

SENLIS AFGHANISTAN

STUMBLING INTO CHAOS: AFGHANISTAN ON THE BRINK



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September 2006, Senlis Afghanistan released a security assessment report detailing the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan, pointing to the increasing hold that the movement has on southern provinces.

Some 14 months later, the security situation has reached crisis proportions. The Taliban has proven itself to be a truly resurgent force. **Its ability to establish a presence throughout the country is now proven beyond doubt; research undertaken by Senlis Afghanistan indicates that 54 per cent of Afghanistan's landmass hosts a permanent Taliban presence, primarily in southern Afghanistan, and is subject to frequent hostile activity by the insurgency.**

The insurgency now controls vast swaths of unchallenged territory including rural areas, some district centres, and important road arteries. The Taliban are the *de facto* governing authority in significant portions of territory in the south, and are starting to control parts of the local economy and key infrastructure such as roads and energy supply. **The insurgency also exercises a significant amount of psychological control, gaining more and more political legitimacy in the minds of the Afghan people who have a long history of shifting alliances and regime change.**

The depressing conclusion is that, despite the vast injections of international capital flowing into the country, and a universal desire to 'succeed' in Afghanistan, the state is once again in serious danger of falling into the hands of the Taliban. Where implemented, international development and reconstruction efforts have been underfunded and failed to have a significant impact on local communities' living conditions, or improve attitudes towards the Afghan Government and the international community.

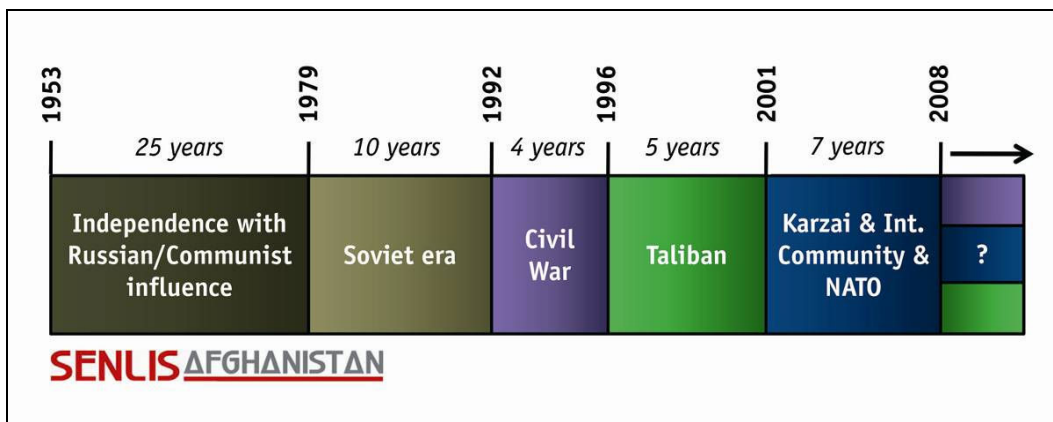
The current insurgency, divided into a large poverty-driven 'grassroots' component and a concentrated group of hardcore militant Islamists, is gaining momentum, further complicating the reconstruction and development process and effectively sabotaging NATO-ISAF's stabilisation mission in the country.

Of particular concern is the apparent import of tactics perfected in Iraq. The emboldened Taliban insurgency is employing such asymmetric warfare tactics as suicide bombings and roadside bombs, causing numerous casualties both among the civilian population and the international and national security forces.

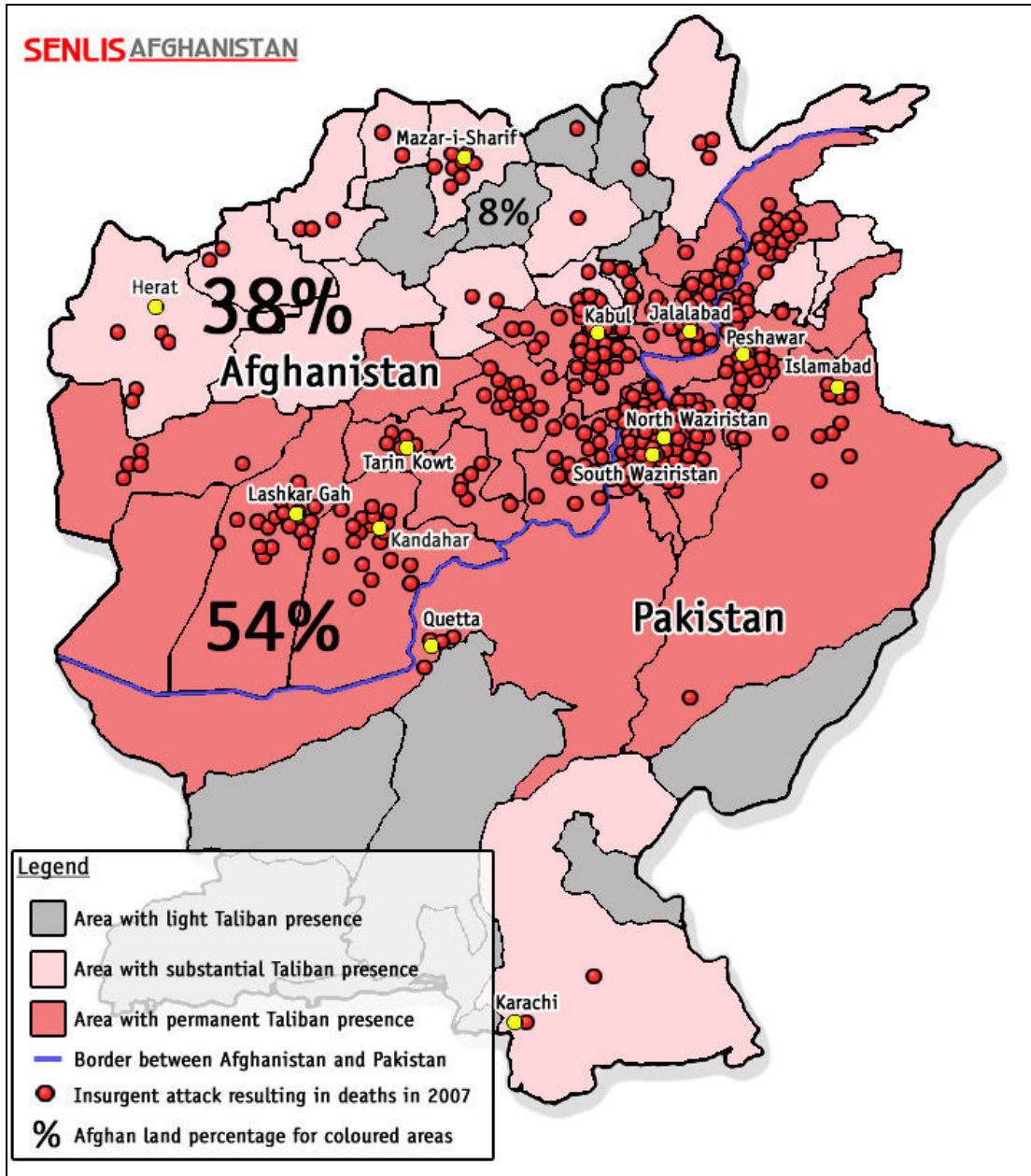
Increased lawlessness and lack of government control in the border areas with Pakistan are directly and indirectly fuelling the insurgency through the flow of new recruits, a stable financial and operational support base and ideological influence inspired by Al-Qaeda.

With limited ground troops and facing a massive resistance, Afghan security forces supported by NATO-ISAF are struggling to contain the return of the Taliban. These forces are engaged in a war of attrition, where bitterly-fought territorial 'victories' are actually Pyrrhic given an inability to defend captured towns. NATO-ISAF forces are forced to return to fight in the areas previously cleared of Taliban, facing an enemy that can continuously regroup and benefit from an almost endless flow of potential recruits, driven by poverty and unemployment.

It is a sad indictment of the current state of Afghanistan that the question now appears to be not if the Taliban will return to Kabul, but when this will happen and in what form. Their oft stated aim of reaching the city in 2008 appears more viable than ever, and it is incumbent upon the international community to implement a new strategic paradigm for Afghanistan before time runs out.



Afghanistan's recent history of mixed influence and regime change



Insurgent Activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan (2007)

RECOMMENDATIONS

A new, coherent strategic course for Afghanistan is now urgently required. The Senlis Council offers a number of recommendations aimed at stemming the slide into chaos, and a summary of these follows:

Recommendation 1: "NATO Plus": double ground troops, caveat-free, move into Pakistan The present number of NATO-ISAF forces deployed in Afghanistan, and the restrictive operational caveats imposed upon them by several European governments, is easing the Taliban's position of dominance in many parts of the country. Therefore the force size should be doubled to 80,000 as soon as is logistically possible. To reach this number, each country contributing to ISAF should make a troop commitment that is proportionate to their overall economic capacity.

For example, the Netherlands are currently contributing 2.3 soldiers per USD billion GDP while others are either above or below this troop commitment. If all NATO member states brought their contribution to at least 2.3 soldiers per USD1 billion GDP (or GBP0.5 billion), the total number of troops would already increase to around 71,000. The remaining 9,000 troops could come from Muslim countries.

The 'NATO Plus' concept should entail:

- The incorporation of Muslim troops;
- An operational doctrine that shifts from a counterterrorism to counterinsurgency (COIN) approach;
- Lifting of national caveats on ISAF troops;
- A move into Pakistan.

The creation of this 'NATO Plus' force will send a strong political message to the Afghan people that a caveat-free, pan-cultural, international community force is willing to establish a long-term presence in Afghanistan in support of the Karzai Government.

Recommendation 2: "Combat aid agencies": aid should match military funding and be delivered by the military

The immediate needs of ordinary Afghans must be met. It is clear that the present approach is not working. For the Afghan state to stand even a chance of recovering from its present position, it is crucial that well-defined development efforts are a central part of the overall mission, particularly in synchronisation with counterinsurgency efforts. To this end, a 'Combat CIDA/DFID' should be established, whereby the Canadian and British militaries assist in the delivery of aid to ravaged parts of the south. The military should also be given control of development agencies' war-zone budgets. Longer-term development should focus upon the provision of essential services such as schools and hospitals, and core infrastructure including roads and power stations. Aid and development funding should match military funding.

Chapter I

SECURITY



Poster in Lashkar Gar: 'Inform the police before you become a target'

SECURITY

Overview and Recommendations

NATO in peril; stronger commitment from governments desperately needed

It is clear that the credibility of NATO, and its ability to operate effectively in the uncertain post-Cold War theatre, is being pushed towards a tipping point in Afghanistan. Defeat would be catastrophic, rendering the West's core military institution irrelevant and handing non-state armed groups around the world their most significant shot in the arm since 9/11.

The inadequate response of several NATO governments to the rising Taliban threat is tantamount to an abandonment of the Karzai government and southern Afghanistan, despite the international community's stated unanimous collective will to succeed in the country.

"If an alliance of the world's greatest democracies cannot summon the will to get the job done in a mission that we agree is morally just and vital to our security, then our citizens may begin to question both the worth of the mission and the utility of the 60-year-old transatlantic security project itself."

Robert Gates
US Defense Secretary, 25 Oct 2007¹

Initial promise vanquished

In the aftermath of 9/11, and in the early months of the US-led assault upon Afghanistan, there existed a significant reserve of global goodwill towards America. At its peak in 2002, a total of 68 states participated in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), with 27 having representation at CENTCOM headquarters.

As it became clear that the myriad problems affecting Afghanistan would not be solved overnight, and that the US were clearly not intent upon reconstructing the state to any serious extent (instead preferring to adopt a 'light footprint'), that groundswell of support ebbed away. OEF states either refocused their efforts upon the peace-building ISAF force or withdrew from Afghanistan altogether.

The two military approaches to Afghanistan, one driven by high-profile, high-casualty counterterrorist operations, the other propelled by a desire to reconstruct and rebuild the state, have enjoyed an uneasy co-existence.

When taken alongside the failed approaches to counternarcotics and governance, this twin-track military strategy has allowed the Taliban to regroup and drive its way back into significant portions of Afghanistan.

¹ Speaking at the Conference of European Armies, Heidelberg, Germany. <http://www.army.mil/news/2007/10/26/5780-us-defense-secretary-calls-for-renewed-commitment-during-us-army-europe-sponsored-conference/>

The twin-track approach to military operations in Afghanistan has failed. The concept of two major offensives operating simultaneously in the same theatre with parallel command structures was flawed from the outset, creating confusion both on the ground and inside national parliaments of ISAF-contributing countries.

Taliban regrouped; Al-Qaeda presence increasing

The Taliban has returned in force, and the insurgency frontline is getting ever closer to Kabul. Attacks are perpetrated on a daily basis: several provinces are now experiencing suicide bombings, murders, ambushes and explosions; US and NATO-ISAF troops are constantly engaged in war operations and are suffering significant losses, especially in the southern provinces of Helmand and Kandahar, and an increasing number of civilians are being killed.

The growing insurgency is bolstered by foreign militants, whose presence in Afghanistan is a direct throwback to the heyday of Taliban rule. That they are logistically able to take their fight directly to Western forces in Afghanistan is a damning indictment of the insufficient number of NATO-ISAF forces present on the ground in the most sensitive areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan, and the quality of their Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) assets.



The aftermath of a suicide bombing in Kabul

The role of Pakistan

Such an increase in Taliban and Al-Qaeda activity would not have been possible without the establishment of an extra-territorial sanctuary. Ever since their egress from Afghanistan in November 2001, the Taliban's Command and Control structures have re-established themselves in Quetta, Pakistan, directing insurgency propaganda and activities from a safe haven just 60 kilometres from the border with Afghanistan.

Furthermore, the North West Frontier Province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas have become a training ground for an array of actors intent upon driving NATO forces from Afghanistan. Bolstered by the support of Pakistan's overbearing military establishment, the Taliban have established firm roots within these regions. Parts of Waziristan in NWFP are now controlled by the Taliban, with the harsh social rules imposed upon Afghanistan in the late 1990s taking hold once again.

Their presence is increasingly bolstered by foreign jihadists, many of whom are keen to import the tactics and *modus operandi* of the Iraqi insurgency into Afghanistan. Hence, suicide bombings and sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) are now commonplace. The response of President Musharraf oscillates between repression and accommodation, but ultimately net gains are invariably made by the insurgents, with the Karzai Government, the Afghan people and NATO forces left to pay the price.

"While the insurgency is sustained by cross border sanctuaries and support, disillusioned, disenfranchised Afghans are also responding to the call of extremists. Progress that results in real change in everyday life is vital. However, the spiralling violence has exacerbated tendencies among the government and its international backers to favour short-sighted, quick fixes."

International Crisis Group
Afghanistan's Endangered Compact, Asia Briefing n. 59, 29 January 2007²

Time running out for NATO

The security situation in southern Afghanistan has deteriorated to the extent that both the Karzai government and NATO will shortly to reach a crossroads that will define their respective futures. If the NATO coalition is to survive its first 'out-of-area' operation, its member states' governments must step up to the challenge.

NATO-ISAF's political masters have under-committed in their effort to support the Karzai Government, and this must be immediately rectified.

Civilian administrations can either provide the funds and troops necessary to enable the organisation to become the world's leading international military body, or watch it wither under the weight of an Afghan insurgency.

² Speaking at the Conference of European Armies, Heidelberg, Germany. <http://www.army.mil/news/2007/10/26/5780-us-defense-secretary-calls-for-renewed-commitment-during-us-army-europe-sponsored-conference/>

Recommendations

1. 'NATO Plus' for Afghanistan

The greatest barrier to the military's capacity to undertake its core stabilisation role in Afghanistan is a lack of forces on-the-ground.

This has led to an over-reliance upon destructive air strikes, leading to increased civilian casualties and lower levels of support for the Karzai Government and the West's presence in the country.

The Taliban are increasingly able to fill the political space, and once rooted within the new community, are proving impossible to remove.

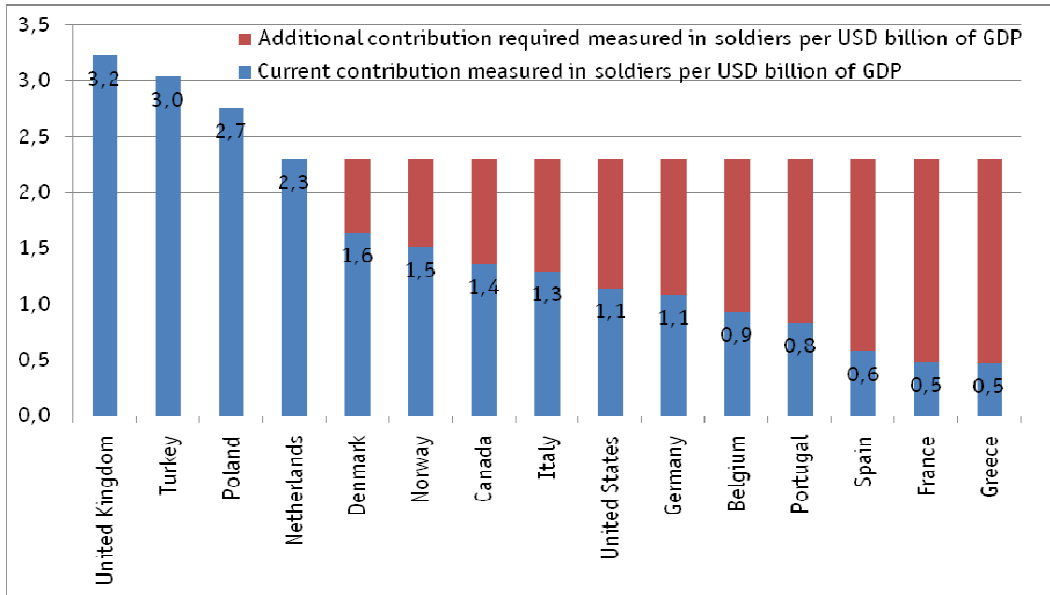
With approximately 40,000 soldiers in Afghanistan, NATO-ISAF still lacks a substantial number of the troops necessary to be able to successfully fulfil its mandate.

This figure is equivalent to less than a quarter of the deployment of international troops to Iraq, whereas the rugged country of Afghanistan is more populated, and has a total area almost 50 per cent larger than Iraq.

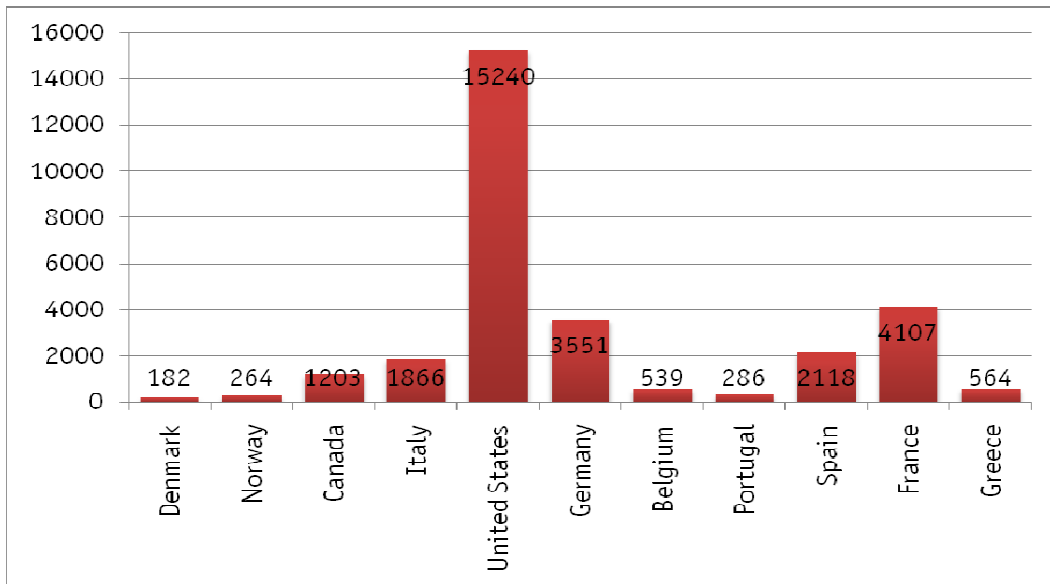
In order to prevent NATO's defeat at the hands of the Taliban, a rejuvenated 'Coalition of the Willing' (NATO Plus) is needed for Afghanistan. A 'NATO Plus' force should be formed along the following lines:

- i. Every NATO state is mandated to contribute to this new force, with a firm level of commitment that will provide a total force size of **80,000**. In order to help achieve this goal, each state must contribute at least 2 per cent of their total annual GDP towards defence as a baseline of NATO membership, and also make a troop commitment that is proportionate to their overall economic capacity.
- ii. Contributions should represent 2.3 soldiers per USD 1billion (GBP0.5 billion) of GDP. If all NATO member states adhered to this basic formula (or retained present levels when already higher), the total number would increase to around 71,000 troops.
- iii. The remainder of 'NATO Plus' would be formed from contributions by non-NATO countries. While Australia, New Zealand, and members of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council are already contributing to ISAF, new contributions could enhance ISAF's capacity and legitimacy. In particular, participation by states with significant Muslim population would ensure that the international force has a multi-cultural dimension. These contributions would fall into three categories:

- a. Muslim liaison officers should accompany Western forces on bridge-building missions into villages to meet with community leaders, thus helping to bridge the cultural divide.
- b. Senior Muslim military figures should also be seconded to work alongside NATO commanders in ISAF headquarters.
- c. Troops should also support NATO-ISAF missions against the Taliban.



Relative current troop contributions to ISAF and additional contributions required to match the Netherlands relative level of involvement, selected countries



Corresponding absolute increase in number of soldiers, selected countries

- iv. Elements of 'NATO Plus' should look to establish concentrated Secure Developmental Areas (SDAs). These SDAs will focus upon bringing security to a densely populated or strategically important town, enabling non-military agencies to undertake developmental projects in a secure micro-climate. Establishing security for SDAs requires one set of troops to be engaged in static security tasks, with a strong forward mobile presence aimed at preventing the insurgency from disrupting the development work.
- v. NATO's ability to undertake a successful mission in Afghanistan is hamstrung by restrictive caveats. If NATO is to truly be able to project itself on a global scale, then its member states must bear the warfighting burden in equal measure, and national caveats must be lifted.

2. 'Afghan COIN': new rules of engagement

A revised set of counterinsurgency (COIN) rules of engagement for Afghanistan should focus upon the following:

- i. A greater emphasis upon intelligence, in particular, human intelligence (HUMINT). This intelligence-driven approach should see the 'NATO Plus' strategy concentrate upon the needs and security of the population, although clearly the short-term operational requirement to defeat the insurgency militarily must continue in tandem. In order to conduct a successful COIN plan, it is imperative to operate at the grass-roots level, establishing a relationship of trust with the locals, who are historically suspicious of any outsiders. As difficult and long as this process may be, it will be the only way to get trustworthy information from an insurgency that relies on human relations to operate.
- ii. The military has a central role to play in supporting the activities of development agencies. As such, it should now be tasked to deliver aid to ravaged areas of the south and east, and be granted control of DFID and CIDA's war zone budgets. These *Combat DFID/Combat CIDA* operations will be crucial in responding to the immediate needs of poor and vulnerable Afghans.
- iii. The reintegration of 'marginal insurgents'. A significant proportion of the Taliban are fighting for economic as opposed to ideological reasons. Establishing viable, sustainable alternative income sources in secure environments will deprive the movement of a core membership strand.

SECURITY Threat Factors

FACTOR ONE: Insurgency on the rise

Threat: Afghanistan-Pakistan dynamics

➤ History of Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship

With the exception of the five year Taliban rule in Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, the relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been antagonistic since the former country gained independence in 1947. Mutual distrust between the two has aggravated the security situation in the region. Despite historical and cultural ties, the political aspirations of the two countries have frequently overlapped, often prompting one state to interfere directly in the other's affairs in order to safeguard their own interests.

This distrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan stems in part from the region's geostrategic location at the crossroads of East-West trade. The economic appeal of the region, whose resources include some oil, natural gas and narcotics, have led to periodic territorial incursions that have contributed to a siege mentality amongst its inhabitants for centuries.

Compounding the situation are the rivalries of various ethnic groups whose territorial boundaries do not coincide with international borders. During the Great Game in the 19th century, these tribal territories were used to create a buffer zone between Tsarist Russia and British India in what would become the northern and southern borders of modern-day Afghanistan. This buffer zone was formalised with the drawing of the Durand Line in 1893, which split the Pashtun territory between Afghanistan's southern border and British India's north-western border.

Historical overview

During the 19th century, Afghanistan became a buffer zone between tsarist Russia and the British Empire in India. As Russia invaded northern Afghanistan, the British secured their defensive strategy by invading from the South. When the British took control of Kabul after the second Anglo-Afghan war, Afghanistan was forced to give up control of several frontier districts, including most of today's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and parts of Baluchistan.

In exchange the British pledged economic and military support to the Afghan ruler to use against external aggression and to subdue his own territory. During their reign, the British had also devised a special legal structure for the FATA, called the Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), which remain in place today.

The guiding principle of the FCR was the creation of a buffer zone in the hinterland between British India and Afghanistan. This buffer zone fell within the Pashtun tribal area between Afghanistan and the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

The border between Afghanistan and British India was drawn within this buffer zone in 1893 at the close of the second Anglo-Afghan war. It was drawn in such a way as to divide and weaken the 11 Pashtun tribes located there who periodically revolted against British colonial rule.

The line became known as the Durand Line, after Sir Henry Mortimer Durand, the British civil servant who drew it. This line, along with the FCR, strengthened the buffer zone between British India and Afghanistan.³

The early twentieth century saw a weakening of the British Empire and increasing nationalist movements against British rule in both Afghanistan and among the tribes in the border regions. Kabul, which lacked a standing army, used the Pashtun tribes located on the Afghan side of the border in a revolt which led to Afghanistan's full independence from the British in 1919.⁴

Ever since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, Afghanistan has continued to dispute the legality of the Durand Line, arguing Afghan treaties with British India were invalidated by the country's dissolution. Pashtuns represent about 15 per cent of Pakistan's total population of around 165 million. In Afghanistan, they amount to around 40 per cent of an estimated total population of more than 30 million.

The enduring conflict between Afghanistan and Pakistan has its roots in this division of the Pashtun population – a deliberate British strategy of “divide and conquer” to weaken the fiercely independent Pashtuns and maintain the Pashtun territory as a buffer zone.

A long period of occupation by the British had engendered an anti-colonialist sentiment in the tribal regions. The Pashtuns, in particular, had suffered from constant repression and thus have possessed a deep-rooted desire for freedom and self-determination.

This sentiment became more vehement with Pakistan's independence in 1947. By not supporting the creation of an independent ‘Pashtunistan’, Pakistan inherited and continued the British strategic policy of the buffer zone. This policy continues today.

³ Husain Haqqani, ‘The Wind Blows Another Way at the Durand Line’ *The Indian Express* (15 March 2006). See: the article on the Carnegie Endowment's website at: <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=18267&prog=zgp&proj=zsa,zus>.

⁴ See the official website of the Federally Administrated Tribal Areas at: <http://www.fata.gov.pk/index.php?link=2>.

From the Afghan perspective, it has been essential to assert its position against the Durand Line in order to defend the integrity of the Pashtun population. This has made compromises very unlikely; Afghanistan has refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of this “phantom border” and Pakistan itself cannot relinquish control of the restive tribal areas contiguous to the border without threatening its own territorial integrity.

Pakistan’s security issues along its border with Afghanistan partially explain its support for insurgents in Afghanistan today. However, the militant camps established in Western Pakistan also pose a threat to Pakistan itself, and have led some analysts to coin the term “the Talibanisation” of the North West Frontier Province.

Historical Timeline



➤ **Pakistan's current security dilemmas**

The Durand Line remains a central issue for Pakistan's security for two distinct reasons: first, it needs to protect and control its Western borders; second, Pakistan needs to keep a stronghold in Afghanistan for national and strategic interests.

The Afghan-Pakistan border issue is central to Pakistan's regional security policy. Afghanistan has rejected the Durand Line as an international border, and its position towards the border and the Pashtun territories which straddle it is unacceptable to Islamabad, as it has the lingering potential to jeopardise the latter's territorial integrity.

Irredentist claims for the creation of a cross-border 'Pashtunistan' are once again gaining ground among the local population. Potentially, the resurrection of such claims could lead to Pakistan being deprived of its North West Frontier Province and parts of Baluchistan. A pro-Pakistani government in Kabul would be more likely to ensure the preservation of the contested Durand Line than an anti-Pakistan administration.

The Question of Pashtunistan

The question of an independent Pashtunistan dates back to 1893, when the border between Afghanistan and British India split the Pashtuns between the two countries. The departure of the British gave Pakistan and India their independence while the Pashtun territory's status as a buffer zone remained unchanged.

Afghanistan, which is majority Pashtun, proclaimed its support for an independent Pashtun state which would ally itself with the Pashtuns of Afghanistan to form a "greater Pashtunistan." Pakistan viewed a potential Pashtunistan as an unacceptable loss of territory and a threat to its security. During the Cold War, the idea of Pashtunistan received support from Afghanistan's Soviet allies.

In 1955, Pakistan merged all provinces in West Pakistan into a single unit. Viewed as an attempt to oppress Pakistani Pashtuns, mobs attacked the Pakistani embassy in Kabul. A series of tit-for-tat exchanges led to the suspension of diplomatic and trade relations and military movements between the two countries. Even when diplomatic relations were restored, the issue continued to simmer.

The secession of Eastern Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971 demonstrated to Islamabad that ethnicity trumped religion, even in Islamic Pakistan. The Pakistani government therefore viewed renewed Pashtunistan rhetoric in Afghanistan under the Daud regime as a threat to national security. It responded by supporting an Islamist movement in Afghanistan, 20 years before the same strategy would be used with regards to the Taliban.

Pakistan's view vis-à-vis the Durand Line can be viewed as part of its so-called "strategic depth doctrine". This doctrine was formed in 1989 as a response to India's military supremacy, and endeavoured to isolate Pakistan's military hardware from Indian forces in the event of conventional warfare between the two states.

In short, it consisted of dispersing Pakistan's military beyond the Durand Line into Afghanistan and countering "the current offensive capabilities of the Indian military".⁵ This strategy needs Pakistani forces to be positioned deep in NWFP/Balochi territory.

One of the ways of securing a pliant security landscape is its use of Islam as a political tool; Pakistan therefore uses its Islam and dedication to the Pashtun cause as a means to retain strong relations with the Taliban and assist with its wider security stance in relation to India.

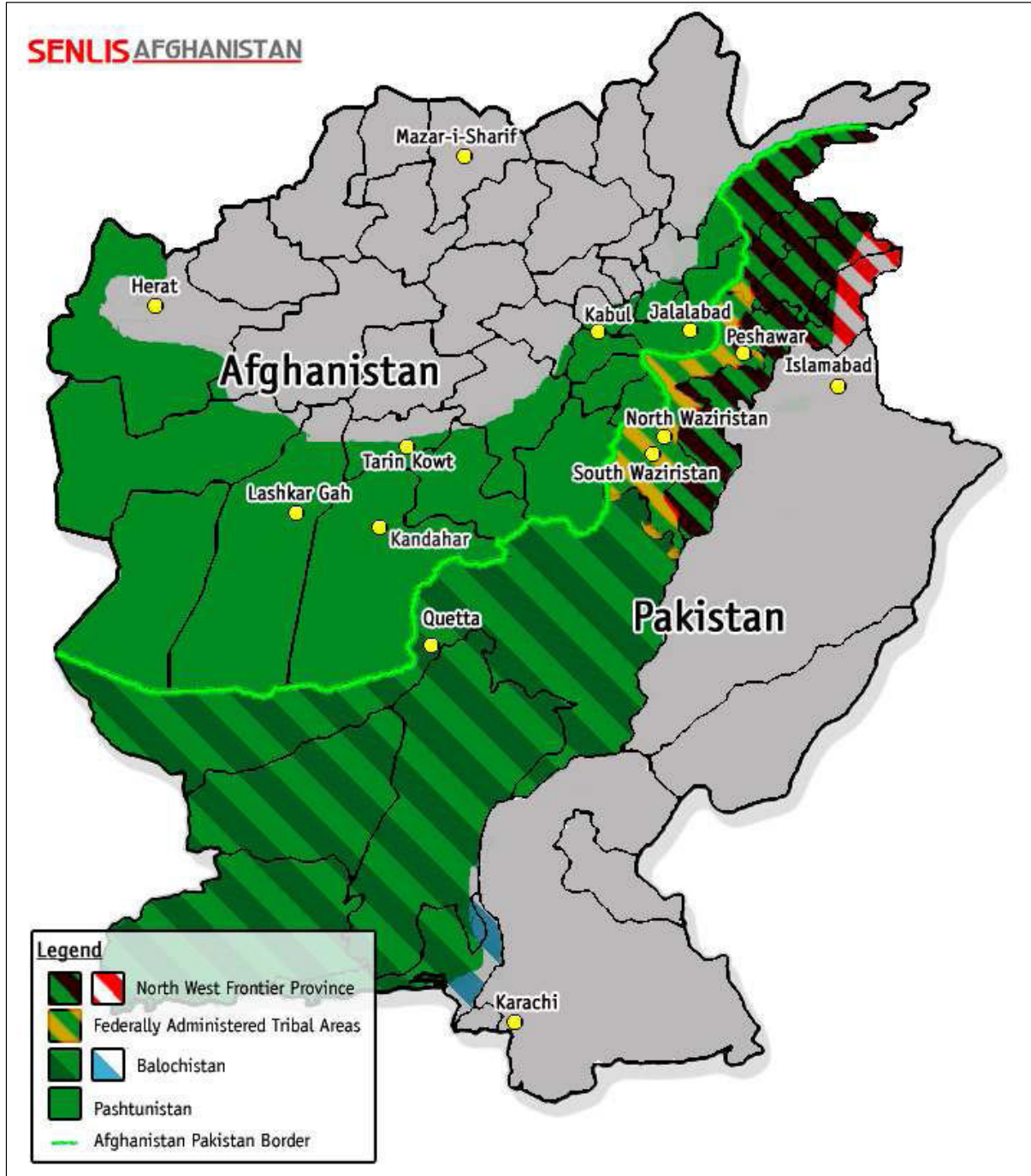
➤ **Pakistan and India**

The situation after Pakistan's creation in 1947 was an opportunity for India to stimulate sub-nationalism in the new Pakistan, which was officially supported by the Soviet Union in the 1950s.

Pakistan seeks to prevent India from expanding its influence in the north, and has been accurately accused of using the Taliban as a proxy ally in pursuit of this aim. Islamabad fears that the weakening of the Taliban – representing a strategic tool of deterrence against their rival – will enable India to gain a stronger foothold in the country. India backed successive Afghan governments throughout the 20th century, except during the Taliban rule, when they supported the Tajik/Uzbek Northern Alliance.

Nevertheless, Pakistan has historically been concerned about New Delhi's close relations to Afghanistan and more precisely about India's support over the issue of the Pashtun territories. Pakistan continues to fear the prospect of a two-front war if events escalate along the Durand Line and the India-Pakistan border.

⁵ W. P. S. Sidhu , 'Why the Durand Line is important' (16 November 1999).



“Pashtunistan” and Pakistan’s Federal Administrative Divisions

➤ Pakistan's current role in Afghanistan's insurgency

Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long, largely unguarded desolate border, which eased the movement of insurgency groups between the two states. Border control is basically an oxymoron in Afghanistan. It has become increasingly clear that Pakistan has played a key role in fostering its western neighbour's insurgency.

The Taliban are essentially a co-Pakistani construct, with the movement developing in the sprawling madrassas of the NWFP during the early 1990s. It should therefore come as little surprise that Pakistan is once again providing the movement with physical and ideological sanctuary.

A reluctant army

An October 2007 article published in *The Atlantic* magazine⁶ illustrates how the Taliban operate in the border region with the full knowledge and complicity of the local authorities, who believe the insurgents are fighting "foreign invaders". *The Atlantic* reports the confusion of an army major who could not understand why his army had killed Taliban Pashtun tribesmen if they had no quarrel with the central government in Islamabad. The article also recounts an anecdote of how the Pakistani army let four trucks transporting approximately 200 heavily armed insurgents cross the border with Afghanistan in January 2007 without even questioning them, despite repeated complaints from the Americans who called for their detention and interrogation.

Stephen P. Cohen, an expert in South Asian security from the Brookings Institution, says the Pakistani Army was half-hearted in its hunt for Al-Qaeda, and through its intelligence wing (ISI), continues to support the Taliban as part of a greater game for control of Afghanistan.

Much of the Taliban, including its key leaders such as Mullah Mohammad Omar, are widely believed to be allegedly based in the vicinity of Quetta in Pakistan. Taliban militants have developed, quite openly, an infrastructure that includes recruiters, trainers, safe houses, and suicide bombers who infiltrate Afghanistan⁷.

Pakistan's policy towards Taliban/Al Qaeda extremism can be characterised as inconsistent, incomplete and insincere. While the Pakistani military has conducted combat operations against foreign fighters, especially in the tribal areas, it is tremendously reluctant to arrest or kill middle- and high-level Taliban officials. The deep-rooted tribal lines frequently shared by soldiers and the Taliban have proved to be far more resilient than short-term military requirements which many soldiers view as being imposed upon Pakistan by the United States. Cohen sees a risk the army itself might lose its coherence, noting that about 18 per cent of its personnel are Pashtun. "There are reports of officers refusing to attack targets," he says.

⁶ Joshua Hammer, 'After Musharraf', *The Atlantic* (October 2007),

⁷ Declan Walsh and Bagarzaï Saidan, 'Across the border from Britain's troops, Taliban rises again' *The Guardian* (27 May 2006). See:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/afghanistan/story/0,,1784304,00.html>.

Hence, since 2006, militants have been allowed to regroup in the FATA and NWFP. Although President Musharraf has played a delicate balancing act – appeasing the United States’ desire for tangible results in the War on Terror on the one hand, retaining a strategic reserve of militants on the other – with skill since 9/11, these same militants now pose a direct threat to Pakistan’s security.

"The Musharraf government’s ambivalent approach and failure to take effective action is destabilising Afghanistan; Kabul’s allies, particularly the U.S. and NATO, (...) should apply greater pressure on it to clamp down on the pro-Taliban militants. But the international community, too, bears responsibility by failing to support democratic governance in Pakistan, including within its troubled tribal belt."

International Crisis Group
11 December 2006⁸

In belated response to this rising radicalism, in October 2007 General Musharraf launched attacks in the tribal zones, which left several hundred soldiers and militants dead.⁹ In November, General Musharraf established emergency rule throughout the country, suspending the constitution and taking independent television and radio stations off the air.

Rising militancy in the region of Swat, where the military has been battling an Islamist who wishes to establish an Islamic fiefdom, was cited as a justification for the emergency rule. In one incident in Swat, Pakistani soldiers’ bodies were paraded through the streets as “American spies.”¹⁰ The rebellion in Swat is particularly embarrassing for President Musharraf, as it is occurring outside the “traditional” areas of militancy in the tribal buffer zone.

"The problems originate from across the border, with insurgents coming from Pakistan. Hence NATO should focus their operations there and ensure these insurgents do not make it into Afghanistan."

Sher Tarozi Zarwali Khan, resident of Landakh village, November 2007

⁸ 'Pakistan’s Tribal Areas: Appeasing the Militants', ICG Asia Report N°125, 11 December 2006

⁹ Bashirullah Khan, '250 Dead in 4 days of Pakistan Clashes' *The Guardian* (9 October 2007). See: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/worldlatest/story/0,,-6983397,00.html>.

¹⁰ Declan Walsh, 'Fear and brutality inside the fiefdom of Islamist Shock Jock' *The Guardian* (5 November 2007)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/pakistan/Story/0,,2205386,00.html>.

Threat: The Taliban

➤ Background

The name ‘Taliban’ (religious students) refers to the religious scholars who led the strict Islamist movement that came to prominence in 1994 and ruled most of Afghanistan between September 1996 and December 2001. The Taliban can be described as a semi-spontaneous movement lacking deep ideological roots, whose political purposes derived from a fundamentalist interpretation of the Koran. Although initially small in number, the Taliban succeeded in building alliances with local warlords and progressively acquired power. However, although the number of alleged Taliban increased, not all shared the original ultra-conservative beliefs. The movement appeared to be defeated following the US-led intervention in 2001, but since then, the Taliban has been making a steady comeback, especially in the south and eastern parts of the country.

➤ The two insurgencies of present-day Afghanistan

The current Taliban insurgency can be roughly divided in two different types of insurgency: one driven by political and religious concerns, another caused by economic incentives and grievances.

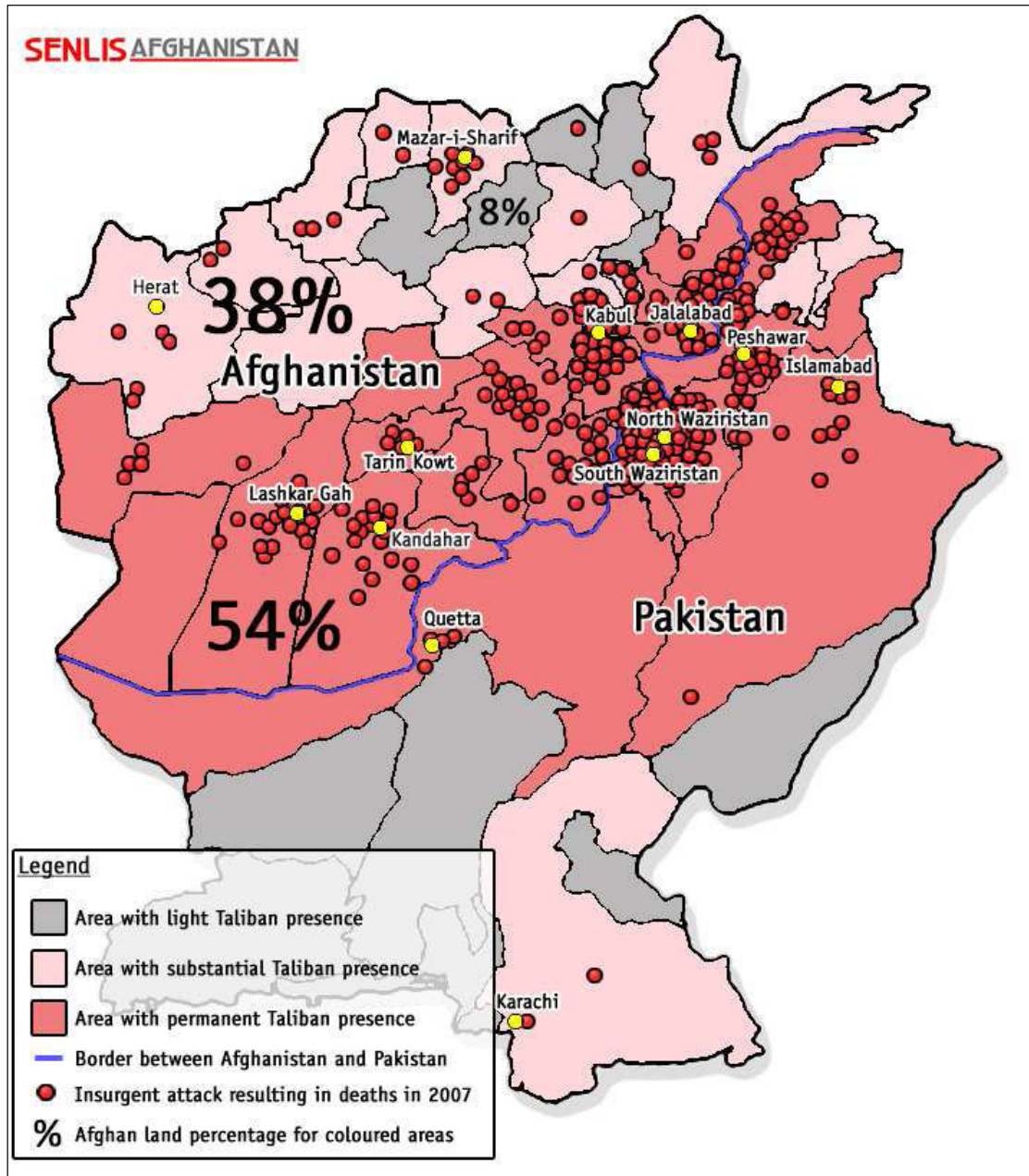
Radical Islamists

The first group consists of the core Taliban leaders and their followers, connected directly or indirectly to the old Taliban regime of the 1990s and, in some cases, to Al-Qaeda. This insurgency is continuously fed by new fighters, mostly trained and indoctrinated in Pakistan. The radical Islamist insurgency shares a common faith in a strict interpretation of Islamic law. The cohesion of this Taliban group and their local support is based on a common dislike of political leaders such as the warlords of the 1990s, or the current internationally-backed Karzai Government. However, the tactics employed by this insurgency differ from those of the Taliban regime in the late 1990s.

Suicide attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)			
2001 - 2004	2005	2006	2007*
5	17	123	131
*Updated up to 19 November 2007 (Source: UNAMA and Senlis research)			

Similar to the situation in Iraq, the current group has adopted high-impact terrorist tactics and has indiscriminately killed civilians, rather than specific groups of people like teachers, police officers and others targeted by the initial Taliban movement. The present insurgency is also using sophisticated propaganda to gain more local support and increasingly frustrate the NATO-ISAF mission in Afghanistan.

The following map shows insurgent activities resulting in deaths for the combined area of Afghanistan and Pakistan.



Insurgent Activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan (2007)

The grassroots insurgency

The second group currently operating in Afghanistan is significantly larger than the former group. It is a grassroots, opportunistic insurgency, driven not by political or religious concerns but mainly by economic incentives and grievances held against the government and the international community. Structural unemployment and extreme poverty provide an ideal recruiting ground for the grassroots insurgency.

“If you just look at my family, I would say that half of them would be willing to join the Taliban. The other half would not. The reason is simple. They are very poor people without jobs.”

Driver
Danand District, Kandahar Province, 16 January 2007

As a disparate assemblage of several different groups, this second insurgent movement has no clear political purpose and lacks the ideological fervour of its counterpart. The ferocious fighting undertaken by this group is occupying the majority of NATO-ISAF's assets, preventing it from undertaking its core mission.

Next to unemployment and poverty there are many other factors propelling people to join the Taliban.

Legitimate grievances increasing Taliban support and thwarting ISAF-NATO mission

Legitimate grievances triggered by the international community's own policies are increasingly causing people to turn their backs on the Karzai government and engendering mistrust and anger against the international community. This in turn fuels the insurgency which is gaining in size and support. The majority of the grievances expressed by Afghan people could be dealt with by relatively simple and inexpensive responses which would cause the insurgency to lose momentum.

These legitimate grievances include the following:

- The significant number of civilian deaths, injury and displacement caused by widespread fighting and bombing in the rural areas.
- Forced crop eradication while many farmers are still fully dependent on poppy crops to feed their families.
- The lack of humanitarian aid and assistance following fighting and natural disasters such as floods and droughts; people are starving and there is an absence of food aid.
- The lack of overall economic development both in cities and in rural areas; more specifically the lack of jobs or decent income opportunities. Southern Afghanistan remains desperately poor.
- The perception that the Karzai Government is a puppet regime with foreign countries in control of Afghan ministries and decision-making.
- The lack of functioning public facilities such as schools and hospitals.

The perception that the international community does not respect the culture and traditions of Afghanistan and is approaching the country in a Western way, trying to solve its problems through Western approaches and instruments.

➤ **The current situation: Taliban extending and retaining control**

As of November 2007, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Taliban was enjoying increasing control of several parts of southern, south-eastern and western Afghanistan, ever more complicating the NATO-ISAF stabilisation mission in the country.

In 2006 and most of 2007, the Taliban was very active but did not seem to be able to conquer terrain and subsequently retain control of it. That situation has now changed, to the detriment of Afghanistan's security.

Field research reveals that key infrastructure is being targeted

Field research undertaken by The Senlis Council in November 2007 indicates that the Taliban are disrupting and in some cases controlling the country's key infrastructure. For instance, the insurgency is disrupting the ring road from Kabul to Herat, and it would be relatively easy for the movement to seize the main road to Jalalabad and Salang Tunnel with some well placed explosions in the narrowest parts of the pass, thereby disconnecting Kabul from outlying cities.

Energy infrastructure has also been affected. As of mid-November 2007, the Taliban controlled electrical substations at Kajaki, Sangin and Musa Qala, effectively giving them control over local power supply.

Negotiations on the table?

Furthermore, insurgent activity has progressively spread to the north and north-east of Afghanistan, with many attacks in and around the capital. This could now easily convert into political legitimacy, especially in the current political climate in which President Karzai is showing open willingness to negotiate with some elements of the current Taliban movement.

On several occasions in September 2007, President Karzai stated that peace cannot be achieved without negotiations and that the Government will continue to work with all those Taliban elements who want to come back. He even outlined his willingness to meet Mullah Omar, the supreme leader of the Taliban.

Nevertheless, Karzai has placed clear conditions upon reconciliation with the current Taliban movement. He only wants to negotiate with those elements within the current insurgency who are genuinely interested in peace. Moreover, the Taliban can only launch their effort to re-enter politics through the ballot box.

At the same time, NATO-ISAF forces do not have enough troops on the ground in southern Afghanistan ensure that their victories over Taliban units are decisive.

Most frustrating is their inability to secure territorial gains following the end of combat operations: a pattern emerges from examining the main areas in southern Afghanistan where battles between NATO-ISAF forces and the Taliban have taken place since March 2006.

The Taliban has repeatedly been confronted in areas such as Chora District (Uruzgan province), Musu Qala, Kajaki and Sangin District (Helmand province), and Arghandab and the Panjwai Valley (Kandahar province) without a sustainable victory for the Afghan security and international forces.

“The government should negotiate with the Taliban opposition and should give them a place in the Afghan government.”

Shopkeeper
Lashkar Gah City, 28 January 2007

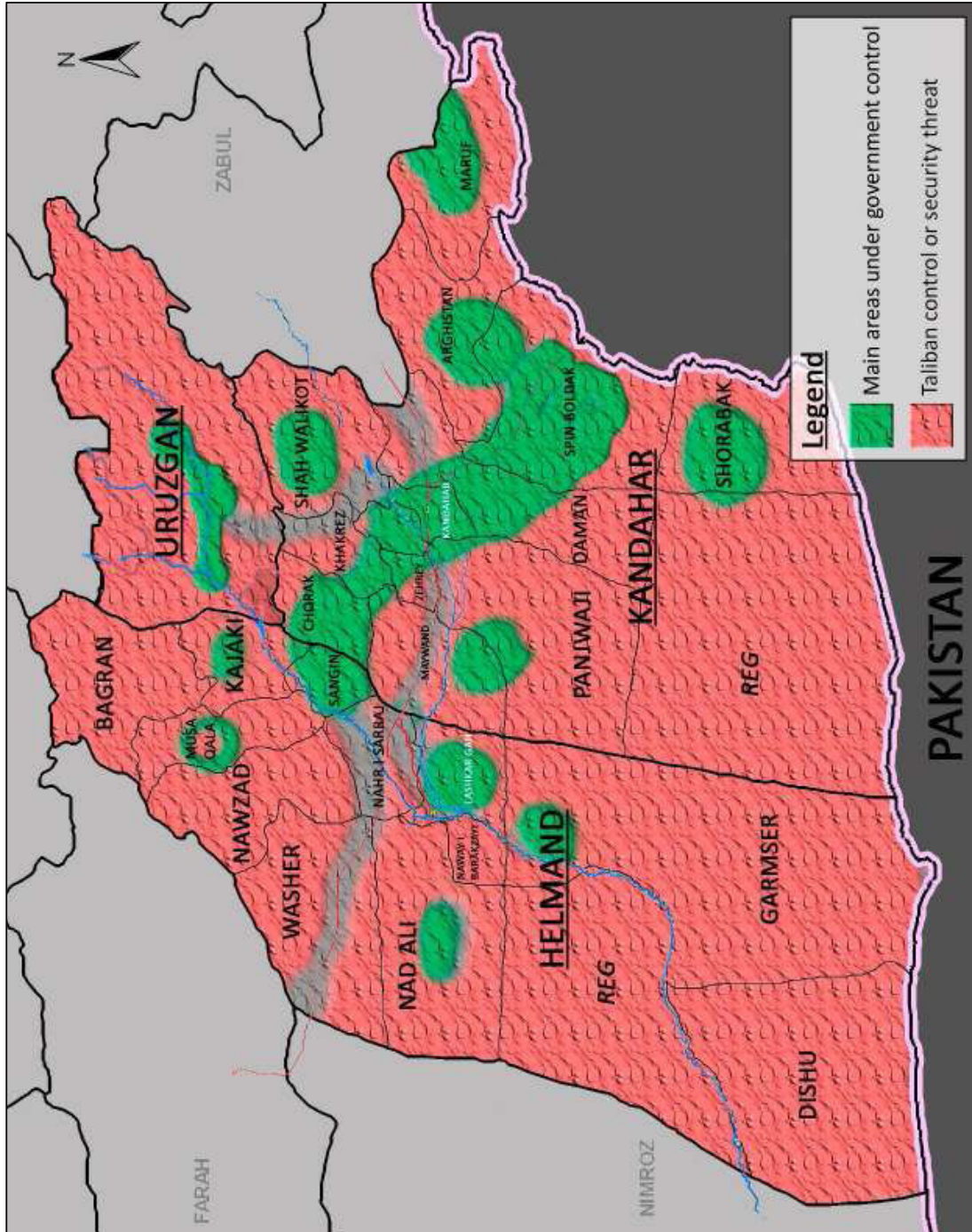
Militant operations in Afghanistan have become increasingly sophisticated since 2004.¹¹ By offering rewards to those willing to kill or kidnap foreigners and government officials, and engaging in increasing amounts of suicide bombing, the militants have intimidated the Afghan population in the south and southeast. This campaign has also rendered ineffective the Afghan National Army’s recruitment efforts; dropout rates in the army stand at approximately 50 per cent.¹²



Retention rates in the ANA are extremely poor

¹¹ “Islamic Militant Insurgency in Afghanistan Experiencing “Iraqisation” November 8, 2005
<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110805.shtml>

¹² Ibid



Main areas of government and insurgent control in Southern Afghanistan (November 2007)

➤ **Taliban propaganda: increasingly effective**

Parallel to NATO-ISAF's attempt to win local support, the Taliban movement is increasingly waging its own Hearts and Minds campaign in southern Afghanistan. The Taliban's propaganda war has flourished as it benefits from the Afghan central government and international community's failure to tackle the poverty and security crises in southern Afghanistan effectively.

Insurgents target refugee camps and villages, offering jobs and cash to internally displaced people (IDPs), and have also offered Afghanistan's poppy farmers protection from eradication operations. A central part of their propaganda campaign consists of regular visits, threats (e.g. through "night letters") and pamphlet distribution throughout southern Afghanistan's most remote areas. In addition, Taliban media spokespersons continuously report their claims of victories or inflicted enemy casualties, and refute claims of the ISAF and the Afghan Government. Increasingly, Taliban communications has developed to embrace modern technology such as the Internet.¹³

The international community's mistakes shaping the Taliban propaganda

The message of the Taliban is largely based on the policy errors of the international community. The underestimation of the food and refugee emergency, the failure to deliver on promises of development and aggressive policies such as eradication and bombings are condensed and translated by the Taliban into one message: the foreigners are waging a war against the people of Southern Afghanistan.

Although the effectiveness of Taliban propaganda is often disputed, it is clear that the credibility of the insurgency's political messages has definitely been strengthened by the Taliban's ability to maintain and increase its presence in southern Afghanistan¹⁴.

The overarching message of the Taliban propaganda – that the West is waging a war in Afghanistan against Islam – is articulated along four main themes:

- 1) The foreigners are an invading force in Afghanistan;
- 2) The Karzai regime is a puppet regime of the US-led international community and as such completely illegitimate;
- 3) The foreigners are disrespectful towards Afghan culture and traditions and are engaged in a global war against Islam;
- 4) The foreigners are bombing villages and killing civilians.

¹³ Tim Foxley, 'The Taliban's propaganda activities: how well is the Afghan insurgency communicating and what is it saying?' *SIPRI* (June 2007).

¹⁴ Id.

Why is the Taliban's propaganda so successful?

The four main themes of the Taliban propaganda described above are simple, easy-to-understand messages that both give rise to and feed on local concerns and grievances. Collateral damage of NATO-ISAF bombings in the form of civilian casualties and damaged property provides for legitimate grievances among the local population and Taliban propaganda can easily tap into these concerns.

The problematic security and development situation in southern Afghanistan enhances the effectiveness of the Taliban's political messages. The Afghan Government and international community have largely failed to reach out to the local communities in the south and not kept to the promises made to the Afghan people in 2001 and 2002. The poverty crisis has worsened, IDP camps have sprung up since the summer of 2006 with the start of Operation Medusa and general development coupled with job creation have not emerged. Lastly, the Taliban propaganda package has found a receptive audience, especially among the Pashtun population of Afghanistan.

"They [the foreigners] play an incredibly important part in the insurgency. They act as a force multiplier in improving their ability to kill Afghan and NATO forces."

Seth Jones

Analyst, Rand Corporation, 30 October 2007

➤ More foreign fighters joining the ranks of the Taliban

According to an increasing number of sources, there are more and more reports of foreign fighters joining the current Taliban insurgency.¹⁵ Foreign fighters from, amongst others, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Chechnya and China (Xinjiang), are once again using Afghanistan as a battleground for their interpretation of global Jihad. As these fighters are normally experienced and well-trained, they tend to perform the role of mid-level Taliban commanders, involved in training and guiding Afghan Taliban fighters.¹⁶ Foreign fighters do not only contribute expertise and know-how to the Taliban, they are sometimes also said to be more action-oriented, violent and aggressive.

¹⁵ See for example: David Rohde, 'Foreign Fighters of Harsher Bent Bolster Taliban', *The New York Times* (30 October 2007).

¹⁶ Id.



Copy of a 'Taliban Passport', which reads:

'I by above description, the Muja heed of Afghanistan, hoping from dear almighty God that I am ready to scarify everything for the holy religion of Islam on the way of Jihad. And I pray to God to give me success.'

Threat: Al-Qaeda**➤ Al-Qaeda's recent attack history and current status**

Al-Qaeda is inextricably linked to Afghanistan as its origins can be traced back to the Mujahideen's struggle against Soviet occupation of the country between 1979 and 1989. In 1988, Osama bin Laden and some associates set up a militant group in the Pakistani town of Peshawar, close to the Afghan border.¹⁷ Since then, the importance of Al-Qaeda has grown enormously, but it has never become a coherent and structured terrorist organisation – not even in 2001 at the height of its operational capability.¹⁸

Six weeks after 11 September 2001 when four Al-Qaeda hijacked aeroplanes devastated the World Trade Center Towers in New York City, and the Pentagon in Washington, the US launched attacks on Al-Qaeda and their "host", the Taliban, in Afghanistan. These attacks forced many Al-Qaeda members to retreat to the mountainous Afghan-Pakistan border.

"Just as they're killing us, we have to kill them so that there will be a balance of terror."

Osama bin Laden¹⁹

Less a homogenous structured movement, Al-Qaeda has essentially become an ideological reference point for ad hoc terrorist cells and like-minded terrorist movements around the world. The Al-Qaeda notion has inspired attacks in such diverse states as Indonesia, Morocco, Spain and the UK.

A radical splinter-group of the Al-Qaeda related Jemaah Islamiyah was allegedly responsible for the 2002 and 2005 bombings in Bali, Indonesia. Also in 2002, an autonomous cell of Moroccan terrorists, with only indirect links to Moroccan Islamist groups, killed 39 people in an attack in Casablanca.

The March 2004 train bombing in Madrid, causing 192 victims, was carried out by an Al-Qaeda-inspired group composed of mainly Moroccans and Syrians, perhaps loosely connected to the Groupe Islamique Armé (GIA) and Moroccan Islamist groups. Spain has been mentioned several times in Al-Qaeda related statements and its military presence in Iraq has been mentioned as a possible motive for the Madrid bombing.

On 7 July 2005, an Al-Qaeda-linked group planned and executed a coordinated attack on London's public transportation system. Three bombs exploded on different underground trains and a fourth went off on a double-decker bus nearly an hour later.

¹⁷ Jason Burke, 'Al Qaeda' (London 2005), p. 3.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 8.

¹⁹ Quoted in Peter Bergen, 'The Osama bin Laden I Know' (New York 2006), p. 321

The series of explosions claimed the lives of 56 people (including the four perpetrators), while injuring over 770 others. A hitherto unknown group named the Abu Hafs al-Masri Brigade, a self-proclaimed “associate” of Al-Qaeda, claimed responsibility, citing UK involvement in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan as the reason for the attacks.

Exactly two weeks later, on 21 July 2005, four attempted bombings took place on three underground trains and one bus in London. Although the triggering mechanisms detonated, none of the bombs exploded. London forensic investigators recovered a great deal of evidence, which led to the eventual capture and conviction of the perpetrators.

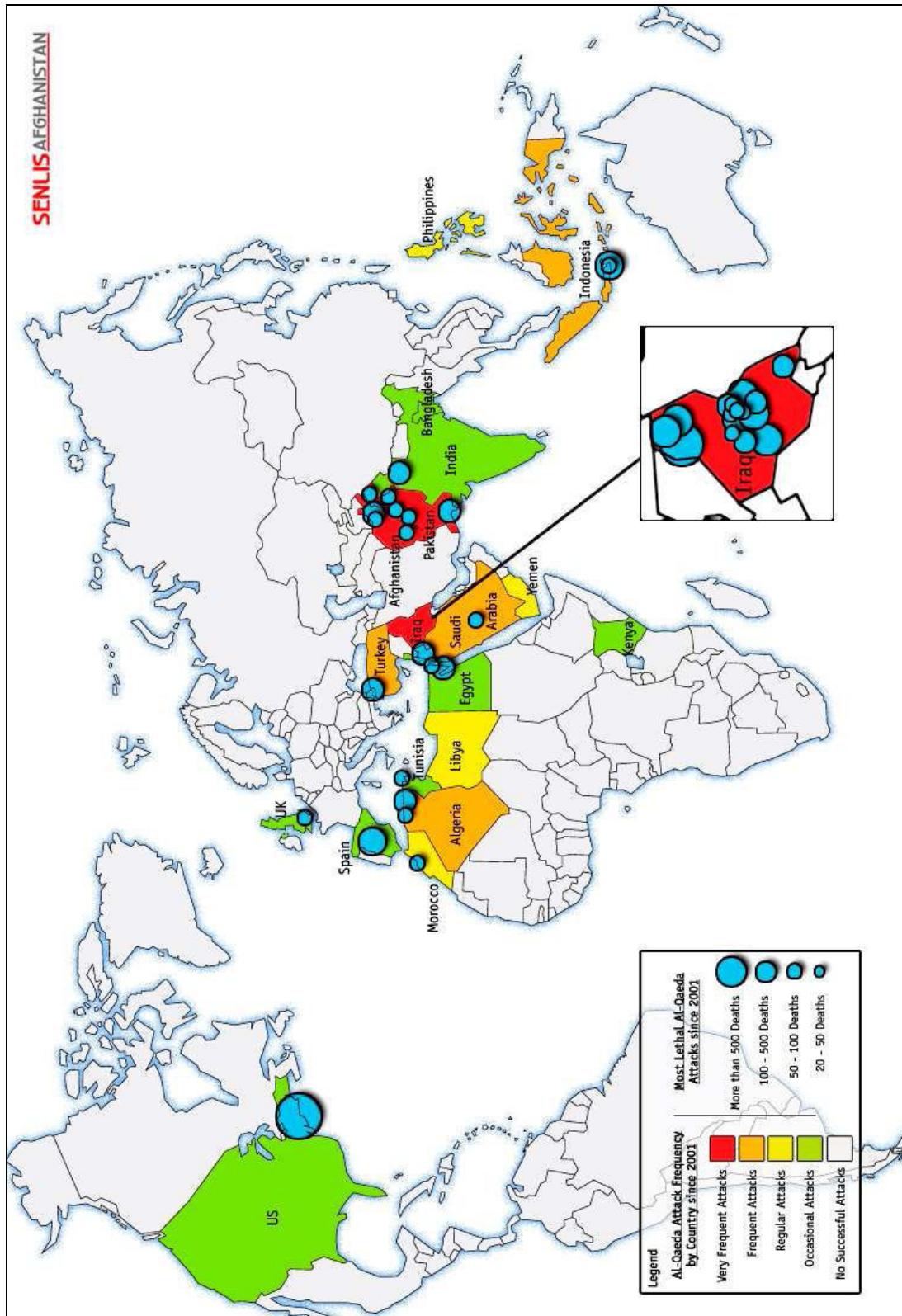
The same Al-Qaeda-linked group as the 7 July attack claimed responsibility for the attempted bombings, but its involvement is doubtful. One of the suspects declared there were not links to Al-Qaeda and stated the group was merely influenced by the situation in Iraq.²⁰

The trial of the Madrid bombings, which took place in early November 2007, failed to identify an intellectual masterminds, providing further evidence of Al-Qaeda’s status as ideological reference point.



A favoured Al-Qaeda tactic hits Afghanistan – the suicide bomb

²⁰ “Bomb suspect: No al Qaeda links”, CNN (1 August 2005). See: <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/WORLD/europe/07/31/london.tube/index.html>.



Al-Qaeda: major attacks and primary areas of activity (2001 to November 2007)

Threat: Al-Qaeda and Taliban linkages to the illegal opium industry

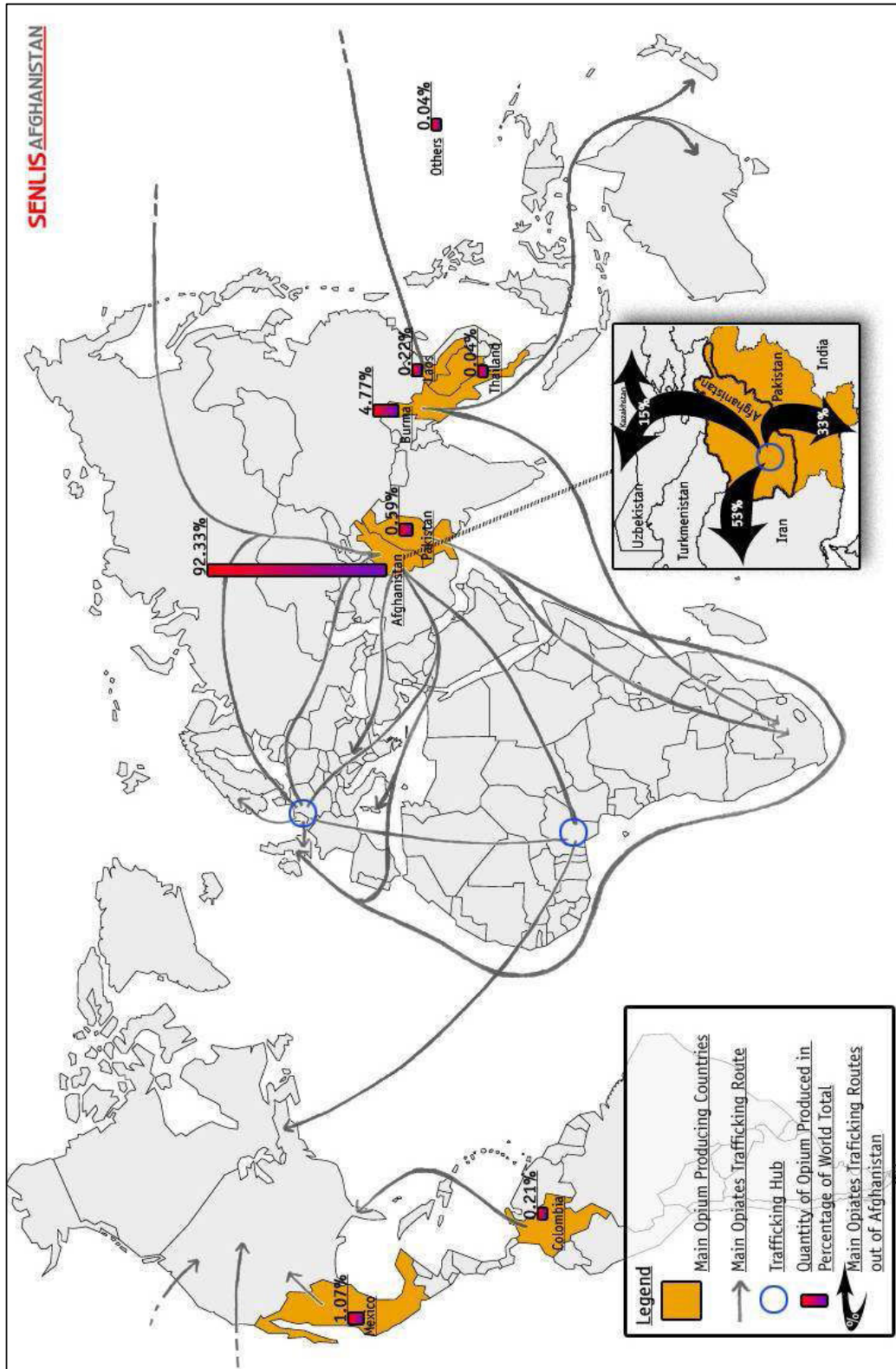
➤ **Al-Qaeda's involvement in the illegal opium industry**

The United States National Commission on Terrorist Attacks that investigated the 11 September attacks concluded in 2004 that:

“Al-Qaeda has been alleged to have used a variety of illegitimate means, particularly drug trafficking and conflict diamonds, to finance itself. While the drug trade was a source of income for the Taliban, it did not serve the same purpose for Al-Qaeda, and there is no reliable evidence that Bin Laden was involved in or made his money through drug trafficking.”²¹

Given its uncertain organisation structure and position within Afghanistan's patchwork of nefarious actors, there is little hard evidence linking Al-Qaeda with the drug trade. However, it is highly likely that, somewhere along the drug money trail, interests sympathetic to Al-Qaeda's aims benefit from the illegal opium economy.

²¹ National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States, The 9/11 Commission Report (2004). Chapter 5.4. A Money Trail? p. 169.



Main opium producing countries and trafficking routes (2006)

➤ **The Taliban's involvement in the illegal opium industry:
The rise of narco-insurgency?**

The Taliban's historical involvement with the illegal opium trade is ambivalent. Although having taxed opium production since it came to power in 1996, the Taliban banned opium poppy cultivation in July 2000, when Mullah Mohammad Omar issued an edict declaring opium production incompatible with the beliefs of the Islam (a move made primarily out of a desire to gain international recognition).²²

Consequently, poppy cultivation and opium production plummeted drastically, with the former down by 91 per cent and the latter by 94 per cent.²³ Despite this one-year opium ban, stocks allegedly continued to provide enough profits for the drug traffickers and Taliban regime that taxed them. Following the opium ban, opium cultivation in 2000 trebled in the northeastern sector controlled by the Northern Alliance in areas such as Badakhshan.²⁴ In the Taliban-controlled area of Afghanistan (an estimated 75 to 80 per cent of the drug trade at the time) the results of the opium ban in terms development were negative. Poppy farmers were locked into poppy cultivation by a system of opium-denominated debts (through so-called *salaam* contracts) which meant that the ban forced them deeper into arrears and prevented them from being able to pay off their old debts.

Given the size and scope of the current illegal opium economy, it is clear that all insurgent groups active in Afghanistan will benefit to some extent, either directly or indirectly, from cultivation, production or trade. Obviously, given the enormous increases of both poppy cultivation and opium production in the past two years, the opportunity for the current Taliban insurgency and Al-Qaeda to tap this illicit opium economy in Afghanistan has increased substantially.

"The government has lost control of this territory because of the presence of the insurgents, because of the presence of the terrorists, whether Taliban or splinter Al-Qaeda groups. (...) It is clearly documented now that insurgents actively promote or allow and then take advantage of the cultivation, refining, and the trafficking of opium."

Antonio Maria Costa
Executive Director, UNODC (August 2007)

Another trend indicates increased levels of insurgent activity within the illegal opium economy. Poppy cultivation and opium production are increasingly concentrated in the south of Afghanistan, with two provinces (Kandahar and Helmand) amounting to around 62 per cent of all opium produced worldwide.

It is estimated that the current insurgency is funded up to 40 per cent by income derived from the illegal opium economy.

²² ODCCP Update, Afghanistan ends opium poppy cultivation (June 2001), p. 3.

²³ UNODC, Global Illicit Drug Trends (2002), p. 6.

²⁴ Peter Dale Scott, 'Drugs, oil and war' (Oxford 2003), p. 33.

“It is my best subjective estimate that the insurgency enjoys fiscal resources from the cultivation of poppy probably to the level of 20 to 40 per cent of its total fiscal resources.”

General Dan McNeill
Commander of ISAF, 18 October 2007

The possible increase of “narco-insurgency” further underscores the urgent need for sound counter-narcotics policies in Afghanistan that could drive a wedge between the rural poppy farming communities and the insurgents. At the same time, counter-insurgency measures will increasingly have to incorporate counter-narcotics elements as the insurgency becomes more reliant on the illegal opium economy.



Afghan Government poster: ‘Differences! Security, Prosperity and Progress on one hand. Insecurity and Terrorism on the other. Choosing one is your right.’

FACTOR TWO: International military effort in danger of failure

Until October 2006 the military mission in Afghanistan was territorially split between NATO's International Security Assistance Force (NATO-ISAF) and the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

Initially, both sets of forces had very different mandates – the former reconstruction and state-building, the latter counterterrorist operations aimed at defeating Al-Qaeda/Taliban remnants.

However, as their respective missions progressed, and the territorial scope of the insurgency broadened, it became difficult for these forces to avoid each other in the operational theatre.

The frequently harsh (or 'kinetic') actions of OEF had a direct impact upon ISAF's capacity to undertake its core task, and a climate of insecurity gradually took hold in eastern and southern provinces.

Although the final provinces under the control of OEF were handed over to NATO command in October 2006, blurred rules of engagement endured. In southern Afghanistan, the initial intent of ISAF to engage in state-building and reconstruction has now been usurped by a bitter territorial fight against a relentless insurgency.

Threat: NATO-ISAF: Shifting sands

"A US campaign against Afghanistan will cause great long-term economic burdens [on the US] which will force America to resort to the former Soviet Union's only option: withdrawal from Afghanistan, disintegration and contraction."

Letter from Osama bin Laden to Mullah Omar, 3 October 2001²⁵

The mission of NATO-ISAF has altered considerably since 2005. Its original remit of stabilisation and reconstruction has been superseded out of necessity by a classic war-fighting mission against anti-government forces.

This has rendered reconstruction efforts in the south obsolete as NATO-ISAF troops are pushed into attritional and brutal warfare against an enemy with a seemingly endless supply of forces willing to fight to the death.

This development has proven counter-productive on several fronts: troop and civilian fatalities have increased steadily throughout 2007; local Afghan support for their mission is dwindling; and central government is seen as increasingly impotent.

²⁵ Bergen, p.316

Country	Casualties
Total	735
US	468
UK	84
Canada	73
Germany	25
Spain	23
France	12
Netherlands	12
Italy	10
Denmark	7
Romania	5
Australia	3
Norway	3
Estonia	2
Sweden	2
Czech Republic	1
Finland	1
Poland	1
Portugal	1
South Korea	1

ISAF deaths in Afghanistan (as of 19 November 2007)

There is now an overall perception that the international community's commitment in Afghanistan is driven not by the will to improve Afghan livelihoods but, instead, by strategic and geopolitical imperatives - mainly a desire to contain the spread of radical Islam.

NATO-ISAF was initially established as a peacekeeping and reconstruction operation focused on achieving stabilisation in a limited space around Kabul. Prior to 2006, and aside from the robust military operations being undertaken under OEF auspices in the south and the east, Afghanistan appeared to achieving a modicum of stability, and ISAF was largely able to prosecute its core task as its presence expanded throughout Afghanistan.

"Breaking down suspected insurgents' doors in the morning [makes] it difficult to build bridges in the afternoon."

French official musing on the difficulties faced in Algeria during the 1950s²⁶

²⁶ "Mission Impossible? Why Stabilising Afghanistan will be a stiff test for NATO", *Financial Times*, 31 July 2006.

As of October 2006, the entire country came under NATO-ISAF command, but peacekeeping and reconstruction has largely been replaced by active engagement with a growing insurgency.

This is particularly true in southern and eastern provinces where, since 2006, a resurgent and multifaceted Taliban and Al-Qaeda movement has deepened its presence and broadened its operational scope to include suicide bombings and sophisticated IEDs.

The different phases of NATO-ISAF

August 2003

NATO assumed command of ISAF. During NATO-ISAF's Stage I, completed in late 2004, NATO-ISAF forces expanded into Afghanistan's northern provinces and assumed command of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Badakhshan, Kunduz, Faryab and Balkh provinces from Operation Enduring Freedom).

May 2005

As part of its Stage II expansion, NATO-ISAF moved westwards with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Herat, Badghis, Ghor and Farah provinces.

December 2005

NATO Foreign Ministers passed a revised Operational Plan for ISAF (OPLAN). This strategy explicitly recognised the pre-eminence of the Afghan government over the state's security and polity, and indicated an intention to establish more efficient coordination between ISAF and US-led counterterrorism missions.²⁷

July 2006

ISAF gained control of the southern region, thereby completing Stage III

October 2006

Stage IV was completed with the control of eastern Afghanistan. By this stage, the number of troops under ISAF control had increased to approximately 32,000, including 12,000 US troops

Reconstruction in the south can now only commence when security is in place, but by then confidence in the local ISAF force may have eroded, particularly if significant civilian casualties are incurred during the combat phase of operations.

²⁷ This was welcomed by the UNSC in Resolution 1659 (2006): 'The Council also welcomed the adoption by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) of a revised operational plan that would allow for continued expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) across Afghanistan'. (<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8641.doc.htm>)

Threat: The mission wavers as caveats intrude

Although NATO member-states are broadly in agreement about the overall mission to bring stability to Afghanistan, there are wildly differing interpretations about the required depth of military engagement, and levels of resource required to enact change.

Most notably, NATO-ISAF's ability to counter an emboldened insurgency with any degree of success is hamstrung by the existence of 'national caveats'. These operational qualifications are appended to a state's deployed forces, preventing them from engaging in certain operation tasks.

Caveats come in several forms, and are invariably kept from the public domain. They limit the fighting capabilities of all but six of the national contingents taking part in the ISAF mission. The restrictions vary and are imposed by governments who fear the domestic ramifications of troop casualties or do not concur with all parts of the mission. Caveats can also be imposed due to a lack of training or equipment.



Canadian forces on patrol in Kandahar...but for how much longer?

From available open source intelligence it can be deduced that six states impose minimal restrictions upon their ISAF deployments - the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey. France under President Sarkozy has agreed to lift some of its restrictions and increase participation in combat operations in and around Kabul, but Turkey continues to refuse to lift its ban upon engagement in combat.

Most complex are the Italian and Spanish restrictions. Their commanders can make the decision to send forces in order to provide combat support in an 'urgent situation', but it is still not clear if clearance is required from Rome/Madrid for such an action to be undertaken. If it is, then the operational air gap would almost certainly ensure that they could not deploy with due speed.

"It's not enough to simply provide forces if those forces have restrictions on them that limit them from being effective."

NATO SACEUR General James Jones²⁸

Germany has borne the brunt of heavy criticism. Its significant deployment of 2,800 troops is stationed in the relatively benign environment of Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, and it remains unclear if they would be willing (or constitutionally able) to engage in active combat in an emergency situation. Germany's reluctance to fight prompted an unnamed British MP to state: "If the situation were reversed and German soldiers were in imminent danger, how would you feel if the British commander responded to a German request for urgent assistance with the answer, 'Sorry, we can't come across the line to help you.'"²⁹



ANA forces on live manoeuvres – a welcome sight for overstretched NATO-ISAF troops

²⁸ "NATO Commander Asks Member Nations to Drop Troop Limits," *Mideast Stars and Stripes*, 25 October 2006.

²⁹ As reported in the NATO Parliamentary Committee's Quebec meeting of 12 December 2006.

SECURITY

Possible Worst Case Scenarios

This section refers to possible future scenarios that could happen in the (near) future. It does not describe the current situation.

The current situation could possibly result in one or more of the following worst case scenarios, rendering it very difficult or even impossible for NATO-ISAF to complete its core mission.

A Downward Spiral: Potential timeline to NATO's withdrawal

Date	Event
<i>November 2007</i>	Suicide bombing at a sugar factory in the previously peaceful northern province of Baghlan kills six MPs and tens of children. No group claims responsibility, but it is clear that instability is spreading throughout Afghanistan.
<i>January 2008</i>	Over 50 NATO-ISAF troops killed per month.
<i>March 2008</i>	Market in Herat struck by twin suicide bombers, one timed to hit the market, the second detonated 10 minutes later and aimed at rescue services.
<i>April 2008</i>	Sectarian attacks become a regular part of the security landscape in Afghanistan, as Taliban step up their efforts to provoke civil war with old Tajik foes. Warlord armies in the north are remobilised in order to counter this threat.
<i>May 2008</i>	Massive VBIED ploughs into ISAF convoy in Kandahar, killing 18 Canadian troops. Insurgents reveal that they were tipped off by bribed ANP forces. Resulting emergency debate in Canadian parliament witnesses cross-party calls for immediate withdrawal.
<i>June 2008</i>	RPG fire rains down on outer provinces of Kabul.
<i>July 2008</i>	Seven senior ministers are killed as security is breached in the Afghan parliament. President Karzai declares a state of emergency, and assumes near-dictatorial powers. This has little effect upon the rest of the country, as his government's writ does not extend beyond Kabul.
<i>July 2008</i>	German parliament votes to withdraw its troops from northern Afghanistan, citing unacceptable levels of instability. NATO Secretary General calls this a disaster for ISAF, and urges Berlin to reconsider. Canada and the Netherlands quickly follow suit. The mission in Afghanistan comes close to collapse as the US Congress and UK Parliament force emergency sessions in which the efficacy of NATO is brought into question.
<i>August 2008</i>	Taliban ideologue proclaims total control of Kandahar; harsh social edicts imposed, religious police appear on the streets, NATO-ISAF unable to enter.
<i>September 2008</i>	Kidnap-for-ransom now a commonplace tactic throughout the country, restricting severely the movements of Western agencies. The insurgency establishes several layers of roadblocks around key strategic routes, rendering free movement around the country impossible.
<i>December 2008</i>	NATO announces a scaling down of its mission in Afghanistan, as it becomes clear that there is no longer a collective political will to continue. Taliban proclaims victory.

***Possible Future Scenario 1:
NATO-ISAF's overstretched forces unable to contain insurgent activity***

In this scenario, it becomes increasingly clear that NATO-ISAF does not have the capacity to deal with the spiralling insurgency. The number of troops killed increases to levels that are unpalatable to a number of domestic constituencies, prompting a number of parliaments to reconsider their presence in Afghanistan.

Public opinion forces the total withdrawal of German troops in the north, whilst Canada and the Netherlands scale back their commitments, imposing non-combat caveats upon their forces and eventually withdrawing them completely. This shortfall forces the US and UK to redeploy thousands of men from Iraq, but battle weariness and overstretch militates against their effectiveness.

NATO's inability to assemble an effective force in the global theatre has been fatally exposed.



Aftermath of a suicide bombing, Lashkar Gar, November 2007

Trigger	Indicators	Alert Status (Nov 2007)
<i>Troop casualties escalate</i>	Over 50 NATO-ISAF troops killed per month	Approximately 20 troop fatalities per month
<i>Forces from non-combatant states are targeted</i>	German/Italian forces in north and west hit with increasing frequency	Areas remain secure in relation to the south and east; casualties from these countries remains tolerably low
<i>Parliaments voice concern at the state of the mission, and withdrawals of national deployments commence</i>	Dutch and Canadian forces either withdrawn or non-combat caveats imposed	Dutch and Canadian parliaments increasingly uncomfortable

**Possible Future Scenario 2:
Iraq-style terrorist tactics commonplace throughout Afghanistan**

At no stage in Afghanistan's tumultuous recent history has suicide bombing been a tactic of choice. However, as the current iteration of the country's insurgency drags on, so recourse to this extreme 'force multiplier' becomes more commonplace.



A nightmare comes to town - suicide bomber in Lashkar Gar

The worst case scenario sees a wholesale import of terrorist tactics and methodologies from Iraq. Seemingly inexhaustible supplies of martyrs permeate the country, indiscriminately attacking public spaces, military forces and the institutions of state. The potency and accuracy of IEDs increases, and the Taliban acquire surface-to-air missiles (SAMs), which start to strike NATO's Chinook helicopters. Freedom of movement around the country is severely restricted, and Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR) becomes a regular event.

NATO-ISAF is gradually overwhelmed by this diversification of insurgent *modus operandi*, and its capacity and willingness to patrol beyond the relative security of bases is extremely limited. The acquisition and use of radiological weapons against NATO forces takes asymmetric warfare tactics in Afghanistan to their natural conclusion, and the alliance crumbles.

"In fact it is somewhat surprising [that a radiological attack] has not happened already, as the technical know-how to build a radiological weapon is not much more than a graduate-level physics degree."

Peter Bergen³⁰

³⁰ Bergen, p.349

Trigger	Indicators	Alert Status (Nov 2007)
<i>High impact and indiscriminate suicide attacks in all major provincial centres</i>	Cities such as Mazar-i-Sharif and Herat are frequently hit by suicide attacks	Not widespread, although major bomb in Baghlan (6 Nov) of deep concern³¹
<i>Sophisticated IEDs a common feature</i>	Precision and regularity of IEDs increases; use of foreign technology verified; strikes upon convoys increase	Use increasing throughout 2007
<i>Foreign militants act with impunity in former eastern/southern strongholds</i>	Towns no-go areas for residents; training camps re-established	Pockets outside Kandahar believed to be controlled by foreigners
<i>Kidnap-for-Ransom (KFR) commonplace</i>	Increasing numbers of NGOs, aid workers captured, paraded and killed	A rare tactic to date
<i>Arbitrary roadblocks by insurgents prevent free travel</i>	Key highways inaccessible to NATO-ISAF; checkpoints become scenes of brutality by insurgents	Kandahar to Kabul ring road closed to international travel, and ambushes between Kandahar and Lashkar Gar frequent



The Kabul-Jalalabad road – a potential target for Taliban IEDs

³¹ This attack saw at least 68 people, including six MPs and tens of children, killed by a suicide bomber during a visit to a sugar factory. Although the Taliban failed to claim responsibility for the bombing, it is noteworthy that former Northern Alliance commander Sayed Mustafa Kazemi died in the blast.

On the same day, Canada’s Defence Minister Peter Mackay narrowly missed being struck by a 107mm rocket fired by insurgents at Canada’s base in Kandahar.

**Possible Future Scenario 3:
Theatre develops in complexity, hosting a number of interwoven conflicts**

As the insurgency worsens and NATO-ISAF's spheres of influence within Afghanistan dwindle, so the Taliban attempt to challenge and overthrow the Tajik power base in Kabul. The movement starts to export the suicide tactics of the south to previously placid northern provinces, with foes from the civil war period once again targeted. The private warlord armies of the Northern Alliance are reformed, with much of the membership coming from the fledgling national security forces. The decimated ANA is pounded from all sides, and effectively ceases to function.

"The [Baghlan] bombing is yet another sign that the Taliban, almost exclusively a Pashtun interest in Afghanistan, is setting the scene for a full-blown civil war, to take on the resurgent Northern Alliance, seen as a Tajik interest, and toppling Hamid Karzai's administration and constitution on the way. Whether we are on the edge of a pan-Afghanistan civil war is a matter of debate to the outside powers, particularly in the US and their NATO allies, but many in Afghanistan and Pakistan not only fear it, but believe the new civil war has begun."

Robert Fox
7 Nov 2007³²

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This security void enables the Taliban to assume *de facto* control of a significant number of southern and eastern towns. It reignites its anti-Shia campaign, focussing once more upon the Hazaras of central Afghanistan.

Externally, a deterioration of the perilous security situation in Pakistan will have a direct impact upon Afghanistan. Taking into account the most recent developments as this report went to print (Musharraf's state of emergency, suspension of key rights, internment of political opponents and key judicial figures), it is conceivable that a change of the executive in Pakistan is foreseeable if internal and international pressure continues to build. In such a scenario, the replacement of General Musharraf becomes a top international priority as the future of the 'War on Terror' depends to a large degree on who substitutes him. The worst possible outcome would be a new leader (either military or civilian) who, in a bid to consolidate power and/or foster stability, makes concessions to pro-Taliban elements within Pakistan.

³² http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/robert_fox/2007/11/the_talib_bomb.html

Trigger	Indicators	Alert Status (Nov 2007)
<i>Tajiks and Pashtuns reignite their ethnic conflict</i>	Armies loyal to old warlords mobilise; tit-for-tat targeted killings of ethnic groups; Taliban indicate willingness to take their fight north to face old adversaries	Taliban activity spreading to non-core areas of Farah, Herat, Faryab and Kapisa
<i>Foreign militants wage jihad on NATO-ISAF forces</i>	Old strongholds are re-established; evidence of terrorist training camps; 'imported' terrorist tactics now the norm	Some evidence of foreign presence in the south and east
<i>Taliban rule established over a number of provinces</i>	Ad hoc Sharia courts impose extreme interpretation of Islam; public executions common; girls education ceases	The movement has not re-established its civil roots
<i>Indigenous security and armed forces melt away in the face of overwhelming opposition, or are coerced/bribed to join the insurgency.</i>	Desertion rates in the Afghan National Army start to match those of the Afghan National Police; ANA/ANP forces complicit in violence against the state	Although imperfect, ANA is demonstrating loyalty to the state and growing as an effective force
<i>Sectarian conflict with Shia Hazara minority rekindled</i>	Unprovoked attacks by Taliban upon areas of heavy Shia concentration	No sign of this coming into play
<i>Pakistani President Musharraf ousted</i>	Security in cities deteriorate; increased militant attacks; CIA reports desertions of some mid-ranking officers in NWFP; military intervenes and ousts Musharraf	State of emergency declared on 3 November, Constitution suspended; elections postponed; international pressure on Musharraf increased
<i>Replacing Musharraf in Pakistan, a little-known military leader takes power and quickly reveals pro-Taliban tendencies</i>	State of emergency lifted; forces in NWFP withdrawn; concessions made to tribal leaders; increased Islamic indoctrination of troops; decreased co-operation with Western powers.	Some elements of the Pakistani military support AQ/T tactics and ideology
<i>Replacing Musharraf in Pakistan, a civilian "puppet figure" backed by the military assumes power and makes concessions to pro-Taliban forces to increase stability.</i>	State of emergency lifted; forces in NWFP withdrawn; concessions made to tribal leaders; pro-Taliban forces allowed to participate in next elections.	Pakistani military is too suspicious of civilians to allow them into power; pressure from the US and other allies would discourage the military from following this option

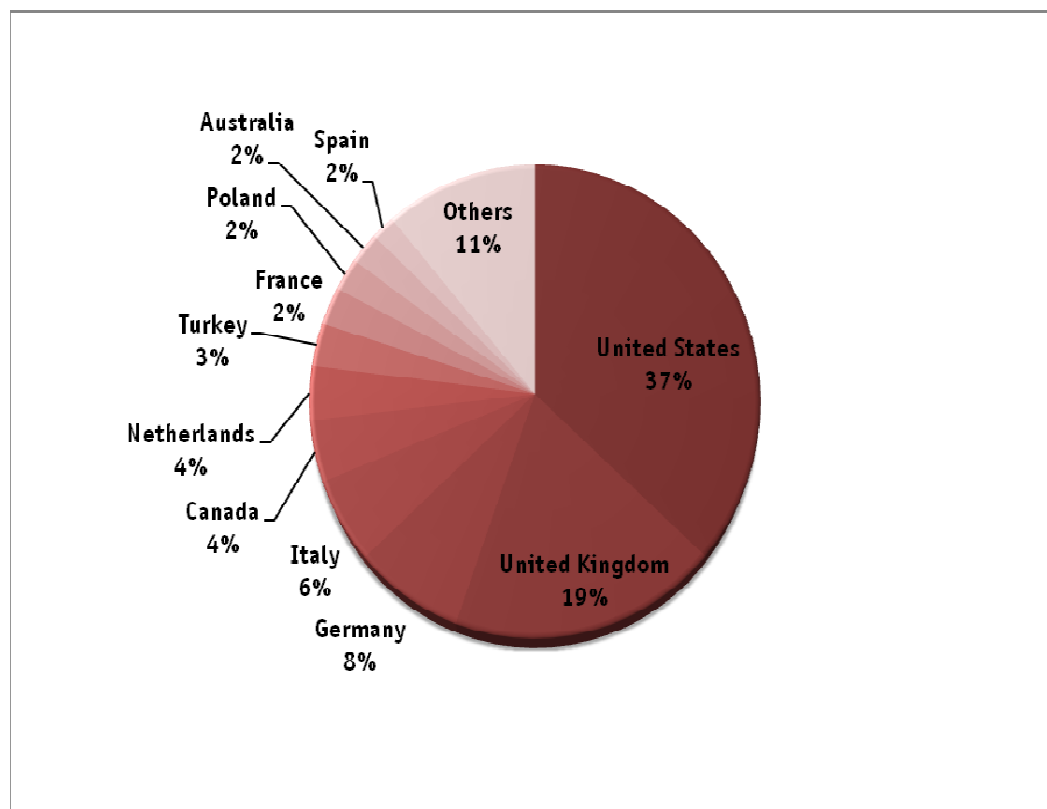
**SECURITY
Recommendations**

1. 'NATO Plus' for Afghanistan

In order to start regaining the 'hearts and minds' of ordinary Afghans, an expanded, caveat-free 'NATO Plus' presence must be established. It is clearly no longer sustainable for the troops of just four core NATO member states – Canada, UK, US and the Netherlands – plus support from such non-NATO countries as Australia and Denmark, to engage in active combat against an emboldened and increasingly successful enemy.

A mandated minimum contribution from member-states

A proportional level of commitment from every NATO member state is an important benchmark, and would send out a clear message that NATO is a unified entity with the capacity to project itself globally. A force of 80,000 troops – over double the present total – should be achievable within a relatively short time-frame.



The inequality of Afghan deployments (November 2007)

Two per cent a minimum: In order to lay the groundwork for an expanded deployment, each NATO state should spend at least 2 per cent of its GDP upon defence³³. At present only five of NATO's pre-1999 expansion states (France, Greece, Portugal, Turkey and the UK), and two of its newer members (Bulgaria and Romania) meet this criteria, prompting Jaap de Hoop Scheffer to declare that he felt 'ashamed' by this discrepancy³⁴. Although an imperfect measure, it does at least provide an equitable benchmark that will facilitate the deployment of required numbers of troops to 'NATO Plus'.

Establish a troops deployed/GDP ratio: With approximately 40,000 soldiers, NATO-ISAF still lacks substantial numbers of troops to be able to successfully fulfil its mandate. This figure is equivalent to less than a quarter of the deployment of international troops to Iraq, whereas the rugged country of Afghanistan is more populated, and has a total area almost 50 per cent larger than Iraq. The 50,000 soldiers of the Afghan National Army (ANA) are neither numerous enough, nor suitably equipped or trained to be able to fully complement the current international force.

ISAF forces often manage to defeat Taliban units but are not able to permanently defend gained terrain and thus fail to prevent insurgents from re-conquering it. ISAF does not have enough troops in Afghanistan to make sure its victories are followed by the establishment of sustainable control over the rural territory.

Too few troops on the ground also means that ISAF is heavily relying on air power to keep a tactical edge on the insurgents; the intense use of air power allows ISAF to win battles, but is resulting in a growing number of civilian casualties that make ISAF fail to win hearts and minds, and perhaps lose the war.

The total number of international troops integrated to ISAF urgently needs to be doubled to an minimum of 80,000 troops. Currently, NATO is in command of the International Force and most ISAF troops are provided by NATO member States. Nevertheless, contributions from individual countries are, even within NATO, largely uneven when considered in proportion to their population or GDP. For instance France and Spain are contributing less than 1 soldier per billion of GDP (measured in USD) while the United Kingdom and Turkey each supply above 3 soldiers per USD billion.

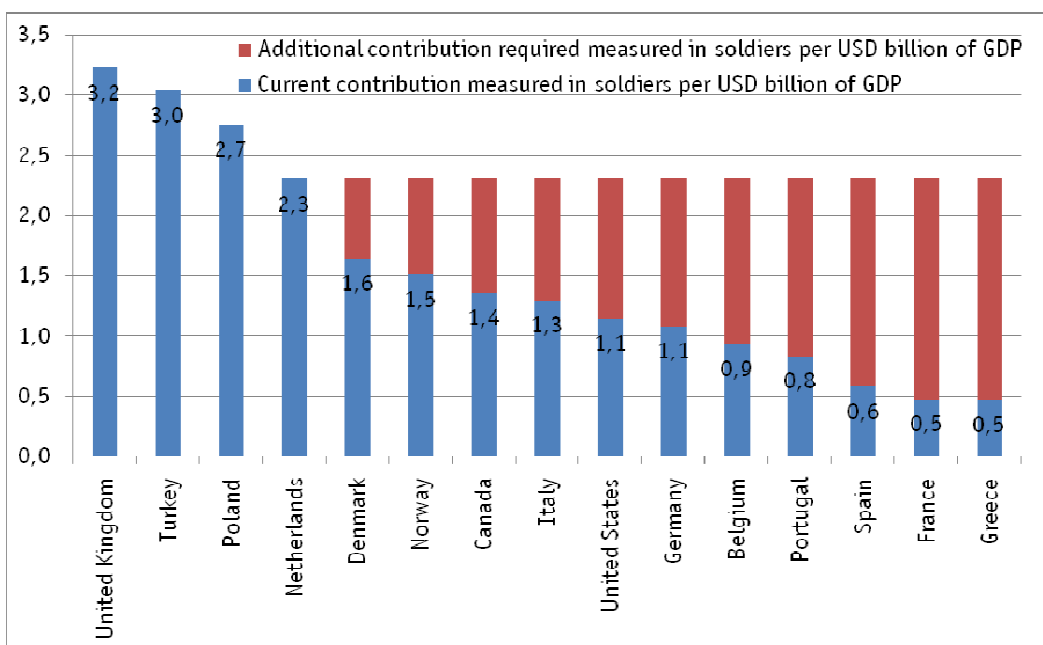
³³ It should be noted that this crude indicator fails to account for budgetary fluctuations in accordance with a state's procurement cycle, the cost of defence equipment, the outlays required by new NATO states to maintain fully interoperable forces, or the existence of extra-budgetary funds that can be made available for operational requirements. For instance, Italy makes a large contribution to NATO activities, but according to official statistics has decreased its military spending from 2.0 per cent in 2004 to 1.7 per cent in 2006.

³⁴ 'NATO chief embarrassed by low defense spending', *Defense News*, 29 Sep 2006

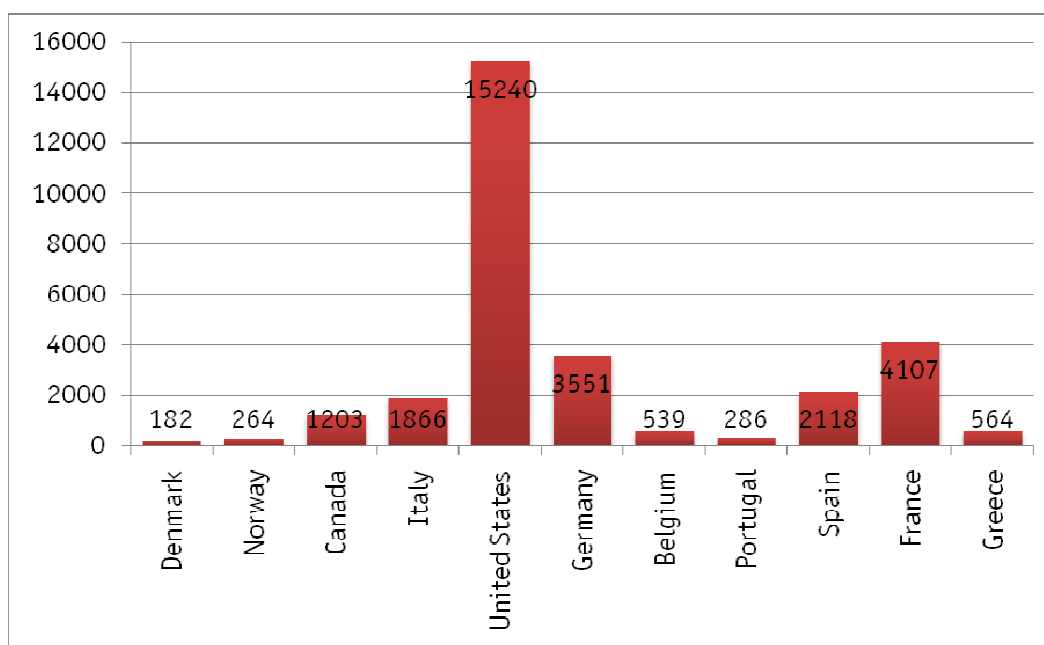
This disparity is hampering ISAF’s efficacy and should be reviewed to allow for an increase in the total number of ISAF troops. Of course there is no easy answer to the question about how precisely the burden should be shared and how much every single country should contribute. But some first approximations of a fairer deal could involve having contributions proportional to national GDP.

Currently, The Netherlands is contributing to ISAF 2.3 soldiers per billion of GDP (in USD). This ratio represents less than half the UK’s ratio of 3.2 soldiers per billion of GDP, but is the double of the US figure of 1.1.

If all NATO member countries increased their contribution to ISAF to this 2.3 soldiers per billion of GDP (or kept it the way it is when it is already higher), the total number would increase to around 71,000 troops.



Relative current troop contributions to ISAF and additional contributions required to match the Netherlands relative level of involvement, selected countries



Corresponding absolute increase in number of soldiers, selected countries

In particular if each of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United States increased their contribution to a relative level equivalent to the Netherlands, ISAF would increase by a total of 30,000 troops.

In addition to increased NATO involvement, ISAF should benefit from contributions from non-NATO countries that also have an interest in establishing a sustainable peace in the region. While Australia, New Zealand, and nations from the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council are already contributing to ISAF, new contributions could enhance ISAF's capacity and legitimacy.

In particular, participation to ISAF by more countries with significant Muslim population would ensure that the international force could not be described as mono-culture.

A debate should be opened on to what extent ISAF should grow in size and how that build up in capacity is to be achieved in a fair and legitimate manner.

National Caveats lifted

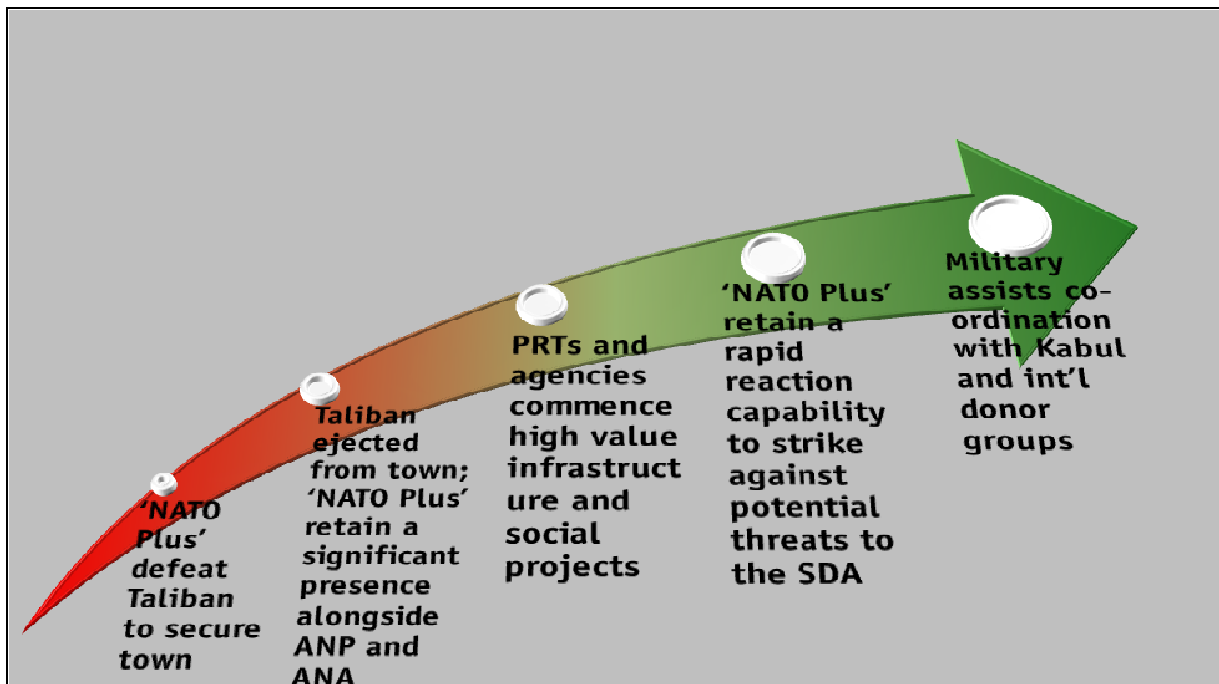
NATO's mission was hamstrung from the very outset, as a number of states were unwilling to share the fighting burden. If the coalition has any chance of success in Afghanistan, national caveats must be lifted immediately and states must engage the enemy under one set of rules.

Secure Development Areas (SDAs) to be established

Elements of 'NATO Plus' should look to establish concentrated Secure Development Areas (SDAs). Similar to the Afghan Development Zone (ADZ), these SDAs will focus upon bringing security to a densely populated or strategically important town, enabling non-military agencies to undertake developmental projects in a secure micro-climate.

Establishing security for SDAs requires one set of troops to be engaged in static security tasks, with a strong forward mobile presence aimed at preventing the insurgency from disrupting the development work. An expanded force of 80,000 would enable a higher concentration of forces to remain in situ within strategic towns that are desperate for reconstruction.

Once firmly rooted, an SDA can become a beacon of developmental progress for other troubled parts of the country, thereby exporting stability by example.



Stepping stones to security - evolution of an SDA

Increased representation from Muslim states

From an internal perspective, the overriding impression of the West's presence in Afghanistan is that of external aggressor. Such a perception has historically congealed Afghan resistance of all hues against that presence, prompting an expedient coalition intent upon expelling them from the country. Indeed, much of the Taliban can be viewed through such a lens.

In order to at least partially counteract that perception, deployments from Muslim states should serve within a 'NATO Plus' force, primarily within the SDA serving as community liaison officers. This addition to NATO's presence in Afghanistan will have tremendous symbolic value, bolstering efforts to win over local hearts and minds, and helping NATO to project itself in means other military operations. A contingent of Muslim forces should also be detached to fight alongside NATO forces entering Pakistan.

Senior Muslim military figures should also be seconded to work alongside NATO commanders in ISAF headquarters in Afghanistan.

Support provided to Pakistan in missions against radical Islamists

An expanded 'NATO Plus' force would offer support to the Pakistani military's already extensive mission to defeat militant Islamists in its troubled western provinces. This support would range from the sharing of tactical intelligence assets (for instance, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle target imagery) to air support and tightly-targeted ground assaults upon high value insurgent targets.

'NATO Plus' support would serve under the operational control of Pakistan, and maintain the lightest possible footprint during lulls in combat to mitigate against insurgent strikes upon forward operating bases.

2. 'Afghan COIN' adopted

In order to win hearts and minds, it is incumbent upon the forces operating in Afghanistan to adopt a different approach to the realities on the ground. An increasing recourse to airstrikes in densely populated areas is proving disastrous for the military's standing amongst local communities, and should be stopped. It is pivotal that the political and physical sanctuaries within which insurgents operate is shrunk, and SDAs established in their place.

Successful Practices ³⁵	Unsuccessful Practices
Focus on the population, their needs and security	Place priority on killing and capturing the enemy, not on engaging the population
Isolate insurgents from the population	Concentrate military forces in large bases for protection
Conduct effective, pervasive psychological operations	Focus special operation forces primarily on raiding
Provide amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents	View insurgents as inherently bad, and treat them accordingly
Embed special operations forces and advisors with indigenous forces	Ring fence incoming forces from indigenous elements

³⁵ US Department of the Army, FM3-24, "Counterinsurgency", 15 December 2006.



Counterterrorism Central – a US base near Tora Bora

In order to achieve this outcome, the military must transition from a counterterrorism-led approach to a counterinsurgency (COIN)-driven one, such as advocated by former Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) chief General David Barno. The adoption of such tactics by an expanded 'NATO Plus', adapted to the Afghan theatre, will provide for more effective prosecution of core stabilisation strategy. The role of Muslim military liaison officers will be key in this regard, as these forces will offer strategic advice to western forces regarding suitable methods of engagement with locals.

Intelligence-driven approach

A greater emphasis upon intelligence, in particular, human intelligence (HUMINT) is required. This intelligence-driven approach should see the 'NATO Plus' strategy concentrate upon the needs and security of the population, although clearly the short-term operational requirement to defeat the insurgency militarily must continue in tandem.

The traditional methods for gathering intelligence developed during the Cold War have been proven consistently ineffective against the new terrorist networks of today, therefore, in order to conduct a successful COIN plan, it is imperative to operate at the grass-roots level, establishing a relationship of trust with the locals, who are historically suspicious of any outsiders (particularly in the Afghan context).

As difficult and long as this process may be, it will be the only way to get trustworthy information from an insurgency that relies on human relations to operate.

Marginal insurgents reintegrated

The reintegration of 'marginal insurgents'. Vast swathes of the Taliban are fighting for economic as opposed to ideological reasons. Establishing viable, sustainable alternative income sources in secure environments will deprive the movement of a core membership strand.

Chapter II

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



The dismal outlook for Afghanistan's children is showing no sign of improvement

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Overview and Recommendations

Notwithstanding six years of international involvement in Afghanistan and proclamations of strong commitment towards the country's people, it remains ravaged by poverty and ranks at the bottom of the table for all major development indicators. Afghanistan's humanitarian and narcotics crises pose a real and direct threat to state stability; failure to address the Afghan people's basic needs and build strong foundations for sustainable social and economic development will see the country lost for another generation.

Failed promises

The failure to recognise the critical importance of the societal and development aspects of Afghanistan's security and, instead, persisting in a one-dimensional, military-focused approach has severely compromised the mission in Afghanistan.

Since the removal of the Taliban in autumn 2001, the international community led by the US has vigorously proclaimed its promise to re-build Afghanistan. Despite six years of international goodwill and presence in the country, Afghanistan's human development and poverty indices remain far behind those of neighbouring countries and living standards are among the worst in the world.

Afghanistan is not progressing fast enough in human and economic development, clearly manifesting unbalanced priorities, lack of coordination and misguided policies.

Afghanistan's grave reality

Human development necessitates a strong society that educates its young population, provides healthcare to all, improves its infrastructure and communications, and facilitates sustainable livelihoods. The reality in Afghanistan, however, reflects only few achievements; the country is facing numerous formidable development challenges.

Living conditions in Afghanistan, particularly in the south, remain appalling. Overall health indicators for women and children are at exceptionally low levels, with only two countries having worse child mortality rates than Afghanistan.

Access to healthcare, education and other basic services is dramatically hindered by the lack of essential infrastructure. Today, the majority of the Afghan population is malnourished and lack essential access to safe drinking water.

A surge in violence, particularly in the south and south-east of the country, has aggravated living conditions, leading to mass internal displacement and a widespread hunger crisis. Very few donors have effective means of delivering basic humanitarian aid in the war-torn south.

In the absence of sustainable livelihoods, Afghanistan's illegal opium cultivation has flourished, providing the only means of livelihood for millions of Afghan farmers and their families. Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of illegal opium, directly involving at least 14 per cent of the country's population. By over-emphasising misguided counter-narcotics policies such as forced poppy eradication, the reconstruction and security efforts of the international community and the Afghan Government are now severely compromised.

Losing the battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghan people

With numerous pledges failing to be realised and ill-advised counter-narcotics policies being pursued, local Afghans are struggling to see any improvements in their day-to-day lives. The endemic poverty endured by the majority of the Afghan population threatens the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

Local populations, particularly in the south, are increasingly doubtful of the ability of the Afghan government to provide security and basic social provisions. A sense of national ownership is gradually being lost; aid is primarily channelled through international humanitarian actors instead of governmental and local bodies, and US-driven counter-narcotics policies reflect a lack of concern for local realities and needs. **Six years on, and incredibly the intervention of the US-led international community is still based upon flawed assumptions and principles.**

Critically, the Taliban are capitalising upon growing public disillusionment with the Afghan government and the international community. By gaining local support in Afghanistan's impoverished communities, the Taliban are undermining NATO-ISAF's mission and the authority of the Afghan government. With poverty effectively driving support for the Taliban, Afghanistan's social and economic challenges require immediate attention.

International efforts at a crossroads

Achieving peace and stability in Afghanistan will not be achieved by military means alone. It is imperative that the international community recognises the essential role of coherent development and counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan's security and stability.

Social well-being and economic security are vital to building public confidence and trust towards the Afghan Government, and support for the international forces and other actors present in the country. Development efforts and a constructive response to the country's opium crisis need to be put at the core of Afghanistan's reconstruction and stabilisation mission.

By failing to respond to the immediate needs of the despairing Afghan people and to build a strong Afghan society and economy, sooner or later Afghanistan will be lost.

Recommendations

1. *Combat aid agencies secure aid delivery*

An extensive, well-funded and transparent aid campaign is desperately needed to respond to Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis. This campaign must encompass a food distribution system appropriate to the current famine situation in the southern part of the country, as well as the provision of shelter and essential healthcare.

In the conflict-ravaged south, the military has a central role to play in supporting the activities of development agencies such as the UK Department for International Development and the Canadian International Development Agency, whose work is thwarted by a surge in violence.

The military should now be tasked to deliver aid to ravaged areas of the south and east, and be granted control of DFID and CIDA's war zone budgets. Such *Combat DFID/Combat CIDA* and similar operations will be crucial in responding to the immediate needs of the poor and vulnerable Afghans.

2. *Afghan Family Fund*

The international community must help lay the foundations of a stable and prosperous Afghanistan through the creation of necessary infrastructure and communications, improving healthcare and education, and promoting activities in which Afghans will be directly involved.

A basis for future economic growth is being created as schools (re)open and proper vocational training is provided. Local capacities should be built and Afghan ownership must be strengthened. The international community has an important role to play both by working together with local civil society and private sector actors to invest in locally supported delivery systems, and in assisting the Afghan government to tackle corruption.

An *Afghan Family/Community Fund*, similar to Brazil's *Bolsa Familia* project, should be initiated, 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. An *Afghan Fund* would have to invest heavily in the supply-side to cope with increased service utilisation and infrastructure.

Securing Afghanistan's future also necessitates a young generation of well-educated, nonviolent Afghans to take the leadership. It is key that the international community does not allow the conflict to impact on the futures of the youth of Afghanistan.

Leadership training for young Afghans must be organised in order to provide the country's next generation with the skills necessary to help the conflict-ridden state to flourish.

3. No to Spraying

The international community must be united in its opposition to US plans for chemical eradication of poppy crops. Chemical eradication has the potential to devastate the country's environment and the rural communities dependent on illegal crops for their livelihoods.

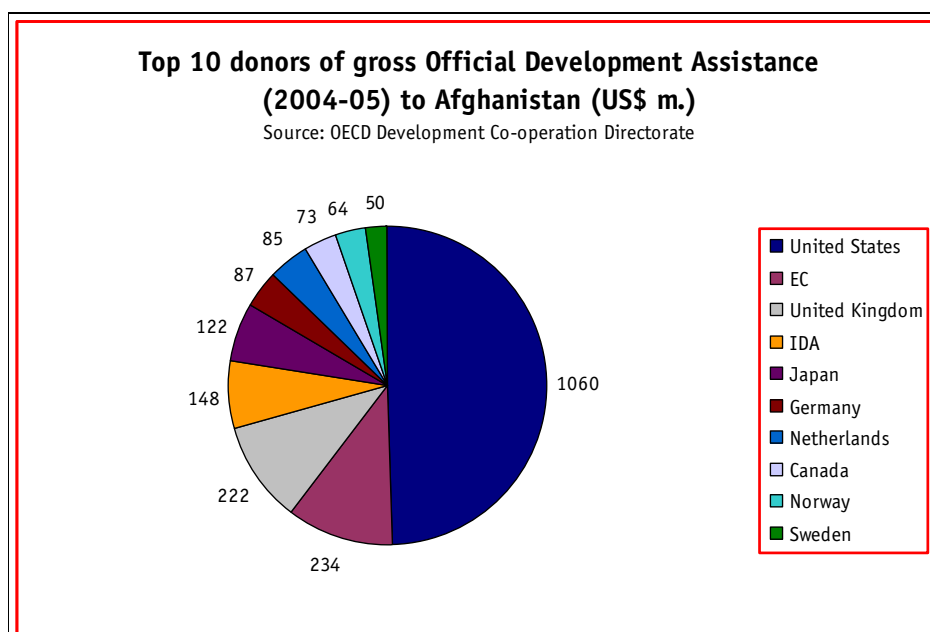
This forceful counter-narcotics tool will irreparably damage the Afghan government's legitimacy and lead to social unrest. Instead, the international community must endorse a pragmatic approach to Afghanistan's opium crisis. An available and immediate-term response is *Poppy for Medicine*, which involves the controlled cultivation of poppy to produce essential poppy-based medicine such as morphine.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Threat Factors

FACTOR ONE: International development assistance in Afghanistan falls short to the challenge

Development and Aid: Reflecting on broken promises

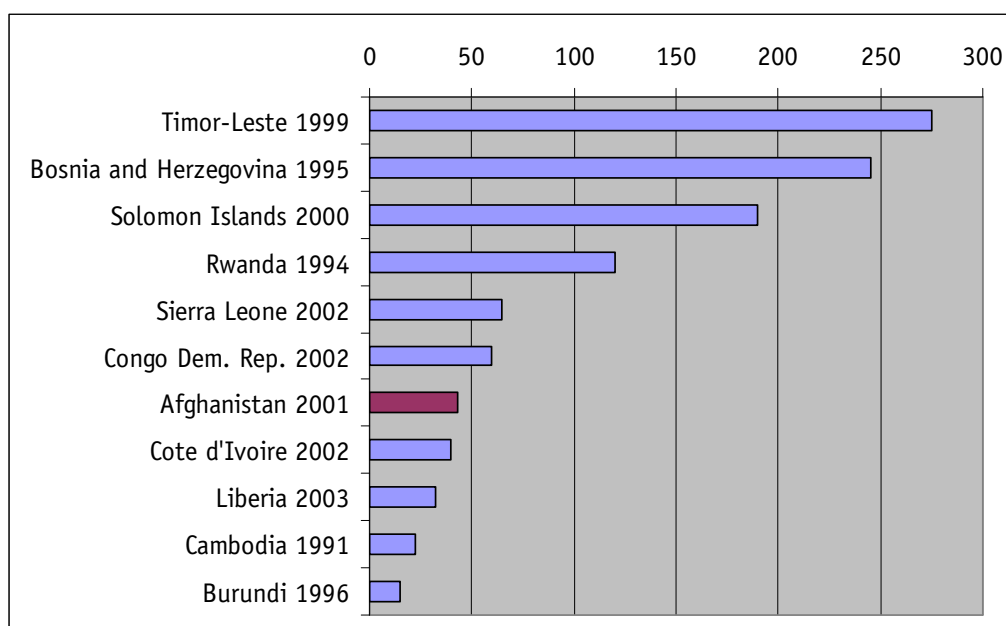
Immediately after the fall of the Taliban regime, the international community pledged to rebuild Afghanistan’s shattered state infrastructure. Over 60 countries and international institutions pledged to provide the necessary resources and support for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.



In February 2006 during the London Conference on Afghanistan, donors renewed their commitment and pledged a further US\$10.5 billion in aid to be disbursed over the next five years. This assurance was confirmed at the second Tokyo Conference on the Consolidation of Peace in Afghanistan, in July 2006.

Nevertheless, despite a series of international conferences gathering bilateral and multilateral donors, proclamations of strong commitment and promises of rapid development, international aid has proven insufficient to respond to the immediate needs of the Afghan people. Progress made towards meeting Afghanistan’s Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is visibly poor.

The average annual aid for post-conflict reconstruction received by Afghanistan fails to measure up to the annual aid received by other post conflict countries over a comparable period. This disparity is strikingly illustrated in Afghanistan's dire poverty and development indices. Whilst other countries such as Sudan and East Timor have benefited from measurable improvements in key poverty indicators, Afghanistan continues to rank towards the bottom of the list.



Average annual aid per capita for post-conflict reconstruction (three years post conflict, USD)³⁶

Notably, in the first two years following the fall of the Taliban, Afghanistan received the smallest amount of international financial assistance per capita of any recent US-led post-conflict rebuilding mission. In 2002, the US committed around US\$500 million in reconstruction aid to AFG compared to a staggering amount of US\$18 billion for Iraq in 2003.

Taking into account all international financial aid provided to Afghanistan, the average Afghan received about US\$50 in foreign aid during the first two years after the fall of the Taliban.

With per capita external assistance reaching US\$1,390 in Bosnia and US\$814 in Kosovo, the average Afghan received only a fraction of the amount received by Bosnians and Kosovars over a comparable period³⁷.

³⁶ UNDP, "Human Development Report", 2005. [online] Available at: <http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/>

Note: Data refer to three-year averages beginning the year conflict ended, except for DRC, Cote d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone, for which data refer to two-year averages, and Liberia, for which data refer to a single year.

A major challenge to Afghanistan's development is the mounting illegal drugs trade. Markedly, the Afghan economy is far more dependent on the production and export of illegal drugs than any other in the world, with per capita income from narcotics exceeding official development assistance.³⁸

To make matters worse, actual disbursements fall dramatically short of pledges. Only around US\$8 billion of more than US\$20 billion pledged by the international community has actually been delivered as development aid for Afghanistan³⁹.



Starving children searching for food, Kabul 2007

Undoubtedly, pledges have failed to materialise. The disparity between rhetoric and the reality on the ground is increasingly perceived by the majority of the Afghan people as dishonesty on the part of the international community. In turn, with public disillusionment mounting and the Taliban capitalising on the current state of Afghanistan, the counter-insurgency efforts of the international community are at grave risk.

³⁷ James Dobbins et al, "America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq", P. 146, RAND, 2003

Gordon book, p.132

³⁸ UNDP, Kabul University, "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007: Bridging Modernity and Tradition – The Rule of Law and the Search for Justice", 2007

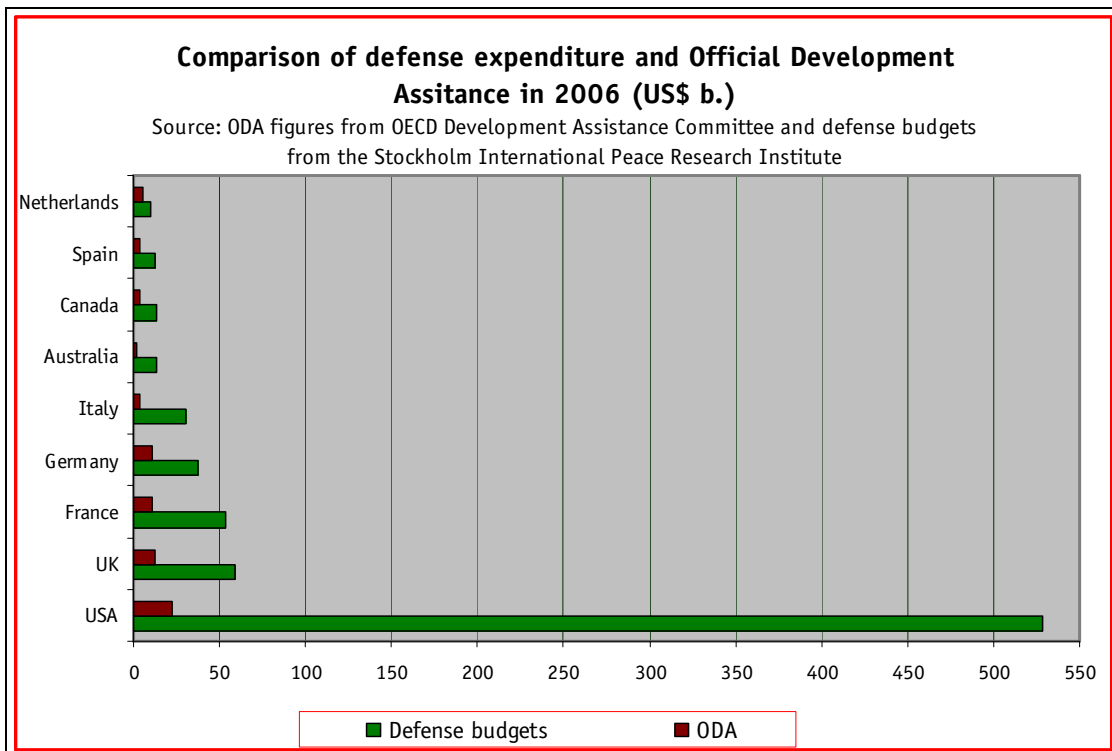
³⁹ Government of Afghanistan/UNDP Donor Assistance Database

“Today’s central question is not simply whether we are capturing or killing more terrorists than are being recruited and trained, but whether we are providing more opportunities than our enemies can destroy, and whether we are addressing more grievances than they can record.”

Richard L. Armitage and Joseph S. Nye, Jr.
 Co-chairs, CSIS Commission on Smart Power: A smarter, more secure America
 November 2007

Unbalanced priorities: Military spending far exceeds development and aid

The pitiful amount of disbursed pledges reveals the prioritisation of military operation in Afghanistan over poverty eradication by the international community. The significant gap between expenditures on the military effort and expenditures on international aid assistance is reflected on the global policies pursued by the US and other major international players.



State-building and security cannot be accomplished by purely military means alone. The dire state of Afghanistan is a clear manifestation of the centrality of social and economic well-being in the stabilisation and reconstruction efforts.

“A smarter public diplomacy is one that shows respect toward other countries, and a willingness to understand local needs and local issues.”

John Zogby
November 2007

Military operations and development efforts in Afghanistan are clearly at odds. The intervention of the US-led international community has been based essentially on the flawed assumption that Afghanistan’s challenges are security related, with counter-narcotics and development issues being of secondary importance.

By failing to accept and, thus, respond to Afghanistan’s multi-faceted realities, the international community’s stabilisation efforts in the country has been largely futile, fuelling widespread public resentment and distrust.

In particular, the international community has appeared incapable of undertaking the full range of tasks necessary for Afghanistan’s state-building and stability. Foreign assistance as currently pursued by the international community is dictated by a security imperative that runs counter to development aims.

The failure to recognise Afghanistan’s intricate realities and understand that social well-being and economic prosperity cannot be accomplished by purely military means has been maximised tactically by the Taliban. In turn, this seriously endangers NATO’s military operations and the stabilisation mission at large.

“There is a common misperception that the issues in Afghanistan can be dealt with by military means. That’s a false perception. The military is key, an essential element in dealing with those problems, but, by and large, these problems can only be resolved politically.”

Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, Chief of the Defence Staff, UK Ministry of Defence
29 October 2007

Accelerated action and a more unified approach are urgently required. The international community, in close collaboration with the Afghan government, must define the strategic objectives and direct the necessary resources. **Aid disbursed in Afghanistan must address the immediate needs of the Afghan people, improve the country’s infrastructure and economy, empower Afghanistan’s youth, and aim to reduce inequalities.** Substantial achievements in Afghanistan’s social and economic development are essential to the country’s transition from a conflict-ravaged society to a secure and prosperous state.

FACTOR TWO: Afghanistan's Reconstruction at a Standstill

Human development is an integral part of establishing a dynamic state promoting peace and stability. It necessitates a strong state that educates and empowers its young population, provides healthcare and essential services to all, improves its infrastructure and communications, supports a strong civil society, facilitates sustainable livelihoods and expands human capabilities and freedoms.

A state in despair

Afghanistan has been devastated by over 25 years of continual conflict, ravaged by general lawlessness, ethnic tension and famine. As a result, it ranks amongst the poorest and most unstable countries in the world.

Following the swift removal of the Taliban regime in late 2001, confident predictions were made about Afghanistan's transition to a viable and prosperous state. The international community had pledged significant support and financial assistance to facilitate Afghanistan's reconstruction and, as a result of the 2001 Bonn Agreement, an interim administration headed by Hamid Karzai took office. Millions of refugees from neighbouring countries returned to Afghanistan firmly holding on to this conviction.



Six years on, refugee camps are still part of Afghanistan's reality

The smooth path to stability and prosperity as envisaged six years ago has failed to materialise, reflecting the failure of the international community to grasp the multi-faceted political, social and economic realities in Afghanistan.

A comprehensive look at Afghanistan today paints a dismal picture; in the absence of achieving concrete progress toward alleviating hunger and poverty, Afghan people, particularly in the south, continue to live in appalling conditions.

The repatriation of millions of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran has further increased the strain on services, which were already considerably stretched. Impoverished communities and refugee camps are no longer exclusive to the volatile south– camps have now spread across the country, reaching the capital Kabul.



Afghan boys at a refugee camp in the capital Kabul, 27 October 2007

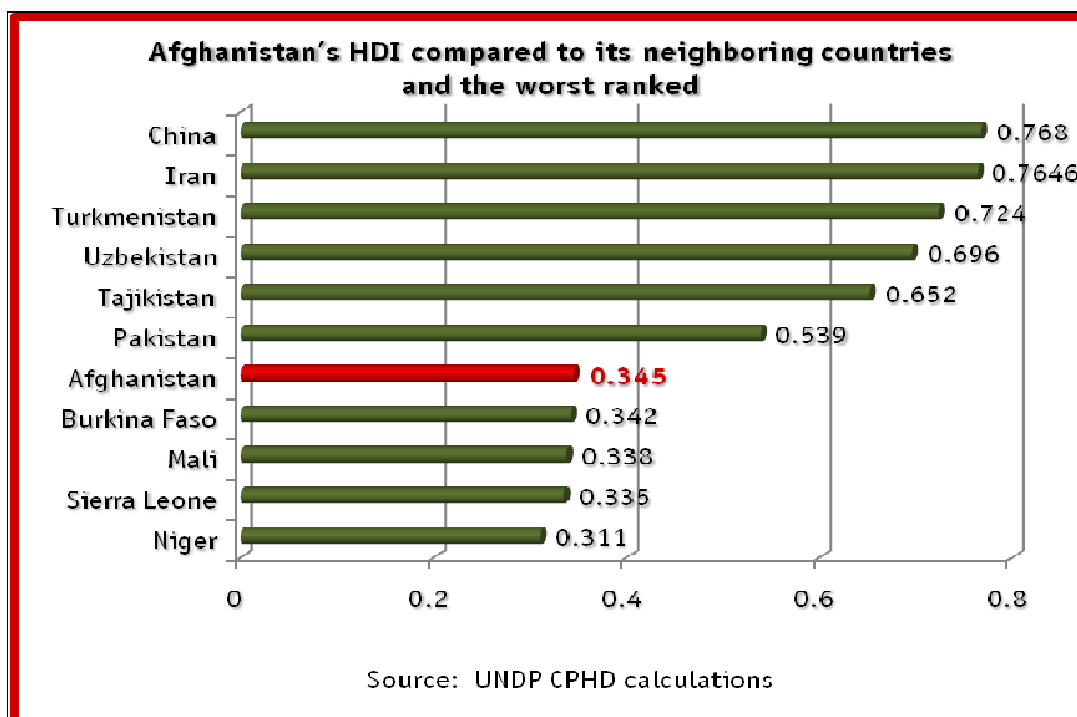
Development continues to lag

Six years on, the pace of real and sustained development across Afghanistan is extremely slow. Corruption and insecurity continue to obstruct service delivery, and unbalanced priorities compromise the overall reconstruction and stabilisation effort.

Although several studies have focused on humanitarian aid in Afghanistan before 2001, few deal with humanitarian aid, or indeed the issue of corruption in the humanitarian system, following the overthrow of the Taliban regime...The resources that became available to resolve the conflict and rebuild the country seemed promising, but five years later, and despite considerable progress, the country remains one of the poorest in the world, with reports of chronic aid mismanagement, waste and corruption.”

OXFAM, July 2007⁴⁰

Indices reveal that the state remains one of the world’s poorest and underdeveloped. The country’s human development index, measuring economic performance, longevity and access to essential services including healthcare and education, has a value of only 0.345. This places Afghanistan 174th out of 178 countries on the global United Nations’ Human Development Index, only ahead of the poorest sub-Saharan African countries. Afghanistan’s living standards are even more palpalable in relation to its regional neighbours.



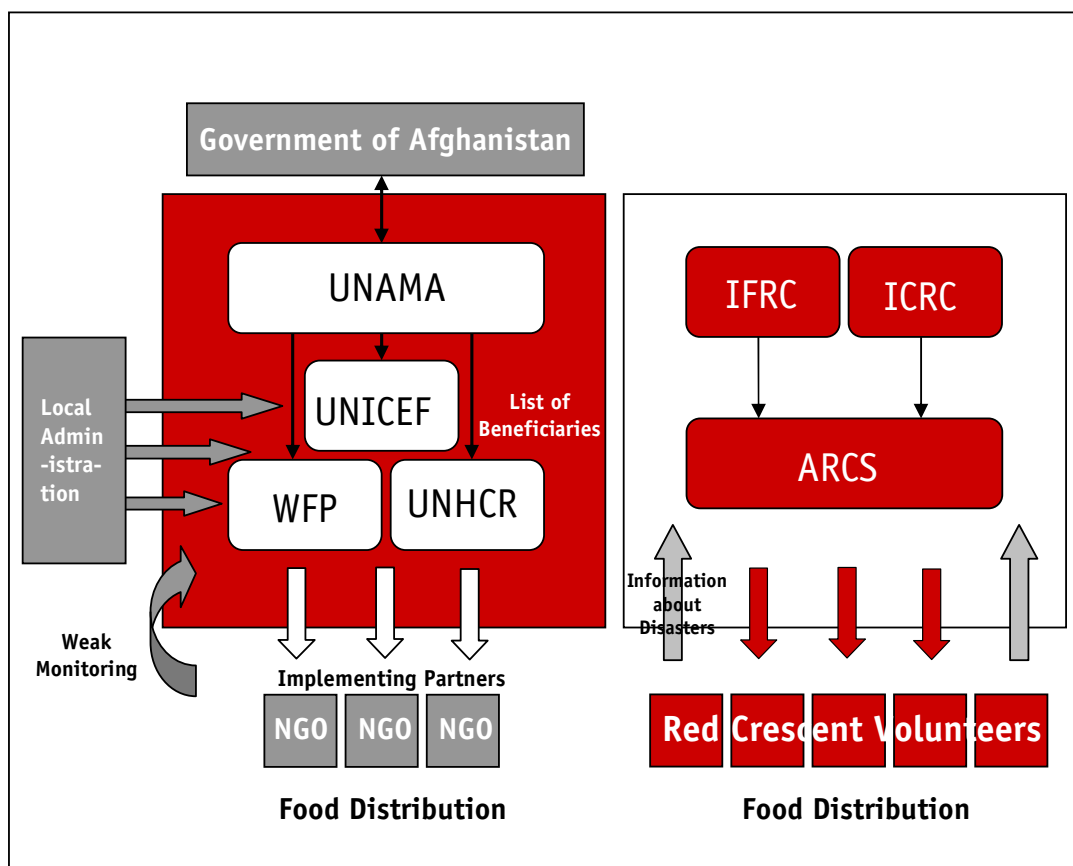
⁴⁰ OXFAM working paper, 'Corruption perceptions and risks in humanitarian assistance:an Afghanistan case study' by Kevin Savage, Lorenzo Delesgues, Ellen Martin, Gul Pacha Ulfat, July 2007

Afghanistan's development indicators at a glance

➤ Widespread hunger

The country, especially its southern provinces, is ravaged by extreme poverty and hunger. More than six million Afghans do not meet minimum food requirements, with an estimated average 30 per cent of the population eating below the minimum level of dietary energy consumption.⁴¹ Food insecurity is particularly high in the war-torn southern part of the country.

UNICEF and other international organisations are deeply concerned with children's nutrition and living conditions. Most recent figures reveal a dismal picture; nearly 40 per cent of children under five years of age are underweight with more than a third suffering of severe malnutrition. Afghan children's appalling living conditions are also reflected in the rates of under-fives that are dying of hunger (7 per cent) and experience stunted growth (54 per cent).



Food aid delivery process in southern Afghanistan

⁴¹ UNDP 2007 and NRVA 2005

Afghans in despair: Insurgency hampering delivery of food aid

Delivery of food aid is significantly hampered by a surge in violence. According to its Afghanistan Director, Rick Corsino, in 2007 the UN World Food Programme has lost 1,000 tonnes of food aid due to a six-fold increase in attacks on convoys.

Corsino revealed that no aid convoys had moved between Herat in the west and Kandahar in the south for over six weeks in late 2007, thereby isolating a vast swathe of the country's poorest regions.

As of November 2007, it is estimated that the UN has six weeks to deliver food to 400,000 people living above the snow line before winter is expected to cut off the roads. Corsino stresses that five million Afghans need some form of food assistance.

In view of these serious impediments, the military has a vital role to play in supporting the activities of development agencies, and should be tasked to deliver aid to the ravaged areas of the south and east. Combat development operations will prove essential in responding to the immediate needs of Afghanistan's poor.

➤ Repatriation and shelter crisis

By late 2001, around 4.5 million Afghans lived as refugees with the vast majority living in Iran and Pakistan. In addition, the US Committee for Refugees believed that a million Afghans were internally displaced.

Following the fall of the Taliban regime, millions of Afghan refugees from neighbouring countries returned to Afghanistan. It is estimated that almost two million Afghans returned during 2002, principally from Iran and Pakistan. Since March 2002, it is believed that a total of at least 4.8 million Afghan refugees have returned. This has increased significantly the strain on already overstretched services.

In the past eighteen months, Afghanistan has suffered from a new wave of displacement. A surge in violence has led to a large number of civilian casualties and triggered the displacement of thousands of Afghans, adding to a population of around 150,000 longer-term internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the southern region.

Access to the areas affected by the insurgency and increased fighting is limited, hindering the urgent delivery of humanitarian aid. The vast majority of those living in makeshift refugee camps in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar face severe food insecurity and poor access to essential health services. Fighting may also prevent refugees returning from neighbouring countries to reach their place of origin and, thus, increases the risk they become displaced once again in urgent need of shelter and access to a sustainable livelihood.

Intense fighting has also forced Afghans to abandon refugee camps, leading to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. For instance, the Panjwai Desert camp, which has for more than a year provided refugees with essential shelter during previous fighting, has now being evacuated. With violence reaching threatening levels, Afghanistan's displaced persons are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.



Refugee camp in Kabul, 27 October 2007

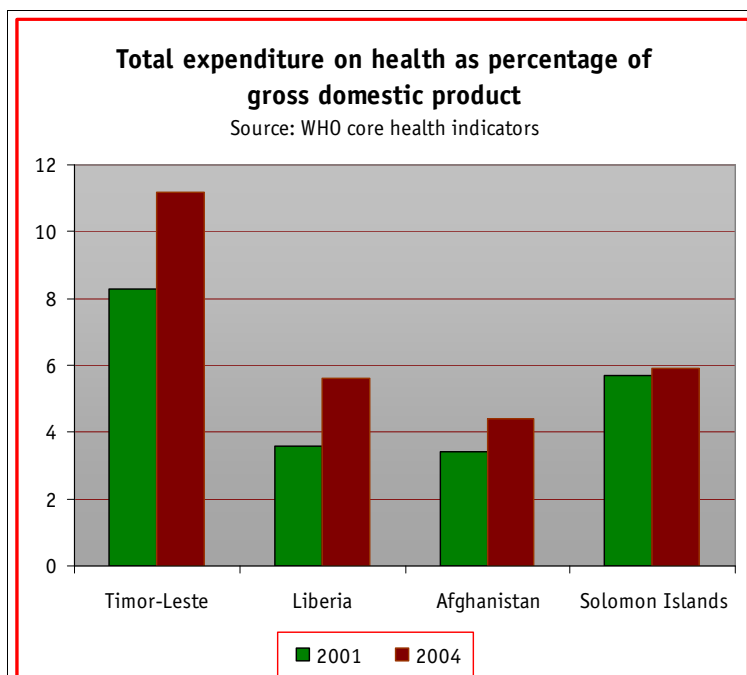
➤ **Healthcare and mortality**

In 2002, life expectancy and the infant mortality rate were all among the lowest in the world. Notwithstanding five years of international involvement in Afghanistan, assistance has failed to meet most of Afghanistan's dire and urgent healthcare needs.



Healthcare is non-existent for the majority of Afghans

Child mortality has dropped from 165 to 135 per 1,000 live births in Afghanistan. However, UNICEF underlines that child mortality in Afghanistan remains extremely low with only two African countries –Angola and Sierra Leone- having worse child mortality rates



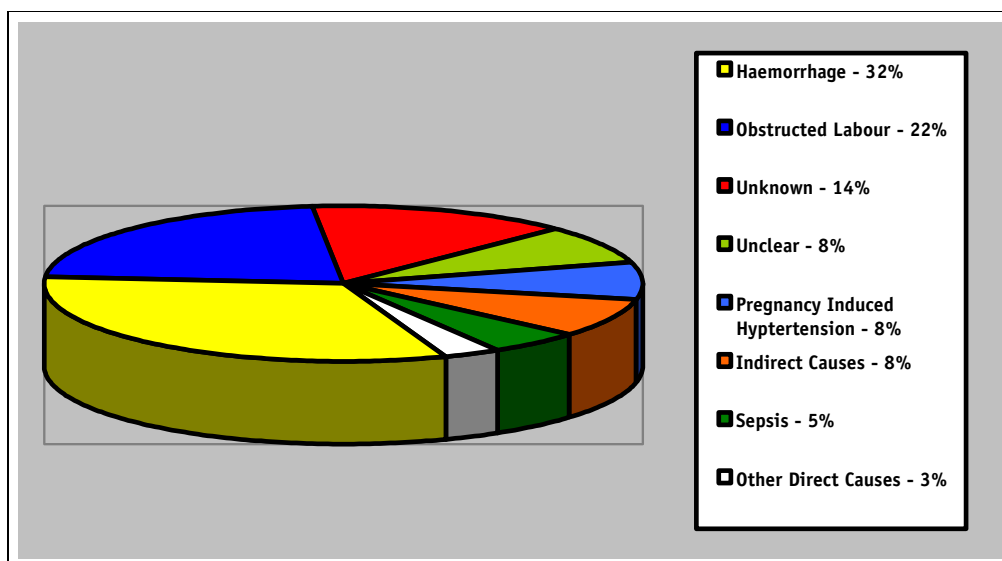
The probability at birth of not surviving to the age of forty is close to 50 per cent, with average life expectancy reaching a mere 44.5 years, one of the lowest life expectancies globally. High mortality rates are partly a result of a lack of access to safe drinking water, malnutrition, inadequate sanitation and poor healthcare services.

Afghanistan's High Maternal Mortality Rate

For women, giving birth in Afghanistan can be a "forecast of death" as the country has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world. The country's maternal mortality ratio is estimated at 1,600 per 100,000 live births. Notably, a remote district in Badakhshan has the highest ever recorded ratio, reaching 6,500 per 100,000 live births.

This high maternal mortality rate reflects the precarious status of women in Afghanistan, the lack of health and education services, the acute shortage of female health workers, low literacy levels and the broader lack of infrastructure and essential services.

Afghanistan's healthcare system suffers from poor infrastructure and accessibility, and a lack of resources and qualified doctors. Poor roads are thwarting access to healthcare and it is expected that in the forthcoming winter, a number of areas will be cut off from access to healthcare services. Furthermore, existing hospitals lack the resources – trained doctors, affordable and easily available medicines – to sufficiently meet the needs of Afghan patients, especially in conflict-torn communities. With the number of civilian casualties mounting, more healthcare providers are urgently required.



Causes of maternal mortality in Afghanistan

“Every time there are bombings and fighting, there are many civilian casualties that need treatment in this hospital. A lot of innocent women, children and men die during every bombing campaign. This doesn't happen just once. During every bombardment, people die, get injured or lose their houses. It happens all the time.”

“If the international community has sent aid to Helmand province I haven't seen this. There are 25,000 refugees in the camps around Helmand. Not a single person has spoke of food aid delivery. In some districts there are not even any medical clinics; these were destroyed as a result of the fighting between the Taliban and the international forces. I don't think anyone is getting any aid whatsoever. ”

“We gave the British ambassador and Members of Parliament a list of all this hospital's needs. We haven't heard anything from them since. We have not received the medicines they promised, nor have we received the equipment or anything else they promised us.”

Chief Doctor of Bost Hospital, Lashkar Gah, November 2007

➤ **Afghan Family Fund**

Establishing an Afghan Family Fund

Brazil's Bolsa Familia

Faced with economic deprivation, and in order to prevent poverty transmitting to next generation, the Brazilian government initiated the *Bolsa Familia* family fund, whereby positive actions from the public (such as families sending their children to school) would be rewarded with mutual investment on the part of government. The Brazilian project is one of the biggest of its kind, targeting about 11.1 million families, or 45 million people. *Bolsa Familia's* success is evidenced in evaluations which have shown increases in consumption rates, school attendance, immunization and a fall in child labour.

An Afghan Equivalent: How would it work?

Afghanistan's realities would essentially dictate the specifications of a similar project seeking to coordinate aid programmes. Certainly, an *Afghan Family/Community Fund* would have to invest heavily in the supply-side to cope with increased service utilization, such as hospitals and schools; training of teachers and doctors; and stimulating local food and produce markets. The international community can provide the financial and logistical support necessary for the Afghan government to formulate and implement an *Afghan Family/Community Fund*.



Afghan boy searching for food amongst the rubbish

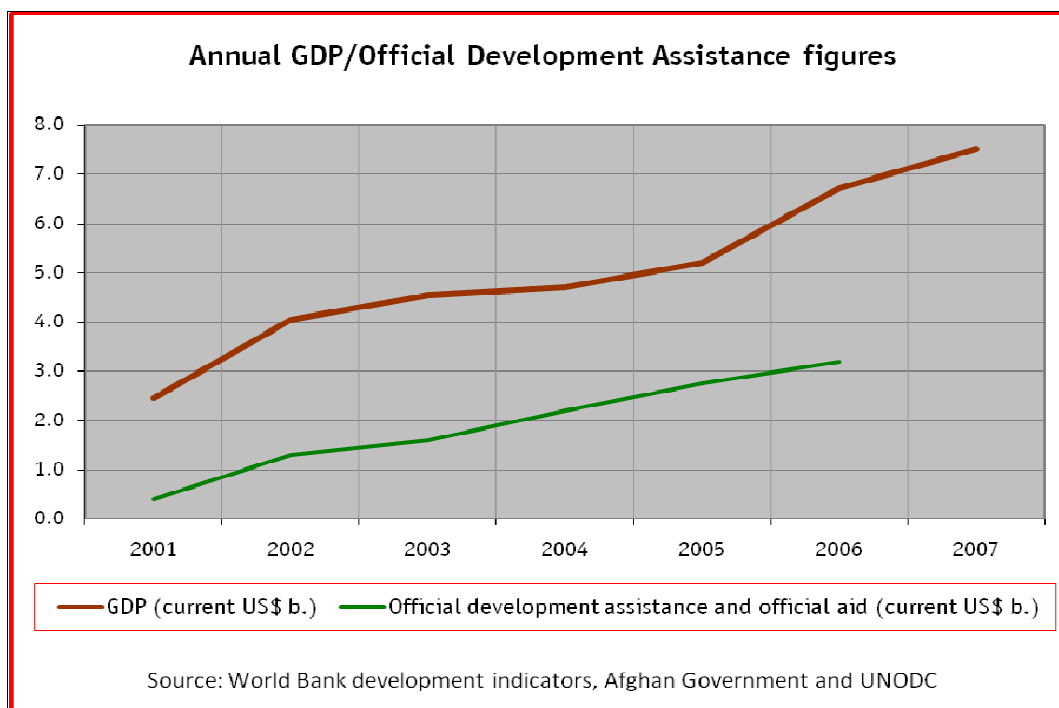
FACTOR THREE: Afghanistan's economy in peril

A stable and prosperous Afghanistan requires a sustained increase in the economic standard of living of its people. Economic development is primarily accomplished through a steady growth in the level of production of goods and services, and an increase in the number of jobs available.

Slow progress hampering Afghanistan's economy

When the Taliban were ousted in autumn 2001, they left a broken, economically destroyed Afghanistan. The country faced major constraints in achieving steady economic growth and establishing a strong, competitive private sector. Essential infrastructure and communications was crippled; key support services such as irrigation systems, roads and power were generally unavailable. Farmers had essentially no other choice to feed and provide for their families but to cultivate the country's only available cash crop: the poppy.

In the years to come, notwithstanding proclamations of substantial progress and rapid economic growth, poor infrastructure alongside endemic corruption and growing insecurity has impeded Afghanistan's economic development. Militia commanders continue to maintain significant sources of revenue, further hindering the country's economy. In 2006, the Afghan government raised domestic revenue of about US\$13 per capita only, clearly inadequate to provide for the basic needs of the Afghan people.



At present, Afghanistan remains highly dependent on foreign aid. Economic deprivation is soaring and the country remains one of the poorest globally. In 2007, Afghanistan's GDP reached US\$7.5 billion; notably, the indicative gross income from wheat per ha, the country's major legal crop, increased only by 3 per cent. Major infrastructure needs, such as road building, irrigation projects and power production, must be urgently addressed.

"The reality is that only limited progress has been achieved in increasing availability of energy, revitalising agriculture and the rural economy, and attracting new investment."

Barnett Rubin⁴²

High unemployment is posing a direct threat to Afghanistan's stability. Currently, it is believed that the unemployment rate in the country has reached a staggering 35 per cent. Job opportunities are particularly lacking for the majority of Afghans in the less secure areas of the country and the parts of the country hit by drought. The grim state of Afghanistan's human capital is further exacerbated by the absence of essential vocational training and support programmes.

"Many thousands of underemployed disaffected men in the Muslim world will continue to embrace bin Laden's doctrine of violent anti-Westernism."

Peter Bergen⁴³

Faced with low stocks of skilful human capital and the imminent threat of having no next generation workforce, Afghanistan's economic growth is in peril. With insurgents capitalising on the public frustration over economic hardships, it is imperative that the effective utilisation of community resources are maximised in order to promote sustainable economic development.

Zimbabwe's collapse reminiscent of Afghanistan's dire economic state

Nothing illustrates better the calamitous destruction of Zimbabwe's economy situation in the country: the unemployment rate has been stuck at around 80 per cent for years, the latest official inflation rate exceeds 6,600 per cent, the economy has shrunk an estimated 40 per cent in the last five years and it is estimated that at least 38 per cent of the population is malnourished.

While the situation in Zimbabwe began to steadily deteriorate in the nineties, the economy really started to collapse in 2000, when the *Fast Track Land Resettlement Programme* was initiated; the plan became one more instrument to deepen corruption and perpetuate the country's black economy.

⁴² *Foreign Affairs*, February 2007

⁴³ Bergen, p.391

A thriving illegal opium economy

In the absence of sustainable livelihoods, the country's illegal opium cultivation has flourished, providing the only means of livelihood for millions of Afghan farmers and their families. No other economic activity has yet to replace opium production in a sustainable manner. As a result, wheat, orchards and vegetable fields are progressively turning into poppy fields.

Crucially, opium cultivation in Afghanistan is now closely linked to insurgency with the Taliban extracting from the drug economy resources for arms, logistics and militia pay. The illegal drug industry has a strong interest in maintaining an environment of instability and lawlessness.

"We need to see strong action against narcotics in this country, which is undermining the foundations being built, increasing corruption and preventing the delivery of services to the people of Afghanistan."

Chris Alexander, UNAMA
22 October 2007

➤ Current situation and a dire outlook

In Afghanistan, the illegal opium economy is currently larger than ever before in the country's history. Afghanistan accounts for 93 per cent of global opium production. Over the past two years, opium production has doubled to 8,200 tons.⁴⁴

More than three million people are directly dependent on illegal poppy cultivation in 2007, equating to a total farmers' income of USD1 billion, compared to USD755 million the year before.⁴⁵ This is equivalent to 13 per cent of Afghanistan's GDP. Markedly, Afghan farming communities at best only receive a fourth of total domestic economic value stemming from the illegal opium economy. The remaining value is distributed to small-scale traders, shopkeepers, drug traffickers, "drug barons" and others.

The total domestic value of Afghanistan's illegal opium economy has now reached unprecedented levels and is estimated at a staggering sum of USD4 billion⁴⁶, equivalent to 53 per cent of the country's licit GDP. In total, approximately 35 per cent of the combined legal and illegal Afghan economy is directly derived from illegal opium.

⁴⁴ The latest data can be found in: UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007 (August 2007). See: http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf.

⁴⁵ A total number of 3.3 million Afghans are involved in opium cultivation; an estimated 14.3 per cent of the total population.

⁴⁶ UNODC bases this figure on a 90% confidence interval of US\$3.5-US\$4.5 billion.

Manual and mechanical eradication of poppy crops in Afghanistan have manifestly not produced any sustainable results, with both illicit poppy cultivation and opium production on the rise. A comparison of cultivation levels and amounts of hectares of cultivation eradicated since 2005 clearly demonstrates that there is no correlation between crop eradication and poppy cultivation.

No correlation between poppy crop eradication and cultivation		
Year	Eradication	Resulting net change in poppy cultivation
2005	5,100 hectares	21 per cent decrease in cultivation (104,000 ha)
2006	15,300 hectares	59 per cent increase in cultivation (165,000 ha)
2007	19,047 hectares	17 per cent increase in cultivation (193,000 ha)



Poppy fields in southern Afghanistan being eradicated

The ineffectiveness of poppy crop eradication to bring about a substantial reduction in poppy cultivation must be seen within the context of the economic nature of the opium problem in Afghanistan.

The majority of Afghan farmers still lack sustainable and profitable economic alternatives to fall back on after their fields are eradicated. In the meantime, they need to provide for their families and pay off their opium-denominated debts. Accordingly, poppy farmers are left with no other option than to replant and cultivate illegal opium poppy in the next planting season.

“Poppy production is a major factor in the Afghanistan's economy and for many farmers it is their only source of income. Poppy eradication programmes have merely alienated local farmers and reduced support for the Afghan government.”

Canadian Senator Raynell Andreychuk⁴⁷

⁴⁷ NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report, *Afghanistan and NATO's ongoing transformation*, 2007

➤ **No to Spraying (N2S)**

The poppy eradication policies being carried out in Afghanistan have added to the cycle of poverty and violence that has gripped the southern half of the country.

A number of factors are negatively impacting on crop eradication efforts. These include the lack of sustainable and profitable economic alternatives to poppy cultivation in most areas of Afghanistan; the lack of effective government control to enforce the crop eradication campaigns; local power-holders' resistance to eradication campaigns; and the corruptive manner in which crop eradication takes place with officers accepting bribes from resource-rich farmers not to eradicate their fields.



Forced eradication of poppy fields in southern Afghanistan

Despite the hugely negative effects that current eradication methods have had on the people of Afghanistan and the troops serving there, the US has inexplicably been calling for an even more aggressive and damaging type of eradication – chemical spraying. The US is in the process of authorising a major programme of crop spraying to eradicate Afghanistan's poppy cultivation in the start of 2008. This would be catastrophic, not only for the Afghan people, but for NATO troops.⁴⁸

“There is a strong opposition from the Afghan government and a perception that herbicide can harm animals and human beings and crops. Whether it is true or not, this is a perception there. The Taliban can exploit this.”

Ali Jalali, Former Interior Minister in Afghanistan
25 October 2007

⁴⁸ Before the end of 2007, The Senlis Council will publish the “No to Spraying” website and will initiate campaign-related activities.

The prospect of chemical eradication in Afghanistan – Spring 2008

For spring 2008, the United States is planning chemical eradication of poppy crops in Afghanistan. Chemical eradication will take place either from the ground, using tractors equipped with spraying devices or through aerial spraying, using aeroplanes.

In 2006, the US announced its intentions to use in Afghanistan the herbicide glyphosate, sold in the US and Canada under the trade name "Roundup". Although Roundup can be bought in stores for weed control, the damaging effects it can have depends on the exact composition of the glyphosate mixture used. Aerial spraying of glyphosate in Afghanistan by definition involves "missing" which in technical terms is called "spray drift", the spraying of dwellings, fish ponds, legal food crops and people. Glyphosate kills indiscriminately. This is one of the main reasons for why President Karzai and the Afghan government are against chemical eradication.

Widespread opposition to aerial spraying

The Karzai government is opposed to aerial spraying as an instrument of poppy eradication, pointing out the possible side-effects of spraying on other crops and human health. Thus far, the government has not authorized any foreign government or foreign company to carry out aerial spraying. Provincial Governors have also expressed their opposition to this forceful counter-narcotics policy.

The United Kingdom, coordinator of Afghanistan's counter-narcotics policy on behalf of the international community, has echoed Karzai's objections to chemical spraying on several occasions. Dr. Kim Howells, UK Minister responsible for the Middle East stressed that *"Neither chemical eradication nor incineration of poppy crops are viable options in Afghanistan. There would also be concerns about the risks that both chemicals and incineration pose to the environment and human health"* (March 2007).

In addition to the concerns expressed by these governments, the 1384 (2005) Afghan Counter Narcotics Implementation Plan explicitly states that the Afghan government has a no aerial eradication policy. The question is, however, how long the Afghan government will be able to resist the strong political pressure from the United States.

Chemical spraying to build support for the insurgency

It is the very economic nature of the Afghan opium crisis –extreme poverty and a lack of sustainable alternatives– that renders eradication ineffective as a counter-narcotics policy tool and counter-productive in terms of the international community's wider development and security agendas.

Switching to the use of chemicals would make the current failing counter-narcotics strategy even more harmful by putting international troops and national security forces in extreme danger. The exploitation of farmers' discontent and despair by the Taliban and other insurgents would create more political volatility in a country where the battle for "hearts and minds" is already suffering from previous policy errors. It could well give the Taliban the decisive strategic advantage when it comes to winning over local support and reinstating their power.

➤ **Poppy for Medicine**

The international community's refusal to support the Afghanistan government in wresting the tremendous natural economic resources – the medicinal poppy crop – away from the Taliban and Al-Qaeda is a key ingredient fuelling this phase of unrest in Afghanistan.

US-led crop eradication is fuelling the insurgency and resulting in year over year increases in opium yield and in the number of Afghan households involved. This policy means that billions of dollars in illicit narcotics trade are funding terrorism. Effective responses to the challenges in the main poppy growing area take into account the diverse and multiple connections between security, development and poppy cultivation in Afghanistan.

Instead of implementing futile yet politically expedient crop eradication-centred counter-narcotics policies, the international community must recognise the unique circumstances characterising the continued cultivation of poppy Afghanistan and open the way for new pragmatic approaches.

An available and immediate-term solution for southern Afghanistan is the production of essential opium-based medicine such as morphine. Such a *Poppy for Medicine* model has been developed and fine tuned to Afghanistan's security and development realities over the past two years.⁴⁹

Following the release in June 2007 of a *Poppy for Medicine* "Technical Dossier"⁵⁰ containing the details of this short-term development project, the European Parliament endorsed the proposal with an overwhelming majority in October, urging the Council of the European Union to further investigate this possibility.⁵¹

The European Parliament's consensus on Afghan counter-narcotics policy rests on two important elements: On the one hand, the Parliament agreed with the need to investigate all possible economic solutions to address the opium crisis including *Poppy for Medicine*. In response to this endorsement, The Senlis Council released a *Poppy for Medicine* economic case-study in November 2007, which consists of further details about the costs of the project, the production process and the benefits for farmers and the wider rural community.

⁴⁹ In 2005, The Senlis Council started its research into an Afghan *Poppy for Medicine* model. The initial findings were released in the form of a Feasibility Study at a conference in Kabul. Building on these initial findings and ongoing extensive field research, The Senlis Council has released its *Poppy for Medicine* Technical Dossier in 2007, including all technical specifications and the entire economic model of the system. See: <http://www.poppyformedicine.net> for all details of this development model.

⁵⁰ The Senlis Council, "Poppy for Medicine: Licensing poppy cultivation for the production of essential medicines: an integrated counter-narcotics, development and counter-insurgency model for Afghanistan," (London 2007). See: http://www.senliscouncil.net/modules/publications/documents/poppy_medicine_technical_dossier.

⁵¹ For the full Report and Recommendation to the Council of the European Union, see: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=2&procnum=INI/2007/2125>.

On the other hand, the Parliament agreed that chemical spraying of poppy crops should not be an option in Afghanistan. The latter is extremely important given the US commitment to push for aerial or ground spraying of chemicals despite the serious consequences this will have for the stability and security of the country.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
Possible Worst Case Scenarios

A number of worst case scenarios could eventuate from the present dire situation, effectively leading to the disintegration of the Afghan state.

Possible Future Scenario 1:
Compromising development assistance for military operations

In this scenario, the deterioration of security in the south requires the further deployment of military forces. The prioritisation of military operations over development assistance reaches unprecedented levels, with development spending becoming an even smaller fraction of military expenditures, and resources for the delivery of aid becoming virtually non-existent. The international community's failure to adopt a development-driven strategy for Afghanistan effectively leads to the failure of their mission.

Trigger	Indicators	Alert Status (Nov 2007)
<i>Complete absence of humanitarian aid leading to massive starvation and renewed exodus of refugees into neighbouring countries</i>	Humanitarian aid cannot reach distant regions due to lack of resources and low priority given to this; militants attack food convoys and humanitarian aid personnel targeted by rebels. Repatriation reversed; more refugee camps established in northern Pakistan and Iran.	55 food convoys have been attacked and 34 aid workers killed in 2007
<i>Existing infrastructure falls under Taliban control or is destroyed</i>	Schools are destroyed or converted to Taliban-era madrassas; roads are routinely targeted and checkpoints are controlled by insurgents.	Number of attacks on schools is increasing, key ring road from Kabul to Kandahar is partly controlled by the Taliban
<i>Civilian casualties rate sharply increases to close to 200 people per month and remains constant. No healthcare facilities are in place to provide essential services in the aftermath of these incidents</i>	Increased use of suicide bomb attacks, more NATO-ISAF 'pre-emptive' shootings in response; NATO-ISAF bombings kill more civilians.	Last September marked the highest monthly death toll this year with 155 civilian casualties; a single suicide bomb attack on 6 November killed sixty people, the bloodiest attack yet.

**Possible Future Scenario 2:
Afghan government fails its people – Black economy thrives**

This scenario exemplifies the extent to which existing instability and insecurity in Afghanistan is jeopardising its future social and economic development. As it stands right now, this is one area where preventive and corrective measures can still be put in place to ensure that social progress is viable.

In the absence of immediate assistance and sustainable social and economic reforms, Afghanistan is bound to be lost; there will be no educated and skilled next generation, civil unrest and the black economy will flourish, and the Afghan government will lose the support of its people ineradicably.

“I cannot provide for my family; I don’t have any work and I am ill. My eldest son is only three years old. My mother is begging for food. Only the people at the mosque collect some money for us.”

Afghan refugee, Kandahar City IDP camp

“We don’t receive any help, no aid whatsoever. My family and I don’t have anything to eat. We have no shelter and no drinking water. We can only get some water from the houses around the camp. We are forced to move from one place to the other.”

Young Afghan refugee, Kandahar City IDP camp

Trigger	Indicators	Alert Status (Nov 2007)
<i>Taliban threats and attacks on schools and hospitals hinder school attendance and provision of essential healthcare, respectively</i>	Ever more teachers and students are kidnapped, attacked and killed; increasing numbers of schools are destroyed. Hospitals forced to operate in miserable conditions or shut down; more civilians go untreated and die.	This year at least 300 schools did not open because of insecurity; 85 teachers and 40 students were killed last year. Healthcare system is frail and inconsistent. Vast majority of population suffers from lack of essential healthcare
<i>Afghan government unable to effectively spend development aid</i>	Corruption affects most development aid project; development funds are routinely diverged; donors cut further donations.	Corruption is embedded in all government levels with large sums of money initially targeted for reconstruction now embezzled
<i>Due to a surge in violence and loss of control in large areas, an increasing number of NGOs are forced to close operations or retreat to Kabul</i>	NGOs targeted by militants; IGOs and INGOs can't find suitable local NGOs to work with.	UN World Food Programme halts operations for food distribution. It is estimated that 400,000 Afghans will face starvation this winter due to persistent violence Collaboration with Afghan partners is minimal
<i>Unemployment rate soars to more than 55 per cent</i>	Higher numbers of refugees return to Afghanistan but are jobless; more efficient forced eradication and aerial spraying of poppy fields drive large numbers of farmers into unemployment; insecurity discourages foreign investors.	American government is pushing hard for aerial spraying; trade is greatly affected by insurgency; illegal economy flourishing
<i>Illegal poppy cultivation reaches higher levels accounting for more than 65 per cent of the country's GDP</i>	Lack of alternative livelihoods forces farmers to continue or start growing poppies; resurgent Taliban encourage farmers to continue down this path. Poppy-free provinces resume cultivation.	All official and anecdotal information published so far points to yet another bumper crop in 2007
<i>Black economy outweighs legal economy</i>	Taliban support more illegal operations to fund insurgency; authorities unable to combat all illegal activities.	Record poppy crop expected; farmers are now expanding into cannabis production

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Recommendations

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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.

4. 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.

Chapter III

GOVERNANCE



A meeting of mullahs in Herat, June 2006

GOVERNANCE Overview

When the US-led coalition removed the Taliban from power in autumn 2001, promises of democracy generated euphoria and high expectations amongst the Afghan population.

Essentially, the international community's plan for building a democratic state was based on meeting western post-conflict benchmarks. The Constitution, Presidential and Parliamentary elections are, indeed, milestones on Afghanistan's path towards a functioning, open government.

However, when Afghans are confronted daily with visible manifestations of the state's weakness and what is widely perceived to be interference by international actors, Afghanistan's governance is at risk.

International community's ill-advised policies undermining the credibility of the Afghan Government

International resources to help build Afghan institutions have proven insufficient. The international community has applied western benchmarks to Afghanistan's post-conflict state-building, failing to understand the country's realities and therefore bringing about genuine and sustainable political reforms. The nascent institutions represent important symbols of progress but, in reality, have had little impact on the lives of ordinary Afghans.

The Afghan government is an indispensable ally for the international community in its stabilisation efforts. However, the pursuit of misguided policies by the international community has severely undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan Government as the latter is called to defend such ill-advised policies to its people. In particular, local support is diluted by military actions that cause civilian casualties and forceful counter-narcotics policies that destroy the only means of livelihood of the Afghan rural communities.

With domestic policies increasingly determined by the international community and the local population doubting the ability of the government to protect its citizens, the Afghan government is becoming progressively irrelevant.

"You do need a certain set of circumstances for democracy to take root and become effective; there is no question about that. It's not just about elections. You need democratic institutions, the rule of law, and the instruments of civil society. We have to constantly measure our policies by whether they weaken the extremists and strengthen the moderates, and do so in such a way that doesn't have counterproductive effects."

Zalmay Khalilzad, US Ambassador to the UN, 16 October

Public perceptions: Simply not enough progress

On a daily basis, Afghans are faced with visible manifestations of the state's inability to protect them: endemic corruption, poor infrastructure, increased violence, a booming drugs trade, uneven economic growth and international intervention in domestic policies.

The majority of Afghans are frustrated with the little progress achieved so far and consider their government incapable of delivering services and enforcing law and order. It is imperative that the Afghan government is given the political space to increase its capacity and deliver essential services across the country. If not, the Afghan government would lose all credibility and the Afghan people would lose all faith in the government's authority.

Government losing legitimacy to the Taliban

The Afghan government has been unable to consolidate its power or extend the rule of law, throughout the country, particularly in southern Afghanistan. Critically, its incapacity to deliver essential services and protect its citizens has been cleverly exploited by the Taliban.

In several of Afghanistan's provinces, the Taliban is now seizing on this power vacuum by providing some of the services which should be delivered by the Afghan government. The Taliban now has psychological and *de facto* military control of large areas in the southern part of the country, further fuelling its resurgence. Afghanistan's weak government is increasingly losing touch with the Afghan people in the south, and the sense of national unity and ownership is gradually being lost.

NOTE: Governance Worst Case Scenarios and Recommendations are inherent features of the other sections, hence only Threat Factors are detailed below

GOVERNANCE Threat Factors

FACTOR ONE: The international community's misguided policies

Threat: Reflecting upon an ill-advised plan

Following decades of war and desolation, the US-led international coalition sought to establish a democratic, stable and effective state in autumn 2001. The creation of an Afghan Interim Authority, as agreed in the Bonn Agreement, signalled the first step towards the implementation of a "broad-based, gender sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government"⁵².

From this early stage, however, the international community failed to consider Afghanistan's local realities, particularly the relevance of decentralised consensus-based power at the local level. Afghanistan has had a long tradition of weak central government, tribalism and ethnic tensions. Decades of war have reinforced decentralised power, vested in strong local structures and regional powerholders. Regrettably, the international community has also disregarded Afghanistan's ethnic composition, a crucial factor in securing national unity and stability. Pashtuns, the country's largest ethnic group and important base of support for the Taliban, felt underrepresented in the successor regime.

Failure to encompass Afghanistan's traditional local structures

International efforts to build a stable and prosperous democratic Afghanistan were based on a misconception of Afghanistan's political realities.

Decades of conflict and devastation have reinforced Afghanistan's decentralised political power. For the majority of ordinary Afghans, it is local structures with which they identify rather than with the distant central government. In terms of ethnic allegiances, mechanisms for social control and administration, it is the traditional local practices that take precedence over the widely ineffective and unpopular central government. Notably, the authority of the informal local decision-making and dispute settlement institutions *jirga* and *shura* predominates throughout Afghanistan.

⁵² Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, known as Bonn Agreement, 5 December 2001

In the years to come, the implementation of the international community's plan for Afghanistan was based on western democracy benchmarks with success essentially reflecting on the organisation of national elections and the adoption of Afghanistan's constitution. "Ticking the boxes" and the nascent democratic institutions were perceived as evidence of success by the international community. However, for the Afghans, these achievements are perceived as merely symbols with no substantial impact on their day-to-day lives.

"There have been many achievements resulting from the engagement of the international community in Afghanistan since 2001. These include the new Constitution, the 2004 and 2005 elections, the revival of education, progress in rebuilding war-damaged infrastructure and the return of approximately four million refugees to the country.

However, this progress is now being undermined by a range of new threats to the Afghan state, some of which have their roots in policy mistakes of the 2001-05 years. These threats include the growing insurgency, which has now spread to provinces in the west, north and centre of Afghanistan, the high levels of corruption within the government and police, the burgeoning drugs trade and the problem of weak capacity in public institutions."

Christian Aid

Submission to UK International Development Committee, 25 October 2007

By failing to comprehend Afghanistan's unique realities and the real needs of the Afghan people, the international community has fallen short in bringing about real and sustained political reforms. Six years on, international promises of good governance and stability have failed to materialise.

Threat: International interference in domestic policies and the pursuit of counter-productive policies

The Karzai Government is an indispensable ally for the international community in its stabilisation efforts. However, the Afghan government is often called to defend ill-advised policies pursued by the international community, which severely undermine its legitimacy and credibility amongst the Afghan population.

Afghan communities are losing faith in the Afghan government as they perceive the latter incapable of preventing the international community from pursuing misguided policies in the areas of counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics.

The interference of international actors in the formulation and implementation of domestic policies has undermined the authority and popularity of the Afghan government.

In the past year, the Afghan communities have witnessed an increase in violence with US-led military forces embarking on an unprecedented number of aerial bombings due to a lack of political will to deploy sufficient troops on the ground.

This has led to a growing number of civilian casualties, fuelling public frustration about the lack of protection and widespread resentment towards international troops and the Afghan government.

The pursuit of ill-advised counter-narcotics policies by the international community has also severely undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan government. In the absence of immediate alternative livelihoods and access to resources necessary to phase out illegal poppy cultivation, forceful poppy crop eradication has fuelled widespread public frustration towards both the Afghan government and international forces.

Crucially, the unsystematic and often corrupt manner in which forced eradication is implemented has fuelled support for the Taliban as the latter offers swift protection to farming communities. In effect, current forceful counter-narcotics policies lead to the growing irrelevance of the Afghan government to its people and risk failure of the international mission in Afghanistan.

FACTOR TWO: Afghanistan's governance in crisis

Afghanistan's state-building efforts must focus on reforming, building and supporting government institutions in order to improve their effectiveness, and on increasing the strength and centrality of the state in the governance and delivery of development assistance.

Threat: Failure to deliver essential services and the loss of national unity

Notwithstanding proclamations of substantial progress being made in Afghanistan, the country's central institutions are far from being representative and inclusive. The Afghan people believe that the only accountability the government has it is to the international community and not to its citizens.

Public institutions are viewed by and large as purely symbolic, lacking the efficiency and accountability necessary. Afghans also perceive a lack of just and fair representation, with a sense of unity and public confidence at low levels. The Afghan government's reputation must be urgently restored, with reform primarily focusing on accountability, fairness and ethnic representation.

The pace of real and sustained social and economic reforms in Afghanistan has been slow. On a daily basis, Afghans are faced with visible manifestations of the state's weakness to deliver services and enforce law and order: a surge in violence; uneven economic growth and poor infrastructure all work to undermine the Afghan government's credibility.

Six years after the Taliban regime was toppled, Afghanistan continues to rank at the bottom of all major human development and poverty indicators globally. A significant proportion of the Afghan population, especially in the southern part of the country, lives in appalling conditions and suffers from malnutrition and lack of access to essential healthcare.



The Majority of Afghans live in appalling conditions

Afghanistan is also ravaged by a thriving illegal economy. The country's economy is far more dependent on the production and export of illegal drugs than any other in the world. In the absence of legal job opportunities, opium cultivation has flourished. Importantly, the illegal drug industry has a strong interest in maintaining an environment conducive to lawlessness and insecurity.

Furthermore, the Karzai Government is also suffering from a lack of qualified officials. With Afghanistan's brightest either residing outside the country or working with international organisations in higher-pay positions, the government is faced with a short supply of competent and skilled labour.

It is now widely perceived that the Afghan government lacks the capacity to protect and provide for its citizens. Long term military intervention alongside the lack of social and economic development has generated public resentment. Conditions for Afghans must be urgently improved, otherwise faith in the Karzai Government will be lost completely.

FACTOR THREE:**The Afghan government losing legitimacy to the Taliban**

In areas of the south where the Afghan government is unable to exert control, the Taliban are increasingly seizing on the power vacuum. Six years on, the Taliban are regaining de facto power in large areas with Taliban control set to engulf the rest of Afghanistan.

Threat: The return of the Taliban

The Afghan government's incapacity to deliver essential services and protect its citizens from misguided policies and a surge in violence has reinforced public frustration and disapproval. In turn, the central government has been unable to consolidate its power or extend the rule of law outside the main centre. Critically, this has generated a considerable power vacuum in Afghanistan's most insecure areas, with the Taliban cleverly capitalising on this.

In several of Afghanistan's southern provinces, the Taliban moves freely and exercise its will and power. By providing some of the services that should normally be delivered by the Afghan government, the Taliban are gaining public support. With the government lacking the funds to provide for its citizens and unable to create sustainable job opportunities for a large proportion of the population, Afghanistan's rural south is progressively developing into recruitment ground for the Taliban.



Taliban's recruitment targets: Abandoned young boys in Afghanistan's refugee camps

In addition to providing services and economic opportunities to the local population, the Taliban also offer farming communities protection from forceful crop eradication, as pursued by the international community. In turn, the Taliban is gradually regaining psychological control of large rural areas, further fuelling its resurgence.

With the Taliban exerting increasing control over the local population in the southern part of the country, Afghanistan's weak government is becoming increasingly irrelevant to its people. The sense of public confidence and the government's legitimacy is gradually being lost and international counter-insurgency operations are put at grave risk.