AFGHANISTAN: THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONAL RESOLVE

Asia Report N°145 – 6 February 2008

International Crisis Group
WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Afghanistan is not lost but the signs are not good. Its growing insurgency reflects a collective failure to tackle the root causes of violence. Six years after the Taliban's ouster, the international community lacks a common diagnosis of what is needed to stabilise the country as well as a common set of objectives. Long-term improvement of institutions is vital for both state building and counter-insurgency, but without a more strategic approach, the increased attention and resources now directed at quelling the conflict could even prove counterproductive by furthering a tendency to seek quick fixes. Growing tensions over burden sharing risk undermining the very foundations of multilateralism, including NATO's future. The U.S., which is demanding more commitment by allies, must realise that its unilateral actions weaken the will of others. At the same time, those sniping from the sidelines need to recognise that the Afghan intervention is ultimately about global security and do more.

The caveats and short-term mandates imposed by many Western capitals on their troops hinder real planning and raise doubts about the depth of commitment. Countries that consider themselves major players in NATO such as Germany, France and Italy need to assume a greater share of the burden, including the combat burden. While the Afghan people, the insurgents and neighbouring countries each in their own way need to know that resolve is strong, the international community is increasingly fragmented, allowing the insurgency to gain momentum and further emboldening spoilers. Despite growing calls for "coordination", international efforts are marred by inability to agree on priorities and plans, even with regard to counter-insurgency. Some influential actors are pressing untimely and destabilising initiatives, such as the UK's recent public talk of negotiations with the Taliban and recruitment of militias. There are major disagreements over other vital areas such as counter-narcotics, with the U.S. continuing to press for aerial eradication of opium poppies despite resistance from nearly every other actor.

The recent attempt to install a senior and dynamic former British political leader and international official, Paddy Ashdown, as a strengthened UN representative was scuttled by President Hamid Karzai, apparently out of concern for Afghan sovereignty and his own authority. A stronger hand, however, remains essential to bring coherence to international efforts, both among the multiple players and in their approach to the Afghan administration. The international community has never had executive authority in Afghanistan, but it controls most military and financial resources. This leverage should be better used to build Afghan capacity and accountability at central and, even more importantly, local levels which would be the ultimate guarantor of a stable, sustainable state.

Unfortunately international players have too often created parallel foreign structures such as Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), even in areas where the security situation does not call for such a militarised approach, while tolerating subversion by a self-interested local elite of important procedures like the vetting of candidates at elections and the appointments board for government positions, as well as police reform. The nascent institutions of state are also being corrupted by burgeoning poppy production. If this is to change, the international community will need to stand up to those in power who are involved in the drugs business, as well as press for a comprehensive, national approach to building alternative livelihoods.

The term "international community" in this context means the U.S. and its Western allies, the dominant players in Afghanistan. The country's powerful neighbours have mostly played negative roles during the conflict. The ability of the insurgents to enjoy sanctuary for their command and control structures in Pakistan and to recruit there are major factors in the violence. Iran has at times been constructive, notably in negotiation of the Bonn Agreement in 2001, but is likely to use Afghanistan as a theatre in which to hurt the Americans through proxies if its relations with Washington continue to deteriorate. If Afghanistan is to be stabilised, the U.S. must understand that the country's interests with regard to the tough neighbourhood in which it lives may sometimes differ from its own.

The UN mission (UNAMA) has lost too much of its policy leadership role in recent years. This is partly the result of the way international engagement has been designed, with the lead in various sectors divided among individual nations and other institutions – most strikingly NATO – being prioritised. In addition, the UN has failed to seize the

initiative and perform the function of coordinator and driver of international efforts set out in its mandate.

The world witnessed on 11 September 2001 the consequences that a failed state can have for global security. If the international community does not stay the course in Afghanistan, the price could be inordinately high, including:

- a return to civil war, with factions divided along regional and ethnic lines;
- a narco-state with institutions controlled by multiple organised criminal gangs;
- a Pashtun-dominated south largely abandoned to lawlessness; and
- increased intervention by regional powers seeking to protect their interests.

Such an unstable Afghanistan, in which extremists have a strong foothold, would again pose a serious threat to global security. Western governments need to acknowledge the importance of defeating this threat at its source and then present the case far more convincingly than they have done to publics which appear increasingly unwilling to accept casualties or long-term commitment of adequate resources.

Streamlined military-to-military, civilian-to-military and civilian-to-civilian coordination is required. Priorities and interests must be reconciled, with a view to ensuring that:

- there is genuine commitment to coordination mechanisms;
- troop-contributing countries are prepared to deploy their forces, with the required mandates, wherever in the country they are needed;
- the focus of international efforts is on institution building rather than supporting individual Afghan players;
- the culture of impunity is tackled; and
- strategic interests in the region are reassessed, leading to efforts to address the Pakistan problem realistically and to insulate Afghanistan as much as possible from the U.S.-Iran confrontation.

This is not a time for finger pointing or scaling down commitments. Neither Western publics nor the Afghan people have boundless patience; their support will disappear if the drift is not halted quickly. Other than rhetorically, the international community has aimed too low in Afghanistan, pandering to patronage networks rather than respecting the wishes of ordinary Afghan men and women for accountability and more inclusive peacebuilding. While addressing their own shortcomings, the internationals must also hold the Kabul government accountable for its failings.

The situation is not hopeless, but it is bad, and an urgent collective effort is needed to tackle it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the International Community, especially the U.S., other NATO Member States and States with Troop Commitments and Assistance Missions in Afghanistan:

1. Emphasise that efforts will be maintained and adequately resourced as long as needed, including:
   (a) commitment of troops, backed by the necessary mandate and associated military resources; and
   (b) satisfaction of the requirements for Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTS) to train the Afghan security forces.
2. Allocate adequate resources for outreach programs to communicate the importance of the mission to domestic constituencies.
3. Support development of a Contact Group of key international players, led by appropriate UN representatives and including the European Union (EU), NATO, the U.S., the UK, Germany and Canada, to meet regularly in Afghanistan, New York and capitals to steer strategic planning of the international engagement.
4. Demonstrate real commitment to coordination mechanisms such as the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB).
5. Abolish the lead nation/key partner approach and give the UN more specific responsibility to coordinate international efforts in areas such as justice and sub-national governance, with emphasis on local capacity building.
6. Reassess relations with Afghanistan's neighbours, in particular the strong support given to Pakistan's military-backed government, and seek to insulate Afghanistan from the consequences of U.S.-Iranian differences.

To the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB):

7. Encourage the mutual accountability and greater effectiveness of donors and Afghan authorities by:
   (a) insisting on the proper functioning of the Consultative Board for Senior Government Appointments as agreed in the Afghanistan Compact and following through on Kabul's

commitments to transitional justice and disarmament;

(b) requiring donors to send regular reports on assistance programs to the finance ministry or risk losing their seats on the JCMB; and

(c) reducing the number of Consultative Groups (CGs), requiring them to meet more regularly, and equipping each group with a secretariat to follow up on actions between meetings.

To the United Nations Secretary-General:

8. Ensure that the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has sufficient resources to fulfil its mandate by:

   (a) reassessing staffing levels and meeting them through a streamlined and transparent appointments process; and

   (b) reviewing and encouraging member states as necessary to meet fiscal and material needs in the conflict-hit areas, particularly in transportation and communications.

9. Stimulate greater coordination with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), including by basing UN liaison officers at ISAF headquarters and increasing contact at regional levels.

To the United Nations Security Council:

10. Emphasise at the next renewal of UNAMA's mandate:

    (a) a regional approach to UN programming inside Afghanistan, including building up regional offices; and

    (b) close cooperation with ISAF, in particular the contribution that UNAMA's analytical resources should make at all levels of planning.

To NATO/ISAF:

11. Harmonise the mandates of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) by emphasising their security sector roles and phasing out development activities in areas where civilian-led approaches by the UN and others are more appropriate.

12. Seek the transition of Afghan National Army (ANA) training and mentoring to ISAF command contingent upon the alliance and its members providing the necessary resources.

13. Emphasise at the renewal of ISAF's mandate the importance of integrating UNAMA political input at every level of operational planning.

Kabul/Brussels, 6 February 2008

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I. INTRODUCTION

The international community responded with almost one voice when 11 September 2001 made clear the dangers that failed states pose to global security. After decades of conflict partly fuelled by a narcotics-driven war economy, Afghanistan had become a sanctuary and breeding ground for terrorists and extremists of many hues. Recognising the threat to global security, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) for the first time invoked Article 5 of its treaty (authorisation of collective defence).[1]

Six years after driving the Taliban from power and prematurely declaring Afghanistan a success, an increasingly fragmented international community appears to have forgotten the lessons of 11 September. As a reinvigorated insurgency threatens the gains that have been made, and Western capitals, pressured by publics unwilling to accept military casualties, begin to explore endgames and exit strategies, the risk of losing Afghanistan is very real.

The representative institutions of state envisaged in the Bonn Agreement are now in place;[2] and some $15 billion has been spent to reconstruct Afghanistan.[3] The wider goal of stabilising the state, however, has proved elusive, with the violence now spreading beyond the southern and eastern provinces to threaten international efforts even in the provinces that ring Kabul.[4] Responding to the deteriorating security environment, the international community is putting more troops – though still not enough – into the country, which now has more foreign soldiers than at any period since the Taliban's overthrow. Financial aid has also increased. International resolve, however, appears to be weakening, and the growing sense of gloom risks being self-fulfilling.

The insurgency has gained momentum but is still not as powerful as some international and domestic actors make it out to be. The danger lies in the prospect that the growing violence can deepen other fissures resulting from political fragmentation, the lack of government outreach at the provincial and district level and growing lawlessness and criminality. If the international community is to retain the backing of an Afghan population increasingly disaffected with its government, it should focus on institution building instead of seeking quick fixes, which will further provoke disillusionment and disenfranchisement. If it is to stay the course in Afghanistan, it will also have to retain the support of constituencies at home, which is only possible if there is a greater sense of momentum and strategic purpose.

Decisions taken now will have a decisive effect on the fate of the region. This report is intended as a wake-up call for action.[5] It does not examine individual nations or

[1] Article 5, The North Atlantic Treaty, 1949: "The Parties agreed 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".

[2] The Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions is commonly referred to as the Bonn Agreement. See Crisis Group Asia Briefings N°13, *Securing Afghanistan: The Need for More International Action*, 15 March 2002; N°17, *The Loya Jirga: One Small Step Forward?*, 16 May 2002; N°19, *The Afghan Transitional Administration: Prospects and Perils*, 30 July 2002; N°31, *Elections and Security in Afghanistan*, 30 March 2004; and Asia Report N° 101, *Afghanistan Elections: Endgame or New Beginning?*, 21 July 2005.

[3] "International Assistance to Afghanistan", finance ministry, updated 24 October 2007. It shows recorded disbursements of $14,690,000,000 for January 2002-March 2008 but billions of dollars went to the security forces unrecorded.

[4] See Crisis Group Asia Reports N°62, *Afghanistan: The Problem of Pashtun Alienation*, 5 August 2003; and N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency, No Quick Fixes*, 2 November 2006.

[5] A number of reports dealing with this issue have been released recently, including three in the U.S. in January 2008. "The Afghanistan Study Group Report", Center for the Study of the Presidency (chaired by General James L. Jones and Crisis Group co-chair Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering), stated that "the progress achieved after six years of international engagement is under serious threat from resurgent violence, weakening international resolve, mounting regional challenges and a growing lack of confidence on the part of the Afghan people about the future direction of their country" (p. 5), and called for Iraq and Afghanistan to be decoupled in funding and related programs within the U.S. government, creation of an

institutions in depth and recognises that many of the constraints are the result of national systems – for instance, how aid is dispersed or troop commitments are approved. It emphasises, however, the need for all actors in the multilateral endeavour to summon "the political will to do things most countries don't want to do".[6]

II. ENGAGING IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is a multilateral effort; 39 countries are involved in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) alone; 60 countries and institutions pledged continued commitment at the January 2006 London Conference.[7] The many international actors operate side-by-side and have separate command structures; coordination is often noticeable by its absence, with international activity consisting of diffuse responses under multiple leads.

Bilateral and multilateral efforts, for example, include three special civilian representatives (UN, European Union and NATO). There are two military commands, the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and the NATO-led ISAF. OEF has a counter-terrorism mission as well as the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which runs police and army training, while NATO-ISAF includes 25 country-led Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operating under five regional commands.[8] A European Union (EU) policing mission (EUPOL) has recently been added to the mix. Engagement today is "handicapped by history" – this fragmentation was built into the design of international activity in the early years of the intervention.[9]

The international approach has failed to draw on lessons that should have been learned from other interventions. The early phase of engagement, moving from the overthrow of the Taliban to stabilisation efforts, was largely premised on expectations of what nations would likely provide rather than what ground realities demanded. This contradicted the advice of the 2000 "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations", which argued for realistic assessments of requirements:

> Member states must not be led to believe that they are doing something useful for countries in trouble when – by under-resourcing missions – they are more likely agreeing to a waste of human resources, time and money.[10]

Eminent Persons Group to develop a long-term strategy and public support, and appointment of a special envoy to pull together U.S. government efforts. "Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action", The Atlantic Council of the United States, told readers to "[m]ake no mistake, NATO is not winning in Afghanistan" (p.1.), and urged swift completion of security and reconstruction assessments; a comprehensive plan; appointment of a UN High Commissioner and an emphasis on a regional approach. Edward Borcherdt, Austin Carson, Frank Kennefick, James Moseley, William Taylor, Harlan Ullman and Larry Wentz, in "Winning the Invisible War: An Agricultural Pilot Plan for Afghanistan", National Defense University, argued that "while NATO and other forces are capable of coping with the current military and security threats posed by the Taliban and other insurgents – although conditions in the south are deteriorating – unless or until civil reforms are put in place, tactical success will not bring political or strategic victory" (p.1) and outlined five programs to rejuvenate the agricultural sector .

[6] Crisis Group interview, senior Western diplomat, Kabul, 20 July 2007.

[7] See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°59, *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, 29 January 2007.

[8] Twelve PRTs are under U.S. national lead, two under German, and one each under New Zealand, Lithuanian, Italian, Canadian, UK, Norwegian, Swedish, Hungarian, Spanish, Dutch and Turkish leads.

[9] Crisis Group interview, NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) Ambassador Daan Everts, Kabul, 10 November 2007.

[10] "Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations" A/55/305 S/2000/809, commonly known as the Brahimi Report after its chairperson, Lakhdar Brahimi, 21 August 2000, p. 11. Brahimi, a former special adviser to the UN Secretary-General and Algerian foreign minister, is a member of the Crisis

The pledges to rebuild and secure Afghanistan in the optimistic period after the Taliban's rout were not matched by adequate contributions or vigorous action. In 2001, President George W. Bush compared the response to the post-World War II plan bearing the name of U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, who, he said, "knew that our military victory against enemies in World War II had to be followed by a moral victory that resulted in better lives for individual human beings".[11] But in the crucial early years, Afghanistan did not receive attention matching this rhetoric, particularly after the distraction of Iraq. This set the stage for much that followed.

A. POLITICAL PRIORITIES

The premise for international engagement in the political realm was outlined by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) Lakhdar Brahimi:

> an integrated mission that will operate with a "light footprint", keeping the international United Nations presence to the minimum required, while our Afghan colleagues are given as much of a role as possible.[12]

That process was unsatisfactory from the start, however, as cabinet posts were allocated as the spoils of war during negotiation of the Bonn Agreement, which laid out the political course for Afghanistan's democratic transition. The beneficiaries included some who had proved so predatory during the civil war of the 1990s that many Afghans – at first at least – welcomed the Taliban.

The UN was acknowledged in the agreement as "the internationally recognised impartial institution" with an "important role to play". Unlike its mandates in Bosnia,[13] Kosovo[14] and Timor-Leste, however, the UN was given no executive powers. The SRSG was tasked with monitoring and assisting "in the implementation of all aspects of this agreement" and facilitating in case of deadlock between the Afghan partners.[15] The UN was to conduct a census, complete a voter registry[16] and "assist" the interim administration in the creation of a Constitutional Commission, Judicial Commission, Central Bank, Independent Civil Service Commission, Independent Human Rights Commission and Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga. It was also entitled to conduct human rights investigations.

On 28 March 2002, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established (replacing the UN Special Mission in Afghanistan). The Security Council mandate gave the SRSG: "full authority … over the planning and conduct of the United Nations activities in Afghanistan", urged "bilateral and multilateral donors ... to coordinate very closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary General [and] the Afghan Interim Administration" and requested "the International Security Assistance Force … to continue to work in close consultation".[17]

In plans presented by the Secretary-General, the integrated mission was to consist of two pillars: one to look after political affairs, with some 30 to 40 international political officers; the second to oversee relief, recovery and reconstruction, with around 50 international assistance workers and ten international data support officers. Some 100 international support staff were to be based in Kabul and seven regional field offices, along with liaison offices in Tehran and Islamabad.[18] This presence was clearly inadequate for a country with a population of 25[19] to 32 million,[20] 34 provinces[21] and communications and transport infrastructure destroyed by decades of conflict. The mission's uniformed personnel consisted of a handful of military and police advisers.

Co-opting rather than challenging the warlords and commanders, embedding them in the heart of the new institutions, sowed the seeds of the culture of impunity that has since flourished. The international community was

Group Board. Although the Afghanistan operation was not a UN peacekeeping operation, the specific subject of the 2000 report, many of the elements dealt with in that report were relevant to it.

[11] www.marshallfoundation.org, 17 April 2002.

[12] Briefing to the Security Council S/PV.4469, 6 February 2002.

[13] Crisis Group Europe Report N°121, *Bosnia: Reshaping the International Machinery*, 29 November 2001.

[14] Crisis Group Europe Report N°125, *A Kosovo Roadmap II: Internal Benchmarks*, 1 March 2002.

[15] "If for whatever reason the Interim Administration or the Special Independent Commission [on Convening the Loya Jirga] were actively prevented from meeting or unable to reach a decision on a matter related to the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, the Special Representative of the Secretary General shall, taking into account the views expressed in the Interim Administration or in the Special Independent Commission, use his/her good offices with a view to facilitating a resolution to the impasse or a decision", the Bonn Agreement, Annex II, Role of the United Nations During the Interim Period.

[16] The census has not yet been held; a new voter registry is planned after two flawed exercises for the presidential and parliamentary elections.

[17] Resolution 1401, UNSC S/RES/1401, 28 March 2002.

[18] "The Situation in Afghanistan and Implications for International Peace and Security", Report of the Secretary-General A/56/875-S/2002/278, 18 March 2002.

[19] UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, included in the Afghanistan Humanitarian Profile, October 2007, ReliefWeb.

[20] "CIA Factbook", July 2007 estimate.

[21] At that time there were 32 provinces; Daikundi and Panjshir were awarded provincial status by presidential decree in 2004.

rightly seen as complicit when it pandered to individuals with patronage networks. This was blatantly demonstrated when the UN – and others – made little public objection to the 2003 Shirpoor land grab by the newly empowered political elite in the centre of Kabul, within metres of many embassies.[22] The 2002 Emergency Loya Jirga saw 100 unelected officials – many unreconstructed warlords – added as delegates at the last minute with international acquiescence.[23] Local disillusionment grew when, under international supervision, there was inadequate vetting before the 2005 parliamentary elections of candidates' involvement in drug trafficking or illegal armed groups, and none were excluded for human rights violations.[24]

While the UN had notional international lead, the U.S. often exerted immense influence over developments in pursuit of its own goals. During the Constitutional Loya Jirga, for instance, it supported creation of a highly centralised presidential system inappropriate for a state emerging from decades of a civil war that had been stoked by regional, linguistic, ethnic and sectarian grievances and disputes. Far from letting the Afghan people decide their own destiny, and by co-opting some of the most undesirable domestic actors, the international community's deceptively light footprint distorted the nascent political institutions and thus failed to break the cycle of conflict.

B. MILITARY COMMITMENTS

International actors overseeing the political transition, as well as President Hamid Karzai, insisted co-option was their only option given the lack of a robust multinational security presence to counter potential spoilers. In 2001, the Taliban was defeated largely by U.S. air power, but to put an Afghan face on the campaign and avoid American casualties, Washington had rearmed and assisted the Northern Alliance,[25] which was then credited with the victory.

To secure the peace, the Bonn Agreement had called for an international security force in Kabul with the explicit possibility of expansion.[26] Despite appeals by Karzai and the UN,[27] Washington opposed enlarging that mission out of concern it would interfere with the U.S.-led OEF's hunt for "high value" al-Qaeda and Taliban targets. It was also reluctant to become too deeply engaged in nation building, a task President Bush considered inappropriate for the military.[28] Many of the U.S.'s Western partners were either unwilling to contribute troops or to provide them in adequate numbers. In 2002, Crisis Group estimated 25,000 to 30,000 peacekeepers were needed to secure Afghanistan's major cities and transport routes[29] but the UN-authorised ISAF had only 4,500, all in Kabul, in contrast to the 55,000 peacekeepers that were in the much smaller Bosnia in 1995.

While ISAF was authorised to take "all necessary measures to fulfil its mandate", that mandate focused on state, as opposed to community, security. The force was there to:

> assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment.[30]

ISAF was led by troop-contributing countries in rotation, until NATO took over command in August 2003, its first

[22] Miloon Kothari, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, accused key officials in the transitional administration of involvement in the illegal occupation of private homes after land in the Shirpoor neighbourhood was reallocated to top government officials. Within days, however, the UN distanced itself from the allegations, and no action followed. See "UN U-turn on Afghan Land Grab", BBC News, 14 September 2003.

[23] See Crisis Group Briefing, *The Afghan Transitional Administration*, op. cit.

[24] Crisis Group Asia Report N°116, *Afghanistan's New Legislature: Making Democracy Work*, 15 May 2006, p. 4. In the end, 34 candidates were excluded for links to armed groups, but none for illegal funding or human rights abuses.

[25] More correctly called the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, it consisted mainly of non-Pashtun elements, including the largely Tajik Jamiat-i Islami, the Uzbek Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami and the Hazara Hizb-e Wahdat.

[26] Bonn Agreement, op. cit., Annex I (3): "Conscious that some time may be required for the new Afghan security and armed forces to be fully constituted and functioning, the participants in the UN talks on Afghanistan request the United Nations Security Council to consider authorising the early deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations mandated force. This force will assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. Such a force could, as appropriate, be progressively expanded to other urban centres and other areas".

[27] Brahimi, in his briefing to the Security Council on 6 February 2002 (S/PV.4469), spoke of "increasingly vocal demands by ordinary Afghans, as well as by members of the Interim Administration and even warlords, for the expansion of ISAF to the rest of the country. We tend to agree with these demands, and we hope that these will receive favourable and urgent consideration by the Security Council".

[28] At the White House press briefing on 25 February 2002, spokesperson Ari Fleischer said: "The President continues to believe that the purpose of [the] military is to be used to fight and win wars, and not to engage in peacekeeping of that nature", at www.whitehouse.gov. According to Lt. General (ret.) David Barno, Coalition commander in Afghanistan (October 2003-May 2005), "in the aftermath of the December 2001 fall of the Taliban … 'nation-building' was explicitly not part of the formula", "Fighting 'The Other War': Counter-insurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005", *Military Review* (September-October 2007), p. 2.

[29] See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°13, *Securing Afghanistan: The Need for More International Action*, 15 March 2002.

[30] Resolution 1386, UNSC S/RES/1386, 20 December 2001.

mission outside the Euro-Atlantic zone.[31] The force expanded outside the capital, to the north in 2004[32] and then to the west in 2005, largely in country-led contingents whose most public face was the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). The staffing and focus of these mixed civil-military units – first created by the U.S. as a means to kick-start reconstruction and assist government outreach in the regions – have varied considerably according to national resources, priorities and capabilities. Their common name "masks a divergent reality".[33] PRT deployment and mandates often seem dictated more by political imperatives – to please the U.S. or to give domestic constituents an appearance of action – than Afghan security needs.[34]

ISAF finally moved south in July 2006, the first substantial international military deployment there since the Taliban's fall. Several thousand UK troops went to Helmand, where only a few hundred Americans had been posted. The Canadians led in Kandahar and the Dutch in Uruzgan, with Danish, Australian, Estonian and Romanian contributions. But the five years it took to enter the most insecure areas, the southern Pashtun heartland and the Taliban's former base, in significant numbers cost dearly. Euphoria had dissipated as the peace dividend failed to materialise. Predatory local leaders, put in power with at least international acquiescence, had fed suspicions of foreign intentions.[35] Local alienation had been increased by OEF house searches and detentions and accounts, factual or exaggerated, of abuse at detention facilities such as Bagram airbase outside Kabul and Guantanamo.[36] Poppy cultivation had exploded: five south western provinces were responsible for 70 per cent in 2007,[37] putting large parts of the country outside the law.

ISAF's expansion eastwards took place in October 2006, although this largely involved only re-hatting U.S. soldiers already there under what became Regional Command East.[38] The U.S. has retained some 7,000 troops outside the ISAF mandate, who operate directly under U.S. Central Command and have a variety of roles; some still focus on "high-value" counter-terrorism targets, including continuation of the policy of sending detainees to the Bagram facility.[39] The Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) trains the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the National Police (ANP).

This complex web of military commands and missions is an almost inevitable result of such a broad multinational alliance. Because the political needs of member states are often placed ahead of operational requirements, however, the requirement to keep everyone on board has stunted effectiveness and cohesion.

C. FRAGMENTED SECTOR LEADS

Although the Bonn Agreement asked for help in training Afghanistan's new security forces[40] and reconstruction,[41] it did not set out explicit responsibilities. In early 2002, security sector reform was divided between "lead nations", with the U.S. to oversee creation of the army; Germany, the police; Japan, disarmament; the UK, counter-narcotics; and Italy, justice. The lead nation concept was premised on the belief it would engender a sense of ongoing responsibility, but the result was fragmentation. Countries interpreted their mandates very differently, and sectors moved at wildly varying paces often with little coordination between related

[31] Troop commitments have also been made by thirteen non-NATO allies, including Australia, which has a significant contingent in the south.

[32] Expansion was authorised in Resolution 1510, UNSC S/RES/1510, 13 October 2003.

[33] Paul Gallis, "NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of The Transatlantic Alliance", Congress Research Service, 23 October 2007, p. 19.

[34] Barbara J. Stapleton, "A Means to What End? Why PRTs Are Peripheral to the Bigger Political Challenges in Afghanistan", *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, vol.10, no. 1 (Fall 2007).

[35] See Crisis Group Report, *The Problem of Pashtun Alienation*, op. cit.

[36] In the "Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Afghanistan", UN Commission on Human Rights (E/CN.4/2005/122), 11 March 2005, p. 16, M. Cherif Bassiouni urged investigations into eight prisoner deaths in Coalition custody. Allegations, which he said were hard to confirm, included: "forced entry into homes, arrest and detention of nationals and foreigners without legal authority or judicial review, sometimes for extended periods of time, forced nudity, hooding and sensory deprivation, sleep and food deprivation, forced squatting and standing for long periods of time in stress positions, sexual abuse, beatings, torture, and use of force resulting in death".

[37] "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007", UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), August 2007, p. iv. Helmand alone was responsible for 50 per cent.

[38] ISAF has five regional commands: North, South, East, West and Capital.

[39] Bagram presently has some 630 prisoners – over double the number in Guantanamo, see Tim Golden. "Foiling U.S. Plan, Prison Expands in Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 7 January 2008.

[40] "Participants request the assistance of the international community in helping the new Afghan authorities in the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces", Bonn Agreement, op. cit., Annex I, International Security Force.

[41] "The participants … urge the United Nations, the international community, particularly donor countries and multilateral institutions to reaffirm, strengthen and implement their commitment to assist with the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in coordination with the Interim Authority", ibid, Annex III, Role of the United Nations during the Interim Period.

areas, for example counter-narcotics, policing and judicial efforts.

There was some sequencing of efforts between disarmament programs and the creation from scratch of the ANA. As largely Northern Alliance militias under the defence ministry (MOD) were stood down, the international community insisted that the ministry's leadership should more fairly represent the country's ethnic balance before new programs were started.[42] This had an unintended side effect, since many ex-commanders, with their militias still intact, were simply moved to the interior ministry (MOI) as police chiefs. As the Germans largely focused on the long-term process of training a new generation of police leaders, local commanders entrenched themselves at the MOI and local level. With only some 40 German officers assisting in Kabul and later in the north,[43] police reform lacked the comprehensive top-to-bottom approach of the U.S. training and mentoring of the new army, which involved thousands of American troops and stretched from the MOD to the rank and file.

International priorities were misplaced. An army is by no means Afghanistan's foremost institutional need.[44] A functioning judicial and policing system would have had far greater impact on daily lives by providing security to communities and mitigating the sources of local grievances, such as criminality and land disputes, which lead to conflict and impede development.[45] The legal system is at the heart of state building, critical to everything from counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics to ensuring property rights (thus the growth of private enterprise) and guaranteeing minority and gender rights. Under Italian stewardship, this languished, based on strategies that lacked local buy-in and the necessary prioritisation and sequencing, let alone resources and personnel.

Meanwhile, efforts to cope with increasing narcotics production were hindered by separation from wider judicial and agricultural development efforts, often premised on building specialist units rather than increasing the capacity of institutions as a whole. The situation was worsened by the initial lack of urgency among some powerful international players, particularly the U.S., which focused on its counter-terrorism objectives, viewed narcotics production as secondary and turned a blind eye to the illegal activities of "friends" in return for nominal allegiance and intelligence.[46]

Similarly the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program is all but moribund because of international reluctance to challenge senior Afghan officials over lack of compliance. It was started after the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) program had been declared complete in June 2006. DDR had focussed on groups formerly on the MOD payroll and was considered essential for securing the political space for presidential and parliamentary elections. The necessary follow-through – the reintegration of former combatants – however, was accorded insufficient priority.

[42] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°65, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan*, 30 September 2003; and Asia Briefing N°35, *Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track*, 23 February 2005.

[43] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°138, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, 30 August 2007.

[44] It is estimated that in fiscal years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005, 60 per cent of security sector spending was on the army, 28 per cent on police, 6 per cent on demining and 3 per cent each on justice and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR), "Afghanistan, Managing Public Finances for Development", vol. v, Improving Public Financial Management in the Security Sector (34582-AF), World Bank, 22 December 2005, p. 50.

[45] See Crisis Group Asia Report, N°45, *Afghanistan: Judicial Reform and Transitional Justice*, 28 January 2003.

[46] UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa said this practice continues, pointing to "tacit acceptance of opium trafficking by foreign military forces as a way to extract intelligence information and occasional military support in operations against the Taliban and al-Qaeda", "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007", op. cit., p. v.

III. SIX YEARS OF EFFORTS

The Bonn process was considered complete with the National Assembly polls in September 2005, which elected the final major representative state institution.[47] At the London Conference (31 January-1 February 2006), over 60 governments and multinational institutions forged a new partnership with Kabul – the Afghanistan Compact – and pledged some $10.5 billion. The Compact sought "to continue in the spirit of the Bonn, Tokyo and Berlin conferences, to work toward a stable and prosperous Afghanistan, with good governance and human rights protection for all under the rule of law".[48] The Afghan government accepted this "shared vision of the future" and that the "international community" was "to provide resources and support to realise that vision".[49]

The Compact's benchmarks spanning security, governance, rule of law and human rights, and economic and social development, however, lacked sequencing and were overly ambitious. No realistic assessment was made of implementation costs. It was a case of "everything is a priority, meaning nothing is a priority".[50] At the time the Compact was presented, the seriousness of the insurgency had still not been widely recognised, and commitments focused on moving from stabilisation to state building and reconstruction; there was even talk of the U.S. withdrawing some troops.[51] The international community appeared to wake up to the scale of the threat only in 2007, when it began to put in additional resources, including more troops and embassy and agency staff.

Nevertheless, there is still too little political will to produce real change and no overarching strategy. Increased resources without demonstrated long-term resolve and unity of purpose may even risk exacerbating conflict. The need for urgent action is feeding a tendency to seek short-term fixes as domestic constituencies in Western capitals demand quick – and visible – results. Many Compact benchmarks for governance and justice, the most important for the Afghan people, have been put aside as luxuries, while initiatives such as the auxiliary police – men armed and given two weeks' training – are stood up in a hurry only to fail.

Although local disillusionment has certainly grown over the six years, the vast majority of Afghans still want the international community to stay.[52] Most are far more fearful of what would happen if they were abandoned than resentful of a foreign military presence. A Kabul shopkeeper reflected the common view that:

> There was civil war in Afghanistan, private prisons were operating, and each street had its own warring "king". The foreigners came and relieved Afghanistan of this. If the foreigners leave, Afghanistan will return to its Taliban and pre-Taliban days.[53]

A labourer from Ghazni agreed: "The presence of foreign forces is good, they should stay, otherwise there will be fighting in every house".[54] But there is also rising resentment about the failure of some of the most powerful global actors to overcome a much less powerful foe and suspicion that other motives must lurk behind their intervention in Afghanistan and the failure to secure it. "If they really wanted, the foreigners could finish off the Taliban within 24 hours", said a civil servant from the violence-hit Andar district in Ghazni who spoke of conspiracy theories that centred on continued international support for the Pakistani military.[55]

A. STATE OF THE NATION

Six years after that intervention, positive developments include a popularly elected government, a stable new currency, two million females back in school[56] and basic health care for 82 per cent of the population.[57] However Afghanistan still is 174th of 178 nations on the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development

[47] This was despite indefinite postponement of district and municipal council elections vital for local democratisation and complete formation of the upper house of the National Assembly (Meshrano Jirga).
[48] Afghanistan Compact, preamble, p. 1.
[49] Ibid, p. 2. The "international community" was not defined.
[50] Crisis Group interview, NATO Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) Ambassador Daan Everts, Kabul, 10 November 2007.
[51] Eric Schmitt and David S. Cloud, "U.S. May Start Pulling Out of Afghanistan Next Spring", *The New York Times*, 14 September 2005.

[52] Crisis Group is sceptical about the accuracy of polling in the difficult conditions of Afghanistan, but basic support for a continued international community presence is evident to observers on the ground. In assessing a variety of opinion polls that had been conducted in Afghanistan a UNAMA report noted large majorities of respondents supported the Afghan government and the international presence in Afghanistan and large majorities disliked the Taliban. However it also noted that "there are important – and growing – segments of the population who have serious concerns and misgivings". "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)", UNAMA, 1 September 2007, p. 97.
[53] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 6 November 2007.
[54] Crisis Group interview, Ghazni, 12 November 2007.
[55] Crisis Group interview, Ghazni, 11 November 2007.
[56] "The Situation in Afghanistan and Implications for International Peace and Security", Report of the Secretary-General A/62/345-S/2007 /555, 21 September 2007, p. 15.
[57] Ibid.

Index,[58] and even such gains are now threatened.[59] Despite relatively small numbers, the Taliban and other anti-government groups[60] have made almost half the south and east outside district centres largely inaccessible to development and government.[61]

Some international military commanders maintain that increasing numbers of asymmetrical attacks, compared to the standing battles of 2006, signal weakness and desperation. These claims should be read more as an attempt to gloss over a deteriorating security situation than confidence that the situation is under control. An assessment made at the start of 2007 is still realistic:

> Despite the high losses of personnel during the past year, the indications pointed to an insurgency emboldened by their strategic successes rather than disheartened by tactical failures.[62]

Since asymmetrical attacks largely target government and military personnel but claim far more civilian lives,[63] they have a considerable impact on public perceptions of security and the international community's ability to counter threats. The unpredictability of hit-and-run incidents makes it hard for authorities and developmental personnel to operate safely. A major development project, the Kabul-Kandahar highway, is now inaccessible to foreigners. Afghans working with the government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs) divest themselves of identification for fear of Taliban checkpoints. As Kabul's ability to exercise authority is stymied, opium production is booming – the record 2007 poppy cultivation could potentially yield 8,200 metric tons of opium, 93 per cent of global production,[64] further fuelling violence and corrupting nascent state institutions. Insurgents and other spoilers are exploiting local anger over civilian casualties in international military operations[65] to propagate the notion of a foreign invasion; the deaths are also driving a wedge between Karzai and his foreign allies.[66]

The insurgency stretches today across nearly the entire Pashtun belt to Kabul's outskirts and makes the neighbouring Pashtun-dominated provinces of Logar and Wardak the sites of kidnappings and seizures of district centres.[67] Increasing instability has ripple effects: powerful warlords and commanders are using the violence to depict themselves as a home-grown bulwark against the Taliban. While the north is described as stable, it is an uncertain peace dependent on the consent of co-opted strongmen who currently assess that working with the government is to their advantage but may increasingly be hedging their bets.[68] What has been built over the past six years remains "a fragile stability, which [depends] on the consensus of the de facto powerful; a consensus that could be withdrawn at any time and without warning should circumstances change".[69]

The Kabul government, an observer noted, follows:

> [a] policy of "social fragmentation" or coercion and capital to co-opt, manipulate, or outright bribe tribal, religious, and local leaders, thereby slowly removing contenders for central power. However this process has increasingly fed perceptions that

[58] "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007", Centre for Policy and Human Development (established by a partnership between UNDP and Kabul University), p. 18.
[59] At the National Assembly opening, President Karzai said 300,000 school children in the south were forced to stay at home by the rising violence, a 50 per cent increase in a year, "Afghan strife keeps children home", BBC News, 21 January 2008.
[60] The insurgents are diverse. Besides the Taliban, responsible for most violence in the south and under whose name many others act, anti-government forces include the Haqqani network and Hizb-e Islami (Hekmatyar), as well as foreign elements including al-Qaeda. See Crisis Group Report, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency*, op. cit.
[61] "The Afghan National Security Forces and … UNAMA currently estimate there to be about 3,000 active and up to 7,000 occasional Taliban fighters in Afghanistan; but while this is a relatively small number, they receive at least passive support from many others", letter dated 15 November 2007 from the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 (1999) concerning al-Qaeda and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities addressed to the president of the Security Council (S/2007/677), p. 8.
[62] "The Situation in Afghanistan and Implications for International Peace and Security", Report of the Secretary-General A61/799-S/2007/152, 15 March 2007, p. 1.
[63] From 1 January to 30 June 2007, suicide attacks killed 193: 121 civilians, ten international military and 62 Afghan army and police, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)", UNAMA, 1 September 2007, p. 47.
[64] "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007", op. cit.
[65] According to NGO data, by mid-June 2007 Afghan and international security forces had killed some 230 civilians, including 60 women and children. "Protecting Afghan Civilians: Statement on the Conduct of Military Operations", Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) statement, 19 June 2007.
[66] At a press conference following four alleged incidents of civilian casualties in a fortnight, Karzai sharply criticised the international community: "Our innocent people are becoming victims of careless operations of NATO and international forces….We are thankful for help to Afghanistan, but that does not means that Afghan lives have no value. Afghan life is not cheap and it should not be treated as such", Aryn Baker, "Backlash from Afghan Civilian Deaths", *Time*, 23 June 2007.
[67] See Wahidullah Amani, "Trouble on Kabul's Doorstep", Afghanistan Recovery Report, no. 271, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 31 October 2007.
[68] Dominique Orsini, "Walking the Tightrope: Dealing with Warlords in Afghanistan's Destabilising North", Royal United Services Institute, vol. 152, no. 5 (October 2007).
[69] Stapleton, op. cit., p. 38.

> the government is also a patronage machine more interested in accommodating illegitimate leaders than providing an alternative that is effective, meritocratic and relatively free of corruption.[70]

The Taliban has proved adept at exploiting such perceptions, appealing to the disillusioned and disenfranchised in an environment where professionalism is bypassed at every level and selective networks empowered, while others are marginalised.

B. STATE OF THE REGION

The decades of conflict have been largely transnational. While regional efforts to rebuild and stabilise the country are desirable, its neighbours still appear bent on pursuing their perceived national interests at the cost of an Afghan peace. This interference is exacerbated by the international community's propensity to favour policies that promote short-term domestic interests rather than long-term regional stability.

Pakistan, whose role in the creation of the Taliban is well documented,[71] has yet to change its policy or preferences fundamentally. Reacting to the irredentist claims of successive Afghan governments on its Pashtun belt and their refusal to recognize the Durand Line[72] as the international border, Pakistan has covertly supported Islamist Pashtun proxies, such as the Taliban.[73] Dependent also on the Islamist parties to counter its moderate civilian opposition, the politically dominant military has empowered Pakistani Pashtun Islamist parties such Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), the Taliban's political mentor and supporter. With JUI-F support, recruiting from the Deobandi party's madrasas and use of the bordering provinces of Balochistan and NWFP (Northwest Frontier Province) as a base of operations and sanctuary, the Taliban and its Pakistani allies are undermining the state-building effort in Afghanistan.

So long as democracy eludes Pakistan, this mullah-military alliance will continue to provide foot soldiers and suicide bombers who make their way to Afghanistan.[74] The international community, particularly the U.S. has yet to hold the Pakistani military accountable for the failure to counter the Taliban threat from Pakistani soil. The Bush administration still extends the military virtually unconditional support in the mistaken belief that it alone can deliver in the war on terror.[75]

While the U.S. and others play down Pakistan's role in the violence, they play up Iran's.[76] Iran was constructive during the Bonn negotiations[77] and afterwards pledged $560 million in grants and loans,[78] with a focus on road reconstruction and power supply projects mainly in western Afghanistan, which was broadly welcomed locally. Its position today is more complex, partly because relations with the U.S. are deteriorating, partly for its own domestic reasons.[79] While Tehran insists it supports the Karzai government, it also appears to be backing an old proxy, the Northern Alliance, in its latest guise of an opposition coalition, the United National Front. There have been a number of seizures of weapons apparently originating from Iran, although it is unclear if there was direct government involvement.[80] Iran has no love for the Taliban, having nearly gone to war following the murder of its diplomats in Mazar-e Sharif in 1998, but the opportunity to make matters difficult for the U.S. may be tempting. An Afghan official said, "in recent months they want to be seen to send a signal that the potential to disrupt remains".[81]

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[70] Hamish Nixon, "International Assistance and Governance in Afghanistan", Publication Series on Promoting Democracy Under Conditions of State Fragility, vol. 2, Heinrich Boll Foundation, June 2007, p. 24.

[71] See, for example, recently declassified documents obtained by the National Security Archive outlining U.S. concerns over Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban over seven years prior to 2001. "Pakistan 'The Taliban's Godfather'?", 14 August 2007, Barbara Elias (ed.), National Security Archive Electronic Briefing Book no. 277, at www.gwu.edu.

[72] The Durand Line is the boundary determined in an 1893 treaty which split the Pashtun ethnic group between Afghanistan and British India. Afghanistan has refused to recognise it as the international border with what is now Pakistan.

[73] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°125, *Pakistan's Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants*, 11 December 2006; and Asia Briefing N°69, *Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan*, 22 October 2007.

[74] Crisis Group Policy Briefing N°70, *Winding Back Martial Law in Pakistan*, 12 November 2007; and Asia Briefing N°74, *After Bhutto's Murder: A Way Forward For Pakistan*, 2 January 2008.

[75] "No country has done more in terms of inflicting damage and punishment on the Taliban and the al-Qaeda since 9/11. The record is quite impressive", U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, Congressional Transcripts, 7 November 2007.

[76] See for instance Tony Blair, "What I've Learned", *The Economist*, 31 May 2007, in which he spotlights the role of Iran in supporting the Taliban but nowhere mentions Pakistan.

[77] James Dobbins, "Time to deal with Iran", *The Washington Post*, 6 May 2004.

[78] David Rohde, "Iran is seeking more influence in Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 27 December 2006.

[79] "Outside assistance – Is Iran supporting the Afghan insurgency?", *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 September 2007.

[80] See Jim Mannion, "Iranian-made weapons intercepted in Afghanistan: U.S. General", Agence France-Presse, 17 April 2007; and Tim Albone, "Iran gives Taliban hi-tech weapons to fight British", *The Times*, London, 5 August 2007.

[81] Crisis Group interview, senior government adviser, Kabul, 10 July 2007.

C. UNEQUAL PARTNERS

The failure of various others to deliver has resulted in the U.S. moving in to become the dominant donor in virtually every area. Some 15,000 of 42,000 ISAF troops are American;[82] twelve of the 25 PRTs are U.S.-led; and OEF is U.S.-dominated. Only the U.S. has a nationwide information network, with State Department and Agency for International Development (USAID) representatives embedded in other countries' PRTs. By 2004, the U.S. accounted for more aid than all other donors combined,[83] and it has pledged some $10.6 billion over the next two years.[84] All this has unsurprisingly resulted in tensions, as the nominal lead nations resent the U.S. calling the shots. The creation of the auxiliary police, the decision to raise police salaries and most recently moves to increase the army by 10,000 have been largely unilaterally driven and presented to coordination bodies as all but a fait accompli. Washington not unnaturally believes it is entitled to a greater role in decision-making since it bears a larger share of the burden.

While others are increasingly resentful, they are not matching U.S. efforts. The European Police Mission (EUPOL) assumed "key partner" status from Germany in June 2007 but has no budget for projects and a modest goal of 200 trainers countrywide, some half to be re-hatted from member states' current programs. "Beware of Europeans bearing gifts", a Washington insider wryly said, comparing the fanfare of its announcement to EUPOL's impact.[85] The EU contribution does not come near the U.S. provision of 500 contracted police trainers and mentors, another 750 military personnel and $2 billion in funding. This is not to say the U.S. approach is appropriate. Driven by the Pentagon, it emphasises equipment and brief training over accountability and institutional change. It will result in a militarised police, not one that necessarily protects and serves communities. The EU rightly argues for civilian police, law enforcement and coordination through the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB) but must back demands for a policy-making role with resources and resolve if it is to be heard.

The EU has failed to punch at its weight in Afghanistan partly due to the lack of coordination among member states and partly due to institutional constraints.[86] As a result, in contrast to the aggressive U.S. leveraging of funding, European concerns often take a backseat. The European Commission and EU member states, for instance, together financed around 40 per cent of the cost of the National Assembly elections, though they fundamentally disagreed with the U.S.-backed Single Non-Transferable Voting System, which all but excluded the political parties essential for robust democratic development.[87]

Unequal burden sharing is also evident in the provision of troops, particularly for the most unstable areas. A handful of nations disproportionately bear the subsequent loss of life.[88] Germany refuses to allow its troops, even embedded trainers with the army, to work in the south.[89] Italy's troops are mainly in the west, and its caveats restrict deployment in the south. France's troops are largely in Kabul. Where actions or movements are not banned completely, they may require reference to capitals. The ISAF commander, General Dan McNeill, is at the mercy of "national rules, national caveats and national contingents".[90] A recent estimate put the troops available for offensive combat at between 5,000 and 7,000.[91] An Afghan official expressed amazement at "some international troops who will fight day and night,

[82] In late 2007 troops contributions were Albania 138, Australia 892, Austria three, Azerbaijan 22, Belgium 369, Bulgaria 401, Canada 1,730, Croatia 211, Czech Republic 240, Denmark 628, Estonia 125, Finland 86, France 1292, Georgia (not yet deployed), Germany 3,155, Greece 143, Hungary 219, Iceland ten, Ireland seven, Italy 2,358, Jordan 90, Latvia 96, Lithuania 196, Luxembourg nine, Macedonia 125, Netherlands 1,512, New Zealand 74, Norway 508, Poland 1141, Portugal 163, Romania 537, Slovakia 70, Slovenia 66, Spain 763, Sweden 350, Switzerland two, Turkey 1,219, UK 7,753, U.S. 15,038. There were also 6,495 troops belonging to the logistical elements of national contingents. Statistics from "ISAF Troop Contributing Nations", 5 December 2007, at www.nato.int/isaf/index.html.

[83] Astri Suhrke, "Democratisation of a Dependent State: The Case of Afghanistan", working paper 10, Chr Michelsen Institute, 2007, p. 5.

[84] "United States Increases Support for Afghanistan", Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, 26 January 2007. Of this around $2 billion is for reconstruction and $8.6 billion for Afghanistan's national security forces. A local study calculated that between 21 March 2005 and 20 March 2006, the U.S. disbursed more funds than all other donors combined, "Afghanistan Compact Procurement Monitoring Project", ministry of finance and Peace Dividend Trust, 1 April 2007, p. vii.

[85] Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, September 2007. EUPOL is still negotiating with PRTs over equipment, housing and security for personnel and may be fully staffed by March 2008.

[86] Crisis Group Asia Report N°107, *Rebuilding the Afghan State: The European Union's Role*, 30 November 2005.

[87] See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°39, *Political Parties in Afghanistan*, 2 June 2005; and Asia Report, *Afghanistan's New Legislature*, op. cit.

[88] According to Reuters, since the intervention began in late 2001 until 7 January 2008, 76 Canadian soldiers, 86 UK, 476 U.S., 23 Spanish, 26 Germans and 66 from other nations have been killed, "Factbox: Military deaths in Afghanistan".

[89] In April 2007 Germany sent six Tornado surveillance jets to be based in Mazar-e Sharif, with overflight capacity for the south.

[90] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 12 November 2007.

[91] "Quarterly Data Report and Annual Summation", Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, 1 January 2007-31 December 2007, p. 3.

some who will fight only by day, and some who will not fight at all".[92]

A non-American diplomat accused European nations with considerable resources, such as Germany, Italy, Spain and France, of "not feeding into problem solving" and "even the opposite of helpfulness".[93] They refuse to share the burden but insist on seats at the decision-making table, while countries with more limited resources, such as Finland, Portugal, Denmark, Hungary, Romania and Poland, are responding to the call. Domestic politics is at the heart of much of the reluctance. Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi barely survived a Senate vote in March 2007 on troop funding, after having briefly resigned the previous month over the issue. The Netherlands is one of the few countries to have deployed troops in the south, but public support has waned as they engage in some heavy fighting. Although the parliament extended the mission to December 2010, members were critical of the unwillingness of other countries to replace their forces in Uruzgan after what was originally agreed to be a two-year tour.[94]

The last vote on the Afghan mission in the Canadian parliament, in May 2006, passed by only 149 to 145,[95] and the three main opposition parties oppose extension of the deployment in Kandahar when the mandate expires in early 2009. Ahead of a parliamentary vote this spring on an extension, a government-appointed but independent panel tasked with assessing Canada's future role in Afghanistan recommended continuing military efforts, since "withdrawal now would make futility certain and failure inescapable".[96] However, it made this recommendation contingent on other ISAF countries providing an additional 1,000 troops.

There has been increasing talk in various capitals of increasing development and political efforts but scaling back military commitments. Military and civilian personnel involved in international development activity in southern Afghanistan, however, say the work is impossible without a robust security component. Some express concern that "assumptions are being based on what capitals would politically like to happen, rather than a proper analysis of reality".[97] After repeated failure to get allies to increase their commitments, the U.S. is temporarily deploying an additional 3,200 marines in the south. This will give the effort even more of an American complexion at a time when the international rifts are increasingly public.[98]

Troop shortages, potential withdrawals and infighting all feed perceptions of weakening international resolve, and thus influence the dynamics of the insurgency. Afghans increasingly do not believe the internationals will stay the course, particularly when they hear discussions about one- or two-year extensions by troop contributors. Insurgents, who have a much longer time frame, are emboldened. Neighbours want to ensure their interests are protected if NATO commitments are shaky. Western governments need to do a far better job of explaining to their publics that the fight against extremism in Afghanistan is ultimately about their own national interests.

[92] Crisis Group interview, defence ministry spokesperson General Azimi, Kabul, 30 October 2007.
[93] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 23 June 2007.
[94] After hours of heated debate, 106 of 150 parliamentarians voted to support continuation of the mission, John Tyler, "Dutch Parliament backs Afghanistan extension", Radio Netherlands Worldwide, 19 December 2007.
[95] Doug Struck, "Canada votes to extend mission in Afghanistan", *The Washington Post*, 18 May 2006.
[96] "Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan", minister of public works and government services catalogue no. FR5-20/1-2008, January 2008, p. 33. In 2005 Canada began to redeploy forces from Kabul to Kandahar, taking over the Kandahar PRT in August. The redeployment was complete in February 2006. ISAF took over international military command responsibilities for the southern region from OEF in July 2006.
[97] Crisis Group interview, Kandahar, October 2007.
[98] Although he later apologised, U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates was publicly quoted criticising allies, saying, "I'm worried we have some military forces that don't know how to do counter-insurgency operations", Peter Spiegel, "Gates faults NATO force in southern Afghanistan", *Los Angeles Times*, 16 January 2008.

IV. UNITY OF PURPOSE?

While international discord provokes conspiracy theories among Afghans,[99] some who have played key policy-making roles are most concerned about the adverse impact of this disunity on stabilisation efforts. A former ISAF commander, General David Richards, said, "the current lack of unity and coordination between the numerous different organisations and agencies often manifests itself in a situation close to anarchy, both military and civil".[100] The shortcomings are not unique to Afghanistan. A recent general study (not Afghanistan-specific) noted: "The international aid architecture has not developed as the result of a master plan and has no central architect. There is little co-ordination of inputs and processes between the large donor agencies, and no single approach to the objectives and outputs of aid programs".[101] That analysis only covered civilian-civilian coordination. In Afghanistan, there are equally serious issues of civilian-military and military-military coordination.

The challenges of multilateral efforts such as Afghanistan's go beyond coordination. A study of global interventions emphasised: "Too often, unrelated problems are misdiagnosed as coordination failures because they manifest themselves, superficially, as disorderliness or ineffectiveness in the field, whereas in fact they reflect deeper frustrations, tensions and uncertainties in the state-building enterprise".[102] Disunity in Afghanistan is about not just structural issues or coordination but also priorities and preferences, goals, means and, increasingly, endgames, exit strategies and, perhaps most importantly, the reasons for being in the country at all. Many countries are motivated as much by desire to show loyalty to the U.S. or NATO as by recognition of the importance of fighting extremism at its source. This translates into half-hearted commitment, with mere presence more important than the impact of engagement. A sceptic said, "there are more people playing to be in the game than playing to win".[103]

A. UNAMA

In the early years, the international community expected UNAMA, even though it was not given explicit authority, to take the lead in keeping the Bonn Agreement on track. But powerful actors, particularly the U.S., encouraged it to opt for backroom deals or sidelined it all together. UN officials, too, were tempted to accept shortcuts to ensure deadlines were met. Timelines often took priority over sustainable stability. Commenting on the warped state-building process, a study concluded:

> If the bar is raised too high, one is faced with a world of unmitigated failure. But arguably the problem in Afghanistan has often been the opposite, one of lowering expectations and standards in order to reach arbitrary targets set in Bonn, New York or Washington.[104]

With representative Afghan institutions in place, UNAMA has struggled to project itself as the leader of international efforts and to find a new role. Its March 2007 mandate stresses "the central and impartial role that the United Nations continues to play in promoting peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community" and "the role of UNAMA to promote a more coherent international engagement in support of Afghanistan".[105] The UN's lead on the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) overseeing implementation of the Afghanistan Compact – discussed further below – was the most obvious vehicle for this but UNAMA has not shown itself central to ongoing processes. Some believe it has failed to respond quickly enough to mounting challenges, since it "was structured for what should have happened after Bonn rather than what did happen".[106]

There have been some changes. The 2007 mandate instructs UNAMA "to promote humanitarian coordination and to continue to contribute to human rights protection and promotion, including monitoring of the situation of civilians in armed conflict".[107] This reflects realisation that rising humanitarian needs, not only developmental ones,

[99] See "Helmand about to become a province of Pakistan", editorial in Afghan daily *Hasht-e Sobh*, 24 October 2007 (translation, BBC Monitoring), which said, "[f]oreigners are in Afghanistan for their own interests and national security, and they work in light of the instructions given to them by their [own] commanders".

[100] Quoted by Lt. Col. Chris Borneman, chief information officer, ISAF, "Letters: Afghanistan is Not Close to Anarchy", *Guardian*, 25 July 2006.

[101] Simon Burall and Simon Maxwell, with Alina Rocha Menocal, "Reforming the International Aid Architecture: Options and Ways Forward", working paper 278, Overseas Development Institute, October 2006, p. 4.

[102] Roland Paris, "Understanding the 'Coordination Problem' in Postwar State Building", Research Partnership on Postwar Statebuilding, May 2007 (draft), p. 2.

[103] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 8 September 2007.

[104] Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, "Bargains for Peace? Aid, Conditionalities and Reconstruction in Afghanistan", Netherlands Institute of International Relations, August 2006, p. 78.

[105] Resolution 1746, UNSC S/RES/1746, 23 March 2007.

[106] Crisis Group interview, international official, Kabul, 20 July 2007.

[107] Resolution 1746, op. cit.

must be met.[108] Monitoring civilian casualties, a sensitive issue, is increasingly at the fore. UNAMA must tread carefully when it publicly raises civilian deaths from international military action to ensure the issue is fairly and proportionately presented. Despite talk of independent monitoring, it has limited resources to investigate in what are often inaccessible and insecure areas. There is also no indication how UNAMA can translate into reality the new emphasis on synergies between its objectives and ISAF's.[109]

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has taken a more public interest in Afghanistan than his predecessor. Statements about strengthening UNAMA[110] have, however, yet to be matched by action. Much has been made of opening new provincial UNAMA offices,[111] which should have happened far earlier. Many, particularly in unstable areas in the south, however, are little more than shells. After Dutch pressure for a presence in Uruzgan, UNAMA based a desk to focus on the province in Kabul. UNAMA is believed to be 20 to 30 per cent below the approved level, with only some 200 international and 800 national staff. Staffing needs and policies should be urgently re-examined in terms of both numbers and deployment. The slow, convoluted appointments process should be revised and made more transparent. UNAMA should listen to and reward field staff, particularly in more insecure areas.

B. NATO

NATO-led ISAF has about 90 per cent of its stated needs, but many of the missing pieces are vital, such as mobile and reserve components. Since the needs assessment has always been done with an eye more on availability than true requirements, it would be a "minimalist force" even fully resourced,[112] with limited capacity to intervene effectively. Insufficient troops and police to hold captured ground means that insurgent territory must be taken repeatedly. Panjwayi, outside Kandahar, has had to be recaptured several times.[113] International security forces call this repeated sweeping of the same areas "mowing the grass". Aside from the military inefficiency and adverse effect on development, too few boots on the ground necessitates more use of air power, which is more likely to produce civilian casualties. By not fielding promised mentors, Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTS) to work with the ANA, contributing countries undermine the prospects of a viable exit strategy that would allow stabilisation to continue apace.[114]

Despite its constant battle for resources, NATO has become, almost by default, the predominant multilateral institution in many areas of Afghanistan, not only in terms of assets and personnel but also in sheer reach. PRTs are now the main instrument of international engagement in many parts of the country. They have become a focal point of commitments by governments, since they are acceptable to domestic constituencies. Because they also provide funds that are spent within the provinces, in contrast to Kabul's highly centralised financial system, local authorities generally welcome them. The military, however, should not be involved in development, except in the most unstable areas. Comprehensive, countrywide planning is also hindered by the PRTs' national caveats and rotations as short as four months.

There is little evidence that stop-gap measures will be replaced by international efforts to improve the professional capacities of local and national government. One study commented, "the potential difficulty is that while the scaffolding functions as a structure onto which an increasing number of things can be loaded, precious little attention may be placed on building the wall".[115] Far too often international resources and attention appear to follow the fighting or poppy production, encouraging bad behaviour according to Bamiyan governor Habiba Sarabi. The New Zealand PRT in her part of the desperately poor but peaceful central highlands has meagre resources compared to those of the major players deployed in the insurgency-hit south and east:

> The naughty boy gets all the parents' attention ... there is no balance in the distribution of aid between the provinces. Where there is a problem, where there

[108] "UNAMA Facing New Humanitarian Challenges", IRIN, 28 May 2007.
[109] Resolution 1746, op. cit.
[110] The Secretary-General said, "I am considering increasing the presence of UNAMA office in southern Afghanistan"; see "Britain to increase forces in Afghanistan; UN considers greater political presence", *USA Today*, 1 February 2007.
[111] UNAMA now has regional offices in Kabul, Gardez, Kandahar, Bamiyan, Jalalabad, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif and Kunduz and provincial offices in Nimroz, Khost, Maimana, Badghis, Faizabad, Kunar, Ghor, Zabul and Daikundi. With the exception of Maimana and Faizabad, all the latter were opened in 2006 or 2007.
[112] Crisis Group interview, senior ISAF official, Kabul, 10 December 2007.
[113] The NATO Parliamentary Assembly Defence and Security Committee concluded: "At a tactical level it was clear that ISAF was more than capable of clearing any given area of insurgents. However, ISAF did not have enough forces to 'backfill' and hold a cleared area after a successful operation. Thus the NATO forces left for their next operation, [and] insurgents often returned to the area. Local populations, fearing the consequences on the return of insurgent forces, were thus unable to commit to supporting the efforts of ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan", "Mission Report", 3-8 September 2007, p. 1.
[114] Only 28 teams were in place in January 2008. The assessed requirement is 103, 62 of which were supposed to be in place by the end of 2007, ISAF figures, 3 February 2008.
[115] "Service Delivery and Governance at the Sub-National Level in Afghanistan", World Bank, July 2007, p. 28.

> is conflict, the international community is mostly taking care of those areas.[116]

Some PRTs have reported incidents in stable districts within provinces where resentment is rising against the apparent preferential provision of goods to conflict zones. Even wider donor efforts involve perverse incentives. If insurgency-hit Helmand province were a country, it would be not only the world's biggest producer of opium but also the fifth largest global recipient of USAID funding.[117]

Because civilian leadership is largely absent from counter-insurgency planning, military operations lack overall strategic direction as well as the follow through that could translate into demonstrable change for the population. Military and civilian players often have a fractious relationship. The military complains about the lack of development following operations;[118] civilians point out they were not involved in the military's planning. Uneasy with its role as the largest, and sometimes only, international player on the ground, ISAF has strongly advocated a robust role for a civilian partner,[119] fearing that "NATO is being blamed for far too much".[120] It is yet to be seen, however, if NATO would be willing to cede any real authority.

NATO's relationship with the U.S-led OEF and their respective mandates and approaches are also blurred. OEF does a bit of peacekeeping and ISAF a bit of counter-terrorism. The ambiguity does have political advantages in a multilateral environment. The U.S. can keep some troops outside NATO command, while others can distance themselves from aspects of operations their publics would not accept, such as detainee policies.[121] Cooperation has also improved, particularly since a four-star U.S. general has been at ISAF's helm, although most military personnel interviewed believe two commands operating in one theatre makes no operational sense. Combining the two missions would pay dividends, tactically and strategically, for long-term counter-insurgency efforts, but a military officer said, "the political penalty for military unity may be too high".[122] Moreover, were the two missions to be united, a number of less than fully enthusiastic participants in ISAF might well abandon the battlefield entirely.

C. ATTEMPTS AT COORDINATION

Though Afghanistan does not lack mechanisms for it, meaningful coordination between the internationals and Afghans and among international players remains elusive. Instead of realigning priorities to reinforce unity of purpose, participants in such forums often do little more than repeat policy lines and action points. SRSG Tom Koenigs said, "there are more people who want coordination than people who want to be coordinated".[123]

The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), co-chaired by the SRSG and a representative of President Karzai, is tasked with overseeing compliance with the Afghanistan Compact. It sits atop a massive pyramid of eight consultative groups, 29 technical working groups and five cross-cutting consultative groups in which national and international counterparts meet. Originally meant to be a small body to drive progress, membership has swelled, with 23 international and seven Afghan members. Intended to meet quarterly, the unwieldy body rarely does. It is a prime example of the difficulties of coordination in a multilateral setting, where the "pressure for inclusion creates sometimes irreconcilable tension between the efficiency of a group – which will be enhanced by its small size – and its legitimacy, which may be better served by the membership of a larger number of states".[124]

The JCMB has highlighted some important issues such as the pressing need for reform at the interior ministry. However, it has had few substantive results. Attempting to ensure high-level attention on Afghanistan, it has become a travelling jamboree, meeting around the world rather than working as the primary in-country coordination mechanism. There are no penalties for failing to live up to benchmarks, and members show little commitment between meetings. The JCMB was envisaged as a partnership between the internationals and Afghan counterparts, with the former committed to "transparency and accountability" in aid,[125]

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[116] Crisis Group telephone interview, Habiba Sarabi, 18 November 2007.

[117] Briefing on "New Strategy for Narcotics Efforts in Afghanistan", Thomas Schweich, coordinator, counter-narcotics and justice reform in Afghanistan, U.S. State Department, 9 August 2007, transcript, Federal News Service, p. 6. This is largely because of the massive Kajaki Dam project, which is not yet operational.

[118] See, for instance, Duncan Gardham, "Officer pours scorn on Afghan 'blunders'", *The Telegraph*, 11 September 2006.

[119] NATO Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer called for "a coordinator with great political clout who is in the position to exert political pressure on the international community and acting at the same level like Karzai and other heads of government", "Wir brauchen Geduld", *Der Spiegel*, 10 September 2007.

[120] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, November 2007.

[121] For an analysis of the differing detainee policies of OEF and ISAF member states, see Timo Noetzel and Sibylle Scheipers, "Coalition Warfare in Afghanistan: Burden-Sharing or Disunity?", Royal Institute of International Affairs, October 2007, p. 5.

[122] Crisis Group interview, senior European military officer, Kabul, 11 October 2007.

[123] Crisis Group interview, Tom Koenigs, Kabul, 30 October 2007.

[124] Teresa Whitfield, "A Crowded Field: Groups of Friends, the United Nations and the Resolution of Conflict", occasional paper, Centre on International Cooperation, vol. 1 (June 2005), p. 2.

[125] Guiding principles are "1.Leadership of the Afghan Government in setting its development priorities and strategies,

but obtaining even the most basic information about where its money goes remains frustrating. There is little evidence that donor priorities are determined by a common assessment of needs.[126]

Similarly, the Afghan administration is not held accountable. Creation of the Special Consultative Board for Senior Government Appointments[127] was hailed as meeting the Afghanistan Compact's first benchmark,[128] but it has yet to receive logistical and political support and has affected very few appointments. It has failed to achieve the purpose for which it was established: to clean up the appointment process by vetting senior candidates for their professionalism and possible ties to human rights abuses and drugs. Though the cabinet recently rewrote its terms of reference, seeking to make it entirely government appointed, there has been no international pushback on what is a central issue and a clear Kabul commitment. The benchmarks on disarmament and transitional justice have similarly been all but forgotten. The international community holds the purse strings, but as long as it does not insist on pledges being honoured, it will be regarded as complicit by the Afghan people. Meeting benchmarks must be about ensuring effectiveness rather than ticking off a checklist of technicalities.

The Policy Action Group (PAG) focuses more specifically on the insurgency. Set up in July 2006, it brings together key Afghan and international military and civil players in a "war cabinet" of sorts, concentrated on the six southern provinces. Those involved say it performs an important function in the absence of any other "meaningful high-level venue to raise crisis issues in a timely fashion".[129] Some minor successes are cited: pushing the defence ministry to better define its involvement in counter-narcotics and ensuring that funds are available to the governors. The PAG, however, was involved in the notably ill-advised decision to create the auxiliary police, has failed to take a central role in shaping policy and lacks the means to ensure implementation of decisions at ground-level. Instead, actual decision-making among the major international players takes place in non-transparent, informal small groups such as the "Tea Club" convened by the SRSG, while there is little structure that facilitates participation by capitals in coherent decision-making.

D. DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS, MIXED MESSAGES

The mosaic of international commitments lacks clear unity of purpose and effort. As an international adviser to the Afghan government noted, the post-Bonn mantra of "Afghan government lead" is often taken to mean "an unwillingness to hammer out policy positions as an international policy position to which the Afghan government can then respond. Rather, the donors go bilaterally and try and influence the government".[130]

Fissures are becoming damagingly public, with donors pushing individual hobby-horses. As a result, the president, ministers and senior officials hear a multitude of international voices on issues large and small. "So many messengers, but where is the message?" an observer asked.[131] It can suit Afghan officials to shop for the most sympathetic nation on a given issue. When the international community has stood together, it has achieved results. When the president's office, for instance, added fourteen men who did not meet the criteria for appointment as provincial police chiefs during the Pay and Rank Reform process, a probation board was instituted at international insistence, and eleven were removed.[132] This welcome step has not been followed up at lower ranks, however; the important process of appointments of district police chiefs was dominated by political manoeuvring. The failure of the senior appointments system cited above has also not produced a similar reaction. This may be because it suits some internationals to keep their lines of bilateral influence open on individual postings, working from behind the scenes rather than through a transparent process.

and within them, the support needs of the country and the coordination of donor assistance; 2. Transparency and accountability on the part of both the Government and the donors of the international assistance being provided to Afghanistan", Afghanistan Compact, Annex II, Improving the Effectiveness of Aid to Afghanistan.

[126] Agreement was reached at the November 2006 JCMB that: "All external budget expenditures and results achieved or expected to be achieved should be reported by the international donors and agencies through the Ministry of Finance and the line ministries. This should be presented at the next round of Consultative Group meetings", "Implementation of the Afghanistan Compact", bi-annual JCMB report, November 2006, p. 13.

[127] See "Factsheet: Special Consultative Board for Senior Government Appointments", UNAMA. More recently it has been called the Afghanistan Advisory Board on Senior Appointments, although a final name has yet to be officially announced.

[128] "A clear and transparent national appointments mechanism will be established within six months, applied within 12 months and fully implemented within 24 months for all senior level appointments to the central government and the judiciary, as well as for provincial governors, chiefs of police, district administrators and provincial heads of security", Afghanistan Compact, Annex I, Benchmarks and Timelines.

[129] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 25 October 2007.

[130] Crisis Group interview, international adviser, Kabul, 25 October 2007.

[131] Crisis Group interview, 10 December 2007.

[132] See Crisis Group Briefing, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, op. cit., p. 12.

Strategising often seems to take the place of strategy. An example is the narcotics issue. "If this collapses, it will be under the weight of strategy papers and a lack of action", an international said.[133] The U.S. released its new strategy in 2007, while the Afghan counter-narcotics ministry has a "National Drug Control Strategy" with implementation plans for eight pillars. The Afghanistan National Development Strategy has its own sector strategy focused on counter-narcotics, while the PAG has created twelve action points on the issue and also has a counter-narcotics pillar, with many of the same members as the cabinet subcommittee. The embassy of the UK, which has had lead nation status, also has a counter-narcotics team. An adviser despaired: "Every year there is a new sense of urgency when the [production] figures are announced, we all draft a lot of plans, we fight among ourselves, and nothing gets implemented out there".[134]

Those involved have backed off from the most essential requirement: confronting government officials involved in drug trafficking or facilitation. Instead, the approach has been to focus piecemeal on areas where production rises, often with the result that production is simply pushed to another province. Only a comprehensive, nationwide approach to building sustainable livelihoods and infrastructure has a chance to effect real change.

Serious operational disagreements also stymie a concerted and cohesive response. Frustrated with efforts under years of British lead during which production soared, the U.S. has demanded aerial eradication, despite vigorous and reasonable Afghan opposition.[135] Forced eradication as the central plank in a counter-narcotics strategy would target the poor; farmers who may not even own their land would lose livelihoods, while traffickers and facilitators would still flaunt their wealth. Insurgents would exploit local alienation to recruit more soldiers. The British, with troops in the Helmand heart of poppy production, fear a backlash and are resisting but offer no viable alternative. Local players are exploiting the divisions. Some major opposition figures in the north, where trafficking continues but cultivation has declined, now support aerial eradication.[136] While that wins them favour with the Americans, the policy has maximum impact on their rivals in the south but little on their own constituencies.

International differences over countering the insurgency are even more damaging. There is increasingly public talk by the British of arming local militias to fight the Taliban. Such an initiative would be dangerous even if Afghan-led but particularly so as a unilateral effort.[137] Some high-level British officials have also begun to talk up the potential of negotiations with the Taliban.[138] Such ill thought-out approaches are dangerous.

Talk of negotiations reinvigorates insurgents, gives a cowed population little incentive to resist and may even drive fence sitters to join the Taliban in anticipation of future rewards and fear of retribution. It is particularly disillusioning to women who – at some personal risk – have supported democracy and have much to fear from renewed Taliban influence. More broadly it could fuel regional tensions. Iran, India and Russia could see their interests threatened, while the Taliban's Pakistani backers would be emboldened. Instead of seeking deals with the Taliban, who have repeatedly demonstrated unreliability as a negotiating partner, the international community would be better served by keeping up military pressure, ensuring that the Kabul government is worth fighting for and focusing on community outreach to ease local conflicts and fault lines.[139] If counter-insurgency is to be effective, the population must not live in fear of being abandoned, but rather be confident that "the counter insurgents have the means, ability, stamina and will to win".[140]

[133] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 17 January 2008.
[134] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 6 December 2007.
[135] The U.S. has recently appeared more conciliatory on this issue, but most see this as temporary and tactical. Anna Bawden, "U.S. backs down over Afghan poppy fields destruction", *The Guardian*, 7 December 2007.
[136] Vice President Ahmad Zia Massoud, "Leave it to us to end the poppy curse", *Sunday Telegraph*, 2 September 2007.
[137] The head of ISAF and the head of CSTC-A have both been quoted as firmly opposing the plan; See Jon Boone, "U.S. General warns on Afghan defence plan", *Financial Times*, 2 January 2008; Jerome Starkey, "U.S. attacks UK plan to arm Afghan militias", *The Independent*, 14 January 2008.
[138] "In Afghanistan, at some stage, the Taliban will need to be involved in the peace process because they are not going away any more than I suspect Hamas are going away from Palestine", said UK Defence Minister Des Browne, "Taliban must be involved in peace process: British Minister", Agence France-Presse, 25 September 2007.
[139] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°64, *Peacebuilding in Afghanistan*, 29 September 2003.
[140] The U.S. Army, Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual, U.S. Army Field Manual no. 3-24, December 2006, I-134.

V. WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

Afghanistan is not lost. There is still a large reservoir of hope among Afghans, who fervently want peace. The sheer number of countries and institutions engaged in Afghanistan is encouraging, and the international community appears to be awakening to the seriousness of the situation, if not the broader threat it poses. There is now fairly wide consensus on the need to rethink efforts, but instead of stiffening resolve for the long haul and the tough tasks ahead, the growing insecurity might hasten countries' departures or at least increase the temptation of dangerous quick fixes. With their publics demanding concrete results, capitals might not have the will to tackle vital structural issues. An even more fragmented international community working with a highly centralised and factionalised, and increasingly unpopular Afghan administration would not be able to deliver stability.

The international community must wake up to the wider threat and summon the means and resolve to make a decisive change. Political will in capitals is needed to demonstrate that all countries are serious about sharing burdens. The priority is not simply more resources but putting them to the best use. Coordination will never be perfect, and new boards and bodies are certainly not silver bullets, but strengthened international leadership and streamlined mechanisms could help harmonise approaches. Political leadership must be at the fore, with military efforts exerted strategically as part of a broader plan.

A. STRENGTHEN LEADERSHIP

With almost uniform consensus on the need for stronger leadership and enhanced coordination of international efforts, most countries are looking to the UN. This has prompted some concern within the institution that member states are "shifting difficult problems to the UN without giving it the means".[141] In the second half of 2007, there was much discussion of appointing a high-level envoy, though there were widely varying ideas on the mandate and responsibilities.[142] After Tom Koenigs said he would leave by end-2007, attention turned to strengthening the SRSG role. Most in Kabul recognised that "we need a strong international lead in Kabul, in country, not abroad".[143]

The U.S. was keen for a strong non-American co-ordinator who could help stimulate allied commitments. Paddy Ashdown (Lord Ashdown), the energetic former leader of the British Liberal Party and High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, was proposed. After several months of negotiations about his powers, largely among capitals, agreement by all parties appeared to have been secured, but Ashdown withdrew from consideration in late January 2008, when President Karzai shocked and disappointed international leaders by declaring his opposition to the appointment. The undiplomatic promotion in the British media of the position's "super envoy" status apparently contributed to Karzai's concern that the very senior and respected Ashdown would lessen his own stature in Afghanistan. This very public disagreement between Karzai and the international community is a worrying development, as is anti-international sentiment surrounding the issue in state and pro-government media.[144] Many who have become entrenched in Kabul over the past six years have sought to head off change.

Given the light footprint approach since 2001 and with an elected president and parliament in place, there will inevitably be difficulties over any attempts at a "heavier" footprint now. Nevertheless, the appointee to such a position has to be a forceful and credible individual if international efforts are to be drawn together, as they must be. UNAMA's relationship with the military and U.S. predominance in virtually every aspect of international activity in the country are among the biggest challenges to be tackled. The U.S. and NATO have called for greater civilian lead and coordination; international players should clearly commit to recognise UN pre-eminence in agreed areas before the next incumbent takes up the position and old rivalries resume. The most powerful among them must understand and accept the importance of political leadership. Military operations must be an aspect of stabilisation, not ends unto themselves. Only when the international community's own house is in order and it speaks with one voice can it hope to drive reform effectively.

B. INCREASE CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION

Double-hatting the new SRSG with NATO's Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) or a similar position was widely considered when terms of reference for a

[141] Crisis Group interview, Kabul, October 2007.
[142] The U.S. ambassador to the UN, Zalmay Khalilzad, supported the creation of a position that would focus on the external dimensions of the conflict. Phil Stewart, "U.S. says Afghan neighbours not helping enough", Reuters, 2 July 2007.
[143] Crisis Group interview, senior international donor agency staff member, Kabul, 20 August 2007.

[144] An editorial in a state-owned newspaper said: "Afghans themselves want to make decisions on peace and war, and not others. They cannot allow foreigners to determine their fate", "We want harmony not someone's dominance", *Hewad*, 20 January 2008. A pro-government publication editorialised: "Afghans never want a viceroy from the international community because they have their own rulers", "Afghan nation does not need any viceroy", *Weesa* (translation, BBC Monitoring), 20 January 2008.

strengthened UN role were being discussed.[145] The idea, while good in principle, does not seem politically feasible in current circumstances. Nevertheless, and though ISAF has resisted any form of UN operational control, stronger links and mechanisms for functional unified strategies between ISAF and UNAMA make good policy sense, perhaps in the form of a standing committee structure for military and civilian coordination. Effective civil-military coordination also requires more than periodic meetings. Embedding civilian UNAMA liaison officers within ISAF could be a viable further option. There is also need for more communication not just within Afghanistan but also between UN headquarters in New York and NATO headquarters in Brussels.

Some civilians have opposed such closer ties because they want to keep humanitarian work separate from the military. But ISAF is in Afghanistan under a UN mandate. Emphasising this more could help reassure member states wary of participating in an "American war". A greater UN role in strategic planning could also provide the necessary civilian counsel to ensure that military operations minimise local alienation and secure the necessary institutional follow through.

C. COORDINATE COHERENTLY

If the SRSG is to be first amongst equals, better consultation mechanisms between principals are needed to ensure they are all on the same page. A promising option would be creation of a Contact Group, composed of the major players, including the U.S., the UK, the EU, Germany and Canada, as well as NATO/ISAF, and led by appropriate UN representatives. Such a group would meet regularly at senior levels in Kabul, New York and capitals. It would give more formal shape to what, to a certain extent, already happens behind the scenes in Kabul, and would also extend coordination mechanisms back to and among capitals. Membership should be kept reasonably small to avoid what has happened with other coordinating mechanisms such as the JCMB. There might, however, be further layers, or sub-committees, to draw in, for example, regional states if the need arises.

Giving the new SRSG the position as EU Special Representative (EUSR) – as was proposed early in the review – would make little policy sense so long as the EU is a minority stakeholder in Afghanistan. A similar relationship between the EU and NATO would also likely face stiff resistance from NATO members, not least Turkey, which has impeded the EUPOL mission by opposing access by non-NATO members to NATO intelligence.[146] The EU should instead focus on ensuring that its efforts are more cohesive and coordinated across EU institutions. At present, there is a European Commission delegation in Kabul with its own justice project, an EUSR and a policing mission. Apart from member states' efforts, these three have separate reporting lines to Brussels. The EU should abandon the lead nation concept and embark on a robust rule of law mission, drawing together expertise and resources across the justice and policing sectors.[147]

The JCMB is not effective. Members need to show more commitment if it is to help produce mutual accountability and ensure more effective use of assistance. International members should meet Compact commitments to transparency by regularly reporting their own efforts. The international community must also hold the Afghan government to its commitments, demanding that benchmarks be met in substance, not used as merely a technical checklist. The Contact Group discussed above should remove any need for the JCMB itself to travel, allowing it to concentrate its work, including its wider plenary sessions, in Kabul. The JCMB's sectoral consultative groups should be revamped to serve as the major forums for driving joint Afghan-international community policy-making and accountability. The groups should be reduced to three: governance, security and development. They should meet more regularly and be staffed by secretariats – perhaps provided by an appropriate international institution – to follow up between meetings.

D. RE-EXAMINE NATO'S ROLE

Governments must ensure that military commitments are adequate and mandates robust, abandoning the national caveats which impede interoperability and effectiveness. With the security situation deteriorating, NATO should urgently re-examine requirements, then lobby troop contributors to provide the necessary resources to satisfy them.

A complete overhaul of the PRT mechanism is overdue. There is need for not only greater harmonisation of core functions and core objectives but also a change in emphasis from mixed security and developmental missions to primarily security and security sector reform roles. In the short term, improved in-country reporting mechanisms are

[145] The NATO SCR, Ambassador Daan Everts, left in December 2007.

[146] The Turkish attitude stems from the Cyprus dispute and Ankara's difficult EU membership candidacy process, see Crisis Group Europe Report N°184, *Turkey and Europe: The Way Ahead*, 17 August 2007.

[147] Italy holds to its status as lead nation on the judiciary, the European Commission has a justice project, and the Council a police mission. Each is far too little in itself, and even if the missions were combined, more resources and resolve would be needed.

required for the embedded political and civilian development advisers, who currently only answer to their capitals. More fundamentally, there must be an assessment of where and if PRTs are needed at all. They might be important for some very unstable areas, but the security situation permitting, foreign troops should normally focus on training and assisting local security forces, with national ministries and the UN taking on the primary responsibility for political and development assistance.

The transition of Afghan National Army training and mentoring to ISAF command is also desirable, since it would allow national forces to work more closely with international forces as they find their feet. This step should only be taken, however, if NATO and participating states commit the necessary heavy financial resources to ensure there is no shortfall from present funding provided by the U.S.

E. RECAST STRATEGY

International efforts should focus firmly on the end goal of stabilising the Afghan state and its institutions. The bar was set too low during the Bonn process, and there is a temptation as the violence rises to drop it further so success can be claimed. Instead, it should be raised. The international community must collectively press for reform in Kabul and demand an end to the culture of impunity and patronage, which is blocking reform at every level and stimulating local alienation.

Seeking a political solution should not mean negotiations with the Taliban, which would draw more violent extremists into government. The culture of impunity among the elite is a major factor in popular disillusionment. Adding Taliban to this mix would increase the sense that violence brings rewards, while failing to impress insurgents who aim for domination, not compromise. The international community should use its control of the purse strings to persuade the government to act in the best interests of its people and accept accountability, particularly at the local level, where improving representative institutions and service delivery is most needed to win hearts and minds. This requires a redirection of international efforts presently focused on the centre in Kabul.

There is also urgent need to rethink policy towards the neighbouring countries. Afghanistan's insurgent swamp will not be drained while the Taliban uses Pakistani territory for command and control, operations, recruitment, training and fundraising. The U.S. should be careful to avoid a policy toward Iran that could undermine Afghan security.

VI. CONCLUSION

Afghanistan was meant to be a model of multilateralism and a cause that the international community believed was worth fighting for. Today, however, many of the country's problems are of the international community's making, the result of empowering and entrenching some of its most undesirable actors over the past six years, and of misjudging the regional dimensions. Most coordination issues are neither new nor unique, but lessons from past multilateral endeavours have been ignored. New mechanisms and new momentum are urgently needed but must be grounded firmly in a comprehensive strategy to which all parties are committed. Without unity of effort and resolve, engagement will remain ineffective, feeding disillusionment of Afghans and home publics alike.

Too rosy a picture was painted early on; by contrast, some now spread a sense of hopelessness, perhaps in order to justify a quick exit. The international community would do better to accept that mistakes have been made and rectify them. Success demands not tinkering around the edges but fundamental rethinking of internal and regional priorities. The will for real change of direction can be summoned if it is understood that Afghanistan is a test not just in itself or of nation building and conflict management, but of 21st century multilateralism.

Kabul/Brussels, 6 February 2008

APPENDIX A

MAP OF AFGHANISTAN

Map No. 3958 Rev. 5 UNITED NATIONS
October 2005

Department of Peacekeeping Operations
Cartographic Section

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (Crisis Group) is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental organisation, with some 145 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

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