

01.02.2008

## Opinion: Afghan Peace Only Possible With More Foreign Aid

**The international community has poured plenty into Afghanistan with little result, but the country needs even more to attain peace, writes DW's Peter Philipp. Only then can it avoid becoming a "failed state."**

What should be done about Afghanistan? None of the participants at the Afghanistan conference in Bonn in fall 2001 could have imagined that, six years later, this question would become more acute than ever before and that the situation would be getting worse every day -- even though the Taliban regime has been overthrown, al Qaeda has been dislodged, elections have taken place and the first democratic structures have been put in place.

The Taliban has tried for a long time to return and the Americans, Brits and other NATO troops are engaged more and more frequently in hostilities with them.

And now this: American think-tanks are saying that Afghanistan is becoming a "forgotten war" and that it will soon have to be labeled as a "failed state."

Over the course of its eventful history, Afghanistan has hardly been anything else -- in part because the central authority of its kings and presidents rarely reached beyond Kabul and was always reliant on alliances with regional rulers. It was possible to displace the Taliban but not to overturn these long-standing structures.

Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai has had to make arrangements with war lords in order to underline his claim to power. He has to put up with their corruption and drug trade and cannot let his dependence on foreign states show too much. After all, the foreigners want to pare down the power of the regional rulers. Those from abroad are increasingly seen as occupiers and enemies, while the Taliban is viewed through rose-colored glasses.

This perception doesn't exactly encourage the international community to send more troops to Afghanistan, which is what the US and NATO are asking for. A growing number of countries are pulling out and Germany would be a rare exception if indeed it does decide to send a small contingent of combat troops to the generally peaceful northern region.

But Germany won't be able to change the course of things. Essentially, everyone -- foreigners as well as Karzai -- agree that Afghanistan needs more than it's gotten so far. More troops, more education, more jobs, more freedom, more democracy.

Many were prepared to offer this kind of help before, but their readiness flagged in the face of constant setbacks. The country has shown itself to be a bottomless barrel when it comes to foreign assistance.

Is that a reason to give up on Afghanistan? Of course not. The majority of Afghans hope for peace, which is only possible with help from abroad -- not just with fighter jets, but with help across the board and with strong partners in Kabul. Otherwise the bleak prediction of a failed state will come true after all.

*Peter Philipp is Deutsche Welle's chief correspondent and an expert on the Middle East. (kjb)*

| [www.dw-world.de](http://www.dw-world.de) | © Deutsche Welle.