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A coherent, well-defined strategic course

The need to associate development and security

Security and development are two inseparable sides of the same reconstruction effort. Development without security and the rule of law would certainly lead to Afghanistan's disintegration.

On the other hand, security at the expense of development will not be sustainable; social and economic development is essential to long-term political stability. The lack of economic governance will eventually provide a breeding ground for conflict, further instability and violence.

The international community's strategy in Afghanistan must be a serious commitment to improve the lives of Afghans in an immediate and substantial manner. An improvement to the lives of Afghans living in the south of Afghanistan is essential in counteracting the Taliban's propaganda against the West and the Afghan government. A coherent hearts and minds strategy that addresses the dire circumstances present in Afghanistan's southern provinces will help international troops achieve their mission.

Formulate well-defined development objectives

For the reconstruction effort to be an unambiguous success story, it is essential that the international community has clearly defined goals to work towards in terms of development. *Currently, the Afghan society is littered with disasters such as the alarmingly high maternal mortality rates, a failure to adequately promote secondary education, high unemployment and mass displacement.*

These are areas that the west should be focussed on improving, setting priorities and sequencing and determining what is the real impact of efforts on the lives of the Afghan people.

Match development and aid spending with military spending

Promoting a stable and prosperous Afghan state is undoubtedly an expensive task. Most importantly, development assistance expenditure should be increased to a level where it can adequately address the humanitarian crisis in the country and create the necessary infrastructure for sustainable growth.

"No one has helped the people who have been displaced by the fighting in Arghandab. There have been several discussions about aid but actual aid has yet to be delivered. The Canadian government has not done any development work in Arghandab; there is no sign of development whatsoever: no water wells, no health clinics, no roads, no schools and no irrigation systems."

District Chief of Arghandab, November 2007

Currently, overall military spending far exceeds international development assistance. It is imperative that the international community exemplifies its commitment to the Afghan people and streamlines budgeting and planning of development operations in Afghanistan.

A strong response to Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis

The role of the military: Combat DFID/CIDA

An extensive, well-funded aid campaign is desperately needed to respond to the humanitarian crisis in the southern and eastern parts of the country. The situation in

Afghanistan's southern and eastern provinces is so precarious that the UK Department for International Development and the Canadian International Development Agency have halted development operations. In the conflict-ravaged areas, the military has a vital role to play in supporting the activities of development agencies.

The military must now be tasked to deliver immediate aid to these areas and be granted control of DFID and CIDA's war zone budgets. This will not only help respond to the immediate needs of the Afghanistan's poor and vulnerable but will also propagate the message that international troops are in the country to help and protect its suffering population.

Addressing Immediate Needs

A winning strategy for the international community is to provide measurable and immediate improvements to the living conditions of local Afghans. With the harsh Afghan winter about to set in, it is of critical importance that immediate needs are addressed. Many internally displaced people are residing in makeshift refugee camps which will be an arena of misery very shortly if adequate shelter, clothing and food needs are not provided soon.

The international community must make this its number one development priority. Healthcare, especially in the war-torn south, requires a general overhaul in order to cater for the increased number of civilian casualties and malnourished population.

Building a secure future

Establish an Afghan Family Fund

The international community's policy in Afghanistan must be to bring about the conditions in which social and economic development can ultimately be created and sustained by the Afghans themselves. It is key that the international community does not allow the conflict to impact on the futures of the youth of Afghanistan. Improving literacy and education; providing healthcare; creating the necessary infrastructure; and providing economic choice through licit sources of revenue and job opportunities are all essential to Afghanistan becoming an economically robust state which is capable of democratic self-governance. An Afghan Family/Community Fund, similar to Brazil's Bolsa Familia project, should be set up, whereby positive actions from the Afghan public would be rewarded with mutual investment on the part of the government with the support of the international community.

Preparing Afghanistan's new leaders

Securing Afghanistan's stable and prosperous future requires a young generation of competent, peace-driven Afghans to take the leadership. Leadership training for the young unemployed and conflict-ravaged Afghans should be organised seeking to provide them with the necessary skills to assume leadership from current stakeholders, who are the victims of decades of conflict, civil strife and tribal tensions.

Afghan ownership

The international community has a crucial role to play in building local capacities and strengthening Afghan ownership by forging connections between Afghans by investing in infrastructure, healthcare and education, as well as investing in locally supported delivery systems. Afghan ownership of the development situation is a politic way forward as it helps build public confidence and trust in the Afghan government and the international community.

A pragmatic counter-narcotics approach

Halting forceful eradication operations

By calling for forced poppy eradication and chemical spraying, the US-led international community has aggravated the security situation, precluding the very reconstruction and development necessary to remove Afghan farmers' need to cultivate poppy. Chemical spraying is a crude policy instrument that not only fails to resolve the root causes of opium cultivation in Afghanistan but crucially creates further social unrest and violence. The international community must be united in its opposition to US plans for chemical eradication of poppy crops.

Pragmatic solutions to Afghanistan's drug crisis: Alternative livelihoods and Poppy for Medicine

The Afghan government and the international community must deliver on their promises to create economically sustainable opportunities and thus incentives for stakeholders to move away from the illicit trade. Alternative development programmes must involve community participation at all stages of planning, implementation and evaluation.

The Senlis Council has developed a Poppy for Medicine project model for Afghanistan as a means of bringing illegal cultivation under control in an immediate yet

sustainable manner. The key feature is that the opium poppy would be transformed into morphine and codeine for pain-killing medicine. The economic profits from Poppy for Medicine projects will remain in the village, providing the necessary leverage for farming communities to diversify their economic activities. Furthermore, the profits generated by exporting morphine tablets would accommodate all stakeholders, including middle-men and local power-holders. Producing internationally tradable commodities, poppy for medicine projects would also benefit the central government. A pragmatic approach to Afghanistan's drug crisis would be conducive to building support for the Afghan government and the international partners.