



House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee

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# Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan

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**Eighth Report of Session 2008–09**

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and  
written evidence*

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# Conclusions and recommendations

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## CHAPTER 2: THE ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN AFGHANISTAN

### NATO, ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom

1. We conclude that, particularly bearing in mind that this is the first ever NATO deployment outside of NATO's 'area', this has now become a most critical and seminal moment for the future of the Alliance. We also conclude that the failure of some NATO allies to ensure that the burden of international effort in Afghanistan is shared equitably has placed an unacceptable strain on a handful of countries. We further conclude that there is a real possibility that without a more equitable distribution of responsibility and risk, NATO's effort will be further inhibited and its reputation as a military alliance, capable of undertaking out-of-area operations, seriously damaged. We recommend that the British Government should continue to exert pressure on NATO partners to remove national caveats and to fulfil their obligations. We further recommend that where NATO allies are unwilling to commit combat troops, they must be persuaded to fulfil their obligations in ways which nevertheless contribute to the overall ISAF effort, for example, by providing appropriate support including equipment and enhanced training for the Afghan National Army. (Paragraph 23)
2. We conclude that no matter how difficult the circumstances facing the military in Afghanistan, the use of air power and acts of considerable cultural insensitivity on the part of some Coalition Forces over an extended period have done much to shape negative perceptions among ordinary Afghans about the military and the international effort in Afghanistan. This problem has caused damage, both real and perceived, that will in many instances be difficult to undo. We further conclude that recent policy changes which aim to improve procedures, combined with the commitment of senior military figures to adopting better practices, are a welcome development. We recommend that, in its response to this Report, the Government supply us with detailed information on measures that are being taken by Coalition Forces in Afghanistan to provide more pro-active and appropriate protection of civilians in the future. (Paragraph 29)
3. We conclude that the conditions under which prisoners and detainees are treated once in the hands of the Afghan authorities are a matter of considerable concern. We will deal with the issue of treatment of those detained by British forces further in our forthcoming annual Report on human rights. (Paragraph 33)

### The role of the United Nations

4. We conclude that while the British Government's support of the UN and for proposals for the UN to play a more significant role as the overarching co-ordinator of the international community's efforts in Afghanistan are to be welcomed, it remains to be seen whether this will involve significant improvements in practice. We recommend that in its response to this Report the Government states what

evidence there is, if any, of actual improvements in international co-ordination. (Paragraph 39)

### **The role of the European Union**

5. We conclude that the EU's effort in Afghanistan thus far has not lived up to its potential. We further conclude that there is a need for the EU and its Member States to address the lack of coherence which exists within the EU effort if it is to have a greater impact in the future. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government should supply us with updated information on the progress it has made in persuading EU Member States and the European Commission to harmonise and co-ordinate their activities within Afghanistan. (Paragraph 44)

### **The US and its policy on Afghanistan under the Bush Administration**

6. We conclude that some, though certainly not all, of the responsibility for problems in Afghanistan since 2001 must be attributed to the direction of US policy in the years immediately after the military intervention in 2001. The unilateralist tendencies of the US under the Bush administration, and its focus on military goals to the exclusion of many other strategically important issues, set the tone for the international community's early presence in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 49)

### **Regional neighbours**

7. We recommend that the Government continues to make clear to the Iranian leadership the total unacceptability to the UK of Iran's direct and indirect assistance to the Taliban in their operations against Coalition Forces. (Paragraph 53)
8. We conclude that the FCO should continue to use its influence to foster greater co-operation between Afghanistan and its neighbours and recommend that in its response to this Report it updates us on recent developments in this respect. (Paragraph 61)

## **CHAPTER 3: WHERE AFGHANISTAN IS NOW: AN ASSESSMENT**

### **The security situation**

9. We conclude that the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly in the south where the majority of British troops are based, will remain precarious for some time to come. We further conclude that the current instability is having a damaging effect on Coalition Forces and efforts to engage in reconstruction and development. (Paragraph 65)

### **Afghan Security Forces**

10. We conclude that the steady progress being made towards the creation of the Afghan National Army stands in sharp contrast to the disappointingly slow pace on police reform, for which Germany was the 'lead nation' before responsibility was transferred to EUPOL. As a consequence, the United States has considered it has no

option but to invest a considerable amount of effort and resource in police reform, with assistance and training provided by the US military. We further conclude that military-led reform of civilian police institutions, no matter how well-intentioned, must run the risk of creating a paramilitary-style police as opposed to the civilian force which was originally envisaged and which will be needed in the future. (Paragraph 79)

## Governance, justice and human rights

11. We conclude that the failure to create an effective formal justice system as promised in the Bonn Agreement means that many Afghans remain reliant on traditional, informal mechanisms of justice. We welcome the Government's policy of developing links between formal and informal mechanisms of justice providing that full access, including to decision-taking, is sought for women in both mechanisms. However, we further conclude that the Government must guard against inadvertently endorsing any measures which could lead to the introduction, through informal mechanisms, of extreme forms of justice which retard or even reverse the slow progress that has been made towards promoting internationally accepted standards of human rights in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 88)
12. We conclude that almost eight years after the international community became involved in Afghanistan, virtually no tangible progress has been made in tackling the endemic problem of corruption, and that in many cases the problem has actually become worse. We further conclude that policy commitments, action plans and all manner of strategies are of little value if they are not accompanied by the political will on the part of the Afghan President and government to drive forward change and tackle corruption at senior levels. Although corruption is a worldwide problem, the situation in Afghanistan is particularly bad and requires an Afghan-led solution if it is to be significantly reduced. (Paragraph 94)
13. We conclude that while much effort has been expended by Western governments on promoting human rights in Afghanistan, the underlying dynamics and cultural views in Afghanistan, amongst men in particular, have not shifted to any great extent. As long as security remains poor, human rights protection will not be considered a priority by many Afghans. (Paragraph 100)
14. We conclude that the proposed "Shia family law" which would have legalised rape within marriage and legitimised the subjugation of Shia women in Afghanistan, represented an affront to decent human values. We further conclude that it is a matter for alarm that these proposals were considered to be acceptable by President Karzai, by a majority in the Afghan parliament, and by significant elements of Afghan public opinion. This episode highlights the challenges that Afghan women continue to face in realising their basic human rights nearly eight years after the fall of the Taliban government. We conclude that this proposed law has had a detrimental affect on international perceptions of Afghanistan. We welcome the British Government's announcement that it considers those aspects of the law which undermine human rights to be wholly unacceptable. We recommend that the Government keeps us fully informed if the Shia Family Law takes legal effect and, if it does, provides us with an analysis as to whether it has been brought in line with the

Afghan Constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women, and with the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party. (Paragraph 114)

### Counter-narcotics

15. We recommend that the Government continues to do its utmost to persuade its ISAF partners in Afghanistan to give their full support and co-operation to ISAF's expanded role of conducting operations against drugs facilities and facilitators. (Paragraph 124)
16. We conclude that in accepting the role of Afghanistan's 'lead' international partner in respect of counter-narcotics, the UK has taken on a poisoned chalice. There is little evidence to suggest that recent reductions in poppy cultivation are the result of the policies adopted by the UK, other international partners or the Afghan government. While the British Government is to be commended for its broad-ranging, holistic approach to tackling narcotics in Afghanistan, it is clear that success depends on a range of factors which lie far beyond the control and resource of the UK alone. The scale of the problem, the drugs trade's importance to Afghanistan's economy and its connection to corruption makes any early achievement of the aspirations set out in the Bonn Agreement highly unlikely. We further conclude that the lead international role on counter-narcotics should be transferred away from the UK, and that the Afghan Government should instead be partnered at an international level by the United Nations and ISAF which are better equipped to co-ordinate international efforts. (Paragraph 126)
17. We recommend that if the Government accepts our recommendation to relinquish the role of lead partner nation on counter-narcotics, it ought to re-focus its effort on facilitating regional co-operation and driving forward diplomatic efforts within international organisations to tackle the trafficking and processing of drugs. (Paragraph 129)

### Economic and social development

18. We conclude that long-term investment in education for young people of both genders in Afghanistan is both morally compelling and strategically sensible. It will enable Afghanistan to create an educated and skilled workforce equipped to develop the country and reduce its dependency on foreign funding. We recommend that the Government should consider extending educational twinning programmes to students in Afghanistan in a bid to foster educational opportunities and improve mutual understanding between students and teachers in the UK and Afghanistan. (Paragraph 136)
19. We conclude that in 2009 economic and social development in Afghanistan continues to lag behind what international donors promised and what, consequently, Afghans had a right to expect as a result of Western intervention in their country. We further conclude, however, that the success of recently initiated Afghan-led projects, such as the National Solidarity Programme, which appear to offer a highly effective model for delivering change, is encouraging. We welcome the British Government's support of this and similar initiatives which are having an impact on

the lives of large numbers of people in rural Afghanistan. We recommend that the Government continue to examine how it can encourage other international donors to support Afghanistan in this way. We further recommend that in its response the FCO sets out what it considers the most important priorities of the international community in Afghanistan to be. (Paragraph 140)

### The international community's approach and impact

20. We conclude that the international effort in Afghanistan since 2001 has delivered much less than it promised and that its impact has been significantly diluted by the absence of a unified vision and strategy, grounded in the realities of Afghanistan's history, culture and politics. We recognise that although Afghanistan's current situation is not solely the legacy of the West's failures since 2001, avoidable mistakes, including knee-jerk responses, policy fragmentation and overlap, now make the task of stabilising the country considerably more difficult than might otherwise have been the case. We recommend that in its response to this Report the FCO sets out what lessons have been learned from the mistakes made by the international community over the last seven years. (Paragraph 145)

## CHAPTER 4: PAKISTAN'S STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE AND ROLE IN RELATION TO AFGHANISTAN

### Pakistan's strategic importance

21. We conclude that Pakistan's strategic importance derives not only from the sanctuary that its semi-autonomous border areas provide to extremists who seek to cause instability in Afghanistan, but also because of connections between the border areas and those involved in international terrorism. We further conclude that it is difficult to overestimate the importance of tackling not just the symptoms but the root causes that enable this situation to persist. (Paragraph 158)
22. We conclude that allegations raised during our inquiry about the safety of nuclear technology and claims of possible collusion between Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, and Al Qaeda are a matter of deep concern. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government sets out its assessment of these allegations and the extent of the threat that this poses. (Paragraph 160)

### Recent Pakistani responses to militancy

23. We conclude that there is a pressing need for the Pakistani government to address the role that some madrassahs play in the recruitment and radicalisation process in Pakistan. We recommend that the British Government sets out in its response to this Report what discussions it has had with the Pakistani Government about this issue, and whether it has raised allegations of Saudi Arabian funding of radical madrassahs with the Saudi authorities. (Paragraph 164)
24. We conclude that Pakistan's civilian government has recently taken some important steps to counter insurgency at a considerable cost in terms of military lives lost. We welcome the increasing recognition at senior levels within the Pakistani military of

the need for a recalibrated approach to militancy but we remain concerned that this may not necessarily be replicated elsewhere within the army and ISI. We conclude that President Zardari's recent remarks that he regards the real threat to his country as being terrorism rather than India are to be welcomed. However, we further conclude that doubts remain as to whether the underlying fundamentals of Pakistani security policy have changed sufficiently to realise the goals of long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 176)

### **Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan**

25. We conclude that addressing long-standing concerns of the Pashtun populace on either side of the Durand Line and the respective governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan in relation to the Durand Line itself, could, in the long term, help to increase bilateral co-operation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, reduce sources of political friction and help tackle the causes, and not just the symptoms, of poverty and weak governance which Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups have exploited so effectively in recent years. Given the UK's close relationship with both Afghanistan and Pakistan and its historical ties to the region (which include the imposition of the Durand Line by British colonial administrators), we further conclude that the UK has a moral imperative to provide whatever diplomatic or practical support might be deemed appropriate by the relevant parties to assist them in finding ways of addressing the many problematic issues that are the Durand Line's legacy. (Paragraph 182)

### **US attacks on targets in Pakistan**

26. We conclude that the use of US drones to attack Al Qaeda targets in Pakistan may have resulted in serious damage to Al Qaeda's network and capabilities. However, we also conclude that these attacks have damaged the US's reputation among elements of the Pakistani population who regard them as a violation of Pakistani sovereignty. We further conclude that drone attacks remain a high-risk strategy and must not become a substitute for the challenging yet vital task of building a Pakistani civilian government counter-terrorist capacity and army capable of conducting counter-insurgency operations and dealing with extremist threats. (Paragraph 199)

### **India**

27. We reiterate our previous conclusion from our South Asia Report that the UK should encourage India and Pakistan to make further progress on the peace process, but that the Government should not get directly involved in negotiations nor try to suggest solutions to the question of Kashmir, unless requested to do so by both India and Pakistan. (Paragraph 201)
28. We conclude that the US plan marks an important and long overdue recalibration of its relationship with Pakistan. Its emphasis on civilian aid, with appropriate conditions attached, has the potential to ensure that long term improvements in Pakistan's political, economic and social capacity limit the appeal of extremism. We further conclude that it is crucial that the US addresses Pakistan's fears, both

legitimate and perceived, relating to India and reassures Pakistan about the extent and nature of the US's long-term commitment to Pakistan. (Paragraph 211)

## CHAPTER 6: THE UK'S MISSION IN AFGHANISTAN

### The UK's expanding mission in Afghanistan

29. We conclude that the UK's mission in Afghanistan has taken on a significantly different, and considerably expanded, character since the first British troops were deployed there in 2001. The UK has moved from its initial goal of supporting the US in countering international terrorism, far into the realms of counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, protection of human rights, and state-building. During our visit we were struck by the sheer magnitude of the task confronting the UK. We conclude that there has been significant 'mission creep' in the British deployment to Afghanistan, and that this has resulted in the British government being now committed to a wide range of objectives. We further conclude that in its response to this Report, the Government should set out, in unambiguous terms, its first and most important priority in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 225)

### The UK deployment to Helmand

30. We conclude that the UK deployment to Helmand was undermined by unrealistic planning at senior levels, poor co-ordination between Whitehall departments and crucially, a failure to provide the military with clear direction. We further conclude that as the situation currently stands, the "comprehensive approach" is faltering, largely because the security situation is preventing any strengthening of governance and Afghan capacity. The very clear conclusion that we took from our visit to Helmand is that stabilisation need not be complicated or expensive, but it does require provision of security, good governance, and a belief within the local population that ISAF forces will outlast the insurgents. (Paragraph 236)

### The role of, and impact on, the British armed forces

31. We conclude that the Government must ensure that our armed forces are provided with the appropriate resources to undertake the tasks requested of them, particularly in an environment as challenging as Helmand. We further conclude that in spite of well-documented difficulties, British armed forces are now gradually beginning to create and sustain the conditions that make it possible to extend good governance and the rule of law in the most heavily populated areas of Helmand. We conclude that the support provided by additional equipment and by the US 'surge' of troops in Helmand will be of considerable assistance, and is greatly to be welcomed. (Paragraph 248)

### The role of FCO staff in Afghanistan

32. We conclude that the ability to engage with Afghans in key local languages is crucial to the UK's effort in Afghanistan and we are concerned that nearly eight years after intervening in Afghanistan, the FCO still has no Pashtu speakers. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the FCO sets out why this situation

exists and what it is doing, as a matter of urgency, to rectify the situation. (Paragraph 250)

33. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the FCO provides details of the length of Postings which it uses in Afghanistan and whether it is considering introducing longer tour lengths to ensure continuity of knowledge and experience. (Paragraph 252)

## **CHAPTER 7: THE UK'S NEW STRATEGY FOR AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN: A WAY FORWARD?**

### **Justifications for the UK's continued presence in Afghanistan**

34. We conclude that while the drugs trade has an invidious effect on governance on Afghanistan and ultimately, through the flow of heroin to the West, has a damaging impact on the UK, the Government's assessment that the drugs trade in Afghanistan is a strategic threat to the UK which, in part, merits the UK's continued military presence in Afghanistan, is debatable. (Paragraph 274)
35. We conclude that the expansion of the stated justifications for the UK's mission in Afghanistan since 2001 has made it more difficult for the Government to communicate the basic purpose of the mission and this risks undermining support for the mission both in the UK and in Afghanistan. We welcome the Government's recognition that its strategy must be grounded in realistic objectives. However, it is not easy to see how this can be reconciled with the open-ended and wide-ranging series of objectives which form the current basis for UK effort in Afghanistan. We recommend that in the immediate future the Government should re-focus its efforts to concentrate its limited resources on one priority, namely security. (Paragraph 278)
36. We conclude that there can be no question of the international community abandoning Afghanistan, and that the issues at stake must therefore be how best the UK and its allies can allocate responsibilities and share burdens so as to ensure that the country does not once again fall into the hands of those who seek to threaten the security of the UK and the West. We further conclude that the need for the international community to convey publicly that it intends to outlast the insurgency and remain in Afghanistan until the Afghan authorities are able to take control of their own security, must be a primary objective. (Paragraph 279)

### **The UK's strategy for Pakistan**

37. We welcome the Prime Minister's announcement of £10 million to support the Pakistani government's counter terrorism efforts and we recommend that the Government intensifies its help to Pakistan in this area. (Paragraph 289)
38. We conclude that the Government is correct to place a heavy emphasis on Pakistan in its new strategy for Afghanistan, published in April 2009, and to seek to build on the broad engagement that the UK has had with Pakistan in relation to counter-terrorism since 2001. We welcome the focus on long-term solutions and the Government's commitment to assisting Pakistan to strengthen its civilian

institutions. We conclude the balance of the UK's relationship with Pakistan particularly regarding its co-operation on counter-terrorism has to be improved. (Paragraph 294)

39. We recommend that the Government should consider how best it can work with allies to develop an international policy for assisting the Pakistani government in dealing with the Taliban and Al Qaeda. (Paragraph 295)
40. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government provides us with an update on what measures it is implementing in Pakistan to strengthen the integrity of its visa application and processing operations against fraudulent applications and to what extent and in what ways it is co-operating with the UK Borders Agency on this matter. (Paragraph 297)

## CHAPTER 8: TOWARDS A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT?

41. We conclude that a negotiated, Afghan-led political settlement with broad popular support represents the only realistic option for long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. However, we further conclude that there can be no serious prospect of meaningful discussions until Coalition Forces and the Afghan National Security Forces gain, and retain, the upper hand on security across the country, including in Helmand, and are then able to negotiate from a position of strength. For these reasons we conclude that the current increased military activity is a necessary prerequisite for any long-term political settlement. (Paragraph 311)
42. We welcome the commitment of the US and UK governments to ensuring that human rights are not undermined in any future reconciliation process and we conclude that the meaningful participation of women is an essential element in any negotiated reconciliation, as has been the case in many other post-conflict peace processes. (Paragraph 318)

# 1 Introduction

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## Background

1. Located at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, Afghanistan has been a battlefield for some six centuries and a “strategic prize for foreign empires for more than 200 years”.<sup>1</sup> The most recent episode of foreign military intervention in the country began in October 2001, when US aircraft targeted Taliban strongholds in response to Al Qaeda’s terrorist attacks on New York and Washington D.C. in the previous month. Backed on the ground by US Special Forces, and in conjunction with the Afghan Northern Alliance, the United States waged war against the Taliban government which had provided shelter to Al Qaeda and Osama Bin Laden. The UK, along with many other nations, were swift to respond to the US’s call for support in its ‘war against terror’ and in October 2001, British forces entered Afghanistan in support of the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) which was tasked with destroying the Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, and ending the Taliban regime that supported them. By the end of 2001, the Taliban government in Afghanistan had collapsed, “its remnants melting back into the Pashtun populace in southern Afghanistan and the Pakistani tribal areas”<sup>2</sup> where many Al Qaeda fighters and members, including Bin Laden, found shelter.

2. With the Taliban apparently in retreat, the international community set about developing a strategy to re-build Afghanistan to prevent it once again becoming a safe haven for terrorists intent on targeting the West. This came in the form of the Bonn Agreement of December 2001, which provided for a political and stabilisation process and power-sharing arrangements under a new constitution. Presidential elections took place on 9 October 2004, with Hamid Karzai later announced as the winner with 55.4% of the vote. The first Parliamentary and Provincial elections in 36 years took place on 18 September 2005 with 6.8 million Afghans voting, and the inaugural session of the Afghan National Assembly was held on 19 December 2005, marking the completion of the Bonn process. In its place, the Afghanistan Compact was launched, providing a framework for international and Afghan involvement in the period up until 2011. In parallel to the Bonn Agreement, G8 countries agreed to lead reform of Afghanistan in five key areas: counter-narcotics (UK); disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of militia (Japan); training of a new Afghan National Army (United States) and police force (Germany); and justice reform (Italy).<sup>3</sup>

## Security

3. In 2001 a 5,000 strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was deployed under a United Nations mandate to maintain stability in Kabul while the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) mission, which focused on counter-terrorism, continued to operate separately. In 2003, NATO took command of ISAF and, with Security Council authorisation, began a phased extension of its area of operation, starting in June 2004 to the

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1 David Loyn, *Butcher & Bolt: Two Hundred Years of Foreign Engagement in Afghanistan* (London, 2008)

2 Ev 80

3 Ev 75

north and west, in July 2006 to the south, and in October 2006 to the east of Afghanistan. ISAF, consisting of some 42 nations and 61,130 troops, is now responsible for counter-insurgency operations throughout Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> The OEF mission continues to operate, albeit in reduced numbers, mainly in Afghanistan's eastern provinces. Although the ISAF and OEF operations remain separate, since 2006 they have been overseen by a single US commander. In the period between 7 October 2001 and 6 July 2009 combined US and coalition fatalities stood at 1,219, of which 885 were a result of hostile action.<sup>5</sup>

4. By 2006, Afghanistan was once again witnessing increased insurgent activity. British troops, who were largely based in the province of Helmand in southern Afghanistan, found themselves dealing with a virulent insurgency. In Regional Command (RC) (South), which includes Helmand, Taliban/anti-government attacks increased 77% in 2008 while the number of security incidents in Helmand increased 188% in 2008, the second highest increase across all of Afghanistan's provinces.<sup>6</sup> The situation in neighbouring Pakistan also deteriorated significantly. Since Al Qaeda's expulsion from Afghanistan in 2001, Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas which border southern and eastern Afghanistan have provided a sanctuary for a growing insurgent network and a base for command and control, fundraising, recruiting, training, and launching and recovery of military operations and terrorist attacks.<sup>7</sup>

## The UK's role

5. The FCO states that UK engagement in Afghanistan is aimed at ensuring that it "becomes a state capable of delivering governance and services to the Afghan people and preventing the return of Al-Qaeda".<sup>8</sup> To this end, the UK has contributed £1.65 billion in development aid and over £3 billion in military operations to Afghanistan since 2001. There are currently around 9,000 British troops stationed across Afghanistan, and around 210 civilian staff. Since May 2006, the UK has been part of the 16-nation NATO-led ISAF force in southern Afghanistan. The Helmand deployment has been focused on a large number of small and medium-size operations designed to enhance and expand security in Helmand, with a view to enabling the FCO and DfID provide development and reconstruction assistance to the local population.

## US and UK policy reviews

6. By the end of 2008, amid growing international concerns about Afghanistan's poor prognosis, the Bush administration launched an Afghan strategy review which was subsequently continued and expanded under the Obama administration. In March 2009, President Obama announced the US's new policy towards Afghanistan which was recalibrated to cover Pakistan, too. In April, shortly after the launch of the US strategy, the

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4 International Security Assistance Force and Afghan National Army strength & laydown, via [www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/placemat.pdf) Figures current at 8 June 2009

5 "Afghanistan Index", *Brookings Institution*, 7 July 2009, [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)

6 "Afghanistan Index", *Brookings Institution*, 21 January 2009

7 Ev 132

8 Ev 75

UK presented its own updated plan for Afghanistan which, like the US approach, was re-focused to include Pakistan.

## Our inquiry

7. This is the seventh in the Committee's series of Reports under the general heading "Global Security".<sup>9</sup> In accordance with the terms of reference for our inquiry and in line with the responsibilities of our Committee, we have not considered issues about defence procurement or spending which are more properly the preserve of other Select Committees.<sup>10</sup> As such, we have focused on the foreign policy aspects of the UK's relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. When we launched our inquiry in December 2008 we agreed that we would examine the following issues:

- the security implications of continuing instability in Afghanistan, and neighbouring areas in Pakistan, and the extent to which this represents a threat to the UK;
- the nature and effectiveness of the UK's foreign policy approach to Afghanistan since 2001;
- the contribution of UK forces in Afghanistan to achieving UK foreign policy objectives;
- the UK's contribution to tackling problems related to counter-narcotics, governance, corruption, human rights and internal security within Afghanistan;
- the role of the international community (in particular, the United States, the European Union, NATO and the United Nations) in relation to Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- the prospects for a political settlement within Afghanistan and the scope for negotiations with elements amongst the Taliban;
- the relationship between Afghanistan and its neighbours including Pakistan and Iran; and
- whether UK and international foreign policy strategies towards Afghanistan ought to be altered.

8. We held four evidence sessions during the inquiry. A full list of witnesses along with their individual designations can be found later under "List of Witnesses" included later in this Report. In February 2009, we heard from Colonel Christopher Langton (International Institute for Strategic Studies), Professor Theo Farrell (Department of War Studies, King's

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<sup>9</sup> In 2007, we published a Report on *Global Security: The Middle East*. This was the first in our ongoing series of Reports under the "Global Security" heading. (Foreign Affairs Committee, Eighth Report of Session 2006–07, *Global Security: The Middle East*, HC 363). We have subsequently reported on *Global Security: Russia* (Second Report of Session 2007–08, HC 51), *Global Security: Iran* (Fifth Report of Session 2007–08, HC 142), *Global Security: Japan and Korea* (Tenth Report of Session 2007–08, HC 449), and *Global Security: Non-Proliferation* (Fourth Report of Session 2008–09, HC 222). *Global Security: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories* (Fifth Report of Session 2008–09, HC 261)

<sup>10</sup> See for example, Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2008–09, *Helicopter Capability*, HC 434

College London), Sean Langan (Freelance Journalist and Documentary maker) and Professor Shaun Gregory, (Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford). In March, we heard from Elizabeth Winter (British and Irish Aid Agencies in Afghanistan Group), Dr Jonathan Goodhand (School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London), David Mansfield (Freelance consultant) and Fabrice Pothier (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace). In April we heard from David Loyn (British Broadcasting Corporation), Christina Lamb (Sunday Times), James Fergusson (journalist and author), Daniel Korski (European Council for Foreign Relations), Dr Sajjan Gohel (Asia-Pacific Foundation) and Dr Stuart Gordon (Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst). The then FCO minister responsible for Afghanistan, Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown, appeared before us in May, together with the FCO's then Director of South Asia and Afghanistan, Adam Thomson. As part of our inquiry, in April we travelled to Pakistan (Islamabad) and Afghanistan (Kabul and Helmand). Our meetings during that visit are listed in an Annex to this Report. We would like to thank those who gave evidence to our inquiry, and the relevant UK Posts for their assistance in connection with our visit. In addition, the Committee received a range of written submissions. We would like to thank all those who took the time to submit their views.

9. Our report is split into eight chapters. Initially, we consider the role that the international community has played in Afghanistan since 2001 (Chapter 2) before turning in Chapter 3 to provide an assessment of where Afghanistan stands now in a range of key areas including security sector reform, governance, rule of law, human rights, counter-narcotics and economic and social development. In Chapter 4 we examine the reasons for Pakistan's strategic importance in the context of Afghanistan, followed in Chapter 5, by an appraisal of the US's latest approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Chapters 6 and 7 focus more closely on the UK's mission in Afghanistan, charting its development since 2001 and considering the Government's new strategy for both Afghanistan and Pakistan which was outlined in April 2009. The final chapter (Chapter 8) looks at the prospects for securing a political settlement in Afghanistan. A glossary of commonly used abbreviations and acronyms is included at the end of this Report.

## 2 The role of the international community in Afghanistan

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### Bonn and beyond

10. The United States led the initial military operation into Afghanistan in 2001 and remains its largest donor and troop contributor. We consider its role at paragraphs 45 to 49. However, re-building Afghanistan has since become an international effort. The process started in 2001 when prominent Afghans met in Bonn under the auspices of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan to map out the country's future. After laborious negotiations between Afghan military commanders, representatives of different ethnic groups, expatriate Afghans and representatives of the exiled monarch, and under substantial pressure from the US and other external powers to reach a common view, the Bonn Agreement was signed on 5 December 2001. In parallel to the Bonn Agreement, G8 countries agreed to lead reform of Afghanistan in five key areas: disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of militia (Japan); training of a new Afghan National Army (United States) and police force (Germany); and justice reform (Italy) and counter-narcotics (UK).<sup>11</sup> We consider the impact that has been made in each of these sectors below starting at Paragraph 66, and assess the efficacy of the 'lead nation' approach at Paragraph 143.

11. As the Bonn process came to a close, the UK played a leading role throughout 2005 in defining the terms for continued international community engagement in Afghanistan. Ministers agreed on 19 December 2005 that the UK's strategic aim was to help create a stable, secure and self-sustainable Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup> In January 2006, the UK hosted and co-chaired the London Conference on Afghanistan which resulted in pledges of over US \$10.5 billion for the period up to 2011 and led to the launch of the Afghan Compact, a framework to develop Afghanistan, detailing the mutual responsibilities of the international community and the Afghan government in the reconstruction process. In total, 53 countries negotiated the Compact which was also signed by the Asian Development Bank, the G8, the European Union and the World Bank. Priority was given to governance, rule of law and human rights; and to economic and social development. International organisations were earmarked to play a key role in implementing the international community's vision for Afghanistan. We consider their respective roles and impact in the following sections of this Report.

### Key international organisations

#### *NATO, ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom*

12. In addition to the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), which led the military incursion in 2001, and continues to operate a counter-terrorism mission mainly in eastern Afghanistan, there is a NATO-commanded International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

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11 Ev 75

12 Ev 76

for Afghanistan. The UK has made a significant contribution to both ISAF and, to a lesser degree, OEF; we discuss this in Paragraph 14 below.

13. ISAF was originally established in December 2001 by UN Security Council Resolution,<sup>13</sup> with a mandate to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority<sup>14</sup> create and maintain a safe and secure environment in and around Kabul. It remained a coalition of the willing until NATO formally took overall command in 2003. Commencing in 2005, ISAF's mandate and presence was gradually extended into different provinces. It is now responsible for security and for conducting the counter-insurgency campaign throughout Afghanistan. It consists of 42 nations and 61,130 troops. The FCO states that ISAF's mission is to "help the people and elected Government of Afghanistan build an enduring stable, secure, prosperous and democratic state, respectful of human rights and free from the threat of terrorism". It adds that ISAF works by conducting stability and security operations in co-ordination with the ANSF [Afghan National Security Forces]; mentoring and supporting the ANA [Afghan National Army]; and supporting Afghan Government programmes to disarm illegally armed groups".<sup>15</sup> To achieve its mission, ISAF has established five Regional Commands (RCs), each with a lead nation and each comprising a Command and Control Headquarters and a Forward Support Base, which are largely logistics hubs providing transport and medical support.<sup>16</sup> ISAF Regional Commands also co-ordinate all regional civil-military activities conducted by the military elements of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in their areas of responsibility.

14. The UK led efforts to establish ISAF, and it remains a key contributor, currently providing the second largest deployment (9,000). The majority of UK Forces are deployed under the command of Regional Command (South) (RC(S)), as part of Task Force Helmand (TFH). RC(S) encompasses the neighbouring provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Uruzgan, and Zabul and comprises forces from the UK, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, France, Lithuania, Georgia, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, UAE and US. Command of this international force is rotated between nations. The UK commanded RC(S) from May 2007 until December 2007 and, under current plans, will take command again in September 2009.<sup>17</sup> We consider the involvement of UK forces in ISAF again in Chapter 6

15. Professor Adam Roberts, of the Centre for International Studies, Oxford University, told us that NATO's role in Afghanistan "began in a problematic way, and so it has continued".<sup>18</sup> NATO's initial offer of assistance, under Article 5 of the NATO Treaty, was rejected by the US which was content to pursue its counter-terrorism agenda through Operation Enduring Freedom, and was set on having "a coalition à la carte in which there would be no institutional challenge to its leadership. [This caused] disappointment and

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13 UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386

14 The Afghan Transitional Authority (ATA) replaced the Afghan Interim Authority. In accordance with the Bonn Agreement, the ATA organised a Constitutional Loya Jirga in late 2003 to pave the way for the election of an Afghan government by early 2004.

15 Ev 80

16 "A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan", *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 39, [www.york.ac.uk/depts/poli/prdu/](http://www.york.ac.uk/depts/poli/prdu/)

17 Ev 82

18 Ev 122

irritation in Europe”.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the war in Afghanistan between October and December 2001, culminating in the collapse of the Taliban government, was effectively conducted under US leadership. It was not until 2003 that NATO “rapidly came back into the picture, not least because the US came to recognize the need for long-term assistance in managing societies that had been freed from oppressive regimes by US uses of force”.<sup>20</sup> Its subsequent involvement in Afghanistan became NATO’s first out-of-area operation.

16. A number of problems have hindered the ISAF operation, some of which are the result of ISAF’s complex and convoluted command and control structures and its relationship with Operation Enduring Freedom. Although a US commander now oversees both ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom in a bid to improve co-ordination, and the continuous rotation of senior posts has decreased, Professor Roberts believes that “the arrangements for coordinating the work of these three distinct forces [ISAF, OEF and Afghan National Security Forces] continue to pose problems”.<sup>21</sup> The journalist and author David Loyn concurred with this view, noting that “as a journalist who deals with ISAF and the international forces in Afghanistan, I do not quite know who to call if something happens”. He added, “If a western journalist does not quite know how to navigate his way around that maze, you can imagine what it is like for Afghan villagers”.<sup>22</sup> The current structures also means that while ISAF “coordinates the efforts of the provincial reconstruction teams, it does not directly ‘command’ them, and instead command lines are ‘stove-piped’ to national embassies and capitals”.<sup>23</sup>

17. The journalist and author James Fergusson argued that at a basic level, the ISAF mission and Operation Enduring Freedom are “totally conflicting” and that British and ISAF efforts to “win hearts and minds” have been undermined by US anti-terror operations which simultaneously targeted and attacked the same communities.<sup>24</sup> Christina Lamb from the Sunday Times claimed that over the past seven years “we have totally lost that consent that we had at the beginning, and I think that a lot of that is due to the behaviour of the ISAF troops and to having parallel operations going on at the same time”.<sup>25</sup>

18. The distinct but related problems of uneven burden-sharing and the use of national caveats by some NATO nations have also been persistent problems. Whereas the US, UK and Canada have tended to see Afghanistan as a counter-insurgency operation, Germany and some others regard it as more of a stabilisation mission, resulting in divisions and tensions both within ISAF, and between ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom.<sup>26</sup> David Loyn told us that the use of national caveats “significantly weakens” ISAF given that “there is so little that those forces can do in terms of effective military action.” Mr Loyn notes that

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19 Ev 122

20 Ev 122

21 Ev 122

22 Q 114 [David Loyn]

23 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p39

24 Q 115 [James Fergusson]

25 Q 114

26 Ev 122

“they will not go out at night; they will not fly helicopters in certain conditions; and they will not go to the south of the country”.<sup>27</sup>

19. The FCO states that “UK diplomatic effort has been deployed in encouraging others to increase their share of the military, civilian and financial burden in Afghanistan”.<sup>28</sup> Although there have been some improvements following NATO’s April 2009 summit, which we discuss at Paragraph 189, there continues to be an unwillingness to commit combat troops. On the issue of burden-sharing, Dr Sajjan Gohel of the Asia-Pacific Foundation noted that some European states have “not shown the willingness to send troops into difficult positions.” Dr Gohel added,

It is all very well having them up in the north where it is safe, but they are not actually doing anything of substance. British troops, along with the Canadians, the Dutch and the Americans are actively engaging the Taliban. They should be applauded for what they have been doing, but they need more support.<sup>29</sup>

20. The decision of the Dutch and Canadians not to extend their combat mission mandates beyond 2010 and 2011 respectively may exacerbate these existing problems. Daniel Korski of the European Council for Foreign Relations argued that NATO needs to “think of creative ways in which European troops, who are unwilling to go to the south or east, can be used to train the forces that are ultimately deploying in the south and east”.<sup>30</sup>

21. ISAF’s reliance on provincial reconstruction teams has also been criticised by a range of commentators. A recent article in *Jane’s Intelligence Review* noted that the different views among ISAF nations as to the purpose of their mission in Afghanistan contributes to a lack of unity, clarity and co-ordination of work among PRTs.<sup>31</sup> NGOs have also been critical of the use of PRTs. In a report for Oxfam published in March 2008, Matt Waldman stated:

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have gone well beyond their interim, security-focused mandate, engaging in substantial development work of variable quality and impact. Although arguably necessary in some highly insecure areas, by diverting resources which otherwise could have been devoted to civilian development activities, PRTs have in many cases undermined the emergence of effective institutions of national and local government, and other civil development processes. PRTs have also contributed to a blurring of the distinction between the military and aid agencies, which has thus undermined the perceived neutrality of the latter, increasing the risk for aid workers, and reduced humanitarian operating space and access.<sup>32</sup>

22. Many of the submissions we received reached the conclusion that NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan has, hitherto at least, not been a success. David Loyn told us that there exists “a military force that was initially drawn from an alliance, which you

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27 Q 128

28 Ev 106

29 Q 147 [Dr Sajjan Gohel]

30 Q 149 [Daniel Korski]

31 “Developing disorder - Divergent PRT Models in Afghanistan”, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 19 September 2008

32 Matt Waldman, “Falling Short: Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan”, *ACBAR Advocacy Series*, March 2008

cannot send into battle in most of the country”.<sup>33</sup> Daniel Korski made a similar point when he commented that “if you are a military alliance and you struggle to conduct military tasks, that is ultimately going to be a problem”.<sup>34</sup> For others, like Professor Roberts, “it is truly remarkable that the reputation of the longest-lived military alliance in the world, comprised of states with fundamentally stable political systems, should have made itself vulnerable to the outcome of a war in the unpromising surroundings of Afghanistan”.<sup>35</sup> In NATO’s defence, as David Loyn told us “you have to remember that it is the first deployment abroad, outside of the NATO area, that NATO has been engaged in, and so there has been a huge amount of learning in the NATO machine since 2006”.<sup>36</sup>

**23. We conclude that, particularly bearing in mind that this is the first ever NATO deployment outside of NATO’s ‘area’, this has now become a most critical and seminal moment for the future of the Alliance. We also conclude that the failure of some NATO allies to ensure that the burden of international effort in Afghanistan is shared equitably has placed an unacceptable strain on a handful of countries. We further conclude that there is a real possibility that without a more equitable distribution of responsibility and risk, NATO’s effort will be further inhibited and its reputation as a military alliance, capable of undertaking out-of-area operations, seriously damaged. We recommend that the British Government should continue to exert pressure on NATO partners to remove national caveats and to fulfil their obligations. We further recommend that where NATO allies are unwilling to commit combat troops, they must be persuaded to fulfil their obligations in ways which nevertheless contribute to the overall ISAF effort, for example, by providing appropriate support including equipment and enhanced training for the Afghan National Army.**

### *The impact of military force on the civilian population*

24. In his written submission, Professor Roberts states that because OEF and NATO ground forces in Afghanistan are “widely dispersed and few in number [they] frequently need air power in support of their ground operations”.<sup>37</sup> He adds that “tactical air support has been vital to any success they have had, and has often saved the small numbers of ISAF forces from being overwhelmed”.<sup>38</sup> However, Professor Roberts and a number of other witnesses have raised concerns about the alleged use of excessive force, including the inappropriate use of air power, in both ISAF operations and those conducted under Operation Enduring Freedom. According to statistics contained in the Afghanistan Index, produced by the Brookings Institution, air strikes from pro-government forces were responsible for 26% of the estimated 2,118 total civilian fatalities in 2008.<sup>39</sup> Professor Roberts suggests that various factors lie behind the high number of civilian casualties, including a “shortage of ground forces, different approaches of individual commanders,

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33 Q 128

34 Q 151

35 Ev 129

36 Q 116

37 Ev 121

38 Ev 121

39 “Afghanistan Index”, *Brookings Institution*, 24 June 2009

poor intelligence, the heat of battle, weapons malfunction, the co-location of military targets and civilians, and the frayed relationship between ground and air forces operating in Afghanistan”.<sup>40</sup>

25. The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) points to “widespread anger among Afghans over civilian casualties caused by excessive use of force and air strikes, and the conduct of some troops”.<sup>41</sup> Peter Marsden, an Afghanistan analyst, states that the high level of civilian casualties arising from the use of air power has become a major political issue within Afghanistan and has led President Karzai publicly to express his concerns to the US Government on many occasions. Mr Marsden adds that civilian casualties have “also greatly strengthened the support given to the insurgency”.<sup>42</sup> We were told during our visit to Afghanistan that there is a perception that the military have not pro-actively investigated incidents or furnished sufficiently timely or full explanations to affected communities.

26. Whilst acknowledging that there have been problems, the British Government has been reluctant for operational security reasons to provide detailed information about how targets are chosen. However, Professor Theo Farrell of King’s College, London, explained to us that planned air strikes are now considered by the Joint Targeting Board, which consists of both civilians from ISAF’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams and military planners, with a view to reducing collateral damage and its effects. He added that since late 2008 there have been improvements in the way that urgent air strikes are used to support ‘Troops in Contact’. He stated:

We have deployed a new weapons system called the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System [GMLRS]. Our forces now call on GMLRS strikes rather than air strikes to support them when they get into contact. That is to break the contact so that they can recover and counter-attack. There is a strong awareness among our forces when calling air strikes, they appreciate the political damage that they can cause to the campaign.<sup>43</sup>

27. Speaking in June 2009, ISAF’s newly appointed commander General Stanley McChrystal stated that his priority would be to review all NATO operations in a bid to reduce civilian casualties.<sup>44</sup>

28. Peter Marsden argues that further public anger has been aroused over “the continued resort, by US forces in particular, to forced entry into the homes of suspects”,<sup>45</sup> an act which he told us amounts to a serious violation of Pashtunwali, the Pashtun code of honour. Colonel Christopher Langton of the IISS told us that this “is one of the problems when you continually inject batches of new troops into this campaign”.<sup>46</sup> BAAG argues

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40 Ev 121

41 Ev 169

42 Ev 177

43 Q 26 [Professor Farrell]

44 “US ‘to protect Afghan civilians’”, *BBC News Online*, 12 June 2009

45 Ev 176

46 Q 26

that although night-time house searches “resulted in fewer deaths, night raids frequently involved abusive behaviour and violent breaking and entry at night, which stoke almost as much anger toward PGF [pro-government forces] as the more lethal air strikes. In areas where night raids are prevalent, they were a significant cause of fear, intimidation, and resentment toward PGF”.<sup>47</sup> In a recent report, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission stated:

In a conflict like Afghanistan, where half of the battle is to ensure that the population does not begin supporting the insurgent forces, or at least does not stop supporting the government forces, public perceptions of supposed violations and misconduct matter. The Afghan public might judge the PGF more harshly than a military lawyer would [...].<sup>48</sup>

**29. We conclude that no matter how difficult the circumstances facing the military in Afghanistan, the use of air power and acts of considerable cultural insensitivity on the part of some Coalition Forces over an extended period have done much to shape negative perceptions among ordinary Afghans about the military and the international effort in Afghanistan. This problem has caused damage, both real and perceived, that will in many instances be difficult to undo. We further conclude that recent policy changes which aim to improve procedures, combined with the commitment of senior military figures to adopting better practices, are a welcome development. We recommend that, in its response to this Report, the Government supply us with detailed information on measures that are being taken by Coalition Forces in Afghanistan to provide more pro-active and appropriate protection of civilians in the future.**

### *Treatment of detainees*

30. Another issue of concern is what Professor Adam Roberts termed the “scandal-ridden matter of treatment of detainees”.<sup>49</sup> ISAF troops can arrest and detain persons, where necessary, for force protection, self-defence, and to fulfil the ISAF mission as set out in UN Security Council Resolutions. ISAF guidelines state that detainees can be held for up to 96 hours before being either released or transferred to the Afghan authorities. We were told by one interlocutor during our visit that the 96-hour window was not adequate. However, many human rights organisations conclude that torture and ill-treatment are significant problems in Afghanistan.<sup>50</sup> Redress cites claims by a former SAS soldier, Ben Griffin, that “hundreds of Iraqis and Afghans captured by British and American Special Forces [have been] rendered to prisons [in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay] where they have been tortured”.<sup>51</sup> Peter Marsden commented that there was also widespread concern over

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47 Ev 172

48 “From Hope to Fear: An Afghan Perspective on Operations of Pro-Government Forces in Afghanistan”, *Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission*, December 2008, [www.acbar.org](http://www.acbar.org)

49 Ev 123

50 “Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights”, A/HRC/10/23, 16 January 2009

51 Ev 145

the detention of suspects at Bagram air base and elsewhere, under conditions which do not conform to international human rights standards.<sup>52</sup> Professor Roberts states:

Anxious not to be associated with shocking US statements and practices in this matter, and insufficiently staffed and equipped to hold on to the prisoners they capture, other NATO members have drawn up separate agreements with the Afghan authorities, embodying a variety of different approaches to how they should be treated once in Afghan hands. There are serious concerns that some detainees handed over to the Afghan authorities on this basis have been maltreated.<sup>53</sup>

31. In 2006 the UK agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Afghan Government in respect of the transfer of detainees captured by UK Forces.<sup>54</sup> It commits the UK Government to transferring detainees to the Afghan Government at the earliest opportunity and obliges the Afghan Government to treat all prisoners in line with Afghanistan's international legal obligations. In its written submission the FCO states that UK personnel, usually members of the Royal Military Police, visit transferred detainees regularly and that the Government has "delivered training to prison officers, including in human rights issues, and has worked to improve prison accommodation in both Helmand and Kabul".<sup>55</sup> The FCO further told us that as at 15 December 2008, just over 200 detainees had been transferred, and that one allegation of mistreatment had been investigated and was found to be without merit.<sup>56</sup>

32. Redress argues that the UK's use of the MoU does not negate its international legal responsibility to apply the principle of non-refoulement (the prohibition on sending an individual to a state where they may be tortured), and that it should stop transferring detainees in its custody until conditions in Afghanistan have improved. The US State Department notes that prisons are decrepit, unsanitary and overcrowded, often housing more than twice the number of inmates for which they were designed.<sup>57</sup> Although a programme of prison building is taking place across Afghanistan to improve conditions for prisoners and other detainees, the FCO's written submission notes that "the welfare of detainees remains a serious concern".<sup>58</sup> The FCO details the assistance that the UK has provided in an attempt to improve prison conditions, whilst also acknowledging that "significant challenges remain in modernising Afghanistan's prison infrastructure and reforming the Central Prison Department".<sup>59</sup>

**33. We conclude that the conditions under which prisoners and detainees are treated once in the hands of the Afghan authorities are a matter of considerable concern. We**

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52 Ev 177

53 Ev 123

54 The Committee printed the Memorandum of Understanding as an Appendix to its report on Guantanamo Bay. (Visit to Guantanamo Bay, Second Report on Session 2006–07, HC 44)

55 Ev 83

56 Ev 83

57 "2008 Human Rights Report: Afghanistan", *US State Department*, 25 February 2009, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

58 Ev 90

59 Ev 90

**will deal with the issue of treatment of those detained by British forces further in our forthcoming annual Report on human rights.**

### *The role of the United Nations*

34. The United Nations has a significant presence in Afghanistan, covering a wide range of activities through a number of specialist agencies, all of which are overseen by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). UNAMA is headed by the Norwegian diplomat Kai Eide, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan (SRSG), who has overall responsibility for all UN activities in the country.

35. The UN has a long history of involvement in Afghanistan which predates the US-led invasion in 2001. Because of this, many believed that it would be able to coordinate international political and diplomatic efforts in Afghanistan. The announcement in 2002 that it would operate with a “light footprint” was, in Professor Adam Roberts’ view, the “the key statement of this period, which did much to define the role not just of the UN but of the international community generally”.<sup>60</sup> Initially, UNAMA sought to assist with Afghanistan’s political and economic transition and the rule of law. Afghanistan analyst Barnett Rubin has stated that the UN’s political efforts, particularly in relation to the post-2001 political transition, the Bonn Conference, the Loya Jirgas (Grand Councils), elections, and the adoption of the Afghanistan Compact, the successor to the Bonn Agreement, were one of the factors that “enabled the Bush administration to camouflage its strategic failure for so long”.<sup>61</sup>

36. In 2005, UNAMA’s mission was expanded to provide political and strategic advice in support of the peace process, and to promote international engagement with Afghanistan. In 2008, the UNAMA mission was further redefined to focus on co-ordination, political outreach, support for sub-national governance (including human rights), humanitarian aid, elections and co-operation with ISAF.<sup>62</sup>

37. Although UN operations have increased the amount of humanitarian assistance reaching ordinary Afghans, we were told during our visit that UNAMA’s role has been hindered by a number of problems, not least that UNAMA’s relationship with ISAF has not been good in the past. Efforts are underway to strengthen co-operation.<sup>63</sup> Interlocutors also told us that the UN’s resources have not kept pace with its increasing mandate, and that there have been significant delays in getting new staff into posts because of bureaucracy within UN Headquarters in New York. David Loyn told us that “there are individuals at the top of the UN who are really excellent, and Kai Eide has done a first-class job since he came in as the head of UNAMA”, but added that “the UN has made a number of really significant errors in Afghanistan”.<sup>64</sup> Mr Loyn told us:

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60 Ev 120

61 Barnett Rubin, “Failure in Afghanistan”, Informed Comment: *Global Affairs Blog*, <http://icga.blogspot.com>

62 In addition to a mission in Kabul, UNAMA now has regional offices operating in seven provincial cities —Bamiyan, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz. UN specialist agencies, including the World Food Programme, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organisation, now have permanent operations across the country.

63 “NATO’s relations with United Nations”, *NATO Factsheet*, [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int)

64 Q 118

There are people who have been there for three or four years, who really understand the country and are able to analyse it well, but beneath that there are rafts of foreign consultants coming in for three and six-month contracts, being paid grotesquely large amounts of money. Those people are really the problem.<sup>65</sup>

38. The FCO is a strong supporter of the UN and its co-ordinating role, and states that it has “pushed key partners in the UN system to provide additional resources to UNAMA as quickly as possible”. However, it cautions that “parts of the UN system remain to be convinced that Afghanistan should be a priority issue for the UN”.<sup>66</sup> Interlocutors during our visit commented that one of the major issues that required attention was the extent to which the US engaged with the UN. We were told that it is difficult to co-ordinate international efforts without US support, but that such support had not been forthcoming in the past. We were further told that some US \$1 billion in US aid was estimated to have been spent on development in Afghanistan without the UN’s knowledge. US aid has been spent through a number of channels including the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) which is meant to fund small-scale, ‘quick win’ military-led reconstruction projects. However, we were told that this approach led to further fragmentation of the international aid effort. Lord Ashdown has commented:

We must tackle, at last, the disastrous lack of co-ordination amongst the international community in Afghanistan, which, above all else, is responsible for our failures there. The appointment of Ambassador Kai Eide as the [...] UN envoy has seen some steps in the right direction. But the international community remains dangerously fractured. Each organization maintains a separate civilian representative and there no meaningful overall co-ordination between them which is worthy of the name.<sup>67</sup>

**39. We conclude that while the British Government’s support of the UN and for proposals for the UN to play a more significant role as the overarching co-ordinator of the international community’s efforts in Afghanistan are to be welcomed, it remains to be seen whether this will involve significant improvements in practice. We recommend that in its response to this Report the Government states what evidence there is, if any, of actual improvements in international co-ordination.**

### ***The role of the European Union***

40. The European Union’s effort in Afghanistan is multi-faceted, covering development aid, military contributions and political reporting. The EU is represented in Kabul by a Special Representative, the European Commission delegation and a policing mission, and indirectly through the presence of embassies from 16 Member States. Daniel Korski told us that the EU Commission and Member States together have contributed a third of Afghanistan’s total reconstruction assistance. He states:

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65 Q 119 [David Loyn]

66 Ev 105

67 Lord Ashdown, “What I told Gordon Brown about Afghanistan”, *The Spectator* (Coffee House Blog), 15 September 2008, [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk)

Of the total pledged at the Tokyo donors conference in 2001, €1 billion was pledged by the European Commission [EC] over five years averaging some €200 million per year. In 2002, the EC exceeded its Tokyo pledge, providing €280 million to help Afghanistan meet its reconstruction and humanitarian needs. In the years since 2002, the EC continued to commit funding of about €200 million per year [and] has made available a package of development aid worth €610 million for the period 2007-10. It focuses on three key priority areas: reform of the justice sector; rural development including alternatives to poppy production; and health.<sup>68</sup>

41. The FCO informed us that the EU had disbursed \$5.2 billion in Afghanistan between 2002 and mid-2008 (between Member States and the Commission) and an additional \$2.3 billion had been pledged for the period 2008–11.<sup>69</sup> Twenty-five EU Member States are contributors to ISAF, and Member States lead 10 of the 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).<sup>70</sup> Short-term EU missions have also observed the Afghan parliamentary and presidential elections.<sup>71</sup> The UK is the largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan among EU nations and has been one of the major advocates of increased EU contributions to Afghanistan, both in terms of military burden-sharing and development support.

42. In spite of the EU's considerable financial commitment, there has been criticism of EU input in Afghanistan. James Fergusson told us that the "EU does not seem to have any profile in parts of Afghanistan."<sup>72</sup> Daniel Korski told us that the European effort was "uneven and lacks the coordination and prioritisation needed to combine the different strands [of effort] into a coherent whole". He commented that "that the EU and European nations have added to the problem of a lack of international coherence by pursuing policies independently of each other, most damagingly in the overlapping areas of policing, justice and counter narcotics".<sup>73</sup> Meanwhile BAAG argues that there is "an obvious need for a common European policy in relation to Afghanistan—one that goes beyond being a good donor—and focuses on a more effective debate with the United States, better involvement in regional diplomacy and having a more concerted and co-ordinated influence over national political issues within Afghanistan".<sup>74</sup>

43. In a bid to improve co-ordination, the FCO has advocated "double-hatting" the roles of EU Special Representative and Head of the European Commission delegation in Afghanistan. The FCO argues that the EU could improve its influence and standing within Afghanistan by harmonising its political messaging, and by using its financial and logistical support to leverage policy progress from the Afghan Government in return for its assistance.<sup>75</sup>

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68 Ev 155

69 Ev 105

70 Ev 105

71 Ev 155

72 Q 127

73 Ev 155

74 Ev 174

75 Ev 105

44. We conclude that the EU's effort in Afghanistan thus far has not lived up to its potential. We further conclude that there is a need for the EU and its Member States to address the lack of coherence which exists within the EU effort if it is to have a greater impact in the future. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government should supply us with updated information on the progress it has made in persuading EU Member States and the European Commission to harmonise and co-ordinate their activities within Afghanistan.

### The US and its policy on Afghanistan under the Bush Administration

45. As the primary participant in Afghanistan, the largest troop contributor and the biggest donor of finance and resources,<sup>76</sup> it is the United States that has most heavily influenced the international intervention since 2001. The initial US strategy was driven largely by military goals, under the banner of Operation Enduring Freedom, and was focused heavily on defeating Al Qaeda. Journalist and author Ahmed Rashid summarises it as “a minimalist, intelligence-driven strategy that ignored nation building, creating state institutions, or re-building the country's shattered infrastructure”.<sup>77</sup> David Loyn told us that “there was enormous confusion on what the mission was right at the beginning” and that the US did not have “a coherent view of what Afghanistan was or what they had let themselves in for”.<sup>78</sup> Mr Loyn went on to state:

In particular, they did not really apply any analysis to what the Taliban was and where they had come from. Huge mistakes were made at the beginning in not being generous enough with the Taliban's enemies, nor sceptical enough of their allies. The Northern Alliance were given a far too easy ride, and warlordism returned very easily into this security vacuum [...]<sup>79</sup>

46. A number of our other witnesses also referred to the negative consequences of the US's decision to rely on warlords to provide security in the period following the collapse of the Taliban government. Christina Lamb told us that this amounted to “one of the most damaging things that the Operation Enduring Freedom forces did”, given that in 2001 most Afghans believed that the warlords were the source of many of Afghanistan's problems. Ms Lamb noted:

Seeing these warlords who had caused all this damage suddenly being paid huge amounts of money and being allowed to then become powerful again gave such a bad signal to ordinary Afghan people.<sup>80</sup>

47. BAAG's written submission was equally critical of the US's reliance on warlords. It states that the US and some other military forces appear to have made “significant use of

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76 The US is the largest single contributor of troops to both ISAF and OEF, with around 20,000 troops currently deployed. It is also the largest contributor of bilateral aid, committing in excess of \$20 billion in reconstruction aid and pledging more than \$10 billion over the next two years; Ev 104

77 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (London, 2008), p 133

78 Ev 36

79 Q 114 [Christina Lamb]

80 Q 115

those commanders in their operations, including for force protection purposes”, in the process rendering disarmament programmes less effective. BAAG also notes:

Former militia commanders in many areas are perceived by local Afghans to have the same amount or more weapons in their possession than four years ago. Many Afghans emphasise the direct link between the presence of arms in society, as well as a lack of reintegration of ex-combatants, and continued insecurity in their areas.

48. In more recent years, the US has placed a greater emphasis on achieving broader counter-insurgency goals involving reconstruction and support for local populations. However, under the Bush administration, the military, and military goals, continued to drive and dominate US strategy, effectively sidelining the US State Department and USAID, the United States Agency for International Development, and their efforts to provide assistance with reconstruction. As early as 2002, significant resources were being diverted away from Afghanistan to support planning for the war in Iraq: US spending dropped from US\$ 815.9 million to US\$ 737 million between 2002 and 2003.<sup>81</sup> Tellingly, BAAG’s written submission notes that although an estimated 80% of Afghans depend on agriculture for their livelihoods, in 2007 just 1% of the USAID budget was spent in this sector.<sup>82</sup>

**49. We conclude that some, though certainly not all, of the responsibility for problems in Afghanistan since 2001 must be attributed to the direction of US policy in the years immediately after the military intervention in 2001. The unilateralist tendencies of the US under the Bush administration, and its focus on military goals to the exclusion of many other strategically important issues, set the tone for the international community’s early presence in Afghanistan.**

## Regional neighbours

50. Since 2001 there has been a proliferation of mechanisms aimed at harnessing regional support for tackling Afghanistan’s problems.<sup>83</sup> None of Afghanistan’s neighbours wish to import instability or militancy from Afghanistan, and all are concerned about the prospect of a long-term US military presence in the region. China and Russia, along with a number of Central Asian states, have already been engaging in discussions about Afghanistan under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. Each country has particular spheres of influence in relation to Afghanistan as outlined below.

### *Iran*

51. Shi’ite Iran retains significant cultural influence in Afghanistan, particularly in the west of the country. Opposed to the Sunni Taliban, Iran’s relationship with Afghanistan is complicated and embraces contradictions. Since 2001 Iran has consistently and publicly

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81 Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy”, *Congressional Research Service*, 18 June 2009, pp 62–63, [www.fas.org/spp/crs/index.html](http://www.fas.org/spp/crs/index.html)

82 Ev 173

83 These include the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration (GNRD), with a focus on counter-narcotics, the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC), South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC), which focuses on regional economic integration. The UK was instrumental in its creation.

backed President Karzai. Bilateral trade has increased and Iran's development and humanitarian activity in western Afghanistan has also grown. It has been estimated that Iranian assistance to Afghanistan has totalled about \$1.164 billion since the fall of the Taliban.<sup>84</sup> As we made clear in our 2008 Report, *Global Security: Iran*, Iran has a strong interest in counter-narcotics co-operation with the West, given its high number of heroin users, and the fact that Iran is a principal staging post on the route by which Afghan heroin is transported to Europe and the US.<sup>85</sup> We discuss this further at Paragraph 127. There is a significant Afghan refugee problem in Iran and conditions for Afghan refugees, especially for the majority who are unregistered, have significantly worsened following recent changes to Iranian law.<sup>86</sup> This, in addition to the increased number of returnees, has caused tension between Iran and Afghanistan.

52. The FCO notes that although "Iran has often been a constructive partner of Afghanistan, their links to the Taliban either through supply of munitions, training or funding remain a concern". Although Iran is ideologically opposed to the Taliban, which represents a very different Islamic tradition to that of the Iranian regime, it would seem that the temptation of causing damage to Western interests in the region by offering selective support for the Taliban in its operations against US and UK forces has proved too great for Tehran to resist. The FCO states that it has consistently argued that Iranian intervention of this kind "is completely unacceptable and undercuts the Iranian policy of support for the Government of President Karzai". The British Government has registered concerns on this subject with Iranian ministers.<sup>87</sup>

**53. We recommend that the Government continues to make clear to the Iranian leadership the total unacceptability to the UK of Iran's direct and indirect assistance to the Taliban in their operations against Coalition Forces.**

## India

54. In the view of many of our witnesses and interlocutors, India's role in, and relationship to, Afghanistan is crucial to stability in that country. Afghanistan has a long history of close cultural and political ties with India, and is said to look to India as "a potential counterweight in its relationship with Pakistan".<sup>88</sup> Since 2001, India has become the largest regional donor to Afghanistan and has pledged or disbursed around \$1 billion of direct aid, focusing on road construction and capacity building for Afghan civil servants.<sup>89</sup> The Indian Government is also funding 500 long-term scholarship places for Afghan students, covering undergraduate and postgraduate courses covering costs for tuition fees, accommodation and providing a limited living allowance.<sup>90</sup> It has maintained its levels of assistance despite the killing of Indian construction workers in Afghanistan and the

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84 Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", *Congressional Research Service*, 18 June 2009, p 48, [www.fas.org/sgp/crs/index.html](http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/index.html)

85 Foreign Affairs Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2007–08, *Global Security: Iran*, HC 142, para 76

86 Ev 102

87 Ev 102

88 Jayshree Bajoria, "India-Afghanistan Relations", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 23 October 2008, [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)

89 Ev 103

90 "Education in India", *website of the Indian Embassy, Kabul*, <http://meakabul.nic.in/>

bombing of its Embassy in Kabul in July 2008. Trade between Afghanistan and India has also risen significantly. However, India's engagement with Afghanistan causes significant concern for Pakistan, and the FCO notes that "improving the India-Pakistan relationship is an essential part of getting full regional buy-in to supporting Afghanistan".<sup>91</sup> We comment further on Pakistan's attitude to India's relationship with Afghanistan in Paragraph 172 below.

### Russia

55. Although Russia is wary of involving itself too closely in the current international effort, given its bitter experiences of Afghanistan in the 1980s, the FCO states that it also recognises that a stable Afghanistan is important to ensuring the stability of Central Asia and its south-eastern flank, and in addressing the considerable flow of narcotics north.<sup>92</sup> Russia's relations with the Taliban regime were poor, due not only to the legacy of its own occupation of Afghanistan, but also to the Taliban's support for jihadists who fought alongside Chechen rebels. Distrust of the Taliban continues to influence the Russian approach to Afghanistan's development. Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid argue that Russia's main concern is that the US and NATO are seeking a permanent US-NATO military presence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. They further argue that this fear "will need to be assuaged" and that:

Russia should be assured that US and NATO forces can help defend, rather than threaten, legitimate Russian interests in Central Asia, including through cooperation with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Russia and the Central Asian states should be informed of the results of legitimate interrogations of militants who came from the former Soviet space and were captured in Afghanistan or Pakistan<sup>93</sup>.

### China

56. China's relations with Afghanistan were very limited before 2001, but in recent years, it has become one of the country's largest trading partners, with a bilateral trade volume of \$700 million in the year to October 2008. The FCO estimates that China has provided around \$300 million official development assistance to Afghanistan over the last seven years and adds that the Chinese are investing heavily in mining and associated infrastructure, including roads and rail links between Tajikistan and Pakistan. The FCO states that:

The key challenges are to ensure China's large programme of investment in Afghanistan will provide stable long-term economic growth for the Afghan people and to encourage China to become more involved in the international development effort in Afghanistan. There are legitimate concerns about Chinese investments,

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91 Ev 103

92 Ev 103

93 Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008, [www.foreignaffairs.com/](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/)

given the fiscal clout of Chinese companies, many state-owned, which distorts the market, as well as their lack of corporate governance and responsibility.<sup>94</sup>

### *Central Asian Republics*

57. The FCO states that the Central Asian republics bordering Afghanistan (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) were “very suspicious of the Taliban regime. Uzbekistan was the most vocal of the three, though all were concerned about the spread of militant Islam and narcotics across their southern borders”.<sup>95</sup>

58. The FCO told us that Uzbekistan has recently sought to play a role in the development of Afghanistan but that the Uzbeks have not recognised the central role the Afghan government in any lasting solution. The FCO states that it has welcomed renewed Uzbek interest in Afghanistan, encouraging them to work more closely with the Afghan government and the rest of the international community.<sup>96</sup>

59. ISAF benefits from logistical support that is provided by both Tajikistan and Turkmenistan while the US has operated an air base in Kyrgyzstan since 2001. The FCO states that the UK continues to encourage Tajik and Turkmen security and development programmes which assist Afghanistan.

60. The FCO adds that it is committed to continuing its dialogue with the Central Asian republics to ensure that “they deliver their assistance in a way that works long-term to support Afghanistan’s development, focussing on water management, energy, trade, transit and counter-narcotics issues”.<sup>97</sup>

**61. We conclude that the FCO should continue to use its influence to foster greater co-operation between Afghanistan and its neighbours and recommend that in its response to this Report it updates us on recent developments in this respect.**

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94 Ev 102

95 Ev 104

96 Ev 104

97 Ev 104

## 3 Where Afghanistan is now: an assessment

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### The security situation

62. Afghanistan, by most measures, remains a fundamentally insecure state, eight years after the West mounted military action to remove Al Qaeda. In recent years, and indeed months, the insurgency has intensified and spread into areas which were previously considered to be relatively stable.<sup>98</sup> Although the main focus of the insurgency continues to be in the Pashtun-dominated south, where the Taliban has its heartland, and in the east of the country, which is vulnerable to increasing cross-border activity from neighbouring Pakistan, militancy has also increased in certain Pashtun pockets in the north and west including in the provinces closest to the capital, Kabul.<sup>99</sup> The capital itself has been the target of a series of high-profile attacks.<sup>100</sup> In an article for *Foreign Affairs*, Fotini Christia and Michael Semple state that “the Taliban’s followers have pushed the Afghan government and its allies out of large swathes of the countryside and crept up to the gates of Kabul, bringing an alternative administration and sharia courts to the vacated areas”.<sup>101</sup> Daniel Korski of the European Council on Foreign Relations told us that the Taliban know that instability in the capital has an “outsized psychological impact on the resolve of the country and the international community”. Mr Korski added that, “the Taliban may not be about to over-run Kabul but they are trying to create panic, and show that the government cannot control the land it sits on”.<sup>102</sup> The submission from the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) states that insecurity is at its worst since 2001. BAAG also notes that:

civilian travel on all major highways has become fraught with risks of attacks by anti-government forces and criminal groups. There is an unprecedented level of criminal kidnapping. It has once again become extremely dangerous to live, travel and do business in the country.”<sup>103</sup> One of the consequences of this degree of insecurity, according to BAAG, is that it has become increasingly difficult to deliver aid to those in need.<sup>104</sup>

63. ‘Asymmetric attacks’, which are commonly understood to mean terrorist attacks and guerilla warfare involving suicide bombs and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), have also become common. There was a fourfold increase in the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in Helmand in 2008<sup>105</sup> and across NATO’s Regional Command (RC)

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98 Ev 127

99 Q 2

100 Q 2

101 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, “Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009, p 34, [www.foreignaffairs.com/](http://www.foreignaffairs.com/)

102 Ev 158

103 Ev 169

104 Ev 169

105 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1034

(South), which comprises six provinces (Nimruz, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabol, Oruzgan and Daykondi), Taliban and anti-government attacks increased by 77% during 2008.<sup>106</sup>

64. A range of groups are involved in the insurgency in Afghanistan. These are said to include the Afghan Taliban, Al Qaeda, Hizb-i-Islami, the Haqqani Network, Hizb-i-Islami-Gulbuddin, and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The number of groups involved, and their disparate aims and motives, means that there is no coherent command structure, strategy or motivation that spans the insurgency as a whole, although most groups are united by their demand for an immediate end to the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan. Although fragmentation of the insurgency is greater in the east than in the south, where it is made up of a wide range of jihadi groups, the FCO's written evidence states that the insurgency as a whole benefits from safe havens in Pakistan which are easily accessed across the porous border.<sup>107</sup> We consider the impact that insurgent groups based in Pakistan have on Afghanistan at Paragraph 146. The security situation also depends upon progress made in a range of other sectors. We consider some of these areas in the following sections of this Report.

**65. We conclude that the security situation in Afghanistan, particularly in the south where the majority of British troops are based, will remain precarious for some time to come. We further conclude that the current instability is having a damaging effect on Coalition Forces and efforts to engage in reconstruction and development.**

### Afghanistan's struggling security sector

66. Afghanistan's security prospects have not been aided by the fact that years of conflict and thirty years of civil war have made the country, in the view of Colonel Langton, "something of an arms dump".<sup>108</sup> The international community's recognition of the potentially adverse affect that this could have on Afghanistan's future stability led to the initiation of a programme of security-sector reform conducted under the 'lead nation' system.

67. In 2003, under Japanese leadership, the international community initiated a three-year voluntary disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) programme, through which former Afghan military forces, comprising the Northern Alliance, warlord militias and other Taliban-era armed groups, were supposed to surrender their weapons and be reintegrated into civilian life. The UK was the second largest donor to the DDR programme, providing £19.1 million in funding. The FCO claims that the programme led to the disarmament of over 62,000 former combatants<sup>109</sup> and that it dealt "largely successfully" with the potential security threat that the targeted groups posed.

68. However, Dr Jonathan Goodhand, of the School of Oriental and Asian Studies, London, told us that it was "at best a flawed success".<sup>110</sup> A large-scale research project

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106 "Afghanistan Index", *Brookings Institution*, 21 January 2009

107 Ev 78

108 Q 5

109 Ev 83

110 Q 72

undertaken by the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at York University, which helped to inform DfID's latest Country Plan for Afghanistan, concluded that "the long-term impact of reintegration assistance is widely doubted, as is the success of the programme in permanently breaking down militia patronage networks".<sup>111</sup> The DDR programme was wound up in 2005 and replaced by what the FCO describes as a "more challenging" Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups process.<sup>112</sup> More than 1,000 groups are engaged in this process and over 42,000 weapons and over 200,000 items of ammunition have been collected.<sup>113</sup> However, the FCO warns that "more remains to be done to ensure that these groups do not continue to jeopardise Afghanistan's stability". Dr Goodhand told us that many Afghans, particularly in the north, are perplexed and frustrated that they have been forced to disarm while the Government has been re-arming other groups, particularly in the south "to pursue the war on terror and the war against the Taliban".<sup>114</sup> He added that the "disarmament process has been very uneven and partially successful and that there is no shortage of men and militias in Afghan society".<sup>115</sup> He argued that

DDR is not what brings about security; security enables DDR to happen. We are looking at it the wrong way in terms of cause and effect relationships. The other thing [...] about the DDR is that it is reintegration—the R—that is the critical thing and which has been the weakest. How do you kick-start the economy? How do you invest in the rural economy to give people options? An AK47 is a means of sustenance.<sup>116</sup>

### **Afghan National Army**

69. In 2001 Afghanistan had no national army or national police force. Nearly eight years later, the existence of a fully functioning army and police force are widely regarded to be crucial to Afghanistan's future stability. The FCO states that "building the capacity of Afghan security forces is essential to improving security across Afghanistan", and notes that both ISAF and OEF are heavily involved in this process.<sup>117</sup> Witnesses and interlocutors have told us that under the tutelage of the US, and with NATO training and advice through Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), progress towards the creation of a fully functioning Afghan National Army (ANA) has been good. The ANA increasingly leads on counter-insurgency operations and opinion polls suggest that the army is the most respected public institution in Afghanistan.<sup>118</sup>

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111 "A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan", *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 44

112 Ev 83

113 Ev 83

114 Q 72

115 Q 72

116 Q 74

117 Ev 81

118 89% of respondents to a survey carried out in 2008 said that the ANA is honest and fair with them, while 86% agree that the ANA is helping to improve the security situation in the country. Positive perceptions of the ANA have not changed significantly since 2007. "Afghanistan in 2008: A Survey of the Afghan People", Asia Foundation, 2008, <http://asiafoundation.org>

70. We were told by interlocutors during our visit to Afghanistan that the army was being created on “an industrial scale” and that consequently the force will be “crude, coarse and functional”. It was explained to us that main aim is to create a functioning force before refining it at a later stage. In spite of this, interlocutors spoke highly of the commitment of those in the ANA and of its improving sense of professionalism. Clearly, however, challenges remain. The lack of rotation between battalions in the ANA means that troops based in unstable areas have no respite, a factor which is beginning to have adverse effects on both recruitment and retention rates. The ANA also appears to be suffering because of its own success. Daniel Korski told us that “the Afghan army is fielding units faster than NATO can supply OMLTs to train them. [...] As it takes an average OMLT four to six months before they become effective, little time is left to leverage the skills learnt and the relationships created given that the military rotations are usually six months.”<sup>119</sup> We discuss the issue of the length of civilian postings below at Paragraph 251.

71. There is also uncertainty as to whether progress can be maintained in the medium to long term. We were told during our visit that the US currently spends approximately \$300 million per annum on sustaining the ANA, an amount that the Afghan government is unlikely to be able to finance through its own revenue in the near future.

### **Afghan National Police**

72. The police force, through its regular contact with the general population, has greater potential to change popular perceptions about the legitimacy of the Afghan government than the ANA. As such it is a key factor in security sector reform. During our visit to Helmand, we visited the new, purpose-built provincial police headquarters where we were briefed about the work of the police. We were impressed by the obvious dedication of those who worked there, assisted, in part, by UK police mentors.

73. However, the evidence we received on the police and police reform highlighted a number of serious concerns. Interlocutors told us that the police were actively involved in criminal activities, that training in the past had been minimal and that many police were drug users or involved in the drugs trade. Other reports state that police positions particularly in lucrative transit and drug trafficking corridors are “sold” for large amounts of money.<sup>120</sup> In some cases corruption occurs because of criminality, but in other instances it can be a result of low salaries which are not routinely or regularly forthcoming from central government. Irrespective of the cause, however, Peter Marsden states that public disenchantment with the police is widespread and that its inability to dispense law and order is a major factor in people turning to the Taliban for justice.<sup>121</sup> The Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit concludes that the ANP is “one of the most dysfunctional institutions in the country”.<sup>122</sup>

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119 Ev 158

120 “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security”, Report of the Secretary-General, A/63/372–S/2008/617, 23 September 2008, p 7, <http://unama.unmissions.org>

121 Ev 177

122 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 41

74. The FCO's written submission highlighted another area of concern, which is that as a result of the deteriorating security situation, the police are in danger of "becoming a state security force, with no form of proper accountability or connection to community needs".<sup>123</sup> Dr Goodhand commented that there is a "worrying trend [...] towards the paramilitarisation of security sector institutions, which should essentially be about protecting Afghans' lives and security", but instead are "now increasingly skewed towards counter-insurgency measures".<sup>124</sup> Although some 78,500 police officers are currently enrolled, the UN estimates that only about 57,000 are actually operational because, in part, of injuries sustained whilst assisting in military operations.<sup>125</sup> Peter Marsden states that the high death rate of police engaged in counter-insurgency operations is a clear indication that they are "neither resourced nor sufficiently trained to take on such a role." He adds that "their use, for this entirely inappropriate purpose, also takes them away from their primary role of providing an effective rule of law for the population".<sup>126</sup>

75. Reform of the police was originally a task assigned to Germany, as lead nation, and then later to the EUPOL, the EU's police reform mission. Both have been heavily criticised for failing to make progress on reform. The creation in 2007 of EUPOL, comprising some 176 personnel (mainly police, law enforcement and justice experts), was supposed to consolidate different approaches among EU members. Yet, as the International Crisis Group has noted, "EUPOL is widely regarded as a disappointment and has been unable to find a niche".<sup>127</sup> Others have told us that since its creation it has struggled to attract staff, deploy into the provinces or make discernable differences to policing standards.<sup>128</sup>

76. Lord Malloch-Brown told us that various approaches are being considered with a view to improving the police. He stated:

We have been looking at supplementing the police with a so-called Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF). We are currently running a pilot of that in Wardak province, with support from the US. It is basically a local community police force. There are issues of training, control, objectivity and performance which we need to track carefully, but I think we all agree that not nearly enough has been done on the police side. In addition to conventional police training, we need to look at some slightly out-of-the-box solutions to supplement the numbers of people we have who are willing to protect communities from Taliban activity.<sup>129</sup>

77. However, BAAG states that setting up tribal militia groups under the APPF appears to be another attempt to find a quick fix to a security challenge that requires a coherent and nationwide strategy. Its written submission noted:

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123 Ev 89

124 Q 64

125 "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", Report of the Secretary-General, A/63/372-S/2008/617, 23 September 2008

126 Ev 176

127 "Policing in Afghanistan: still searching for a strategy", *International Crisis Group*, Asia Briefing No. 85, 18 December 2008, [www.crisisgroup.org](http://www.crisisgroup.org)

128 Ev 156

129 Q 196

Afghans have had bitter experience of armed militias and are rightly concerned about inter-ethnic and inter-communal tensions that have almost always followed initiatives aimed at making communities responsible for their security. There is a real danger that communities involved in APPF would face additional security risk resulting from their association with pro-government forces.<sup>130</sup>

78. During our visit it was clear that although the EU remains nominally in the lead on police reform, the shortcomings of its approach, along with a lack of sufficient EU police mentors, means that the US military, with its considerable influence and financial clout,<sup>131</sup> has now stepped into the breach and is driving the police reform agenda. Interlocutors told us that, however well-intentioned the US military may be, they do not possess the requisite skills or experience to create a civilian police force. They argued that, in consequence, the police force will inevitably reflect, to some extent, the values and approaches of the military. A Focussed District Development (FDD) programme, promoted by the US, takes police officers, district by district, and gives them eight weeks of training by the military, private security contractors and the Ministry of Interior. During the training period, policing in the affected districts is provided by ANCOP, the Afghan National Civil Order Police, who are more extensively trained and whose main role is to maintain order in the larger cities. Daniel Korski told us that the FDD programme has proved relatively successful. He commented:

Sure, there are problems; there are not enough ANCOP special troops to go in and, when the old police officers come back, people say, “Give us the special troops who were here before.” There are positive things going on in the policing sector. It may not be that wonderfully expansive vision of a democratically accountable and responsive security sector that we originally had, but it is not yet handing over guns to a series of militias unconnected to the security sector reform process.<sup>132</sup>

### ***Afghan security forces: conclusions***

**79. We conclude that the steady progress being made towards the creation of the Afghan National Army stands in sharp contrast to the disappointingly slow pace on police reform, for which Germany was the ‘lead nation’ before responsibility was transferred to EUPOL. As a consequence, the United States has considered it has no option but to invest a considerable amount of effort and resource in police reform, with assistance and training provided by the US military. We further conclude that military-led reform of civilian police institutions, no matter how well-intentioned, must run the risk of creating a paramilitary-style police as opposed to the civilian force which was originally envisaged and which will be needed in the future.**

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130 Ev 170

131 Between 2002 and 2008 the US has provided \$6,199,000,000 in support to the Afghan National Police (“Afghanistan Index”, *Brookings Institution*, 26 May 2009)

132 Q 148

## Governance, justice and human rights

### Governance

80. The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) points to “a crisis of governance in many parts of the country”. It claims that the police and judiciary, where they exist, are widely regarded as inept and corrupt. Reports of ‘shadow government’ are widespread.<sup>133</sup> There have been many recent attempts to improve the situation, including the creation of a new Afghan Independent Directorate of Local Governance which aims to by-pass corrupt government departments when selecting capable governors, police chiefs and other local office holders. We were told, however, that the pace of change was extremely slow, and that the capacity of the provincial government departments responsible for key services remains poor.<sup>134</sup> The FCO warns that “without renewed progress the governance situation could worsen” and that rule of law and basic security is lacking for large parts of the population.<sup>135</sup>

### Justice

81. The situation in relation to the justice sector is equally gloomy. As part of the ‘lead nation’ approach adopted in 2001, the substantial responsibility for reforming Afghanistan’s justice sector was placed on Italy’s shoulders, with assistance from the US. However, the different legal traditions of Italy and the US led to conflicting approaches. Indeed, justice also remained a low priority for the international community as a whole. A 2005 report by the World Bank stated that only 3 % of the donor funds allocated to the security sector went to justice institutions.<sup>136</sup> Dr Goodhand told us that the principal reason why strengthening the rule of law was considered to be a low priority in the early days of Western intervention in Afghanistan is that this was a reflection of the “politics of the time”. He stated:

In the Bonn agreement, the issue of transitional justice was purposely kept opaque [...] because [...] the mujaheddin were brought back into power and they did not want to address those questions. An amnesty Bill in Parliament in 2007 drew a line under that. [...] Was there an opportunity to push this more strongly in 2002? I think that there was. In civil society and in society more generally in Afghanistan, there was a demand to bring these people to account, but by making those early decisions [...] it then became very difficult to address it. In many ways, the opportunities and the openings for intervention have successively narrowed since 2002. We are in a very different situation now from where we were in 2002.<sup>137</sup>

82. Elizabeth Winter of BAAG told us that the Italians “found it very hard to make progress”. She added that “people felt that they perhaps took the wrong approach in the

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133 Ev 170

134 Ev 170

135 Ev 87

136 William Byrd, “Afghanistan-State Building, Sustaining Growth, and Reducing Poverty”, *World Bank*, 2005, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

137 Q 79

beginning. They themselves blamed other members of the international community for not supporting them, but the upshot was that very little was done”.<sup>138</sup> In some areas, the Taliban have exploited the lack of a functioning formal justice system by providing justice and law and order where none exists. Dr Goodhand told us that, particularly in the north of the country there is not necessarily public demand for the type of justice dispensed by the Taliban but warned that “we should reflect on what kind of state is realistic in Afghanistan and what kind of state people want. They want a state that is able to give a level of predictability and security to their lives so that they can go about their economic business [...] . There is a need for much more modest ambitions about what an Afghan state is able to deliver in the medium term.”<sup>139</sup>

83. There have been some improvements: funding has increased in recent years and, in 2007, the international community adopted a National Justice Sector Strategy described by the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at York University as “a major breakthrough” in addressing the previous *ad hoc* and poorly co-ordinated approach.<sup>140</sup>

84. Dr Goodhand told us that, notwithstanding these positive developments, the international community is still “grappling with the problem of the rule of law and legal reform”.<sup>141</sup> The Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit notes that a “major resource shortfall remains” and that “it is estimated that up to US\$1 billion dollars will be required over the coming decade to complete the necessary reforms in the system”.<sup>142</sup>

85. One major consequence of the poorly functioning justice system is that many Afghans resort to more traditional, informal forms of justice which have existed for hundreds of years.<sup>143</sup> Dr Goodhand told us that Afghans try to avoid the state sector because they regard it as predatory and biased and that “to ignore that would be very wrong-headed.”<sup>144</sup> The FCO estimates that over 90% of justice in Afghanistan is delivered through the “informal justice” system.<sup>145</sup> This operates through two key informal institutions – the jirga among the Pashtuns and shura among the non-Pashtuns of Afghanistan. The United States Institute for Peace explains that “the jirga is [...] a community-based process for collective decision-making and is often used as a dispute settlement mechanism, including imposing agreed sanctions and using tribal forces to enforce its decisions” while the term shura “refers to a group of elders or recognised leaders who make decisions on behalf of the community they represent”.<sup>146</sup> A report by the United Nations Development Fund stated that jirgas and shuras reach community-led decisions that “promote restorative justice,

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138 Q 70

139 Q 83

140 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 42

141 Q 63

142 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 42

143 “Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007: Bridging Modernity and Tradition – Rule of Law and the Search for Justice”, *United Nations Development Programme, 2007*, [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

144 Q 71

145 Ev 89

146 Sudhindra Sharma and Pawan Kumar Sen, “Institutionalization of the Justice System”, in “State Building, Security, and Social Change in Afghanistan: Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People”, *Asia Foundation*, 2008, p 46, <http://asiafoundation.org>

helping to restore peace and dignity between the victims, offenders, and other key stakeholders. They also aim to reintegrate the offender back into the community after holding him or her responsible for a wrongdoing". The UNDP argued that, "in combination with [bodies] such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, civil society organizations, and the media, informal institutions of dispute settlement can complement formal state institutions to enable more Afghans to access affordable justice that is viewed as legitimate and can progressively do more to meet national and international legal and human rights standards".<sup>147</sup> However, it also notes women are almost totally excluded from participating in the decision-making of jirgas/shuras "resulting in serious consequences for their status and the protection of their rights."<sup>148</sup>

86. We questioned whether it was possible, or indeed desirable, to mix traditional forms of Afghan justice with Western-oriented systems. Elizabeth Winter argued that there were ways in which international forms of law and Islamic law "can be complementary to each other" but added that some of the traditional systems of dispute resolution "are not particularly satisfactory."<sup>149</sup>

87. The FCO's view is that "it is vital for the international community to engage more actively [with the informal system], especially in developing linkages with the formal system".<sup>150</sup> In an attempt to work with, rather than against, the Afghan grain, and in addition to its work to improve the formal justice system, the British Government has begun to assist with the development of local community meetings to help solve community disputes, and to strengthen and build links between the Afghan government and local communities.<sup>151</sup> This has included work to develop a Prisoner Review system which links tribal elders to the formal justice system and efforts to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women and children, through the creation of a Women and Children's Justice Group in Lashkar Gah and the provision of training courses to female inmates in Lashkar Gah prison.<sup>152</sup>

**88. We conclude that the failure to create an effective formal justice system as promised in the Bonn Agreement means that many Afghans remain reliant on traditional, informal mechanisms of justice. We welcome the Government's policy of developing links between formal and informal mechanisms of justice providing that full access, including to decision-taking, is sought for women in both mechanisms. However, we further conclude that the Government must guard against inadvertently endorsing any measures which could lead to the introduction, through informal mechanisms, of extreme forms of justice which retard or even reverse the slow progress that has been made towards promoting internationally accepted standards of human rights in Afghanistan.**

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147 "Afghanistan Human Development Report 2007: Bridging Modernity and Tradition—Rule of Law and the Search for Justice", *United Nations Development Programme*, 2007, p 9, [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

148 *Ibid.*, p 10

149 Q 70–71 [Elizabeth Winter]

150 Ev 89

151 Ev 89

152 Ev 89

## Corruption

89. Closely related to the issue of poor governance is the problem of corruption, which is endemic in Afghanistan. In its written submission BAAG states that corruption within the police force and amongst government officials has had a “crippling effect on business, social life and travel, leading to growing concerns that many Afghans now perceive the armed opposition groups as ‘the lesser of the many evils’ and therefore may actually decide to support those rather than the government”.<sup>153</sup> Our witnesses and interlocutors were united in the view that corruption not only affects the poorest people disproportionately but also undermines efforts to improve stability.

90. In 2005 Afghanistan’s ranking in Transparency International’s corruption perception index stood at 117 out of 159 countries. By 2008 it had dropped to 176 out of 180 countries.<sup>154</sup> According to a recent survey by Integrity Watch Afghanistan stated that the average Afghan household pays an estimated \$100 in petty bribes every year (by way of context, 70% of the population survives on less than \$1 per day).<sup>155</sup> Dr Goodhand told us that “Afghanistan is a highly insecure environment at the moment, and people do not have confidence in the future, so the risk-opportunity calculus is, “I need to make money now, while there is a possibility” [...] This is not just a few immoral people trying to use public office for private gain, although, of course, there is that as well”<sup>156</sup> Ms Winter added:

Afghans are capable of deciding when something is really just to oil the wheels, and when something is out and out corruption and they really find it intolerable. Some of that is going on. Where you have good Ministers who manage their Ministries well and are able to find good staff to support them [...] corruption is being rooted out and is lessening.<sup>157</sup>

91. Allegations that corruption reaches to the highest echelons of the Afghan government have seriously damaged its attempt to extend its writ within the country.<sup>158</sup> The FCO states that it has pressed President Karzai to take action against corrupt public officials and that DfID has supported work to identify and address the areas that are most vulnerable to corruption, including creating more robust public financial management systems.<sup>159</sup> Elizabeth Winter told us that the UK Government was “one of the better governments in supporting the development and the capacity of the Afghan government”.<sup>160</sup> In December 2008, the UK created a Multi Agency Anti-Corruption Task Force to assist the Afghan government in tackling corruption. It is made up of representatives from DfID, FCO, the Serious Organised Crime Agency, the Crown Prosecution Service, and the Crown Office

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153 Ev 169

154 “Corruption Perceptions Index”, *Transparency International*, 23 September 2008, [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org)

155 Quoted in “UN envoy: “Corruption in Afghanistan is endemic, it hurts the poorest people”, ReliefWeb, August 20, 2008, [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int)

156 Q 66

157 Q 76

158 Kenneth Katzman, “Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy”, *Congressional Research Service*, 18 June 2009

159 HC Deb, 14 November 2008, col 278W

160 Q 76

Procurator Fiscal Service.<sup>161</sup> Two new Afghan anti-corruption bodies were also established in 2008: the High Office of Monitoring, and a corruption oversight unit within the Attorney General's Office. President Karzai's October 2008 appointment of Mohamad Hanif Atmar as Interior Minister was also seen as a signal that the Afghan government is serious about addressing corruption.<sup>162</sup> However, high-level prosecutions have been noticeable by their absence. Dr Goodhand expressed scepticism about the impact that anti-corruption bodies might have, arguing that they tend ultimately to "reflect power relationships within the government, and [...] achieve very little".<sup>163</sup>

92. Integrity Watch Afghanistan reported recently that of \$25 billion given in aid since 2001, only some \$15 billion had been spent, and that for every \$100 spent, sometimes only \$20 reached Afghan recipients.<sup>164</sup> Dr Goodhand told us that the problem "is not just about greedy Afghans grabbing the aid. There is a whole infrastructure, which is kind of auto-consuming the aid—I am thinking here of private sector contractors and security firms. A lot of the money is not even leaving Washington".<sup>165</sup> BAAG states that as long as the public administration, law enforcement and public accountability agencies remain unreformed, underdeveloped and ineffective, the problem of corruption is likely to continue.<sup>166</sup>

93. We asked Lord Malloch-Brown about the Government's position on corruption in Afghanistan. He told us that:

Through DFID, we have worked hard both to make sure that our own aid money is not wasted and that we are building the kinds of institutions of governance—the checks and balances and controls over corruption—that start to clean this up. But one has to be honest—this is one of the real Achilles heels of the Kabul Government. Particularly at the regional level, there are governors appointed by Kabul who have a horrible reputation regarding corruption. We hope that [the] election campaign [in the summer of 2009] will be an opportunity for ordinary Afghans to air their grievance about that and demand of whomever they elect as President that they clean up their act.<sup>167</sup>

**94. We conclude that almost eight years after the international community became involved in Afghanistan, virtually no tangible progress has been made in tackling the endemic problem of corruption, and that in many cases the problem has actually become worse. We further conclude that policy commitments, action plans and all manner of strategies are of little value if they are not accompanied by the political will on the part of the Afghan President and government to drive forward change and tackle corruption at senior levels. Although corruption is a worldwide problem, the situation in Afghanistan is particularly bad and requires an Afghan-led solution if it is to be significantly reduced.**

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161 Ev 90

162 "2009 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report", *US State Department*, 27 February 2009, [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov)

163 Q 76

164 "Strategic Survey", *International Institute for Strategic Studies*, September 2008

165 Q 66

166 Ev 172

167 Q 200

## Human rights

95. The Afghanistan Compact sets out the respective commitments of the Afghan Government and the international community in relation to improving human rights. Under this framework, by the end of 2010 a range of benchmarks are to be met, which include:

- more compliance with human rights treaties;
- the adoption by government security and law-enforcement agencies of measures aimed at preventing arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, extortion and illegal expropriation of property;
- improvements in the ability to exercise freedom of expression;
- the inclusion of human rights awareness in education curricula and its promotion among legislators, judicial personnel and other Government agencies, communities and the public; and
- human rights monitoring by the Government, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and the UN.<sup>168</sup>

96. The FCO states that “although much remains to be done, hard work and significant investment by the Afghan government, supported by the international community, is having an impact, for example gradually realising people’s rights to freedom of expression, equality and a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being”.<sup>169</sup> Since 2001, the UK has provided over £1.75 million of support for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC)<sup>170</sup> and works with a range of small NGOs and the United Nations Development Programme to create a Human Rights Support Unit in the Afghan Ministry of Justice. The Unit will support and co-ordinate Afghan government efforts to protect and promote human rights.<sup>171</sup> The UK is also providing human rights training to the Afghan prison service, and in Helmand is providing advice and training to both the ANP and the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan to improve human rights compliance.<sup>172</sup>

97. Overall, however, the UN concludes that the human rights situation remains a source of serious concern. A report published in March 2009 by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, states that gross human rights violations remain a serious threat to continuing efforts to transform Afghan society; that a culture of impunity prevails and is deeply entrenched; that there is a lack of political will to advance the transitional justice process to address past abuses; and there is an absence of accountability for current human rights violations.

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168 Ev 91

169 Ev 91

170 Ev 85

171 Ev 93

172 Ev 89

98. The 2004 Afghan Constitution includes references to a number of political, social and economic human rights as well as a commitment to abide by the core international human rights treaties.<sup>173</sup> However, Elizabeth Winter told us that although “Afghanistan has signed all the major protocols, [...] it has not put a great deal of effort into actually following them”.<sup>174</sup>

99. We address the specific issue of women’s rights in Afghanistan in the following section of this Report.

**100. We conclude that while much effort has been expended by Western governments on promoting human rights in Afghanistan, the underlying dynamics and cultural views in Afghanistan, amongst men in particular, have not shifted to any great extent. As long as security remains poor, human rights protection will not be considered a priority by many Afghans.**

## Women and their position in Afghanistan

101. The FCO states that many women in Afghanistan still face significant hardships and unequal treatment as a result of poverty and insecurity, and in part due to deeply held cultural views. It adds that “a lack of legal protection and inadequate access to justice increases the risks women face in a society where the rule of law is still weak. Outspoken women still face severe risks”.<sup>175</sup> In her most recent human rights report on Afghanistan, the UN’s High Commissioner for Human Rights is particularly critical of a failure to protect women’s rights and warns that gains made recently by women in the public sphere are in danger of receding.<sup>176</sup> Statistics from the United Nations Development Fund for Women for 2008 state that although women represent 27% of the National Assembly, the estimated literacy rate for women stands at 15.8% (compared to 31% for men), only 19% of schools are designated as girls schools, and in 29% of educational districts there are no designated girls schools at all. 70% to 80% of women face arranged marriages in Afghanistan and 57% of girls are married before the legal marriage age of 16.<sup>177</sup>

102. The FCO told us that the UK attempts to enhance the status of women in Afghanistan in three main ways: through policy engagement with the Afghan government; through support for national programmes and services, which benefit women; and through bilateral programmes. The British Government also regularly engages in discussions about women’s rights with members of the Afghan government, Afghan Parliamentarians and NGOs.<sup>178</sup> Most of the Government’s financial support is channelled through the Afghan

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173 Afghanistan has ratified all the core human rights treaties: Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (24 April 1983), Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (24 April 1983), Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (05 August 1983), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (05 March 2003), Convention Against Torture (26 June 1987), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (27 April 1994) and its optional protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (24 September 2003).

174 Q 80

175 Ev 92

176 “Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan and on the achievements of technical assistance in the field of human rights”, A/HRC/10/23, 16 January 2009

177 “The Situation of Women in Afghanistan”, *UNIFEM Afghanistan Fact Sheet, 2008*, www.unifem.org

178 Ev 92

government but the UK also provides £500,000 to support a women's empowerment programme, implemented by the NGO Womankind (running from 2005 to 2010). The programme focuses on promoting women's equal participation in governance; building awareness of women's rights among civil society and policy makers; and providing educational, health, community and psycho-social support to women affected by violence and conflict. Over £35 million has also been provided to support the Afghan government's micro-finance programme, which we discuss below at Paragraph 138, giving women in particular better access to finance. The UK is also working with local and international NGOs in pursuit of the promotion of women's rights.

103. The FCO states that:

The AIHRC [Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission] now has representatives in Helmand province, who are helping support the new Women and Children's Justice Group, established in Lashkar Gah in August 2008. Run by prominent female members of the community, the group is developing and implementing practical programmes on the ground to support women and children's rights and justice issues.<sup>179</sup>

104. During our visit, interlocutors told us that human and women's rights had fallen from the agenda of the Afghanistan government and that of the international community. They argued that more money for the education of girls and women was required and that "if you educate a woman, you educate a whole family".

105. We visited a girl's school in Kabul, which has been supported by the British Council, where we were able to see for ourselves what progress had been made, as well as some of the challenges that girls and teachers face on a daily basis. We were encouraged to see the voracious appetite for female education which exists: each day 6,337 students are taught by age group in three shifts starting at 6.30 am and concluding at 5 pm, a process that is overseen by 14 senior teachers.

106. In spite of the obvious spirit and commitment of staff and students, it is clear that tremendous challenges remain. Elsewhere in Afghanistan, opponents of women's education have thrown acid at schoolgirls and have been accused of mounting poison-gas attacks on girls' schools.<sup>180</sup> The World Bank states that girls represent less than 15% of the total enrolment in many southern provinces and that the limited supply of learning spaces and lack of female teachers are major factors constraining girls' education.<sup>181</sup>

107. A number of our witnesses pointed to the fact that the international community's approach to women's rights may, paradoxically, have contributed to the difficult situation that women in Afghanistan face. Dr Goodhand stated:

With human rights and gender, the perception that this is internationally driven has had perverse effects for Afghans who are interested in pushing the questions and pushing the boundaries. Women have become a banner issue that is being used by

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179 Ev 92

180 "Girls targeted in 'Taliban gas attack'", *The Independent*, 13 May 2009

181 "Afghanistan: Education in Afghanistan", *World Bank website*, [www.worldbank.org](http://www.worldbank.org)

the Taliban and the mujaheddin to mobilise legitimacy. When international actors engage in these questions, they are hitting some very sensitive nerves. The key issue is looking historically and moving carefully without becoming an apologist for the [...] view that culture never changes.<sup>182</sup>

Elizabeth Winter concurred, stating that the way the international community approached the issue of human, and women's rights "was at fault". She added:

Westerners found it very difficult to do it in an effective manner. Very often, they appointed women to do the job—very young, inexperienced Afghan women at that—who were told that they were focal points for gender, and human rights were often just seen as women's rights. You had grandstanding by many senior members of the international community in their own countries.<sup>183</sup>

108. Christina Lamb also spoke about the specific issue of women's rights and argued that "it would not be wrong to say there has been a betrayal of women, given all the promises that were made in late 2001." Ms Lamb told us that the human rights initiatives that were introduced in 2001 had been unsuitable:

There were all these gender rights projects and feminists coming in with different things that were not what most women wanted. [...] Afghanistan has the best laws for women in most of Asia because of the new laws that were drawn up after the Taliban were removed. [...] Yet that makes no difference because nobody complies with those laws.<sup>184</sup>

109. David Loyn told us that the international community had overly high expectations about what could be achieved in respect of human rights generally and women's rights more specifically. He said that although there was "a huge appetite for girls' education among the middle class, [...] in most Afghan society, we are a long way from the kind of equality between men and women that is commonplace in the west. It is far too high an expectation for us to demand it of Afghanistan".<sup>185</sup>

110. Interlocutors told us that in recent years lessons have been learned and that the British Government was committed to a more low key approach which aims to support women in Afghanistan in a manner which does not directly antagonize those opposed to women's rights, and which seeks to avoid playing into the hands of the Taliban and the large elements of Afghan society which remain socially conservative and resent what they perceive to be an example of the West attempting to change traditional Afghan values.

### ***The Shia family law***

111. The difficulty of reconciling Western conceptions of human rights with deeply rooted Afghan customs was cast into sharp focus recently by the controversy surrounding the so-called "Shia family law". In April 2009, it became known that a parliamentary bill on the

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182 Q 80 [Dr Goodhand]

183 Q 80 [Elizabeth Winter]

184 Q 122 [Christina Lamb]

185 Q 122 [David Loyn]

Personal Status of Followers of Shia Jurisprudence (“the Shia Family Law”) had been signed by President Karzai and was to enter into force. President Karzai’s detractors accuse him of electioneering at the expense of women’s rights by signing the law to appeal to Shia swing voters in this year’s presidential election. His defenders argue that he was not aware of what he was signing. We were appalled to learn that if enacted the law would, *inter alia*, eliminate the need for sexual consent between husband and wife, tacitly approve child marriage, and restrict a woman’s right to leave the family home without her husband’s consent. We raised this issue during our visit to Afghanistan, and voiced our concerns with a number of interlocutors, including the country’s two Vice-Presidents, Ahmad Zia Massoud and Abdul Karim Khalili, as well as with Foreign Minister Dr Rangin Dadfar Spanta. The law would apply only to the Shia minority in Afghanistan (which amounts to some 19% of the total population<sup>186</sup>), but on the basis of meetings we have had with Afghan parliamentarians, it is clear that the Sunni majority is reluctant to intervene in what they regard as the internal affairs of their Shia fellow citizens.

112. Following an international outcry over the proposed law, President Karzai announced that the law would be changed to bring it in line with Afghanistan’s constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women. In June 2009, Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the law was under review by a committee established by the Afghan Ministry of Justice. He added that the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) had been coordinating the international response to the passage of this bill and had convened a meeting in May with Afghan MPs, local and international NGOs, UN agencies and Embassies. Once the internal Afghan review has been completed, the intention is that law should go back to Parliament. Lord Malloch-Brown assured us that the Prime Minister had made his concerns clear to President Karzai, that the British Government would continue to monitor the situation closely, and that it would intervene again, “should we consider it necessary”.<sup>187</sup>

113. A subsequent letter from the Foreign Secretary stated that the Ministry of Justice had completed its review of the law and that following written recommendations by Afghan civil society, the Afghan Women’s Network, Katib University and moderate Ulema (religious scholars) some sixty articles were added and around ten removed from the Law. The Foreign Secretary’s letter also stated that “language was also added to clarify the meaning of certain articles” and that the Government understands that “the Afghan Women’s Network view the amended draft as broadly acceptable, and contentious articles, including the provision appearing to legalise rape, had been removed”. The letter also states that the Law is being reviewed by the Supreme Court and that President Karzai has indicated that the Law will next be sent back to the Afghan Parliament for approval in time for the new session of Parliament, beginning 20 July 2009. The Foreign Secretary’s letter concludes that “the Law continues to cause controversy on both sides” and that “the outcome is still uncertain”.<sup>188</sup>

**114. We conclude the proposed “Shia family law” which would have legalised rape within marriage and legitimised the subjugation of Shia women in Afghanistan,**

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186 “Country Profile: Afghanistan”, *CIA World Factbook*, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov)

187 Ev 188

188 Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2008–09, *Human Rights Annual Report 2008*, HC 557, Ev 52

represented an affront to decent human values. We further conclude that it is a matter for alarm that these proposals were considered to be acceptable by President Karzai, by a majority in the Afghan parliament, and by significant elements of Afghan public opinion. This episode highlights the challenges that Afghan women continue to face in realising their basic human rights nearly eight years after the fall of the Taliban government. We conclude that this proposed law has had a detrimental affect on international perceptions of Afghanistan. We welcome the British Government's announcement that it considers those aspects of the law which undermine human rights to be wholly unacceptable. We recommend that the Government keeps us fully informed if the Shia Family Law takes legal effect and, if it does, provides us with an analysis as to whether it has been brought in line with the Afghan Constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women, and with the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party.

115. We consider further issues relating to the role of women in Afghanistan, in relation to any future political settlement in that country, in Paragraphs 316 to 318 below.

### Counter-narcotics

116. Opium poppy is widely grown in Afghanistan. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimes (UNODC) estimates that 98% of it is grown in just seven provinces in the south-west, one of which is Helmand.<sup>189</sup> UNODC also estimates that opium cultivation in Helmand province alone accounted for two-thirds (66%) of all the opium cultivated in Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2008, it is claimed that cultivation in Helmand, where the majority of UK troops are based, more than tripled.<sup>190</sup> The FCO notes that Helmand is likely to remain the main cultivating province for the foreseeable future.<sup>191</sup>

117. The UK is G8 'Partner Nation' for Afghanistan on counter-narcotics, which means that it is responsible for leading international efforts to tackle illicit narcotics in Afghanistan. The various political and security challenges facing the country during the first two years after the fall of the Taliban ensured that narcotics and other issues received less attention than might otherwise have been the case. In several instances the central government's need to bolster its authority in the provinces and the US-led coalition's campaign against the Taliban led to a reliance on regional commanders and militias believed to be closely involved in the drugs trade.<sup>192</sup>

118. The FCO states that its goal is to "to achieve a drugs trade divided from the insurgency and prevented from undermining security, governance and the economy to the point where the Afghan Government can take responsibility for its own counter-narcotics effort".<sup>193</sup> This involves targeting influential narco-barons, maximising access to markets for farmers, reaching out to Governors and building effective institutional and international development arrangements to sustain and expand poppy-free provinces. To

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189 "Afghanistan Opium Survey", *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, 26 August 2008, [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)

190 *Ibid.*

191 Ev 97

192 "Afghanistan and Narcotics", *House of Commons Library Standard Note*, SN/IA/3831, 4 June 2007

193 Ev 99

this end, between 2004 and 2008 the UK spent nearly £160 million on its counter-narcotics programme in Afghanistan, in support of the Afghan government's National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS).<sup>194</sup> The NDCS advocates a coordinated, nationwide approach involving public awareness, alternative livelihoods, law enforcement, criminal justice, eradication, institutional development, regional cooperation, and demand reduction. Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the British Government's "whole effort is about strengthening Afghan Government capacity. [...] [T]he Afghan ministry in that area remains relatively weak [and [w]e feel that it needs a strong external partner to help it stand up against the rather contradictory demands on it from elsewhere in the Afghan Government."<sup>195</sup>

119. Lord Malloch-Brown believed that "our commitment in this area is slowly paying off"<sup>196</sup> and cited statistics from UNODC which indicate that poppy cultivation in Helmand has reduced this year.<sup>197</sup> We heard the same message when we visited Helmand when we were told about the success of an eradication programme led by Governor Mangal, and supported by the UK, which led to the creation of the Helmand Food Zone which has used a range of tactics to encourage Helmandis to switch to licit livelihoods including wheat-growing.

120. Fabrice Pothier of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace told us that "for political reasons at home" and "counter-insurgency purposes" in Helmand, the Government was keen to show that progress is being made. However, while praising the UK for adopting and promoting a multi-pronged approach to counter-narcotics, both Fabrice Pothier and the freelance narcotics consultant David Mansfield stated that success could only be fully measured over the longer period.<sup>198</sup> We were told that a successful counter-narcotics approach could take some 25 years to take effect. Within this context Mr Mansfield stated that "pursuing these annual figures can be quite unhelpful", particularly without a full understanding of what is driving change.<sup>199</sup> A number of witnesses and interlocutors stated that recent reductions in poppy cultivations cannot necessarily be attributed to counter-narcotics strategies. Mr Mansfield told us that many farmers had switched away from poppy in recent months, not as a result of counter-narcotics strategies, but because high global prices for wheat made it made it profitable for them to do so. He argued that "[i]t now makes no sense to grow opium poppy to buy wheat when you can get more wheat by growing it on your land".<sup>200</sup>

121. As Fabrice Pothier told us, the situation is complicated by the fact that "you literally have as many strategies [on counter-narcotics] as you have actors in Afghanistan". Both the EU and US, to name two key partners, follow their own drugs strategies and, reflecting a recurring problem in Afghanistan, Mr Pothier concluded that as a result, "you have high fragmentation, and that does not leave much space for true Afghan capacity to develop".<sup>201</sup>

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194 Ev 99

195 Q 217

196 Q 217

197 See "Afghanistan Opium Winter Assessment", *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, January 2009

198 Q 105

199 Q 103

200 Q 103

201 Q 105

The reality of the situation was brought home to us during our visit to Helmand which coincided with the poppy harvest. Not only were the vast swathes of land used for poppy cultivation clearly visible to us from the air, it was obvious that Lashkar Gah was profiting handsomely from the drugs trade. Although it was clear that the drugs trade was in full flow in Lashkar Gah, interlocutors told us that a lack of resources and capabilities meant that police were unable to stop the trade during the harvest period and had no choice but to allow it to continue.

### *Drugs, the insurgency and ISAF*

122. Some interlocutors argued to us that further support from ISAF would make success in counter-narcotics more likely. ISAF's involvement in counter-narcotics operations was first authorised in October 2008, and ISAF troops can now conduct interdiction operations against drugs facilities and facilitators. The FCO has supported this move, arguing that ISAF involvement will enable "the UK to support the Afghan security forces in targeting those elements of the insurgency where there is a clear link to the illegal drugs trade".<sup>202</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown also told us that "we are trying [...] to be a NATO country that meets our share of the responsibility on this."<sup>203</sup> However, the UK has struggled to convince other NATO members to adopt a similar position.<sup>204</sup>

123. Although both the UN and the FCO state that there is a link between the drugs trade and the insurgency in the south of Afghanistan,<sup>205</sup> there is some disagreement over the extent and nature of the links. In 2008, the UN estimated that insurgents earned \$100 million in taxes—or protection money—from opium farmers<sup>206</sup>, while the Afghan Minister for Counter-Narcotics, General Khodaidad Khodaidad, has stated that between 20 and 40% of the profits from the poppy harvest help anti-government forces and that taxes on the poppy crop have become a major source of revenue for the Taliban insurgency.<sup>207</sup> However, a recent report from the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at York University, which was commissioned by DfID, concluded that "the international community's assumption that poppy cultivation and trafficking supports the insurgency is considerably overstated".<sup>208</sup> Fabrice Pothier argued that the UN figures were "mostly a statistical extrapolation over what, potentially, the Taliban could generate by taxing up to 10% of the production in the areas that they want control over". He stated that the evidence was very weak and there is very little documentation about the extent and the type of relationship between the Taliban and the drugs economy.<sup>209</sup> Both Mr Pothier and Mr Mansfield pointed to the fact that the Taliban are focusing on drugs because they have a

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202 Ev 99

203 Ev 67

204 Ev 99

205 Ev 99 and see for example "Afghanistan Opium Survey", *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, 26 August 2008

206 "UNODC anticipates another large opium crop in Afghanistan in 2008", *UNODC News Release*, 6 February 2008

207 "Closing in on the Enemy: Fighting Narcotics in Afghanistan", Transcript of meeting with Colonel General Khodaidad, Minister of Counter Narcotics, Afghanistan, *Chatham House*, 23 February 2009, [www.chathamhouse.org.uk](http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk)

208 "A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan", *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 27

209 Q 106

high financial value but have in the past taxed “whatever [...] lootable resource” was available, whether it was drugs, [...] onions or lapis lazuli”.<sup>210</sup> Mr Pothier stated:

If you look at the historic relationship between the Taliban and drugs, it is one of ambiguity and opportunism, rather than a symbiotic relationship [and] that they go for or against opium when it serves some higher political purpose.<sup>211</sup>

**124. We recommend that the Government continues to do its utmost to persuade its ISAF partners in Afghanistan to give their full support and co-operation to ISAF’s expanded role of conducting operations against drugs facilities and facilitators.**

### **Corruption and narcotics**

125. Another challenge that the UK faces in tackling narcotics in Afghanistan is that of corruption. We deal with the general issue of corruption in Afghanistan in Paragraphs 89 to 94 above. Corruption is blamed by many observers for blunting efforts to control narcotics. Most reports suggest that the degree to which politicians are implicated in the opium trade is significant. During 2008, several mid-level Afghan government officials, including police commanders, were convicted of narcotics and corruption charges.<sup>212</sup> Senior government officials attempting to address the problem are increasingly being intimidated and attacked. On 4 September 2008, the head of the Appeals Court of the Central Narcotics Tribunal was shot and killed on his way to work in Kabul.<sup>213</sup> Corrupt practices range from facilitating drug activities to benefiting from revenue streams that the drug trade produces. In 2008, two new anti-corruption entities were established: the High Office of Monitoring, and a corruption oversight unit within the Attorney General’s Office. However, David Mansfield told us that there is a strong perception among ordinary Afghans that not enough is being done to target high-level corruption and that ordinary people are being penalised for counter-narcotics activity while senior state officials act with apparent impunity.<sup>214</sup> He also told us that while many farmers are able to produce licit goods, have good land and “enormous agricultural potential” they are dissuaded from doing so because “when it comes to actually getting their goods to market”, it is not worth it “because of the costs of checkpoints and of moving down what is perceived to be a very dangerous road”. He added:

If I grow onion in Helmand and I try to take it to the market in Kandahar, I have to go through 14 checkpoints to get the goods to market. Everyone wants some baksheesh. By the time I get to market I am very much a price taker and I am at a loss. I have case studies of farmers who have gone through that calculation. [...] So people grow poppy on their land and let people come to them. [...] Removing the

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210 Q 106 [David Mansfield]

211 Q 106 [Fabrice Pothier]

212 Christopher Blanchard, “Afghanistan: Narcotics and US Policy”, *Congressional Research Service*, 18 June 2009

213 “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security”, Report of the Secretary-General, A/63/372–S/2008/617, 23 September 2008

214 Q 108

checkpoints or, mentoring the checkpoints so that they are not taking baksheesh, and constraining the movement of legal goods is fundamental.<sup>215</sup>

**126. We conclude that in accepting the role of Afghanistan's 'lead' international partner in respect of counter-narcotics, the UK has taken on a poisoned chalice. There is little evidence to suggest that recent reductions in poppy cultivation are the result of the policies adopted by the UK, other international partners or the Afghan government. While the British Government is to be commended for its broad-ranging, holistic approach to tackling narcotics in Afghanistan, it is clear that success depends on a range of factors which lie far beyond the control and resource of the UK alone. The scale of the problem, the drugs trade's importance to Afghanistan's economy and its connection to corruption makes any early achievement of the aspirations set out in the Bonn Agreement highly unlikely. We further conclude that the lead international role on counter-narcotics should be transferred away from the UK, and that the Afghan Government should instead be partnered at an international level by the United Nations and ISAF which are better equipped to co-ordinate international efforts.**

127. Witnesses suggested areas where the UK could have more of an impact internationally in relation to counter-narcotics. For instance, the success of any anti-narcotics programme arguably depends upon the co-operation of Afghanistan's neighbours, particularly, according to Fabrice Pothier, "Iran, Pakistan, Russia and, increasingly, the central Asian markets".<sup>216</sup> The bulk of Afghan opium leaves via Iran and Pakistan, and much of it is also consumed within those countries. These are issues that we previously considered at length in our Report on *Global Security: Iran*, published in March 2008.<sup>217</sup> Fabrice Pothier told us that 2.8% of Iran's population, amounting to some 3 million people, are drug users. Tehran's anti-drugs policy has led to the execution of some 10,000 traffickers over the past two decades but success in reducing volumes or increasing prices has been minimal.<sup>218</sup> Some suspect that elements of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps are complicit in the trade. Meetings between Iranian, Pakistani and Afghan officials aiming to form a co-ordinated approach have led to pledges of co-operation, and during our visit to Afghanistan we were told that the counter-narcotics and police forces of these three countries carried out the first-ever joint operation against drug trafficking networks on 8 March 2009, in an initiative brokered by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.<sup>219</sup> Fabrice Pothier argued that the British Government could make "a very helpful contribution" to the counter-narcotics effort by advising Iran, Russia and Pakistan on how to create comprehensive strategies that "reconcile supply with demand".<sup>220</sup>

128. In recent months there has also been a far greater emphasis, internationally, on countering the flow of chemical precursors necessary for illicit heroin manufacturing.<sup>221</sup> A

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215 Q 104

216 Q 112

217 Foreign Affairs Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2007–08, *Global Security: Iran*, HC 142, pp 31–32

218 "Afghanistan", *House of Commons Library Standard Note*, SN/IA2845, 8 July 2008

219 "Counter-narcotics operation on the border between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan", *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*, 16 March 2009, [www.unodc.org](http://www.unodc.org)

220 Q 112

221 "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", Report of the Secretary-General, A/63/372–S/2008/617, 23 September 2008, pp 9–10

2008 report commissioned by DfID argues that by closely tracking the sale and transport of precursor chemicals, the international community and Afghan government could provide an “ideal solution” in which “cultivators continue to receive payment for the raw product while the organised criminal networks will be unable to add value. [...] Processing will continue, as it previously had, to be done outside of Afghanistan, thus leaving far fewer profits in the country to finance violence and, in particular, to undermine the State through the co-optation of public officials.”<sup>222</sup> Fabrice Pothier told us that this was an important part of a comprehensive strategy:

Figures show that an increasingly high quantity of those chemical precursors is going to Afghanistan, which is an indication that the drug market is consolidating and increasing in value. According to UNODC, 70% of heroin is now produced in Afghanistan itself. Indeed, having a chemical precursor strategy would be an important and effective way of trying to cut the higher-value, and therefore more threatening, part of the drug economy.<sup>223</sup>

**129. We recommend that if the Government accepts our recommendation to relinquish the role of lead partner nation on counter-narcotics, it ought to re-focus its effort on facilitating regional co-operation and driving forward diplomatic efforts within international organisations to tackle the trafficking and processing of drugs.**

130. We consider the extent to which the UK’s involvement in counter-narcotics efforts in Helmand constitutes a valid reason for a continuing UK presence in Afghanistan in Paragraphs 271 to 274 below.

## Economic and social development

131. The collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001 revealed the extent of Afghanistan’s political, economic and social devastation at that time. The Afghan government was barely functioning, the financial system was in total disarray with no banking system and three different currencies in circulation; millions of refugees were preparing to return home, and nearly one million people faced starvation.<sup>224</sup> Infrastructure had been severely damaged and traditional irrigation systems had suffered from destruction and lack of maintenance. Agricultural production was limited, industry had ceased functioning and most skilled professionals had left the country.<sup>225</sup>

132. From that time to this, most analysts have concluded that providing Afghans with access to basic services would go a considerable way to improving the government’s legitimacy and credibility and that this, in turn, would help to improve Afghanistan’s security and humanitarian prospects.<sup>226</sup> The FCO states that there has been “considerable progress made across most areas of the economy since 2001”. However, it acknowledges

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222 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 60

223 Q 111

224 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (2008), pp 177–178

225 Ev 93

226 “Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds - Exploring Afghan perceptions of civil-military relations”, *British and Irish Aid Agencies in Afghanistan Group*, 11 June 2008, [www.baag.org.uk](http://www.baag.org.uk)

that even with this progress, Afghanistan remains poor and is still at the very early stages of its economic development. It adds that making progress to a fully functioning economy is only achievable over the long term.<sup>227</sup> The submission by the British and Irish Aid Agencies Afghanistan Group noted that despite some progress in the communication sector, such as roads and mobile phones, and lately energy, infrastructure remains extremely weak. BAAG also points out that revenue collection by the central government through taxes remains “abysmally low”, amounting, in 2007, to net receipts of just over \$600 million. The result, is a country which continues to depend on foreign assistance to provide even basic services.<sup>228</sup>

133. There are some bright spots. For instance, the BBC World Service’s written submission details the massive expansion of the media sector in recent years which had to be largely re-built after the Taliban had destroyed all vestiges of it.<sup>229</sup> On the economic front, a new currency was introduced in October 2002, replacing the three different currencies in circulation.<sup>230</sup> In other sectors, a number of programmes initiated since 2002 are deemed to have been relatively successful. There have been significant improvements in health service provision, albeit from a low baseline,<sup>231</sup> resulting in greater access to healthcare and a corresponding reduction in mortality rates for infants and under 5s, and increases in the proportion of women receiving antenatal care.<sup>232</sup>

134. In education, the ‘Back to School’ campaign initiated in 2002 led to the enrolment of 4.3 million children. As a consequence, some 6 million children are now in school, 35% of whom are girls.<sup>233</sup> Under the Taliban, girls were forbidden from attending school and estimates suggest that only 500,000 boys were enrolled when the Taliban’s rule was brought to an end.<sup>234</sup> We were told during our visit to Kabul that since 2001 the number of schools has increased from 3,000 to 11,600 while the number of teachers has risen from 20,000 to 170,000. However, BAAG’s written submission notes that there is a continuing lack of investment in secondary and tertiary education.<sup>235</sup> Interlocutors during our visit told us that 5.3 million young people of school age in Afghanistan do not have access to education, a figure which equates to 7% of the global out-of-school population. Teaching standards, however much improved in recent years, also remain low. Of the 6 million children who are in school, most are in the northern or western areas where stability is greater. Even in these areas, schools, their pupils and teachers have been targeted and intimidated by the Taliban.

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227 Ev 93

228 Ev 172

229 Ev 148

230 “Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan”, *US Department of Defense*, January 2009

231 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 43

232 “The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security”, *Report of the Secretary-General*, A/63/372–S/2008/617, 23 September 2008

233 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 43

234 “Education and the Role of NGOs in Emergencies: Afghanistan 1978–2002”, *American Institutes for Research*, August 2006

235 Ev 173

135. The World Bank states that, “with scarce natural resources in the country, quality education is a critical ingredient to poverty alleviation and economic growth in Afghanistan. The future performance of the country depends on the successful development of the education sector.”<sup>236</sup> During our visit we heard about the British Council’s attempts to encourage twinning of schools between the UK and Afghanistan and we also raised the prospect of twinning educational institutions with several interlocutors all of whom agreed that it would be a mutually beneficial arrangement.

**136. We conclude that long-term investment in education for young people of both genders in Afghanistan is both morally compelling and strategically sensible. It will enable Afghanistan to create an educated and skilled workforce equipped to develop the country and reduce its dependency on foreign funding. We recommend that the Government should consider extending educational twinning programmes to students in Afghanistan in a bid to foster educational opportunities and improve mutual understanding between students and teachers in the UK and Afghanistan.**

137. We were told in oral evidence and during our visit about a number of Afghan-led national rural development programmes which have produced impressive results, and apparently at a fraction of the cost of those undertaken by western contractors.<sup>237</sup> Considerable praise was forthcoming for the National Solidarity Programme, which the UK Government has actively supported. This is a community-based programme sponsored by the central government which helps local Afghans to elect councillors and provides technical assistance to let local people decide on their own priorities for development. We were told that, because the community decides upon and contributes towards the costs of the projects, there is an in-built interest for all those involved in making it work which leads to a greater sense of ownership. So far the programme has reached 40,000 villages and has led to the establishment of over 18,000 Community Development Councils across Afghanistan, and the delivery of projects in some of Afghanistan’s poorest and most remote communities. During our visit we were also informed that the average cost of a project implemented by the local community is, on average, \$2,000 whereas costs for private firms are closer to \$60,000.

138. We were also told about the Micro Finance Investment Support Facility of Afghanistan (MISFA) which helps Afghans set up and expand small businesses. MISFA has issued over £150 million in small loans to over 400,000 Afghans. Over 70% of MISFA’s beneficiaries are women.

139. We asked witnesses whether they believed that progress in the areas of health and education could be sustained over the longer term. Elizabeth Winter, Advisor to BAAG, told us that she thought this was possible. However, Dr Goodhand was more cautious. He argued that it would be difficult to maintain progress if the Taliban continued actively to target “visible symbols of the Afghan state” including infrastructure, health centres and schools. He also noted that it was proving difficult for aid agencies to sustain their operations and deliver aid in the current security climate. Finally, he stated that the majority of aid was delivered through contractors and non-governmental organisations, a

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236 “Afghanistan: Education in Afghanistan”, *World Bank website*, [www.worldbank.org.af](http://www.worldbank.org.af)

237 Martin Stremecki, Testimony to the US Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on Strategic Options in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 26 February 2009, p 15

process which he argued does not help the “state-building exercise” and raises “questions about how sustainable those projects will be in the future”.<sup>238</sup>

140. We conclude that in 2009 economic and social development in Afghanistan continues to lag behind what international donors promised and what, consequently, Afghans had a right to expect as a result of Western intervention in their country. We further conclude, however, that the success of recently initiated Afghan-led projects, such as the National Solidarity Programme, which appear to offer a highly effective model for delivering change, is encouraging. We welcome the British Government’s support of this and similar initiatives which are having an impact on the lives of large numbers of people in rural Afghanistan. We recommend that the Government continue to examine how it can encourage other international donors to support Afghanistan in this way. We further recommend that in its response the FCO sets out what it considers the most important priorities of the international community in Afghanistan to be.

### Assessing the international community’s approach and impact

141. There is general agreement amongst analysts and experts that, with hindsight, the Bonn Agreement process and its conscious decision to exclude key groups, including the defeated Taliban, limited its effectiveness. The process entrenched the power of warlords and gave them democratic legitimacy but also caused ethnic tensions to resurface, with President Karzai and his supporters seeking to align themselves with others Pashtuns, who supported a strong presidency, opposing the large block of minority ethnic groups in the north which supported greater autonomy and a weaker president.

142. The goals of the Bonn process have also been the subject of much criticism. The Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit at York University concludes that the international community’s attempt to create a unitary western-style government was - given Afghanistan’s long history of conflict and de-centralised power, vested in tribal structures - inappropriate and overly ambitious.<sup>239</sup>

143. The adoption of the ‘lead nation’ approach was supposed to ensure that the burden of effort was shared between donors, but a lack of co-ordination meant that the overall impact was far less than had been hoped.<sup>240</sup> One of the consequences, according to Lord Ashdown, is that individual countries have tended to see Afghanistan exclusively through “the narrow lens of their own troop deployments”, meaning that “the UK thinks Helmand is Afghanistan, the Dutch think it is Uruzgan and Germany thinks it is Kunduz. There is, in consequence, no comprehensive internationally accepted country-wide political military strategy and almost no means of creating one.”<sup>241</sup> BAAG states that one of the consequences of this is that major troop-contributing countries have concentrated their reconstruction and development funds and efforts in the provinces where their troops are

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238 Q 92 [Dr Goodhand]

239 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 54

240 See conclusions of “Afghanistan Study Group Final Report”, *Center for the Study of the Presidency*, 30 January 2008

241 Lord Ashdown, “What I told Gordon Brown about Afghanistan”, *The Spectator* (Coffee House Blog), 15 September 2008, [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk) See also comments by Lord Ashdown on the BBC Andrew Marr Show, 19 April 2009

primarily stationed, apparently to promote their national profile and priorities. BAAG adds that this has resulted in large amounts of development funds being spent in the most insecure provinces of the east and south “often with dubious outcomes”. BAAG concludes:

[T]he more stable provinces with ‘poorer’ PRTs [provincial reconstruction teams] have received significantly less resources despite significant needs and being more conducive to development. Many see this discrepancy as a disincentive for security and equally worryingly that donors are only concerned about their own immediate political objectives.<sup>242</sup>

144. Others point to the international community’s attention to areas which “did not contribute as greatly to security as they potentially could have”. The Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit’s Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan states:

Demographically, a focus on gender and education led to a considerable focus on women and children. Attention to governance, founded in the belief that the promotion of elders and traditional leaders would lead to stability, focused primarily on older populations. Left out of the equation was the group of young men who pose, in nearly every country of the world, the greatest threat to peace and security. Livelihoods and economic development provided the greatest opportunity to address this group. However, agriculture, a source of employment for nearly 70 per cent of Afghans, was one of the least emphasised sectors of intervention. [...] More broadly, livelihoods were rarely addressed, and efforts tended to focus upon urban areas and the higher echelons of the economy rather than on sustainable, low-level employment in rural communities. Without adequate sources of income, itself a cultural imperative to allow men to pursue marriage, these young men were highly vulnerable to recruitment by AOGs [armed opposition group].<sup>243</sup>

**145. We conclude that the international effort in Afghanistan since 2001 has delivered much less than it promised and that its impact has been significantly diluted by the absence of a unified vision and strategy, grounded in the realities of Afghanistan’s history, culture and politics. We recognise that although Afghanistan’s current situation is not solely the legacy of the West’s failures since 2001, avoidable mistakes, including knee-jerk responses, policy fragmentation and overlap, now make the task of stabilising the country considerably more difficult than might otherwise have been the case. We recommend that in its response to this Report the FCO sets out what lessons have been learned from the mistakes made by the international community over the last seven years. We further recommend that in its response the FCO sets out what it considers the most important priorities of the international community in Afghanistan to be.**

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242 Ev 173

243 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 49

## 4 Pakistan's strategic importance and role in relation to Afghanistan

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### Pakistan's border areas

146. Bordering Afghanistan to its south and east, Pakistan is perceived by both the British Government and the US administration to be crucial to success in Afghanistan. The border between the two countries, the so-called Durand Line, stretches some 1,640 miles through “difficult, widely differentiated terrain, from the Southern deserts of Baluchistan to the northern mountain peaks of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)”.<sup>244</sup>

147. In the wake of 9/11, and following the US-led intervention in 2001, the semi-autonomous tribal-dominated areas of western Pakistan, which are home to a sizeable Pashtun population, became the new base for Al-Qaeda as well as the displaced Afghan Taliban's centre of gravity.<sup>245</sup> The territories in question are firstly, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA, which includes seven ‘Agencies’ that border Afghanistan namely Khyber, Kurram, Bajaur, Mohmand, Orakzai, as well as North and South Waziristan (see attached map of Pakistan/Afghanistan Border Area ). The author and journalist Ahmed Rashid describes the Federally Administered Territories (FATA), as a “multi-layered terrorist cake” containing Pakistani Taliban, Afghan Taliban, militants from Central Asia, Chechnya, Africa, China and Kashmir and “Arabs who forged a protective ring around bin Laden”.<sup>246</sup> It is from North Waziristan, that the Afghan militant group Jalaluddin Haqqani commands support for Taliban resistance to Western forces in Afghanistan, and it was to South Waziristan that many Al Qaeda and foreign fighters fled following their displacement from Afghanistan in 2001.

148. The second area of strategic importance in the context of Afghanistan, and in relation to Pakistan's own internal security, is Baluchistan which borders Helmand and Kandahar provinces. Quetta, Baluchistan's capital has a large Pashtun majority—unlike the rest of Baluchistan—and is the largest and poorest of Pakistan's provinces. Crucially, it is home to the Afghan Taliban leader Mullah Omar and is considered to be a “sanctuary of the Taliban leadership”.<sup>247</sup> Baluchistan is also an area of concern for the Pakistani government. For years, Baluch nationalists have campaigned for greater autonomy and control of local resources, while rebels have also fought the Pakistani army for full independence.

149. The third area of importance is the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) where the full impact of the Pakistani Taliban has been felt, particularly in the northern districts of Swat and Malakand. Professor Shaun Gregory states that in the aftermath of the attacks of 11 September 2011, the Taliban was tolerated in the NWFP and “has been *de facto* permitted—through a series of ‘peace deals’ with Pakistan—to attack Afghan and NATO

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244 Daniel Markey, “Securing Pakistan's Tribal Belt”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Special Report No. 36, August 2008, [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)

245 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (2008), p 4

246 *Ibid*, p6

247 Ev 138

forces across the border provided they did not threaten Pakistan itself”.<sup>248</sup> Once a popular tourist destination, Dr Gohel notes that “the entire Swat valley has now been devastated by the spread of radicalism”.<sup>249</sup>

150. The Pakistani government has little authority in FATA and only limited control in NWFP and Baluchistan. The FATA is also the poorest and least developed part of Pakistan. Literacy rates stand at 17%, compared to the national average of 40%. Among women this drops to 3%, compared to the national average of 32%, and nearly 66% of households live beneath the poverty line. The FATA’s inhospitable terrain helps to ensure that Pashtun tribal communities are excluded from markets, health and education.<sup>250</sup> A report by the Asia Society’s Afghanistan-Pakistan Taskforce states that Al Qaeda has “exploited the problems in Pashtun lands to establish a safe haven among people who do not support its ideology but whose poverty, isolation, and weak governance leave them vulnerable”.<sup>251</sup>

151. In recent years, the security situation in the tribal areas has become increasingly volatile. By 2008 violence had reached a peak with some 2,000 terrorist, insurgent and sectarian attacks occurring in FATA.<sup>252</sup> The strategic importance of Pakistan’s border areas is multi-faceted. From a military perspective, NATO and US commanders have repeatedly voiced worries about the “unremitting flow of militants across the Durand Line”,<sup>253</sup> the porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan which is not recognised in any meaningful way by the people who live adjacent to it and trade across it on a daily basis. Professor Shaun Gregory told us that it is from Pakistan’s northern Baluchistan (which lies to the south of the tribal lands) and the FATA that the Afghan Taliban planned and conducted their comeback in Afghanistan,<sup>254</sup> while the FCO refers to the “intimate connections between the insurgency in Helmand and that in Waziristan, and between the criminals, spoilers and terrorists who operate in Kandahar and Quetta, Peshawar and Nangahar”.<sup>255</sup> Sean Langan told us that “for every successful insurgency, you need a safe haven, a sanctuary, and that is what the tribal areas provide”.<sup>256</sup> Reflecting the views of all of our witnesses, Mr Langan also stated that “the symptoms may be in Afghanistan, in Helmand, but the causes are in the tribal areas, and without dealing with that [...] the counter-insurgency strategy [in Afghanistan] will not succeed”.<sup>257</sup>

152. The strategic importance of the tribal areas and northern Baluchistan also derive from the fact that they serve as the main arteries for the supply of NATO forces in Afghanistan. NATO’s main logistics chain which starts in Karachi and runs through Pakistan, provides

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248 Ev 164

249 Ev 138

250 Daniel Markey, “Securing Pakistan’s Tribal Belt”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, Special Report No. 36, August 2008 p 5

251 “Back from the Brink: A Strategy for Stabilizing Afghanistan-Pakistan”, *Asia Society Taskforce*, April 2009, [www.asiasociety.org](http://www.asiasociety.org)

252 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1034

253 “Pakistan on the brink”, *IJSS Strategic Comments*, Vol. 14, Issue 9, November 2008, [www.ijss.org/](http://www.ijss.org/)

254 Ev 162

255 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1032

256 Q 38 [Sean Langan]

257 Q 38 [Sean Langan]

about 80% of materiel and 40% of fuel to forces in Afghanistan.<sup>258</sup> In the last year, insurgents have launched a significant number of attacks on fuel tankers entering Afghanistan from Pakistan, and a major depot containing NATO military vehicles in Peshawar was attacked in December 2008 resulting in significant damage.<sup>259</sup> In February 2009 supplies intended for NATO forces in Afghanistan were suspended after militants blew up a bridge in the Khyber Pass region.<sup>260</sup>

153. Alongside the insurgent groups that are targeting Afghanistan, there exists a range of groups more focused on attacking the Pakistani state. Professor Gregory pointed to two main Pakistan Taliban related groups. The first is Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which came into existence towards the end of 2007, is led by Baitullah Mehsud, and is, in Professor Gregory's view, an "umbrella for a variety of tribal and non-tribal Pakistani radicals".<sup>261</sup> It considers the Pakistani state to be too pro-Western and demands a much more radical, fundamental state.<sup>262</sup> The second is Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) which has led an insurgency since 2007 in Swat, part of the 'the settled areas' adjacent to the tribal areas. Although these are primarily targeted at the Pakistani state the FCO argues that deteriorating stability in Pakistan could pose a threat to Afghanistan.<sup>263</sup>

154. Notwithstanding the recent increase in violence and the expanding influence of Taliban and other militant groups in these areas of north-western Pakistan, the consensus of our interlocutors during our visit to Pakistan was that there was no real sense that the civilian government was in danger of collapsing.

### The connection to international terrorism

155. It was from the tribal areas in Pakistan that the bomb plots in London, Madrid, Bali, Islamabad, and later Germany and Denmark were planned. The Lashkar e Toiba (LeT) group, which was responsible for the November 2008 Mumbai attacks which targeted Westerners, in particular US and UK nationals, also operates from these tribal areas. The former head of the CIA, Michael Hayden, claimed earlier this year that LeT had reached a "merge point" with Al-Qaeda.<sup>264</sup>

156. On 14 December, 2008, the Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated that 75% of the most serious terrorist plots being investigated by UK authorities had links to Pakistan.<sup>265</sup> In April 2007, four British men of Pakistani origin were convicted of planning attacks on British targets. All had established links to Al Qaeda in the tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border where some had gone for terrorist training. On 8 August 2008, at the end

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258 Ev 162

259 Ev 177

260 "Bridge Attack Halts NATO Supplies to Afghanistan", *New York Times*, 3 February 2009

261 Q 35

262 Q 39

263 Ev 101

264 "LeT a global security risk, accepts CIA", *Economic Times*, 4 February 2009

265 Transcript of a press conference given by the Prime Minister, Mr Gordon Brown, and Mr Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan, in Islamabad, 14 December 2008, [www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)

of one of the biggest ever terrorist trials in the UK—that relating to the so-called “Liquid Bomb/Operation Overt Plot”—three men were convicted of conspiring to commit mass murder. The cell’s ringleader, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, travelled frequently to Pakistan, staying for long periods between 2003 and 2006.<sup>266</sup> The bomb-maker Assad Sarwar, and his co-conspirator Tanvir Hussain, also travelled to Pakistan. Dr Gohel told us that the places where these British individuals were recruited and trained (Kohat, Malakand and South Waziristan) were the same places that the Taliban and their affiliates were operating. Dr Gohel argues that “there is a clear nexus that exists which in addition to being a base of operations for the Taliban is also a recruiting ground for Britons. This has obvious security concerns and challenges.”<sup>267</sup> However, Dr Gohel cautioned against supposing that the terrorist threat to the West from elements in Pakistan emanates exclusively from the border areas. He commented that, “though the tribal areas represent a significant security concern, other major terrorist plots in Britain have emanated from areas of Pakistan that extend beyond the Afghan-Pakistan border like the 7 July 2005 suicide attacks and the follow up failed plot (21/7) two weeks later”.<sup>268</sup>

157. Pakistan’s status as a nuclear weapons state also generates significant strategic concern. As Professor Shaun Gregory states, “many analysts believe that if there is a nuclear 9/11 carried out in the West, it will have its origins in Pakistan”.<sup>269</sup> A recent US Council on Foreign Relations report warned that organisations like the banned Jaish-e-Mohammed or Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which operate from within Pakistan, are “well resourced and globally interconnected”, and that “some appear to retain significant influence within state institutions and enjoy public sympathy, in certain cases because of the social services they provide”. The report warned that “if present trends persist, the next generation of the world’s most sophisticated terrorists will be born, indoctrinated, and trained in a nuclear-armed Pakistan”.<sup>270</sup>

**158. We conclude that Pakistan’s strategic importance derives not only from the sanctuary that its semi-autonomous border areas provide to extremists who seek to cause instability in Afghanistan, but also because of connections between the border areas and those involved in international terrorism. We further conclude that it is difficult to overestimate the importance of tackling not just the symptoms but the root causes that enable this situation to persist.**

159. Professor Gregory discussed with us the issue of whether there is direct collusion between terrorists and Islamists within the Pakistan military and intelligence services who have access to nuclear weapons or nuclear components. Professor Gregory stated: “Do I think that the Pakistanis have completely secured their nuclear weapons against the terrorist threat or nuclear-related technologies? The answer to that is a firm no”.<sup>271</sup> He referred to a number of issues of concern. The first was that a substantial proportion of

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266 Ev 139

267 Ev 139

268 Ev 139

269 Ev 165

270 Daniel Markey, “From AfPak to PakAf: a Response to the New U.S. Strategy for South Asia”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2009, p 5, [www.cfr.org](http://www.cfr.org)

271 Q 44

Pakistan's nuclear weapons-related infrastructure is to the north and west of Islamabad, close to the unstable tribal areas. In his view, a direct physical attack could not be ruled out, given that in 2008 suicide bombers succeeded in attacking a weapons production facility where parts of nuclear weapons are thought to be assembled.<sup>272</sup> Both Professor Gregory and Mr Langan also pointed to evidence of direct contact between some of those who have nuclear weapons-related experience and Al Qaeda, and to possible collusion between militants and those with extremist, Islamist sympathies in Pakistan's army and intelligence agency. Professor Gregory told us that "the Pakistanis have put a huge amount of effort into trying to mitigate that problem. But they recognise, as we all do, that you cannot have 100% assurance that the people who have day-to-day control over nuclear weapons are wholly reliable in that way".<sup>273</sup>

**160. We conclude that allegations raised during our inquiry about the safety of nuclear technology and claims of possible collusion between Pakistan's intelligence agency, the ISI, and Al Qaeda are a matter of deep concern. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government sets out its assessment of these allegations and the extent of the threat that this poses.**

### Recent Pakistani responses to militancy

161. Pakistan's civilian government, which has been in power since early 2008, has repeatedly pledged to do everything in its power to bring the tribal areas back under state control.<sup>274</sup> Following a surge in insurgent activity, there was a flurry of military action against militants in Bajaur and Swat in October 2008. However, with few signs of strategic progress, and after a two-week debate in secret session, the Pakistani Parliament passed a resolution in October 2008 endorsing, amongst other initiatives, negotiation with extremist groups.<sup>275</sup> The resolution stated that regions on the Afghan border where militants flourish should be developed; and force used as a last resort. It opposed the cross-border strikes by US forces in Pakistan (for which, see Paragraph 194 below), but at the same time indicated a degree of support for US policy. It called for dialogue with extremist groups operating in the country, and hinted at a fundamental change in Pakistan's approach to the problem: "We need an urgent review of our national security strategy and revisiting the methodology of combating terrorism in order to restore peace and stability".<sup>276</sup>

162. In February 2009, the ruling Awami National Party in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), which is a coalition partner of the governing Pakistan Peoples Party at the Federal level, agreed to a truce with the insurgent group Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM) which led to the implementation of Sharia in the districts of Swat, Chitral, Dir, Buner and Shangla. The hope was that by agreeing to a truce, the leader of the TNSM, Sufi Mohammad, could be persuaded to rein in his son-in-law, Maulana Fazlullah, who leads the TNSM faction in Swat.<sup>277</sup> On 14 April, the Pakistani President Asif Ali

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272 Q 44

273 Q 45

274 See for example, "Militancy to be eradicated, Zaradari tell lawmakers", *Dawn*, 3 February 2009

275 "Pakistan rejects America's War on Extremists", *The Guardian*, 24 October 2008.

276 Robert Birsell, "Pakistan Parliament Seen United against Militancy", *Reuters*, 23 October 2008, quoted at Ev 131

277 "Will Sharia Save Swat?", *Jane's Foreign Report*, 26 February 2009

Zardari signed the Nizam-e-Adl Regulation 2009 paving the way for Sharia law to be implemented in the north-western provinces of Pakistan. However, punishments inflicted by the Pakistani Taliban in Swat, including the widely broadcast flogging of a young woman, led to a groundswell of public revulsion against the Taliban and calls for military action to be taken against the militants. By late April, the peace deal had effectively collapsed and fighting intensified as the Pakistani military launched a series of offensives to control the security situation and limit the influence of the TTP. At the time of writing, this new approach appears to have inflicted significant military defeats upon the Taliban, but at the expense of creating a large-scale humanitarian problem, with up to two million people being displaced by the fighting. Lord Malloch-Brown told us that:

there are some real concerns about how the Pakistanis have gone about the matter, as so often is the case: largely aerial attacks or long distance attacks, which are a lot harder to manage in terms of limiting civilian displacement and casualties. Ultimately, they are a lot less effective than using ground troops against these kinds of elements. The Government, the army and others have got their work cut out. We support wholly what they are doing, with this one big caveat of the need to try to look after civilians and protect them from displacement.<sup>278</sup>

### **Madrasahs**

163. The role of religious schools—madrasahs—and the Pakistani responses to calls for tighter controls over them, were raised by a number of witnesses. Sean Langan told us that “the thousands of madrasahs that still exist, funded in part by Saudi donors, are churning out cannon fodder for the Taliban”,<sup>279</sup> while Professor Gregory told us “there is a big throughput of fighters for the Afghan Taliban from the Pakistani madrasahs [...] and that includes many Afghan refugees, as well as Afghans whose families send them for all sorts of reasons to madrasahs on the Pakistan side of the border”.<sup>280</sup> Although a number of radical madrasahs were identified during President’s Musharraf’s era, controls were not forthcoming,<sup>281</sup> prompting Christina Lamb to comment that “again and again, there has been talk that Pakistan will regulate the madrasahs and crack down on them, but nothing happens in practice”.<sup>282</sup>

**164. We conclude that there is a pressing need for the Pakistani government to address the role that some madrasahs play in the recruitment and radicalisation process in Pakistan. We recommend that the British Government sets out in its response to this Report what discussions it has had with the Pakistani Government about this issue, and whether it has raised allegations of Saudi Arabian funding of radical madrasahs with the Saudi authorities.**

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278 Q 222

279 Q 38

280 Q 39

281 Q 159

282 Q 144

## The role of the military and ISI

165. In spite of the return of a civilian government in 2008 and its commitment to tackling militancy in the tribal areas, much depends on the commitment and ability of Pakistan's military to deal with the insurgents. Witnesses told us that the military continues to play a pivotal role in the areas of defence, foreign, nuclear and internal security policy.<sup>283</sup> In Sean Langan's opinion, "clearly, [civilian] politicians are in office, but not in power".<sup>284</sup>

166. We were told that for most of its history, Pakistan has sought to assert control in Afghanistan by fostering friendly regimes in Kabul and supporting insurgencies, including that led by the Afghan Taliban, in a bid to prevent Afghanistan falling under Indian influence.<sup>285</sup> Overt support in the form of diplomatic recognition to the former Taliban government was combined with more clandestine backing for proxy terrorist groups in Afghanistan, in many instances created and shored up by the ISI, Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence agency. Historically, the approach of Pakistani governments has been to support the Afghan Taliban but to crack down on the home-grown Pakistani Taliban. However, as Dr Gohel points out, by encouraging and supporting extremists, like the Taliban, as a tool to retain and hold influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan has inadvertently introduced changes that have undermined its ability to maintain its own writ within its borders and which have resulted in wider domestic instability.<sup>286</sup>

167. Our witnesses were unanimous in their view that the military and ISI, rather than civilian politicians, control and determine foreign and security policy in Pakistan. Many analysts, including Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, have noted that "while the Pakistani military does not control the insurgency, it can affect its intensity".<sup>287</sup> In recent years, military action against insurgents in Pakistan has tended to focus on groups which threaten Pakistan's internal security and not, according to Professor Gregory, on the Afghan Taliban or its former proxies in Afghanistan including the Jallaludin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmayar militants, or Kashmiri separatist groups such as the Lashkar e Toiba which have relocated to the FATA.

168. Many of our witnesses told us that Pakistan's military and the ISI remain broadly supportive of the Afghan Taliban's desire to control Afghanistan. Professor Gregory attributes this to the fact that the army and ISI regard the Karzai government as "unacceptably permissive of Indian influence", and are concerned about the presence of NATO and US forces which "complicate Pakistan's own calculus and prop up Karzai and Indian influence".<sup>288</sup> Dr Goodhand told us that in order to comprehend the current situation, it is necessary to understand that "this is part of a long-term strategy and a long-term project of the Pakistani state". Like many other analysts, he argued that "unless the existential and security concerns of Pakistan are addressed somehow in relation to India

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283 Ev 167

284 Q 48

285 Ev 136, 163

286 Ev 136

287 Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008, [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com)

288 Q 39 [Professor Shaun Gregory]

and Kashmir, I do not think there will be a fundamental rethink. While Pakistan sees it as in its interests to pursue a policy based on asymmetrical warfare, it will continue to do so".<sup>289</sup>

169. Recent reports suggest that elements of the ISI continue to help the Afghan Taliban with money, military supplies and strategic planning.<sup>290</sup> Those who subscribe to this view argue that this partly explains why the Pakistani military have been ambivalent about targeting groups in the FATA that are involved in supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. Dr Gohel told us the Pakistani military do not view Afghanistan in the same manner as the West, and that they are "waiting for the West to get fed up with Afghanistan and the mounting casualties, the cost, the endless problems of corruption, and just withdraw". He stated that:

We are looking at what is happening tomorrow, next week, perhaps until the end of the year. They have a much longer term strategy. One of the most interesting things I heard in Afghanistan was that 'the west keeps looking at their watch, but the Taliban keeps the time'. Sooner or later, many within Pakistan feel that they will be able to reassert the Taliban into Afghanistan, and that of course is a big concern.<sup>291</sup>

170. We were told during our visit to Pakistan that for domestic reasons, political support from the main parties for mounting large-scale military action in areas such as North and South Waziristan and Baluchistan had hitherto not existed. In Baluchistan, the Taliban and Islamist groups have previously played an important role in suppressing Baluchi nationalism,<sup>292</sup> and therefore Baluchistan was left largely untouched. As a consequence of this legacy, we were told that in recent times the military had been reluctant to act unilaterally in these areas without political cover. However, a number of interlocutors stated that there was an increasing recognition at senior army levels that the policy of supporting militant groups was a problematic and self-defeating strategy. Professor Gregory and several other witnesses qualified this by noting that this sentiment was not necessarily shared at other levels in the army and ISI where "extremist, Islamist sympathies" prevailed.<sup>293</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown offered a similar view:

We are convinced that [the ISI] is on board institutionally, and that the leaderships of both the army and the ISI are supportive of the president and his strategy, which is reflected through the meetings that we have had with [Chief of Army Staff] General Kayani. There is a difficulty, that within the ISI, there may remain individuals who have some sympathy with these groups.

Adam Thomson, the FCO's then Director of South Asia and Afghanistan, added:

It is the case that, historically—at our behest, in part—the ISI developed relations with Islamic groups [in Afghanistan]. It has not proved that easy for it, as an institution, to turn that off and to turn it around quickly, but I think that it is

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289 Q 69

290 "Taliban fighters 'supported by Pakistan intelligence agency'", *Daily Telegraph*, 27 March 2009

291 Q 154

292 Ev 163

293 Q 45

working on it. To address the Lashkar e Toiba that you referred to, the fact that the Pakistani Government have been able to put a number of individuals on trial for responsibility for aspects of the Mumbai attacks suggests that the Government have support across the Pakistani establishment.<sup>294</sup>

171. However, other witnesses, such as Dr Gordon, noted that quite apart from the issue of willingness, the Pakistan military has not been not equipped or trained to deal with a counter-insurgency. On the contrary, it has been configured for conventional warfare and for “dealing with what they perceive as an Indian threat”.<sup>295</sup> We discuss the role that the UK has played in helping to address this problem below at Paragraph 281.

172. In what has been seen by some commentators as a significant shift at the highest level, Pakistan’s President stated in June 2009 that India was no longer to be regarded as a threat to Pakistan, and that he wished to transfer resources to fighting the real threat which was terrorism. Speaking in Brussels to EU officials, President Zardari said that:

I do not consider India a military threat; the question is that India has the capability. Capability is what matters. [With regard to] intention I think we both have our good intentions. India is a reality, Pakistan is a reality, but Taliban are a threat, an international threat to our way of life. And at the moment, I’m focused on the Taliban. It’s something that has been going on for a long time and of course went unchecked under the dictatorial rule of the last president.<sup>296</sup>

173. President Zardari’s comments were interpreted in the press as “represent[ing] a victory for British and American diplomats who have been attempting to persuade Mr Zardari and his army chiefs to concentrate their efforts on confronting the Taliban rather than India”.<sup>297</sup>

174. We were told during our visit that there was widespread frustration that Pakistan’s efforts against the insurgency and the military sacrifices that have been made have not been more consistently and publicly acknowledged by the West. There has also been considerable disquiet in Pakistan about civilians’ deaths caused by attacks by unmanned US aircraft which have targeted alleged terrorists in Pakistan. We consider this issue in more detail below at Paragraph 194.

175. In Dr Gohel’s view, “more needs to be done to support the civilian Government in Pakistan. They are not perfect. They have shown their weaknesses, especially with the Swat valley deal. There are divisions within the civilian Government. But supporting the military, as has been done in the past, is not a solution”.<sup>298</sup> Mr Korski concurred with the view that support for the civilian government must be a priority<sup>299</sup> as did a number of interlocutors during our visit to Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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294 Q 223–224

295 Q 155

296 “Pakistan: India no longer a military threat”, *Daily Telegraph*, 24 June 2009

297 *Ibid.*

298 Q 159

299 Q 173

176. We conclude that Pakistan's civilian government has recently taken some important steps to counter insurgency at a considerable cost in terms of military lives lost. We welcome the increasing recognition at senior levels within the Pakistani military of the need for a recalibrated approach to militancy but we remain concerned that this may not necessarily be replicated elsewhere within the army and ISI. We conclude that President Zardari's recent remarks that he regards the real threat to his country as being terrorism rather than India are to be welcomed. However, we further conclude that doubts remain as to whether the underlying fundamentals of Pakistani security policy have changed sufficiently to realise the goals of long-term security and stability in Afghanistan.

### Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan

177. The FCO written submission states that Pakistan is key to Afghanistan's future, "as its largest trading partner, as a country that faces many of the same challenges and whose own security concerns impact directly on those of Afghanistan".<sup>300</sup> It adds that "we are encouraging the Governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan to build on recent improvements".<sup>301</sup> The recent improvements referred to by the FCO are partly a result of improved political and personal relations between President Hamid Karzai and President Asif Ali Zardari, which are said to be far more cordial than those that existed between Mr Karzai and Pakistan's previous military ruler, President Pervez Musharraf. Apart from the personal animosity that existed between Presidents Karzai and Musharraf, Dr Goodhand notes that Pakistan's problematic relationship with Afghanistan was not helped by the content of the Bonn Agreement. He told us that Pakistan felt that its concerns were not reflected in that agreement and that "it was essentially an elite pact between members of the Northern Alliance and international actors, which left out parts of the Pashtun south and the concerns of Pakistan".<sup>302</sup>

178. It was apparent to us during our visit that in spite of better Presidential relations, there has yet to be sustained and substantive improvements between Afghanistan and Pakistan in intelligence co-operation, border control and counter-narcotics, and that both parties continue to have a tendency to blame the other for a failure to take action on a range of issues. The FCO warns that "the bilateral relationship, without further broadening, remains susceptible to internal and external shocks".<sup>303</sup> Dr Sajjan Gohel, giving evidence to us in April 2009, argued that neither Afghanistan, nor its stability, was high on Pakistan's agenda:

At the moment, Pakistan's priority is its own domestic problem [...] and the fact that the Taliban is proliferating, growing and expanding its activities. The Swat valley is only a few hours away from Islamabad, and there is talk about the fact that militant activity is being seen in southern Punjab in Multan, and even in the northern part of

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300 Ev 74

301 Ev 74

302 Q 69

303 Ev 101

Sindh. If that problem continues to expand, that will be the biggest challenge Pakistan faces, rather than looking eastward or westward to Afghanistan or India.<sup>304</sup>

179. Another issue which was raised by a number of witnesses as a source of political friction between Afghanistan and Pakistan is Afghanistan's refusal to recognise the border between the two countries, the "Durand Line", and the fact that it retains a territorial claim over parts of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP). The Durand line was established in 1893 as a boundary between Afghanistan and British India, named after the British colonial official Sir Mortimer Durand. It continues to exist as an international boundary today. In his written submission Dr Gohel explains that the Durand Line followed the contours of convenient geographical features, as well as the limits of British authority at the time, rather than tribal borders. It divided the homeland of the Pashtun tribes nearly equally between Afghanistan and Pakistan, effectively cutting the Pashtun nation in half. Dr Gohel argues, "this largely imaginary boundary has been viewed since its inception with contempt and resentment by Pashtuns on both sides of the line. As a practical matter the border is unenforceable. In some places the position of the line is disputed; in others it is inaccessible to all but trained mountain climbers".<sup>305</sup>

180. Dr Gohel told us that an amicable resolution of the Durand Line dispute and the Pashtunistan issue would go a "long way to improve border co-operation because it would help to allay Pakistani fears that a strong Afghanistan would revitalise past claims on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan".<sup>306</sup> He explained that "the majority of the Pashtun tribes and clans that control the frontier zones of eastern and southern Afghanistan along the Durand line have never accepted the legitimacy of what they believe to be an arbitrary and capricious boundary".<sup>307</sup> A recent report by the Afghanistan-Pakistan Taskforce concurred that it is imperative to address "long-standing issues surrounding the status of Pashtuns in both Afghanistan, where they are the largest ethnic group, and Pakistan, where twice as many live as a minority". It added:

Resolving these problems will require working with both governments and their people to reform the status of FATA, improve governance and security throughout the North-West Frontier Province, enable Afghanistan to recognize the Durand Line as an official open border, guarantee Afghanistan's access to the port of Karachi, assure free land transit of Afghan products across Pakistan to India, and eliminate suspicions of support for separatism or subversion from either side.<sup>308</sup>

181. However, Daniel Korski questioned whether "we as outsiders have the wit, the ability, [or] the flexibility [...] to make a serious go at this. [...] We have not been able to do many simpler things in that region, so trying to create a kind of counter narrative would be a real struggle for us".<sup>309</sup>

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304 Q 163

305 Ev 133

306 Ev 135

307 Ev 133

308 "Back from the Brink: A Strategy for Stabilizing Afghanistan-Pakistan", *Asia Society Taskforce*, April 2009

309 Q 162

182. We conclude that addressing long-standing concerns of the Pashtun populace on either side of the Durand Line and the respective governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan in relation to the Durand Line itself, could, in the long term, help to increase bilateral co-operation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, reduce sources of political friction and help tackle the causes, and not just the symptoms, of poverty and weak governance which Al Qaeda and other insurgent groups have exploited so effectively in recent years. Given the UK's close relationship with both Afghanistan and Pakistan and its historical ties to the region (which include the imposition of the Durand Line by British colonial administrators), we further conclude that the UK has a moral imperative to provide whatever diplomatic or practical support might be deemed appropriate by the relevant parties to assist them in finding ways of addressing the many problematic issues that are the Durand Line's legacy.

## 5 The Obama plan: addressing previous failings?

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### The Obama plan

183. Speaking about Afghanistan at the Munich Security Conference in early February 2009, Richard Holbrooke, President Obama's special envoy for Pakistan and Afghanistan, was reported to have said, "I have never seen anything like the mess we have inherited", and to have commented that "it is like no other problem we have confronted, and in my view it's going to be much tougher than Iraq".<sup>310</sup> Referring to the US's previous approach to Afghanistan, in April 2009 the Asia Society concluded:

The policies of the previous administration toward this conflict zone fell short. The administration did not match its proclaimed objectives with the necessary resources and strategic effort, although resources began to increase in recent years, and it did not develop a sufficiently integrated approach to the two countries and the region. Its ideological "war on terror" mind-set blinded the administration to significant strategic realities of this region, which led to a fundamentally dysfunctional relationship with Pakistan that exacerbated regional tensions, failed to prevent al-Qaida from re-establishing a safe haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA), enabled the Taliban to regroup and rearm from their strongholds in Quetta and FATA, and offered no significant response to the upsurge of the Pakistan Taliban movement.<sup>311</sup>

184. Early in his presidency, President Obama conceded that the US's Afghan strategy had been allowed to drift and he accepted that more troops were needed to tackle the insurgency. In February 2009, Mr Obama authorised the deployment of an additional 17,000 combat troops to be based mainly in southern Afghanistan. On 27 March, he presented his new strategy for Afghanistan, which had been recalibrated to include Pakistan. The US's new approach built on three previous reviews conducted by General Lute at the National Security Council, Admiral Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and General Petraeus at CENTCOM.

185. The overriding goal of the US plan is to disrupt, dismantle and destroy Al Qaeda's sanctuaries in Pakistan and its support network and to prevent it from establishing safe havens in Afghanistan. The heavy focus on Pakistan is complemented by a recognition of the importance of wider regional support for a stable Afghanistan. Looking to the longer term, the plan stresses the need to improve and accelerate army and police training in a bid to ensure that the Afghan security forces are able, ultimately, to lead counterinsurgency efforts with reduced international assistance. Other priorities include improving co-ordination between civilian and military efforts, and between international actors. Progress on all these areas is to be measured against a series of benchmarks. Finally, the plan accepts

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310 "Barack Obama envoy Richard Holbrooke warns of 'a new Iraq' as he heads to Pakistan", *The Times*, 9 February 2009

311 "Back from the Brink: A Strategy for Stabilizing Afghanistan-Pakistan", *Asia Society Taskforce*, April 2009

that the war in Afghanistan cannot be won unless there is political reconciliation with “non-ideologically committed insurgents”.<sup>312</sup> We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 8.

### *Assessing the Obama plan*

186. We asked our witnesses for their views on the general thrust of the Obama plan. Christina Lamb told us that, “the good thing is that everyone now recognises that the situation is a mess and that something has to be done quickly. That is a lot better than, say, a year ago, when people were still talking about it as though it was somehow successful”.<sup>313</sup> James Fergusson told us that the plan, and its reliance on a “comprehensive approach”, is in many respects the same as that which the UK proposed in 2006 when troops were first deployed to Helmand. Mr Fergusson noted that a lack of resources were primarily to blame for its failure to work in Helmand, but offered a more favourable prognosis for the US, given that “they are the only ones, really, who now have the resources and the will to do it”.<sup>314</sup> However, like Christina Lamb, he expressed some scepticism as to whether it can work given that “we have lost the consent of the Afghan people because we have been going for eight years”.<sup>315</sup> Daniel Korski told us that President Obama’s strategy is “everything to every man”. He said that the importance of the strategy is “not that it is saying anything that has not been said, but that it has allowed the US Administration to re-engage allies and the Afghan authorities on the strategy”.<sup>316</sup> In a recent report for the US think-tank the Council on Foreign Relations, Daniel Markey states:

While the broad contours are in place, clearly Washington’s approach to South Asia remains a work in progress. The strategy’s authors insist that it is intended to provide a framework, not a strait-jacket, for U.S. policy. Questions remain about the correct prioritization of U.S. objectives; the level of and manner in which U.S. diplomatic, military, intelligence, and economic resources should be deployed; and the appropriate sequencing and duration of U.S. efforts.<sup>317</sup>

### *Military surge*

187. Daniel Markey’s paper for the Council on Foreign Relations states that basic counter-insurgency lessons from Iraq appear to have informed US plans for Afghanistan. Markey states that, having committed an extra 17,000 combat troops to southern Afghanistan, “Washington will begin with a rapid expansion of military force to confront decisively the Afghan Taliban’s offensive during the spring and summer fighting seasons”.<sup>318</sup> We asked witnesses for their view on the US’s plans for a military ‘surge’ of 17,000 combat troops to southern Afghanistan. Daniel Korski argued that this would make the US the biggest presence in the south and the east, which in his view would mark “a very profound,

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312 “US Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan”, White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report, April 2009

313 Q 145

314 Q 188 [James Fergusson]

315 Q 118, Q 145

316 Q 147

317 Daniel Markey, “From AfPak to PakAf: a Response to the New U.S. Strategy for South Asia”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2009, p3

318 *Ibid.*

strategic difference in the way that it has been proceeding until now”.<sup>319</sup> We also heard from interlocutors during our visit to Afghanistan that the imminent arrival of US troops in the south would be warmly welcomed by the British military, in part because of the resources and equipment that the US would make available.

188. However, some of our witnesses were sceptical about the difference that the additional US combat forces alone will make to the situation in the south. David Loyn told us that the extra 17,000 US troops would not make a significant difference on the ground without “the changing politics of a far more effective development strategy, which is the bit of President Obama’s policy that I am most sceptical about.”<sup>320</sup> General David McKiernan—who in May was replaced by General Stanley McChrystal as US commander in Afghanistan—had previously requested 10,000 more troops in addition to those to be deployed as part of the ‘surge’. It is reported that the White House will decide in the autumn whether to accede to the request. The Council on Foreign Relations notes that by the middle of 2010, the US troop presence will have expanded by nearly one-third, to 78,000. Dr Stuart Gordon of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, warned that there is a danger that “the surge will be seen as a US surge” and as such “putting an Afghan face on security is essential”. He added that it will also be crucial to reform “the Afghan Government sufficiently so that they can deliver tangible results on the ground to cement a political settlement”.<sup>321</sup>

189. The US plan focuses heavily on the need to accelerate training for the Afghan security forces so as to increase their self-reliance. Dr Stuart Gordon described the US’s plan to send an additional 4,000 mentors to support the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police as a “key reform measure”. He called the Obama strategy with a full Brigade dedicated towards training “a real potential force multiplier”.<sup>322</sup> He told us that the “key is to build some form of social contract or political settlement between Afghans and their Government”.<sup>323</sup> To supplement this, NATO allies have also agreed to augment their existing support by providing senior-level mentoring of the ANA and an expanded role in developing the ANP, both under the control of one training organisation.<sup>324</sup>

190. During our visit to Afghanistan we heard widespread support for the US’s new commitment to improve the previously poor co-ordination between the various actors in that country. The US has stated that it accepts that military, political and development efforts have to be better co-ordinated and that “an effective response will require allies, partners, the UN and other international organizations, and NGOs to significantly increase their involvement in Afghanistan”.<sup>325</sup> Our witnesses approved of the US’s plan to dispatch hundreds of US civilian experts to increase reconstruction and development programmes,

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319 Q 147 [Daniel Korski]

320 Q 117

321 Q 147 [Dr Stuart Gordon]

322 Q 149

323 Q 147 [Dr Stuart Gordon]

324 “NATO’s Training Mission, Afghanistan”, NATO, 4 April 2009

325 “US Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan”, *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report*, April 2009

and took the view that this would be an important step forward in persuading ordinary Afghans to side with the government rather than the insurgency.<sup>326</sup>

### **Regional diplomacy**

191. One of the key changes under the new US strategy is the move away from almost total reliance on military might under the Bush administration to an approach which places a greater emphasis on diplomacy. The US has pledged to involve India, Russia, China and Iran, as well as establishing a “Contact Group” and a regional security and economic co-operation forum. The participation of all of Afghanistan’s neighbours, including Pakistan, India and Iran, at the International Conference on Afghanistan held in The Hague on 31 March 2009, suggests that there is a willingness on the part of those countries to support regional initiatives. Notwithstanding this, our witnesses were insistent that, as important as the other regional actors are to Afghanistan’s future, the key state that the US should be focusing on is Pakistan.<sup>327</sup>

### **Engaging Pakistan**

#### **Key elements of the US approach**

192. Previously, under the Bush administration, US effort was largely focused on targeting Al Qaeda operatives and networks in Pakistan. To this end, between 2001 and 2007, the US gave more than \$10 billion in traceable aid to the Musharraf regime, the vast majority of which went directly to the military.<sup>328</sup> In his book ‘Descent into Chaos’, Ahmed Rashid reflects the views of many commentators who believe that the US’s strategy of offering aid with few, if any, conditions attached produced few strategic returns.<sup>329</sup>

193. There has been a significant change of emphasis under the Obama administration towards seeing Pakistan as both part of the problem in relation to Afghanistan, and potentially part of the solution, for the reasons that we have outlined in Chapter 5 of this Report.. Under the new strategy, both countries are to be treated as a single ‘theatre’ (sometimes dubbed ‘AfPak’). There are to be regular trilateral US-Pakistan-Afghanistan talks, and bilateral meetings with President Obama’s special envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke. In addition to diplomatic initiatives, the US has committed to providing the Pakistani security forces with operational and development support to improve their ability to mount successful counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations. Non-military aid to Pakistan is to triple to \$1.5 billion every year for five years. This will include direct budget support, development assistance, infrastructure investment, and technical advice to provide longer-term economic stability. The US also wants to strengthen the civilian government by fostering reform in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and the North West Frontier Province by improving economic prospects. However, disquiet in Congress about the Administration’s plans to increase military

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326 Q 147

327 Q 157

328 Craig Cohen and Derek Chollet, “When \$10 Billion Is Not Enough: Rethinking US Strategy toward Pakistan”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Spring 2007, 30:2 pp 7–19

329 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (2008), p 401

funding to Pakistan have apparently resulted in the Obama administration's decision to take a harder line than its predecessor on the issue of aid conditionality - it has indicated that the pledge of \$7.5 billion in civilian aid over five years will only be forthcoming if Pakistan demonstrates its commitment to uprooting Al Qaeda and other violent extremists.<sup>330</sup> We asked Dr Gohel whether the US had now got the balance right in terms of aid conditionality. His view was that:

“It is a starting point. It will take time to see whether it produces positive results. The language is right. The US Administration have understood that more needs to be done. If the country is going to receive \$1.5 billion a year as has been proposed, more needs to be done in terms of tackling the Taliban, Al Qaeda and domestic terrorism”.<sup>331</sup>

### *Issues not addressed in the strategy*

#### *US attacks on targets in Pakistan*

194. President Obama's strategy remains silent on a number of issues which are nevertheless considered by many people to be of major importance to the success or otherwise of the US plan for Pakistan. The first of these is US military action against terrorist targets in Pakistan.

195. Frustration at Pakistan's failure between 2001 and 2009 to deal effectively with the threat from the tribal areas has been expressed by both the Afghanistan and US administrations. In 2008, Afghanistan publicly criticised Pakistan for failing to stop insurgents crossing into the country, and warned Pakistan that it was considering taking military action to tackle the situation.<sup>332</sup> The US went one step further after losing, what Dr Gohel describes as “faith and trust” in the ISI, which the US believed was passing intelligence to terrorists that it was targeting. Dr Gohel explained that the solution adopted by the Bush Administration was the use of Predator drone strikes, which are “quick and decisive”.<sup>333</sup> We were told by Professor Gregory that “it is a measure of the perilous state of the war with the Taliban in Afghanistan that the US clearly feels these risks are outweighed by the need to take direct action in the FATA”.<sup>334</sup>

196. We heard conflicting reports about the value of drone attacks during our visit and from our witnesses. Many of our witnesses and interlocutors told us that the US's targeting has been precise and largely accurate and the attacks had significantly curtailed Al Qaeda's ability to plan and mount attacks against Western targets. For instance, Dr Gohel told us that the US drone attacks have led to the elimination of a number of senior Al Qaeda members including Abu Hamza Rabia, Abu Laith al-Libi and Midhat Mursi, who directed al-Qaeda's chemical, biological, and nuclear programme. Another of those alleged to have been killed after previously escaping from a Pakistani prison, was the British national

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330 “With conditions set on aid, Pakistan sharpens tone”, *The Guardian*, 5 April 2009

331 Q 160

332 “Karzai issues warning to Pakistan”, *BBC News Online*, 15 June 2008

333 Q166 [Dr Sajjan Gohel]

334 Ev 165

Rashid Rauf, who was sought by the British authorities in connection with the alleged plot to target transatlantic airliners in 2006. However, several interlocutors in Pakistan pointed to considerable anger amongst the Pakistani public at reported attacks which, in their opinion, had exacerbated already existing anti-US sentiment. Professor Shaun Gregory told us that the drone attacks are regarded by many in Pakistan as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty and that this "plays very badly in terms of western and anti-western sympathies, particularly in the Pakistan army and ISI. They resent this".<sup>335</sup>

197. President Zardari has stated publicly that he "cannot condone violations of our sovereignty even when they are done by allies and friends. We would much prefer that the US share its intelligence and give us the drones and missiles that will allow us to take care of this problem on our own".<sup>336</sup> Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the foreign minister, has also been quoted as saying that US drone attacks were damaging trust between the two allies.<sup>337</sup> However, other press reports suggest that the government's public protestations mask a degree of tacit acceptance of the drone attacks on the part of Pakistani government.<sup>338</sup>

198. Although President Zardari was reported to have raised the issue of US drone attacks with the Prime Minister when he visited London on 16 September 2008, the Government refrained from issuing any official comments on this matter. During our oral evidence session Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the Government was "obviously concerned" about the attacks "but we have been very clear that this is an issue between the Pakistanis and the US." On the question of 'collateral damage', he added:

Civilian casualties are a very inflammatory issue - they are also a desperate issue of unnecessary loss of life - but we have been very clear that this is an issue between the Pakistanis and the US. [...] They need to work out between themselves how they want to handle it. We are observers, not participants, in this issue.<sup>339</sup>

**199. We conclude that the use of US drones to attack Al Qaeda targets in Pakistan may have resulted in serious damage to Al Qaeda's network and capabilities. However, we also conclude that these attacks have damaged the US's reputation among elements of the Pakistani population who regard them as a violation of Pakistani sovereignty. We further conclude that drone attacks remain a high-risk strategy and must not become a substitute for the challenging yet vital task of building a Pakistani civilian government counter-terrorist capacity and army capable of conducting counter-insurgency operations and dealing with extremist threats.**

## India

200. As we discussed in Paragraphs 165 to 176 above, Pakistan's security establishment has consistently seen India as its primary foreign policy threat, and has been particularly concerned about India's expanding activity in Afghanistan. Although President Obama's

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335 Q 54

336 "Zardari: 'Give us the drones and we will take out the militants ourselves'", *Independent*, 8 April 2009

337 "Pakistan fighting for survival, says Zardari President says he needs unconditional aid to fight terrorism", *Daily Telegraph*, 8 April 2009

338 "Obama urged to escalate drone bombing raids deep into Pakistan", *The Times*, 19 March 2009

339 Q 233

strategy stresses the need to involve regional neighbours in finding a solution to Afghanistan and Pakistan's security dilemmas, it makes no specific mention of the role of India. Lord Malloch-Brown noted that "it was interesting that, when the American envoy [Richard Holbrooke] was appointed, there was an immediate flurry when it was suggested that his remit also covered India. The Indians jumped to the conclusion that that meant Kashmir, and he had to clarify rapidly that that was not the case because there is sensitivity".<sup>340</sup> India regards the issue of Kashmir and its status, as an internal, domestic matter and has consistently bridled at the prospect of outside intervention. However, referring to Special Envoy Holbrooke, Daniel Korski told us that, "it is fair to say that [his] mandate includes India even though it does not say so on the package".<sup>341</sup> For its part, Pakistan remains extremely concerned about what it perceives to be the US Administration's wooing of India, in particular, the recent US-Indian deals on civilian nuclear co-operation. Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid argue that "the new US-Indian nuclear deal effectively recognizes New Delhi's legitimacy as a nuclear power while continuing to treat Islamabad, with its record of proliferation, as a pariah".<sup>342</sup> Baroness Williams told us (giving evidence as part of our recent inquiry into non-proliferation) that it "has made Pakistan, at an internal political level, argue that it has been treated quite differently from India and far less favourably. It is not a happy moment for that kind of attitude to be taken in a democracy that is clearly very frail at present".<sup>343</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown echoed these views when he told us the US-India nuclear deal "has merely exacerbated Pakistan's sense of grievance about its nuclear status vis-à-vis India. There are real issues to be dealt with there."<sup>344</sup>

201. During our visit we were told that there was no appetite - given the current political climate and particularly following the terrorist attacks by Pakistan-based groups on Mumbai in 2008 - for a return to the Composite Dialogue process which previously offered a potential way forward on the Kashmir dispute, and an opportunity to de-escalate tensions between Pakistan and India. However, we were also told that both parties had "left the door open" to allow the process to be re-started in the event of more propitious circumstances. We discussed the issue of Kashmir in our Report on South Asia which was published in April 2007.<sup>345</sup> In that Report we welcomed the confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir question and their cooperation against terrorism. **We reiterate our previous conclusion from our South Asia Report that the UK should encourage India and Pakistan to make further progress on the peace process, but that the Government should not get directly involved in negotiations nor try to suggest solutions to the question of Kashmir, unless requested to do so by both India and Pakistan.**

202. In June 2009, Manmohan Singh, India's Prime Minister and President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan met during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit,

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340 Q 231

341 Q 157

342 Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan", *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008

343 Foreign Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2007-08, *Global Security: Non-Proliferation*, HC 222, Q 45

344 Q 232

345 Foreign Affairs Committee, Fourth Report of Session 2006-07, *South Asia*, HC 55

the first high-level bi-lateral meeting to take place since September 2008. Pakistan stated its desire to resume full diplomatic dialogue which India and press reports suggested that both countries agreed to share information on terrorists. In the week prior to the SCO summit, “Mr Singh told the Indian parliament that was prepared to meet Pakistan “more than halfway”, but only if Pakistan could show they are serious about tackling terrorism”.<sup>346</sup> Further talks are expected.

203. President Zardari’s comments at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as well as his recent remarks to the effect that terrorism, not India, was now seen by Pakistan as the greater threat (see Paragraph 172 above), while welcome, do not dispel the suspicion that a large part of his country’s security establishment continues to be fixated on India and on the possibility of a future military conflict between the two countries.

204. Giving oral evidence to us, Lord Malloch-Brown stated:

While you have a Pakistan which considers that its first military purpose in life is to maintain 800,000 troops on the Indian border and to be ready to fight a conventional war with India and maybe a nuclear war with India, it is very hard to get it to focus, let alone train for, equip for and organise for an insurgency in the Swat valley, or for insurgencies in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. I agree that, until we can de-escalate the tension between the two countries and allow Pakistan to detach and demobilise itself from the Indian dimension and reengage around its internal security problems, we shall never get an optimal outcome. That is not just an overnight strategic decision. It is all about trust building and all the rest, and it has a Kashmir component to it.<sup>347</sup>

205. Professor Gregory was of the view that “we need to understand that Pakistan has legitimate interests and concerns in Afghanistan and in the region more broadly and that these concerns need to be listened to and addressed, otherwise the paranoia of the Pakistan Army/ISI will continue to be fed”.<sup>348</sup>

## ***Implementing the Obama plan***

### ***The question of resources***

206. Dr Stuart Gordon of the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, raised with us some practical concerns about implementing the new US plan as it relates to Pakistan. Although Dr Gordon told us that development assistance will play “a key part in the future of Pakistan, particularly in the border areas”, he added that it raises “interesting questions as to what type of development work will work and will achieve some sort of political or stabilising effect”. He said that there were “real questions about whether we have instruments” to implement the plan and “whether we are expecting far too much of development assistance and financial aid”. He commented that there will be “significant

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346 “India and Pakistan talk for first time since Mumbai attacks”, *Daily Telegraph*, 16 June 2009

347 Q 231

348 Ev 169

difficulties” in terms of channelling funding and said it was unclear as to who would be delivering the aid and “what political message” this would send.<sup>349</sup>

207. Daniel Markey, writing for the Council on Foreign Relations, states that the United States has “relatively few direct policy tools for fighting extremism and improving state capacity inside Pakistan”. Mr Markey also states that

while the President’s remarks prioritized Pakistan as a US national security concern, US resources and attention are far more heavily engaged in Afghanistan. Since 9/11, the United States has spent (or requested for fiscal year 2009) roughly \$170 billion on Operation Enduring Freedom and just over \$15 billion in assistance and reimbursements to Pakistan.<sup>350</sup>

Also commenting on the issue of resources, Daniel Markey of the Council on Foreign Relations suggested that for the US to “have any chance of effectively formulating, implementing, and monitoring these new and improved assistance programs, Washington must also invest in its own institutions”.<sup>351</sup> He adds that “USAID and the Department of State will need expanded personnel and security to operate throughout Pakistan and to enable improved cooperation with public and private organizations”.<sup>352</sup>

### *The extent of political leverage*

208. The response to the US strategy in Pakistan was mixed. President Zardari stated that the US’s new emphasis on economic progress to combat militancy was a “positive change”.<sup>353</sup> In a recent meeting with Richard Holbrooke, President Zardari is also reported to have said that “Pakistan needs unconditional support by the international community in the fields of education, health, training and provision of equipment for fighting terrorism”.<sup>354</sup>

209. Daniel Markey has commented that widespread anti-Americanism in Pakistan, together with distrust of the US on the part of the military as well as the present poor security conditions, “impose severe limits on US military, intelligence, and even economic development efforts”. He concludes that the “the centerpiece of U.S. efforts should therefore be to win trust among partners within Pakistan’s military, intelligence, and civilian institutions and to empower these partners to undertake the daunting task of fighting terrorism and militancy”.<sup>355</sup>

210. In his written submission Professor Gregory discusses a range of issues which limit the US’s ability to exercise leverage over Pakistan. He told us that it is important not to

349 Q 173

350 Daniel Markey, “From AfPak to PakAf: a Response to the New U.S. Strategy for South Asia”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2009, p 7

351 *Ibid.*, p 6

352 *Ibid.*

353 “Pakistan’s Zardari hails US strategy review”, *Reuters*, 28 March 2009

354 “Pakistan fighting for survival, says Zardari President says he needs unconditional aid to fight terrorism”, *Daily Telegraph*, 8 April 2009

355 Daniel Markey, “From AfPak to PakAf: a Response to the New U.S. Strategy for South Asia”, *Council on Foreign Relations*, April 2009, p 6

“lose sight of sight of Pakistan's capacity for ‘coercive options’, [involving] its capacity to deny the West what support it presently offers and/or to step up support for the Taliban, for terrorists, for proliferation, and so on. I have [...] heard several senior Pakistani diplomats and military figures make precisely this threat, albeit veiled in polite language”.<sup>356</sup> Professor Gregory also stated that the narrow focus of the Bush administration on President Musharraf and the Pakistan Army “denied the West a broader front of engagement with Pakistan” He added, “democracy has declined in Pakistan and Islamic extremism and terrorism have flourished. It will not be easy to find that broader front or to reverse the consequences of Bush's policy myopia”.<sup>357</sup>

**211. We conclude that the US plan marks an important and long overdue recalibration of its relationship with Pakistan. Its emphasis on civilian aid, with appropriate conditions attached, has the potential to ensure that long term improvements in Pakistan’s political, economic and social capacity limit the appeal of extremism. We further conclude that it is crucial that the US addresses Pakistan’s fears, both legitimate and perceived, relating to India and reassures Pakistan about the extent and nature of the US’s long-term commitment to Pakistan.**

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356 Ev 167

357 Ev 167

## 6 The UK's mission in Afghanistan

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212. Having considered the role of the international community in Afghanistan and discussed the importance of Pakistan in relation to the current conflict in Afghanistan, we turn now to focus in more detail on the UK's role in Afghanistan since 2001.

### Background

213. The UK has been involved in Afghanistan alongside coalition forces, led by the US under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), since October 2001. In March 2006, UK troops deployed to Helmand Province as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and since then they have formed part of a 16-nation counter-insurgency force in southern Afghanistan. FCO representation in Afghanistan is based in the British Embassy in Kabul (around 150 civilian staff), the Civil-Military Mission Headquarters in Lashkar Gah, Helmand (over 60 civilian staff) and in Forward Operating Bases across Helmand Province including in Gereshk, Musa Qaleh, Garmsir and Sangin Nad-e-Ali.

214. The UK's contribution to the international intervention in Afghanistan has been significant. It is the second biggest troop contributor in Afghanistan with nearly 9,000 troops in theatre and, as at 21 July 2009, 187 British service personnel have lost their lives in Afghanistan. The UK's financial contribution has also been high: the cost of UK military operations in Afghanistan increased from £750 million in 2006–07 to £1.5 billion in 2007–08, and to £2.6 billion in 2008–09. At the same time, development and stabilisation spending increased from £154 million in 2006–07, to £166 million in 2007–08, and to £207 million in 2008–09,<sup>358</sup> making the UK Afghanistan's third biggest donor, behind the US and the Asian Development Bank.

### The UK's expanding mission

215. When UK forces entered Afghanistan in October 2001, they did so in support of the United States, and in direct response to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. In a statement to the House on 4 October 2001, the then Prime Minister Tony Blair outlined the UK's objectives:

We must bring Bin Laden and other Al Qaida leaders to justice and eliminate the terrorist threat they pose. And we must ensure that Afghanistan ceases to harbour and sustain international terrorism. If the Taliban regime will not comply with that objective, we must bring about change in that regime to ensure that Afghanistan's links to international terrorism are broken.

I believe the humanitarian coalition to help the people of Afghanistan to be as vital as any military action itself. [...] The international community has already pledged sufficient funds to meet the most immediate needs. [...] We will give Mr Brahimi [Lakhdar Brahimi, former United Nations representative for Afghanistan and Iraq]

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358 "UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward", *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 8, [www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk)

all the support we can, to help ensure that the UN and the whole of the international community comes together to meet the humanitarian challenge. [...]

We will do what we can to minimise the suffering of the Afghan people as a result of the conflict; and we commit ourselves to work with them afterwards inside and outside Afghanistan to ensure a better, more peaceful future, free from the repression and dictatorship that is their present existence.

The coalition is strong. Military plans are robust. The humanitarian plans are falling into place. [...]The Afghan people are not our enemy, for they have our sympathy and they will have our support. Our enemy is Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda network, who were responsible for the events of 11 September. The Taliban regime must yield them up or become our enemy also. We will not act for revenge. We will act because we need to for the protection of our people and our way of life, including confidence in our economy. The threat posed by bin Laden and his terrorism must be eliminated. We act for justice. We act with world opinion behind us and we have an absolute determination to see justice done and this evil of mass international terrorism confronted and defeated.<sup>359</sup>

216. In practical terms, this political commitment led to the deployment of the first UK troops in November 2001, when Royal Marines helped secure the airfield at Bagram. Subsequently, 1,700 UK soldiers were deployed until July 2002 as Task Force Jacana in eastern Afghanistan to deny and destroy terrorist infrastructure. The UK also oversaw efforts to establish ISAF and led it for the first six-months of its operation until June 2002. Following the hand-over of ISAF control, the UK military presence was scaled down significantly, although a small contingent of logistics and support troops remained to assist ISAF.<sup>360</sup> In May 2003, the UK announced the creation of its first Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the north of Afghanistan, in Mazar-e-Sharif, with the aim of helping to extend the authority of central government and facilitating reconstruction by improving the security environment. This was followed by a second, smaller, UK-led PRT in Meymaneh, also in northern Afghanistan.

217. In May 2006, following an earlier decision to expand ISAF's operation throughout Afghanistan, UK forces were deployed to Helmand. By the summer of 2007, the number of UK personnel deployed had risen from some 3,300 to approximately 7,700 troops.<sup>361</sup>

218. In a statement on 26 January 2006 outlining the parameters of the Helmand deployment, the then Secretary of State for Defence, Rt Hon Dr John Reid, told Parliament that the UK would be "working to ensure that we provide Afghanistan with a seamless package of democratic, political, developmental and military assistance in Helmand. All of that is necessary to ensure that international terrorism never again has a base in Afghanistan".<sup>362</sup> In March 2006, another comment by Dr Reid attracted much attention. In an interview he said of the UK's mission to Helmand, "if we came for three years here to

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359 HC Deb, 4 Oct 2001, col 675

360 "Afghanistan", *House of Commons Library Standard Note*, SN/IA/4788, 8 July 2008

361 Defence Committee, Thirteenth Report of Session 2006–07, *UK Operations in Afghanistan*, HC 408

362 "Afghanistan", *House of Commons Library Standard Note*, SN/IA/4788, 8 July 2008

accomplish our mission and had not fired one shot at the end of it, we would be very happy indeed”.<sup>363</sup> Although widely quoted even today, James Fergusson notes that:

Reid’s remark was not quite the hostage to fortune it was made out to be. What he also said [...] was that he expected the mission to be “complex and dangerous ... because the terrorists will want to destroy the economy and the legitimate trade and the government that we are helping to build up”. He added that “if this didn’t involve the necessity to use force, we wouldn’t send soldiers”.<sup>364</sup>

219. Some 18 months after troops were deployed to Helmand, the Prime Minister outlined the Government’s “strategic principles for the UK’s involvement in Afghanistan” in a statement to the House.<sup>365</sup> These were to:

- support the Afghan government, army and police to allow them to take responsibility for their own security;
- strengthen national and local institutions and support the search for political reconciliation;
- support reconstruction and development; and
- work in partnership with the international community.

220. The UK was also bound by a series of seven objectives agreed in December 2007 by the National Security, International Relations and Development Cabinet Committee:

- reduce the insurgency on both sides of the Durand Line to a level where it no longer poses a significant threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- ensure that core Al Qaeda does not return to Afghanistan and is destroyed or at least contained in Pakistan’s tribal areas;
- ensure that Afghanistan remains a legitimate state and becomes more effective and able to handle its own security, increase the pace of economic development, and allow the UK and international military commitment to transition away from a ground combat role to security sector reform.
- contain and reduce the drugs trade to divide it from the insurgency and prevent it from undermining security, governance and the economy;
- provide long term sustainable support for Afghan Compact goals on governance, rule of law, human rights and social/economic development; and
- keep allies engaged.

221. These goals have been translated into nine interdependent strands which guide the UK’s current effort in Afghanistan, as follows:

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363 Transcript available via the Ministry of Defence website:  
[www.operations.mod.uk/afghanistan/statements/transcriptjohnreid.doc](http://www.operations.mod.uk/afghanistan/statements/transcriptjohnreid.doc)

364 James Fergusson, *A Million Bullets* (2008)

365 HC Deb, 12 Dec 2007, col 303

- **Security** – Increased capacity of the Afghan Government and army and police to contain the insurgency;
- **Politics & Reconciliation** – Strengthened national and local institutions and support for political reconciliation;
- **Governance & Rule of Law** - Increased capacity and accountability of Afghan Government institutions to deliver basic services, remove corruption and provide justice for the Afghan people;
- **Economic Development & Reconstruction** – Economic growth and poverty reduction that improves the lives of Afghan men, women and children;
- **Counter-Narcotics** – Contain and reduce the drugs trade to prevent it from undermining security, governance and the economy;
- **Helmand** – Increased capacity of local and national government to contain the insurgency and deliver security and development to local people;
- **Regional Engagement** – Regional neighbours support the creation and maintenance of a stable Afghan state;
- **International Engagement** – More coherent international engagement supporting Afghan peace building and development; and
- **Strategic Communications** – Increased Afghan and UK public support for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

222. Lord Ashdown, who in 2007 was the UK’s preferred candidate to be the UN Secretary General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, has argued that the Government has set itself too many goals:

Whenever I hear our Prime Minister [...] what I hear is not clarity, but confusion. It appears that his answer to the fact that we are close to losing one war in Afghanistan is to fight lots more: a war against the Taliban; a war against drugs; a war against want; a war against Afghanistan’s old traditional ways. We cannot fight all these wars at the same time. We cannot “liberate” Afghan women, until we have first created an effective rule of law. We cannot pauperise Afghanistan’s farmers as part of a war on drugs, if we want to rely on their support to fight the Taliban. We cannot lift Afghanistan out of poverty within the time frame we have to turn things round. To have too many priorities, is to have none.<sup>366</sup>

223. Lord Malloch-Brown conceded in June 2009 that “some of the apparent objectives we were laying out in the early years were much too open-ended and seemed to imply a 20 or 30-year military commitment in Afghanistan by British troops”.<sup>367</sup> He added that there was

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<sup>366</sup> Lord Ashdown, “What I told Gordon Brown about Afghanistan”, *The Spectator* (Coffee House Blog), 15 September 2008, [www.spectator.co.uk](http://www.spectator.co.uk)

<sup>367</sup> Q 182

“a detachment between objectives and what it is reasonable to ask people to put their lives in danger for”.<sup>368</sup>

224. We asked witnesses whether the growth in objectives was a deliberate decision or one which evolved without due consideration through ‘mission creep’. Colonel Christopher Langton of the IISS stated that the need to remain involved in Afghanistan to “prevent a return to the ‘status quo ante bellum’ has meant that other missions have emerged”.<sup>369</sup> We asked Lord Malloch-Brown the same question. He told us that he “wouldn’t say it was mission creep” but that “a deepening of the mission might be a more accurate description”.<sup>370</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown added:

The difficulty is that you can eliminate individual terrorists, but if you leave a country as a failed state and a seedbed for renewed terrorism, you leave your job unfinished. Perhaps the early statements of the mission were too two-dimensional—one-dimensional, if you like—but the objective of leaving an Afghan Government, who are representative of their people and able to offer security to their people, and offer to the world a secure state that will not be a source of future terrorism, is an extension of the mission, not a change of mission.<sup>371</sup>

**225. We conclude that the UK’s mission in Afghanistan has taken on a significantly different, and considerably expanded, character since the first British troops were deployed there in 2001. The UK has moved from its initial goal of supporting the US in countering international terrorism, far into the realms of counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, protection of human rights, and state-building. During our visit we were struck by the sheer magnitude of the task confronting the UK. We conclude that there has been significant ‘mission creep’ in the British deployment to Afghanistan, and that this has resulted in the British Government being now committed to a wide range of objectives. We further conclude that in its response to this Report, the Government should set out, in unambiguous terms, its first and most important priority in Afghanistan.**

## The Helmand deployment

226. In its Report of 6 April 2006 entitled, *The UK deployment to Afghanistan*, the Select Committee on Defence states the “MoD told us that it had chosen to deploy to Helmand Province specifically because it was an area containing continuing threats to stability from the narcotics trade, the Taliban and other illegally armed groups”.<sup>372</sup> In his book, *A Million Bullets*, James Fergusson also considers the reasons behind the British deployment to Helmand. He states:

Operation Herrick 4, as the Helmand deployment was called, was supposed to secure economic development and reconstruction in the region. It was in the terminology

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368 Q 182

369 Ev 111

370 Q 175

371 Q 174

372 Defence Committee, Fifth Report of Session 2005-06, *The UK Deployment to Afghanistan*, HC 558, para 45

of the planners, a ‘hearts and minds’ operation, not a search-and-destroy one. The intention was to spread the Karzai government’s remit into the recalcitrant south of Afghanistan, the Pashtun heartlands and one-time spiritual home of the Taliban—a force that, barring a handful of hardliners, was confidently assessed to have been defeated in 2001. [...] The move into southern Afghanistan was no ad hoc decision but part of a carefully phased international strategy to extend the remit of NATO’s ISAF to areas of the country it had yet to reach.<sup>373</sup>

227. British planning for the mission was carried out throughout 2005, and with it came a heavy emphasis on the ‘comprehensive approach’ which involved the FCO, MoD and DfID working together, and co-ordinating their work through a small cross-departmental body formerly known as the Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU) and now called the Stabilisation Unit. James Fergusson argues that the initial British plan in Helmand was, “ambitious, perhaps overly so”.<sup>374</sup> Mr Fergusson states that the Government’s Afghan planning committee was encouraged to “think big in Afghanistan” and that “the sense of purpose emanating from the Cabinet Office was impossible to ignore or resist” even although officials from the PCRU (now the Stabilisation Unit) advised a more measured approach. Allegedly sidestepping many of the concerns raised by people working on the ground in Helmand, the Joint Plan for Helmand was nevertheless agreed in December 2005.<sup>375</sup>

228. A study by Professor Theo Farrell and Dr Stuart Gordon, both of whom were witnesses in our inquiry, suggests that the initial British plan resembled the “Malayan ‘ink-spot’ strategy”, a reference to the successful counter-insurgency approach adopted by the UK in Malaya some fifty years ago.<sup>376</sup> Focusing on the provincial capital, Lashkar Gah, the plan was to use British and Afghan troops to provide a framework of security that would allow development work to “slowly transform the political, social and economic fabric of the town and generate ‘effects’ that would spill over beyond the town itself”.<sup>377</sup>

229. The UK’s decision to deploy a Brigade to Helmand in 2006 was, according to Daniel Korski, initially hailed as an important improvement on the small US-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the main city of Helmand province, Lashkar Gah, which only had a limited capacity and a few hundred soldiers.<sup>378</sup> However, Professor Farrell and Dr Gordon state that “the initial plan contained serious weaknesses” including “an information vacuum” and a diversion of resources away from Afghanistan caused by “Whitehall’s focus on Iraq”. They add there was an erroneous presumption that Afghan elites shared British views on how to reverse state failure, and that there was no clear cross-governmental blueprint for a counter-insurgency campaign or any sense of how it would link to counter-narcotics efforts. Daniel Korski highlights the fact that the Government’s strategy did not account for the time it took for the FCO and DFID to “staff up the UK

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373 James Fergusson, *A Million Bullets* (London, 2008), p 9

374 *Ibid.*, pp 147–148

375 *Ibid.*

376 Professor Theo Farrell and Dr Stuart Gordon, “COIN Machine: The British Military in Afghanistan”, *Rusi Journal* 2009, Jul 2009, Vol. 154, No. 3

377 *Ibid.*

378 Ev 154

Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) let alone before all government departments, including the MoD, realised the nature of the fight”<sup>379</sup>.

230. Most analysts believe that the initial UK strategy failed primarily because of a lack of manpower, and a poor understanding of the local situation and the level of resistance that would emerge. Professor Adam Roberts states that because the insurgency began relatively slowly its seriousness was not recognized for some time.<sup>380</sup> Giving evidence to us, Lord Malloch-Brown acknowledged that “the strength of the insurgent opposition we have faced in Helmand has surprised us; there is no way around that”<sup>381</sup>.

231. Professor Farrell and Dr Gordon also note that “the UK plan was derailed almost from the outset” following a request in June 2006 from the Afghan government, for British troops to deploy to northern Helmand to show that government authority extended throughout the province.<sup>382</sup> The resulting “platoon house strategy” where British troops found themselves in outlying areas of Helmand, surrounded by insurgents and cut off from support, was highly controversial and resulted in significant losses among UK forces. The multiple demands placed upon the British military by other key individuals and institutions in Afghanistan is a theme which is also discussed by journalist and author Ahmed Rashid, who suggests that British military commanders appear to have “suffered under too many masters”. He notes:

Richards [General David Richards, former Commander of ISAF] arrived in Kabul with a plan to implement an ink spot strategy [...] However with British troops surrounded by the Taliban the moment they arrived in towns the ink could not flow. [...] NATO states wanted him to preserve their caveats, while Blair insisted that he go softly on Pakistan because of the ISI’s cooperation with MI5 in catching Britain’s domestic terrorists—even though British officers under fire in Helmand were seething with anger at the ISI’s support to the Taliban. The Americans and the Afghans said Richards was too soft with the Pakistanis.<sup>383</sup>

232. A number of commentators have argued that there was a lack of clarity about why the UK was in Helmand. Brigadier Andrew Mackay, who commanded British forces in Helmand in 2007, is reported to have been struck by the lack of clear direction “from above” and is quoted as saying there was a sense of “making it up as we go along.”<sup>384</sup> Stephen Gray’s book *Operation Snakebite* is just one of many accounts to highlight the apparent disconnect between different Whitehall departments.<sup>385</sup> Mr Gray quotes the former UK Ambassador to Kabul, Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, as saying that “a lot of people had been rather naïve about what could be done here in Afghanistan. There was still sort of

379 Ev 154–155

380 Ev 115

381 Q 183

382 Professor Theo Farrell and Dr Stuart Gordon, “COIN Machine: The British Military in Afghanistan”, *Rusi Journal* 2009, Jul 2009, Vol. 154, No. 3

383 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (2008), p 360

384 Richard Norton-Taylor, “Afghanistan: soldiers’ reports tell of undue optimism, chaos and policy made on the hoof”, *The Guardian*, 30 March 2009

385 *Ibid.*

a hangover of misplaced optimism.”<sup>386</sup> Military analyst Daniel Marston argues that the mission was initially “hampered by the fact that HMG and the Ministry of Defence had generally failed to stipulate that what was needed was a COIN [counter-insurgency] campaign.” He adds that the mission was originally presented as a peace support and counter-narcotics operation, primarily as a matter of UK domestic political expediency.<sup>387</sup> James Fergusson suggests that many of the soldiers in Helmand including more senior officers had only “the haziest idea of what Herrick 4 was supposed to achieve”. He adds:

In this they were no different to most of the British public. Some of them thought the fighting was about poppies, and the need to curtail and control the world’s biggest source of opium. Some thought it was about the War on Terror, and conflated the Taliban with Al Qaeda in the most general way. Others were closer to the mark when they said it was about policing the world, and bringing democracy and governance to a benighted nation.

James Fergusson goes on to quote from a memo by Brigadier Ed Butler in which he says:

Everyone here should be entirely clear as to why we are here [...] If we fail to deliver a pro-Western Islamic state in the post- 9/11 era then I would suggest that the War on Terror will become untenable.<sup>388</sup>

233. In a speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in November 2008, the then Defence Secretary Rt Hon John Hutton stated:

If we hadn’t gone into Southern Afghanistan in 2006 the Taleban would probably now control Southern Helmand and Kandahar. There are many students of history in this room today who would tell us that those who control Kandahar have often controlled Kabul. Which would give free reign to Al Qaeda through Afghanistan. Pre 9/11 all over again.<sup>389</sup>

234. On a more positive note, Daniel Korski stated that “the problems of integrating economic reconstruction with military operations have decreased with every update of the so-called ‘Helmand Road Map’, which has guided UK effort since 2007. He commented that more civilians are now working in the PRT and that civil-military structures have improved.<sup>390</sup> In a recent innovation the PRT is now headed by the civilian UK Senior Representative working alongside the Brigadier who currently commands TFH. The UK Senior Representative reports to the Ambassador in Kabul, while the Brigade remains under the command of ISAF for all operational military matters.<sup>391</sup> We note that the Defence Committee is currently examining how effective the UK’s ‘comprehensive approach’ has been, and we await with interest their findings on this issue.

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386 Richard Norton-Taylor, “Afghanistan: soldiers’ reports tell of undue optimism, chaos and policy made on the hoof”, *The Guardian*, 30 March 2009

387 Daniel Marston, “British Operations in Helmand Afghanistan”, *Small Wars Journal*, 13 September 2008

388 Quoted in James Fergusson, *A Million Bullets* (London, 2008) p 23

389 Rt Hon John Hutton MP, (then) Secretary of State for Defence at the *International Institute of Strategic Studies*, 11 Nov 2008

390 Ev 155

391 Ev 82

235. During our visit to Helmand we were briefed about progress that is being made in a number of towns in the Helmand Valley. For example, in Garmsir the UK has been able to undertake development activities, assisted in part by the presence of a good district governor and chief of police. We witnessed the good working relationships for ourselves when we visited Helmand and the importance that was attached to the civilian elements of mission, which in part is due to the recent appointment of a senior FCO official to head the PRT. However, as we also witnessed during that visit, the security situation makes it extremely difficult for civilians to move around the province, and as a result civilian projects suffer. Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the arrival of additional US forces, combined with the longer-term focus on training the Afghan National Army, would help to provide a “long-term, credible security solution”.<sup>392</sup>

**236. We conclude that the UK deployment to Helmand was undermined by unrealistic planning at senior levels, poor co-ordination between Whitehall departments and crucially, a failure to provide the military with clear direction. We further conclude that as the situation currently stands, the “comprehensive approach” is faltering, largely because the security situation is preventing any strengthening of governance and Afghan capacity. The very clear conclusion that we took from our visit to Helmand is that stabilisation need not be complicated or expensive, but it does require provision of security, good governance, and a belief within the local population that ISAF forces will outlast the insurgents.**

### **The role of, and impact on, the British armed forces**

237. The British military remains key to the UK achieving its foreign policy objectives in Afghanistan. In the eight years since British troops were deployed they have paid a significant price in fatalities and injuries. British troops have been on the receiving end of a particularly virulent insurgency in Helmand where the majority of UK forces are based. Of late there have been increased attacks on the main provincial city, Lashkar Gah. Over the course of 2008, security incidents rose by 188%, the second highest increase in all of Afghanistan’s provinces.<sup>393</sup> In its written submission, the FCO acknowledges the rise in security incidents but argues that particularly in the south and east, this is “often as a result of ANA and ISAF initiated operations”.<sup>394</sup> During our visit to Helmand in April 2009, we were briefed on a number of operations involving British and Afghan forces that had resulted in significant successes against the insurgents. However, we were also told that the situation was expected to worsen in the coming months, and that although the British control the most densely populated areas in Helmand, the Taliban continued to dominate entire districts within the province. Since June, UK armed forces have been engaged in a major offensive, Operation Panther’s Claw, supported by Afghan forces, which has aimed to drive the Taliban from the areas of central Helmand which have until now remained beyond the reach of the Afghan Government. The Americans are engaged in a similar operation in the southern part of the province. Once an area is cleared and security is established, the aim is for Governor Mangal and his district governors to follow up with

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392 Q 194

393 “Afghanistan Index”, *Brookings Institution*, 21 January 2009, [www.brookings.edu](http://www.brookings.edu)

394 Ev 78

plans to build basic services such as clean water, electricity, roads, basic justice, basic healthcare, and then economic development.<sup>395</sup>

238. British troops have also had to deal with a fourfold increase in the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs)<sup>396</sup> in the year to February 2009, an enormously difficult challenge which, ironically, has come about as a result of coalition successes against the insurgents. Professor Theo Farrell of King's College London told us that the Taliban have been forced to adopt new tactics as a result of military operations carried out against them in 2007 and 2008 which led to the deaths of around 6,000 Taliban fighters and consequent damage to the Taliban's ability to conduct conventional warfare.<sup>397</sup>

239. The number of deaths of British soldiers in Afghanistan for the whole of 2008 was 51.<sup>398</sup> In 2009, the equivalent number was almost reached by 20 July 2009. The Government has argued that this recent spike in casualty figures is explained by pro-active British targeting of Taliban strongholds, in a bid to provide greater security for the provincial capital Lashkar Gah and to pave the way for a voter registration programme.<sup>399</sup>

## Resources

240. We asked several of our witnesses why there had been such a serious increase in casualties over the past twelve months. Colonel Christopher Langton stated that increased casualty figures could be attributed to the increased operational tempo faced by British troops.<sup>400</sup> Professor Theo Farrell responded that although combat troops have had better protective equipment to mitigate the effects of improvised explosive devices since mid-2007, there has not been sufficient equipment to ensure the safety of other personnel involved in logistics, intelligence and communications who face similar risks. Professor Farrell told us, "that gap has been identified and is being plugged by the protected mobility package, but that will take between now and early 2011 to reach full capability".<sup>401</sup>

241. As the Defence Committee's Report into *Defence Equipment 2009* details, the Ministry of Defence has taken a range of measures to ensure that troops in Afghanistan have adequate air capabilities and support.<sup>402</sup> However, during our visit to Helmand we were told repeatedly about the deleterious effect the lack of helicopters continues to have on the military's ability to prosecute operations there. In this respect, we note, with interest, the Defence Committee's recent Report into *Helicopter Capability*.<sup>403</sup> We were also told about the allegedly poor conditions faced by those serving on the front-line in forward operating bases throughout Helmand Province. And we witnessed just how cumbersome the man-

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395 Uncorrected Evidence presented by Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Uploaded on 16 July 2009, HC 257-ii

396 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1034

397 Q 2 [Professor Farrell]

398 Ministry of Defence, "Operations in Afghanistan: British Fatalities", via Ministry of Defence website, [www.mod.uk](http://www.mod.uk)

399 "NATO forces complete major operation in southern Afghanistan", *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report*, 5 January 2009

400 Q 6 [Colonel Langton]

401 Q 6 [Professor Farrell]

402 Defence Committee, Third Report of Session 2008-09, *Defence Equipment 2009*, HC 107

403 Defence Committee, Eleventh Report of Session 2008-09, *Helicopter Capability*, HC 434

portable equipment designed to provide protection for troops against improvised explosive devices is.

242. More generally, our overall impression was of British forces doing a terrific job to contain and improve the security situation in Helmand, but with very limited resources and support. The issue of resources has been examined in detail by the National Audit Office (NAO) in its *Support to High Intensity Operations* Report,<sup>404</sup> and by the Committee of Public Accounts in its recent Report *Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report*. Although the NAO noted that the Ministry of Defence is now taking appropriate measures to tackle problems and shortfalls in relation to equipment, the Public Accounts Committee concluded that “delays to projects have caused gaps in front-line capability, or increased the risk that gaps may arise in future”.<sup>405</sup>

243. Classic counter-insurgency doctrine suggests that some 20 troops are required for every 1,000 people in the affected population.<sup>406</sup> In the south of Afghanistan this would necessitate some 280,000 military personnel, which far exceeds the military presence which has existed in Helmand. Last year, Brigadier Carleton Smith was reported to have called for an additional brigade of around 4,000 to be sent to Helmand.<sup>407</sup> In May 2009 we asked Lord Malloch-Brown whether more British troops would be sent. He replied:

We have concluded [...] that we cannot solve this through that classic counter-insurgency ratio of troops to population. That is another reason why we need a political-military strategy. We have to use our military presence to put pressure on the insurgent elements to the point where we create conditions for successful reconciliation by the Government, with elements of society who currently appear to support the insurgents.<sup>408</sup>

244. In July 2009, General Sir Richard Dannatt, the outgoing Chief of the General Staff, stated: “I have said before, we can have effect where we have boots on the ground” and that “I don't mind whether the feet in those boots are British, American or Afghan, but we need more to have the persistent effect to give the people (of Helmand) confidence in us. [...] “That is the top line and the bottom line.”<sup>409</sup>

### Learning lessons

245. Military analyst Daniel Marston claims that “The British...have faced heavy criticism for their prosecution of the war in the South”,<sup>410</sup> but in oral evidence to us, Professor Theo Farrell stated that “there is evidence that our taskforces have consistently got better at

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404 National Audit Office, Session 2008–2009, *Support to High Intensity Operations*, HC 508

405 Public Accounts Committee, Twentieth Report of Session 2008–09, *Ministry of Defence: Major Projects Report 2008*, HC 165

406 See for example the *US Army Field Manual 3–24*, pp 1–13

407 “4,000 more British troops ‘needed to fight Taleban in Afghanistan’”, *The Times*, 25 September 2008

408 Q 193

409 “Army head calls for more troops”, *BBC News Online*, 15 July 2009

410 Daniel Marston, “British Operations in Helmand Afghanistan”, *Small Wars Journal*, 13 September 2008, [smallwarsjournal.com](http://smallwarsjournal.com)

learning lessons internally". Speaking in November 2008, then Defence Secretary John Hutton expanded upon the challenges that British troops are facing:

After our third summer in Helmand down the south, we are still learning how to operate and realise our objectives. That is the nature of any prolonged and complex campaign. Take Helmand province for example. A tribal melting pot, the largest of which is the Alizai with around 20 subsets. Lay on top of that the influences of kith, kin, and the Pashtun tribal code, tribal and traditional loyalties and you will begin to understand just how a complex an environment it is. Our people are constantly trying to decipher that complexity in order to do their jobs with empathy.<sup>411</sup>

Lord Malloch-Brown also told us that lessons were being learned:

As with any good military action by this country over the centuries, we have stepped up our game and our commitment, and reinforced our effort to deal with an enemy who has been tougher than we initially thought would be the case. Please do not misunderstand me - it is not a surprise that we faced an insurgency in Helmand, which is the reason why we went there. We knew it was there, we wanted to take it on and it has been a hard fight [...].<sup>412</sup>

246. We asked one of our witnesses, James Fergusson, what impact the campaign was having on the British armed services. He stated:

It is very tired. The marines have just been there for their second tour, and I have heard that they are complaining bitterly [...]. They were fighting in exactly the same places they were on their first tour, and a lot of them cannot see the point of it. I cannot speak for the whole Army, but you come across a lot of despondent views within it. [...].

Many senior soldiers will tell you that this is not sustainable for ever. Apart from anything else, we do not have the equipment for it. We do not have the helicopters, as I am sure you know. In terms of Chinook forces, we have 40 Chinooks altogether, of which half are working and perhaps eight are deployed in Helmand at any one time. The Army is very small and we are asking an awful lot of it.<sup>413</sup>

247. In paragraphs 187 to 188 above we have discussed the planned US 'surge' in troop deployments to Helmand. This will bring much-needed support to the British forces in that province.

**248. We conclude that the Government must ensure that our armed forces are provided with the appropriate resources to undertake the tasks requested of them, particularly in an environment as challenging as Helmand. We further conclude that in spite of well-documented difficulties, British armed forces are now gradually beginning to create and sustain the conditions that make it possible to extend good governance and the rule of law in the most heavily populated areas of Helmand. We conclude that the support**

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411 Rt Hon John Hutton MP, (then) Secretary of State for Defence at the *International Institute of Strategic Studies*, 11 Nov 2008

412 Q 199

413 Q 141 [James Fergusson]

**provided by additional equipment and by the US ‘surge’ of troops in Helmand will be of considerable assistance, and is greatly to be welcomed.**

### **The role of FCO staff**

249. During our visit to Afghanistan in April 2009 we saw for ourselves the scale of the UK’s current wide-ranging effort there. We met many highly committed, able and motivated civilian personnel who are an integral part of that effort. However, we were surprised to be told by interlocutors that there are no Pashtu speakers within either the FCO or DfID in Afghanistan and only two Pashtu speakers in the army. Both the FCO and DfID rely on locally engaged staff for translation and interpretation.

**250. We conclude that the ability to engage with Afghans in key local languages is crucial to the UK’s effort in Afghanistan and we are concerned that nearly eight years after intervening in Afghanistan, the FCO still has no Pashtu speakers. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the FCO sets out why this situation exists and what it is doing, as a matter of urgency, to rectify the situation.**

251. We were also told that although the length of civilian postings to Afghanistan varies according to each individual, it is not uncommon for many FCO staff to be posted for only six months during which they work six weeks in-country, before taking two weeks leave. We were told that this arrangement can result in a lack of continuity and that staff often cover for colleagues who are on leave and, in effect, end up doing one and a half jobs. We were also told that logistical problems and security concerns can result in delays to staff returning to work.

**252. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the FCO provides details of the length of Postings which it uses in Afghanistan and whether it is considering introducing longer tour lengths to ensure continuity of knowledge and experience.**

## 7 The UK's new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan: a way forward?

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253. Like the US, the UK recently decided to review its policy for Afghanistan. On 29 April 2009 the Cabinet Office launched a new “comprehensive strategy” entitled, “UK policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the Way Forward”.<sup>414</sup> Mirroring the US strategy, the UK's approach has also been altered to include Pakistan. The strategy was a result of a stock-taking process on the part of relevant government departments which assessed the UK's ‘strategic engagement’ in Afghanistan. It focused on the progress that had been made between December 2007 and November 2008 towards the objectives which were previously agreed by the National Security, International Relations and Development Cabinet Committee (NSID (OD)) and which we detailed at Paragraph 220. We are grateful to the Government for having allowed us access to classified material relating to the new UK strategy which has informed our overall conclusions.

254. On the same day, 29 April, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Department for International Development (DfID) also set out their future policies in relation to Afghanistan. The MoD explained that UK force levels in Afghanistan would increase to 9,000 over the course of the Afghan elections scheduled to be held later in 2009, before reducing to an “enduring presence” of 8,300 in 2010. It stated that the number of tactical unmanned aerial vehicles, Sea King air surveillance and control helicopters is to increase.<sup>415</sup> A new airborne stand-off radar system is also to be used.<sup>416</sup>

255. DfID's new four-year, £510 million country plan for Afghanistan focuses on four areas: building an effective state; encouraging economic growth; providing alternatives to poppy growing; and promoting stability and development in Helmand. There is also to be more effort expended on addressing gender inequality and a commitment to spend at least 50% of British assistance through “Afghan Government systems”.<sup>417</sup>

### Key elements of the new UK strategy common to Afghanistan and Pakistan

256. The strategy has a number of objectives that apply to both Afghanistan and Pakistan. These are as follows:

- ensuring Al Qaida does not return to Afghanistan, and is defeated or incapacitated in Pakistan's border areas;
- reducing the insurgencies on both sides of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border to a level that poses no significant threat to progress in either country;

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414 “UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward”, *Cabinet Office*, April 2009

415 HC Deb, 29 April 2009, col 46WS

416 The radar system allows the military to track movements on the ground and is intended to help the military detect, follow and intercept insurgents before they can lay IEDs.

417 HC Deb, 29 April 2009, col 51WS

- supporting both states in tackling terrorism and violent extremism, and in building capacity to address and contain the threat within their borders;
- helping both states contain and reduce the drugs trade, and divide it from insurgency;
- building stronger security forces, better governance, and economic development, so that progress is sustainable.

## The Government's priorities in Afghanistan

257. As we discussed earlier, the Government's mission in Afghanistan has expanded considerably since the UK first became involved in 2001. Its new strategy for Afghanistan contains many element of the previous strategy which has been in force since 2007. It contains the twin goals of (1) helping Afghanistan become an effective and accountable state, increasingly able to provide security and deliver basic services to its people; and (2) providing long-term sustainable support for the Afghan National Development Strategy, particularly in relation to governance, rule of law, human rights and poverty reduction. In his statement to the House on 29 April, the Prime Minister said:

For Afghanistan, our strategy is to ensure that the country is strong enough as a democracy to withstand and overcome the terrorist threat, and strengthening Afghan control and resilience will require us to intensify our work in the following key areas. First, we will build up the Afghan police and army and the rule of law, and we should now adopt the stated goal of enabling district by district, province by province handover to Afghan control. Secondly, we want to strengthen Afghan democracy at all levels, including by ensuring credible and inclusive elections and improving security through that period. Thirdly, we want to help strengthen local government in Afghanistan, not least the traditional Afghan structures such as the local shuras. Fourthly, we want to give people in Afghanistan a stake in their future, promoting economic development as the best way of helping the Afghan people to achieve not just stability but prosperity.<sup>418</sup>

258. We asked Lord Malloch-Brown whether the Government's top priority in Afghanistan was security, good governance or human rights. In response, he told us that it is extremely difficult to achieve one without all three:

Security might seem separable, in that you might be able to have it without governance and human rights, but the lesson from recent years in Afghanistan is that that is not the case; in some cases, the absence of good governance has fuelled the insurgency. Similarly on human rights, we need to draw the human rights line at a reasonable level and not expect to get everything conforming to tip-top, impeccable, best western standards and practice. [...]

I think you have to progress on all three objectives without taking your feet off the ground, [...] and aiming for the moon—trying to create a model state that is beyond reach and that would lead to an over-extension of our mission in impossible ways.<sup>419</sup>

The reason we have asked for that commitment from our soldiers is not to bring about girls' education or development. To be honest, there are plenty of countries in the world that welcome our development pound but where we do not have to put in our army to ensure that it is used properly. If it were just about anti-poverty, we should take our money and spend it in Africa or poor parts of India, but we are not doing that.<sup>420</sup>

259. In a letter to the Liaison Committee in July 2009, the Prime Minister stated:

In 2001 the case for intervention in Afghanistan was to take on a global terrorist threat and prevent terrorist attacks in Britain and across the world. In 2009 the overriding reason for our continued involvement is the same—to take on, at its source, the terrorist threat, and prevent attacks here and elsewhere.<sup>421</sup>

260. Our witnesses had different views about what the Government's priorities should be. Daniel Korski told us that, in the short term, the focus should be on providing support to ensure credible elections in the autumn. He argued that in the south of Afghanistan there “needs to be a much sharper focus on security and elements of governance, and probably leaving aside many of the areas that we would like to work on if the environment becomes a little more benign”.<sup>422</sup> He added that subsequent to this the priority would be:

the development of a governance strategy that works for Afghanistan—that does not necessarily create that centralised state, but at least allows the delivery of some basic services. We have created Potemkin institutions, if you will, in Kabul, and I think we have to be much clearer about what our priorities are.<sup>423</sup>

261. Dr Gordon told us that there should be a number of policy priorities and they all need to be addressed to make progress. In his view this will involve adopting “a raft of measures, not one simple focus”. He argued that “it is about creating space for collaboration, a government who are capable of developing their legitimacy through some form of public services, which are prioritised, and an immediate and demand-led economic recovery as well”. He noted that the focus on capacity-building and sustainability is “laudable”, but that “what is often required is a sense that the Government are doing something now. If they do not do something now, that hearts and minds strategy is doomed to failure”.<sup>424</sup>

262. Dr Goodhand told us:

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419 Q 180

420 Q 182

421 Uncorrected Evidence presented by: Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Uploaded on 16 July 2009, HC 257-ii

422 Ev 53–54

423 Ev 53–54

424 Q 172

One of the problems with intervention since 2002 has been the idea that all good things come together and that we can pursue the war on terror, reinvent the NATO alliance, address drugs and bring democracy and development to Afghanistan, but we cannot do so. We have to make some priorities here.<sup>425</sup>

263. He added that where there was a clash of priorities between security and long-term development, it should be a case of “security first”. He explained that “there is no empirical evidence, either historically or presently, to support the notion that development will win hearts and minds and help play a pacifying role. It is completely wrong-headed to think that. Bringing a level of security means addressing the insurgency, not just militarily, but politically. That seems to be a precondition for any kind of sustainable development”.<sup>426</sup> James Fergusson also emphasised the importance of linking UK effort back to the UK’s national security interests. He stated:

Are we there to build a new democracy or are we there for our national security interests? The two things conflict. My own view is that we are going to have to take a hard-nosed realpolitik line on Afghanistan, which is about our security.<sup>427</sup>

## Justifications for the UK’s continued presence in Afghanistan

### *An existing base for international terrorism?*

264. The Government puts forward a range of reasons for its continued presence in Afghanistan. As we discussed in the previous chapter, its initial intervention was based on the belief that Afghanistan represented a strategic, and immediate, security threat to the UK because of the presence of Al Qaeda. In the intervening years, the Government has continued to claim that Afghanistan is a strategic threat. In a speech to the International Institute for Strategic Studies in November 2008, the then Defence Secretary John Hutton stated:

[...] [T]he decision to stay [ in Afghanistan] was based on a hard-headed assessment of our clear national security interest in preventing the re-emergence of Taleban rule or Afghanistan’s decline into a failing state again. Either of those outcomes would have allowed Al Qaida to return and recreate their terrorist infrastructure. The same calculations informed our later decisions to make a significant military contribution to the International Security and Assistance Force, and then to play a lead role in NATO’s operations in the south, especially in Helmand Province.<sup>428</sup>

265. The Government’s new strategy, announced in April, maintains this approach. During a visit to Afghanistan in April 2009, the Prime Minister said that “there is a crucible of terrorism in the mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan”. He added that

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425 Q 95

426 Q 93

427 Q 135

428 Rt Hon John Hutton MP, (then) Secretary of State for Defence at the International Institute of Strategic Studies, 11 November 2008

“three-quarters of the terrorist activities that happened in Britain arise from the areas around here. The safety of people on the streets of Britain is immediately being safeguarded by the action being taken here”.<sup>429</sup> In a similar vein, Lord Malloch-Brown set out the rationale for the UK’s continued presence in Afghanistan:

In this new global era a distant country such as Afghanistan, or indeed its neighbour, Pakistan, can pose huge security threats to people on the streets of our cities, as we have seen in terrorist incidents since 2001. So this, in its motivation and rationale, is a classic national security challenge, to which the solution is some measure of development, good governance and security that defuses Afghanistan as a threat to us. We must remember that the reason we are there, and particularly why our soldiers are there, is to defuse that threat from terrorism in our market squares, nightclubs and train stations.<sup>430</sup>

266. The FCO’s written submission states that “the significance of Afghanistan in the psyche of Islamist extremists, the potential for Al-Qaeda to use the current insurgency to galvanise a similar level of resistance to that witnessed in Iraq and their continuing aspiration to return to the pre-September 11th situation in the country leads the UK to view Afghanistan as amongst its highest priorities in countering terrorism”.<sup>431</sup> Referring to the reasons for UK involvement in Afghanistan, the Prime Minister stated on 11 July that “this is a fight to clear terrorist networks from Afghanistan”.<sup>432</sup>

267. However, a number of witnesses noted the importance of distinguishing between the Afghan Taliban, against whom the British military are fighting but who appear to have no foreign policy agenda other than the removal of foreign forces from their country, and Al Qaeda, which continues to mount a serious threat to the UK. As David Loyn told us, “Afghanistan never terrorised the rest of the world. It was host to people who did”.<sup>433</sup> James Fergusson argued that, “there is this rather lazy conflation of language”. He added, “the Foreign Office now talks about the threats coming ‘from this area’, but, [...] they do not, they come from Pakistan”.<sup>434</sup> This point was reinforced by a range of interlocutors who told us that that Al Qaeda is no longer operating in Afghanistan, a point which the FCO acknowledges in its written submission when it states that “international terrorist activity has been disrupted and reduced to a relatively low level throughout the country”.<sup>435</sup>

### ***A future base for terrorism?***

268. The second, and related, reason which the Government gives for its presence in Afghanistan is based on the belief that it is “vital to immediate UK national security interests that Afghanistan becomes a stable and secure state that can suppress terrorism

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429 “Gordon Brown unveils plan to tackle ‘crucible of terrorism’ between Afghanistan and Pakistan”, *Daily Telegraph*, 27 April 2009

430 Q 182

431 Ev 80

432 Uncorrected Evidence presented by Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Uploaded on 16 July 2009, HC 257–ii, [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmliaisn/uc257\\_ii/uc25701.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmliaisn/uc257_ii/uc25701.htm)

433 Q 131

434 Q 121

435 Ev 79

and violent extremism within its borders and contribute to the same objective across the border in Pakistan".<sup>436</sup> In July the Prime Minister stated: "If, in Afghanistan, extremists return to power and once again provide a safe haven for Al Qaeda, then the same threat of global terrorism arises".<sup>437</sup>

269. We asked witnesses whether they agreed with the proposition that Al Qaeda would return to Afghanistan if international forces were not present or the Afghan state was weak. Colonel Christopher Langton of IISS argued that in the event of a reduction in effort or withdrawal of troops, Afghanistan "could reconstitute a safe haven for international terrorism". He told us that Afghanistan remains a "rentier state, and it is very far away from being able to stand on its own two feet. In those conditions, any withdrawal creates a vacuum, and I am quite sure that those who wish us ill know that very well".<sup>438</sup> Professor Farrell presented a similar view, and stated that "one can predict with fair confidence that the Afghan Government would last a little while and then collapse. The Taliban would push back in and then in short order we would see Al Qaeda back in Afghanistan, operating out of it".<sup>439</sup> However, both James Fergusson and Christina Lamb argued that the Afghan Taliban have no reason to allow Al Qaeda to return and that, in any event, Al Qaeda has no need to return to Afghanistan given its strong support network in Pakistan.<sup>440</sup> Similar arguments are presented by Professor John Mueller in the journal *Foreign Affairs*. He states:

Given the Taliban's limited interest in issues outside the "AfPak" region, if they came to power again now, they would be highly unlikely to host provocative terrorist groups whose actions could lead to another outside intervention. And even if al Qaeda were able to relocate to Afghanistan after a Taliban victory there, it would still have to operate under the same siege situation it presently enjoys in what Obama calls its "safe haven" in Pakistan.<sup>441</sup>

According to Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, "two Taliban spokespeople separately told *The New York Times* that their movement had broken with al Qaeda since 9/11" and that others linked to the insurgency had made the same point to the authors. They state:

Such statements cannot simply be taken at face value, but that does not mean that they should not be explored further. An agreement in principle to prohibit the use of Afghan (or Pakistani) territory for international terrorism, plus an agreement from the United States and NATO that such a guarantee could be sufficient to end their hostile military action, could constitute a framework for negotiation. Any agreement

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436 Ev 73

437 Uncorrected Evidence presented by Rt Hon Gordon Brown MP, Uploaded on 16 July 2009, HC 257-ii

438 Q 10

439 Q 12

440 Q 133ff

441 John Mueller "How Dangerous are the Taliban? Why Afghanistan Is the Wrong War", *Foreign Affairs*, 15 April 2009, [www.foreignaffairs.com](http://www.foreignaffairs.com)

in which the Taliban or other insurgents disavowed al Qaeda would constitute a strategic defeat for al Qaeda.<sup>442</sup>

270. During our oral evidence session with Lord Malloch-Brown we asked him to explain what evidence the Government has to support the assumption that Al Qaeda would return to Afghanistan if western military forces were not present. He told us that the “presence of a strong Taliban-based insurgency in southern Afghanistan allows us reasonably to assume that absent control from Kabul, whether or not they were formally allowed back, would mean that there would be nothing stopping Al Qaeda operating again in Afghanistan”.<sup>443</sup> Adam Thomson, the FCO’s South Asia and Afghanistan Director added:

Al Qaeda and the Taliban are collaborating on the Pakistani side of the border in operations into Afghanistan. So there is some evidence to suggest that they have a continuing working relationship. It is not necessarily cordial. It may simply be a matter of practical mutual interest.<sup>444</sup>

### Counter-narcotics

271. We considered the issue of counter-narcotics earlier at Paragraphs 116-130. We discuss it in this section primarily because containing and reducing the drugs trade continues to be a strategic objective for the UK in Afghanistan. The Government’s National Security Strategy also lists six major sources of threat to the UK, one of which is transnational crime. Afghanistan’s supply of 90% of the heroin in the UK is said to fall within the ‘transnational crime’ category.<sup>445</sup> The size of the UK’s heroin street market has been estimated at £1.2 billion (out of a total £4 billion for all Class A drugs). On that basis, drugs originating from Afghanistan represent between 25% and 30% of the value of the UK’s Class A market.<sup>446</sup> In its written submission, in a section titled ‘Why Afghanistan Matters’, the FCO states that “in the longer term, building up the Afghan Government’s ability to tackle the narcotics trade is important to global action against illegal drugs, and in particular to UK action against illegal drugs”.<sup>447</sup>

272. We have received somewhat contradictory messages from the Government about the role they consider the UK should play in relation to counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan. The FCO’s written submission states that narcotics are a threat to the UK which merit its role as Afghanistan’s international ‘lead partner’, but Lord Malloch-Brown appeared less persuaded, stating “[W]e feel that we are doing [this] more because someone has to than because we are hugely enthusiastic about it, so if others wanted to take it on credibly we would help them do it”.<sup>448</sup> He went on to tell us:

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442 Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, “From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008

443 Q 186

444 Q 188

445 “UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward”, *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 5

446 HC Deb 481, 23 October 2008, col 510W

447 Ev 75

448 Q 217

We feel that we need to help the Americans by leading on different policy issues where they wish us to. Yes, it is not a comfortable position to be in. It is not great PR to be in charge of counter-narcotics, but as I say, it is an important part of this. My closing point is that, while it is not great PR, it is not all a disaster.<sup>449</sup>

273. During our visit we queried whether the British focus on ‘winning hearts and minds’ was compatible with military involvement in counter-narcotics operations, which in some cases use ISAF to target the only means that many Helmandis have of making a living. Some interlocutors told us that soldiers are reluctant to be involved in counter-narcotics operations whilst simultaneously trying to win support for their counter-insurgency efforts among the local population. David Loyn also told us that the biggest concern for British officers fighting in Helmand now is “that they may be on one side of what is, effectively, a drug war”.<sup>450</sup>

**274. We conclude that while the drugs trade has an invidious effect on governance on Afghanistan and ultimately, through the flow of heroin to the West, has a damaging impact on the UK, the Government’s assessment that the drugs trade in Afghanistan is a strategic threat to the UK which, in part, merits the UK’s continued military presence in Afghanistan, is debatable.**

### *Unspoken aims: NATO’s credibility and relations with the US*

275. Giving evidence to us on 25 February 2009, Professor Theo Farrell argued that government policy was also driven by a desire to sustain NATO’s credibility. The FCO’s written submission states that Afghanistan is a test for the international community, especially for the United Nations and NATO. It adds:

We have a direct interest in them succeeding, and being seen to succeed because failure for the international community would have far reaching effects not only for regional security but also for the authority and credibility of those key multilateral institutions that underpin the UK’s security and support for the international rule of law.<sup>451</sup>

276. Professor Farrell also argues that the UK has an unstated aim of ensuring its reputation and relationship with the US. The FCO’s written submission only refers to the fact that “Afghanistan is an enduring US political commitment, reinforced by the President-elect” and makes few other direct references to the UK’s relationship with the US.<sup>452</sup> Echoing a number of recent press reports, Professor Farrell told us “the feedback that I have received from people in Washington is that the American view is that we were very good at counter-insurgency at one stage, and now we are not so good. All the operations surrounding the Charge of the Knights [in Iraq] - our failure to support that operation and the fact that we lost control of Basra - is evidence to them that we have lost the ability to conduct COIN [counter-insurgency]”.<sup>453</sup> In Professor Farrell’s view this is “really worrying

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449 Q 217

450 Q 116

451 Ev 75

452 Ev 75

453 Q 29

because if [...] one reason why we are in Afghanistan is to support our relationship with the United States, we are kind of wasting our time if they think that we are not performing. That is part of a misperception on their part".<sup>454</sup> Professor Farrell suggested that public opposition to the war in Iraq and distrust about the British Government's role in supporting the US in its mission there had made the Government wary of stating publicly that part of the reason for being in Afghanistan was to support the US.<sup>455</sup>

### Assessing the justifications: mixed messages?

277. One of the issues that we set out to explore during this inquiry was the extent to which instability and insecurity in Afghanistan, and neighbouring areas in Pakistan, continue to represent a threat to the UK. As far as Afghanistan is concerned, it was the imperative to combat international terrorism and remove the threat that it posed to western interests, along with a desire to support the US, which prompted the UK's initial intervention in 2001. The claim that Afghanistan continues to represent an immediate strategic threat to the UK continues to be used by the Government nearly eight years later. This single justification would, if deemed to be sound, be in itself sufficient to justify the UK's continuing presence in Afghanistan. However, while the Government may well be correct to suggest that Afghanistan could once again become a safe haven for Al Qaeda if Western forces left prematurely, there is a strong argument to be made that Afghanistan, and the Taliban insurgency, does not currently in itself represent an immediate security threat to the UK. That threat, in the form of Al Qaeda and international terrorism, can be said more properly to emanate from Pakistan. This is more than a question of semantics. It goes to the heart of the UK's justification for being in Afghanistan. If we are to ask our troops to risk their lives we must be clear about what we are fighting for, and against.

**278. We conclude that the expansion of the stated justifications for the UK's mission in Afghanistan since 2001 has made it more difficult for the Government to communicate the basic purpose of the mission and this risks undermining support for the mission both in the UK and in Afghanistan. We welcome the Government's recognition that its strategy must be grounded in realistic objectives. However, it is not easy to see how this can be reconciled with the open-ended and wide-ranging series of objectives which form the current basis for UK effort in Afghanistan. We recommend that in the immediate future the Government should re-focus its efforts to concentrate its limited resources on one priority, namely security.**

**279. We conclude that there can be no question of the international community abandoning Afghanistan, and that the issues at stake must therefore be how best the UK and its allies can allocate responsibilities and share burdens so as to ensure that the country does not once again fall into the hands of those who seek to threaten the security of the UK and the West. We further conclude that the need for the international community to convey publicly that it intends to outlast the insurgency and remain in Afghanistan until the Afghan authorities are able to take control of their own security, must be a primary objective.**

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454 Q 29

455 Q 19

## The UK's strategy for Pakistan

280. Since 2001, the British Government's security strategy towards Pakistan has in many respects followed the lead of the US. In December 2004, the Government stated that the UK and Pakistan shared close strategic ties and that Pakistan was a key ally in the 'war against terror', a stance that the British government continued to maintain publicly for the duration of the Musharraf era. In December 2006, the UK Government signed a long-term Development Partnership Agreement with the government of Pakistan. As a result, UK aid to Pakistan doubled, from £236 million for the period 2005 to 2008, up to £480 million for the period 2008 to 2011, making Pakistan one of the UK's largest aid recipients.<sup>456</sup>

281. In recent years relations between the UK and Pakistan have been dominated by the issue of terrorism. As we have seen, in December 2008, the Prime Minister stated that 75% of the most serious terrorist plots being investigated by UK authorities have links to Pakistan.<sup>457</sup> The Government states that it has been helping "Pakistan [...] take ownership of the struggle against violent extremism".<sup>458</sup> In practice this has meant the provision of "extensive bilateral counter-terrorism assistance", and training to build capacity in areas such as scanning, detecting car bombs, bomb disposal and airport security. It has also helped to build more capacity in policing, including forensic science, crisis response and countering extremist ideology.<sup>459</sup> The Prime Minister recently announced a £10 million package of counterterrorism capacity, "giving assistance to Pakistan's agencies".<sup>460</sup>

282. Detailing the Government's new approach to Pakistan on 29 April in a statement to the House, the Prime Minister stated:

In Pakistan, [...] we want to work with the elected Government and the army [...] Pakistan has a large and well funded army, and we want to work with it to help it counter terrorism by taking more control of the border areas. Secondly, not least through support for education and development, we want to prevent young people from falling under the sway of violent and extremist ideologies.<sup>461</sup>

283. The strategy states that a "stable Pakistan is strategically important to British interests and to the region" and that it requires "high-level political diplomatic and official engagement more than directly deployed resources".<sup>462</sup> As we noted in Chapter 4, the Government argues that it is from Pakistan's border areas (the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North West Frontier Province and Baluchistan) that Al Qaeda "recruits and trains terrorists (including vulnerable people from the UK) and plans attacks against Western targets".<sup>463</sup> Afghan groups are also said to train and plan attacks on

456 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1040

457 Transcript of a press conference given by the Prime Minister, Mr Gordon Brown, and Mr Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan, in Islamabad, 14 December 2008, [www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)

458 HC Deb, 5 February 2009, col 1039

459 Transcript of a press conference given by the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, and Mr Asif Ali Zardari, President of Pakistan, in Islamabad, 14 December 2008

460 Transcript of press conference given by the Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Prime Minister Gilani of Pakistan, in Islamabad, Tuesday 28 April 2009, [www.number10.gov.uk](http://www.number10.gov.uk)

461 HC Deb, 29 April 2009, col 870

462 "UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward", *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 6

463 "UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward", *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 11

international and Afghan targets in Afghanistan from the FATA. The Government adds that Baluchistan is a “vital supply route for opiates smuggled to the UK”.<sup>464</sup> During our oral evidence session with Lord Malloch-Brown he told us that it has become “absolutely critical to Britain's national security that the strategy succeeds in Pakistan and that a democratic Government are established who impose law and order and security, and suppress the terrorist groups. It is harder to think of a more important foreign policy priority at the moment for the UK than success in Pakistan”.<sup>465</sup>

284. The Government’s key objectives specifically in relation to Pakistan are as follows:

- Helping Pakistan achieve its vision of becoming a stable, economically and socially developed democracy and meet its poverty reduction targets;
- Encouraging constructive Pakistani engagement on nuclear safety issues.<sup>466</sup>

285. Our witnesses set out a range of issues upon which they believe the Government should be focusing on in its relations with Pakistan. Dr Gohel stated that there is a need to “help to shore up the civilian government and prevent the military from interfering in the domestic scene”. He added “unfortunately, far too often we have taken a back seat. We assumed that Musharraf would do the right thing, [...] and unfortunately he did not.”<sup>467</sup> He also urged a broad-based approach to future political engagement:

The UK has to consider talking to all the different leaders in that country, because if we do not, others will. Nawaz Sharif's biggest complaint, when he was in the UK a couple of years ago, was that he was ignored. The Saudis stepped in. They gave him armour-plated cars and support, and they have now got a lot of influence with him. We lost an opportunity there. So, we should be talking to the civilian politicians and helping them, shoring them up against any threat from terrorism and the military, but we should not be talking to the Pakistani Taliban and assuming somehow that they will come to the negotiating table.<sup>468</sup>

286. Daniel Korski concurred about the need to support the civilian government, but added that far more investment was needed in police and judicial reform, particularly in the border areas. On the issue of delivery of aid he suggested that “we need to have a new look at how we deliver assistance, in particular in some of these troubled areas, perhaps with non-traditional partners”.<sup>469</sup>

287. The Government states that it is working closely with the US to co-ordinate support for Pakistani security forces, and that it is “keen to help Pakistan establish a trust fund for reconstruction and development in Pakistan’s border areas, administered by the World Bank”. The UK has supported a US initiative to establish a Tri-lateral Commission bringing together senior political figures from Afghanistan and Pakistan with a focus on

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464 Ibid.

465 Q 225

466 “UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward”, *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 13

467 Q 173

468 Q 173

469 Q 173

border issues.<sup>470</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the UK was giving support “on the premise that there is going to be clear Pakistani action against these groups”.<sup>471</sup> He added that, in return,

what we have demanded from them is that they continue to meet their commitments to poverty reduction, good financial management and respect for human rights and other international obligations, including in this area. But we have to find the right balance, because if we do this wrong and make it too conditional and too political, it will backfire and not achieve the objectives that we want.<sup>472</sup>

288. As we discussed above at Paragraph 163, a number of our witnesses also highlighted the issue of radical madrassahs. We note that this is not mentioned in the Government’s strategy for Pakistan.

**289. We welcome the Prime Minister’s announcement of £10 million to support the Pakistani government’s counter terrorism efforts and we recommend that the Government intensifies its help to Pakistan in this area.**

### *The extent of intelligence co-operation*

290. Given the nature of the threat that terrorism emanating from Pakistan presents to the UK, the Government has argued that “operational co-operation” with Pakistan is “vital”.<sup>473</sup> The extent to which this actually occurs was queried by several of our witnesses. Professor Shaun Gregory argued that in spite of the aid provided by the UK and US, “we can no longer afford a “business as usual” relationship with the Pakistani military”.<sup>474</sup> He claims that the ISI is not proactive in making its own intelligence available to the West, and that there are “huge gaps in the intelligence the ISI does provide to the West which Western agencies believe they are able to fill should they wish”.<sup>475</sup> Professor Gregory asserted that the ISI has been unhelpful in relation to investigations into the 7/7 and 21/7 attacks, and that it has misdirected US and UK intelligence services on a number of recent occasions.<sup>476</sup> Dr Gohel also highlighted poor co-operation as an issue of concern. He told us that “more co-operation on the Pakistan side in terms of counter-terrorism is needed”, specifically “information as to where British citizens go, where they end up being trained to take part in acts of terrorism against the UK.”<sup>477</sup> Referring to individuals who were convicted recently for terrorism-related offences, Dr Gohel stated:

We know that they went to places such as Malakand and Kohat in the North West Frontier province. What is disturbing about that is that in Malakand there is a very large army presence and they would have been trained around the same area. So, one

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470 “UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward”, *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 16

471 Q 225

472 Q 232

473 “UK Policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward”, *Cabinet Office*, April 2009, p 24

474 Ev 166

475 Ev 166

476 Ev 166

477 Q 173

has to wonder where these individuals go, where they are trained and who is training them. We know that the ISI is a very powerful institution. [...] If it wanted to, it could certainly co-operate a lot more in providing the information that we need for our authorities here to be able to carry out their investigations successfully and disrupt and foil plots.<sup>478</sup>

291. We asked Lord Malloch-Brown for the Government's assessment of ISI co-operation with British authorities on matters relating to terrorism. He told us this is an issue that is "continually debated at the official level" and that it had also been the subject of recent discussions between the Prime Minister and President Zardari. He added:

I think it has historically been a problem with two sides to it, with the ISI complaining that we have been reluctant to share operational intelligence because we have been worried about its security; both sides bring an argument to the table about this. [...]

Given the number of terrorist incidents and averted incidents in the UK that are sourced from Pakistan in one way or another, it has become absolutely incumbent on us that we build a more trusting intelligence relationship between the two countries. We need that for our security. The fact is that it has not been perfect, there have been problems and we are working to try to raise it to a new level.<sup>479</sup>

292. In addition to the issue of Pakistan's willingness to assist the UK, the Committee was also told on its visit to Pakistan that there is a lack of capacity within the Pakistani system that hinders bi-lateral co-operation on counter-terrorism issues.

293. In our forthcoming annual Report on human rights, we will look at another issue relevant to the relationship between the British Government and the Pakistani intelligence services: that of allegations that British officials have been complicit in the torture of terrorism suspects by the Pakistani authorities.<sup>480</sup>

**294. We conclude that the Government is correct to place a heavy emphasis on Pakistan in its new strategy for Afghanistan, published in April 2009, and to seek to build on the broad engagement that the UK has had with Pakistan in relation to counter-terrorism since 2001. We welcome the focus on long-term solutions and the Government's commitment to assisting Pakistan to strengthen its civilian institutions. We conclude the balance of the UK's relationship with Pakistan particularly regarding its co-operation on counter-terrorism has to be improved.**

**295. We recommend that the Government should consider how best it can work with allies to develop an international policy for assisting the Pakistani government in dealing with the Taliban and Al Qaeda.**

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478 Q 173

479 Q 227

480 Foreign Affairs Committee, Seventh Report of Session 2008–09, *Human Rights Annual Report 2008*, HC 557

### ***Processing of UK visas in Pakistan***

296. Also, during our visit to Islamabad, interlocutors told the Committee about the high level of fraudulent and forged UK visa applications which are made in Pakistan, particularly for student visas. We note that at the time of our visit the FCO was undertaking a stock take of the situation with a view to implementing measures to ensure the veracity of documents. However, allegations were also relayed to us about poor quality control and a lack of supervision of locally engaged subcontractors. We asked the FCO for additional information on this matter. In response, they provided with a written submission which is attached to this report.<sup>481</sup> The submission outlines the aspects of the visa process in Pakistan which are sub-contracted and to whom, and the procedures which exist to ensure quality control of sub-contractors. We note that the UK Borders Agency is currently reviewing its procedures to “strengthen the integrity of the service”.<sup>482</sup>

**297. We recommend that in its response to this Report, the Government provides us with an update on what measures it is implementing in Pakistan to strengthen the integrity of its visa application and processing operations against fraudulent applications and to what extent and in what ways it is co-operating with the UK Borders Agency on this matter.**

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481 Ev 188

482 Ev 188

## 8 Future prospects: towards a political settlement?

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298. Both the US and the UK argue that Afghanistan's future cannot be secured through a military victory alone. One way in which a wider political settlement might be achieved could be through political engagement with elements within the Taliban. In the July/August 2009 edition of the journal *Foreign Affairs*, Fotini Christia and Michael Semple argue that "although sending more troops is necessary to tip the balance of power against the insurgents, the move will have a lasting impact only if it is accompanied by a political 'surge', a committed effort to persuade large groups of Taliban fighters to put down their arms and give up the fight".<sup>483</sup>

### *Existing reconciliation programmes and initiatives*

299. Attempts thus far to negotiate with insurgents have foundered. In October 2008, Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting between Afghan Ministers and former Taliban insurgents, at the invitation of the Afghan Government, but no agreement was forthcoming. Christia and Semple also point to the existence of the Afghanistan National Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission (better known by its Dari abbreviation, PTS). Launched in 2005, the PTS was given an ambitious agenda but its achievements, according to Christia and Semple have been "lacklustre" not least because it was not provided with sufficient resources or been able to protect ex-fighters from retribution by the Taliban or harassment from the government.<sup>484</sup> They comment that:

The PTS office in Kandahar, where the Taliban have their base and which is thus the most crucial part of the country for reconciliation, is a parody of the program. Its monthly budget, barely \$600, is supposed to both cover its operating costs and support all the former fighters who choose to defect. The office's efforts have been minimal [...] and its record is dismal. Of the roughly 7,000 people whom the Kandahar office has certified during its four years in operation, fewer than a dozen were bona fide midlevel Taliban officials.<sup>485</sup>

300. In March 2008, the UK, US and Dutch governments suspended their support for the PTS programme arguing that there were "a number of weaknesses in the programme, including lack of validation, monitoring and credibility". UK financial support totalled £500,000 from 1 January to 31 March 2007, and £870,000 from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.<sup>486</sup> Provincial-level attempts to bring onside tribes and communities who had previously tolerated or supported the Taliban have met with mixed success. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) is now leading central Government

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483 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

484 *Ibid.*

485 *Ibid.*

486 Ev 86

efforts to co-ordinate provincial-level reconciliation efforts led by provincial governors, and is developing guidance on this issue.<sup>487</sup> BAAG's written submission states that:

It would appear that the major troop contributing countries that are fighting the anti-government forces in the south and east have made attempts to negotiate with elements from those forces. The outcomes of those negotiations are either unclear or perceived as questionable and counter-productive. A major weakness of these initiatives is a lack of a common strategy and of Afghan perspectives. The role that Afghan civil society could play in these processes should be recognised and promoted and resourced.<sup>488</sup>

301. A number of commentators argue that the excessive use of force by NATO troops and Afghan security forces has hindered reconciliation attempts and strengthened the resolve of many insurgents who may otherwise have been receptive to negotiation. For instance, Christia and Semple argue that the "United States' misguided approach to the detention of suspected Islamist terrorists in Afghanistan, spurred on by political insiders in Kabul [...] eager to harass personal rivals, drove people who might otherwise have cooperated into the insurgency. In other words, the people charged with stabilizing Afghanistan forfeited one of the most powerful tools at their disposal".<sup>489</sup>

### **Challenges in realising reconciliation**

302. The new US strategy calls for the Afghan government to engage in reconciliation with mid to low-level Taliban fighters. It concludes that "Mullah Omar and the Taliban's hard core that have aligned themselves with Al Qaeda are not reconcilable," but states that the war in Afghanistan cannot be won without "convincing non-ideologically committed insurgents to lay down their arms, reject Al Qaeda, and accept the Afghan Constitution".<sup>490</sup> Dr Stuart Gordon told us "there is a sense that there is a middle ground somewhere between economic opportunists and the ideologues, where you have a group of Pashtun nationalists with conservative religious ideas, who, if they could be offered [...] real commitments to security and stability-are able to be bought off into another political process."<sup>491</sup> Likewise, Dr Gohel commented:

What we have is the ideological Taliban and those who join the Taliban for monetary purposes. If we can clinically extract those members of the Taliban [...] and remove them by offering them jobs, employment and economic opportunities, then that is possible. You cannot talk to the ideological Taliban. Their view and their agenda are totally different from ours.<sup>492</sup>

303. Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid argue that talking with the Taliban or other insurgents need not "mean replacing Afghanistan's constitution with the Taliban's Islamic

487 Ev 86

488 Ev 172

489 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, "Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

490 "US Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan", *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report*, April 2009

491 Q 171

492 Q 171

Emirate of Afghanistan, closing girls' schools, or accepting other retrograde social policies.” They state “that whatever weaknesses the Afghan government and security forces may have, Afghan society - which has gone through two Loya Jirgas and two elections, possesses over five million cell phones, and has access to an explosion of new media - is incomparably stronger than it was seven years ago, and the Taliban know it.”<sup>493</sup>

304. Christia and Semple state:

The idea that large groups of armed men bent on killing Americans and other Westerners can be persuaded to change sides may seem fanciful at first. But it is not—at least not in Afghanistan. After continuing uninterrupted for more than 30 years, war in Afghanistan has developed its own peculiar rules, style, and logic. One of these rules is side with the winner. [...] Afghanistan's recent history is replete with examples of commanders choosing to flip rather than fight.<sup>494</sup>

305. However, Christia and Semple argue that it is “only if the United States' military surge can demonstrably stem the insurgents' influence in Pashtun areas” that militants in that area will start to believe that their own safety could be secured by realigning with the winning side in the form of the government.<sup>495</sup>

306. However, Christia and Semple add that “US policymakers have not adequately developed a vision of how to achieve reconciliation. Admitting their lack of knowledge about the precise character of the insurgency, they equate reconciliation with merely cajoling Taliban foot soldiers into crossing over to the US side”.<sup>496</sup> Professor Adam Roberts notes that the first question to be asked is “whether, on either side of the border, there are sufficiently clear hierarchical organizational structures with which to negotiate”. He then goes on to raise a series of questions which remain to be answered:

Whether, or to what extent, the Taliban are interested in negotiating with Kabul and the West? To what extent are Kabul and the West in a position to lay down terms and conditions for negotiations? If the Taliban are a decentralized entity, then which Taliban faction or affiliate should Kabul be talking to? On what terms and conditions would the Taliban be willing to share power with the Karzai government? What would be its impact on the country's constitution, state structures, and foreign policy? Is Kabul willing to integrate Taliban guerrillas into the armed forces? How would it impact on the position of minority ethnic groups? These are some of the issues of far-reaching consequence which are not being thought of, especially as Kabul, in the given circumstances, cannot speak from a position of strength.<sup>497</sup>

307. Pakistan's recent experience of the consequences of negotiation with insurgents in the Swat valley area arguably highlights some of the risks involved in pursuing political

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493 Barnett Rubin and Ahmed Rashid, “From Great Game to Grand Bargain: Ending Chaos in Afghanistan and Pakistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008

494 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, “Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

495 *Ibid.*

496 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, “Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

497 Ev 139

settlements. Professor Roberts states that “the scope and content of any agreement are matters of huge difficulty” and that some of the agreements that were concluded by the Pakistan government in recent years were widely perceived to have given Taliban leaders a licence to support the insurgency in Afghanistan. Professor Roberts notes that “this serves as a warning of the hazards of partial negotiation”.<sup>498</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown told us that “What happened in the Swat valley shows you the real risks of doing this the wrong way”. He added:

The Pakistan Government negotiated from a position of weakness. They negotiated when they did not have the upper hand militarily in the valley, and so the agreement was perceived by the Taliban [...] as a sort of white flag from the Government. That, I think, validates what we are trying to do in Helmand, which is to ensure that the Afghan Government enter into any reconciliation negotiations with the upper hand militarily so that they are able to do this from a position of strength.<sup>499</sup>

308. The US has made it clear that future attempts at reconciliation must be Afghan-led which, as Peter Marsden notes, means that the US is reliant upon the Afghan government to reach a political settlement with the Taliban that will determine the overall success or otherwise of the US’s counter-insurgency campaign. President Karzai’s relations with the USA have soured since the election of President Obama and he has become increasingly vociferous in his criticism of American military tactics and has hinted that he may shift his allegiance to Moscow.<sup>500</sup> Mr Marsden highlights another factor to consider:

If the hand of President Karzai is further weakened, the political dynamics of Afghanistan will continue to be dominated by the deals that are being struck on a daily basis by the many other actors in Afghanistan, some of whom, including those involved in the drugs trade, have a vested interest in continuing instability and the absence of an effective state. The international community may thus find it difficult to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan and, therefore, a means through which it can establish a face-saving exit from its military involvement.<sup>501</sup>

309. A number of our interlocutors told us that the US was keen to show that progress is being made in Afghanistan by 2011. Daniel Korski pointed out that “the [US] mid-term elections are in two years, and I think that the US Administration would like to show something for their efforts, whether it is a regional—not settlement, but process—that Ambassador Holbrooke can instigate, or something else. [...] There is a clear sense in the Obama strategy that, if there is not an exit, they keenly understand that the American people are only so interested in staying for so long”.<sup>502</sup> Yet, there is no sense that reconciliation will take place soon. The Strategic Conflict Assessment produced by the Post-War Reconstruction and Development Unit comments:

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498 Ev 131

499 Q 219

500 “Nosedive in Afghan-US relations”, *BBC News Online*, 5 February 2009

501 Ev 178

502 Q 171

Despite a reportedly high level of public support within Afghanistan, a political solution is neither clear nor imminent. While many informants and critical actors recognise the need for political dialogue leading up to formal negotiations, the parties themselves may have an interest in avoiding such a situation. For the United States and its Coalition partners, including the UK, a political solution would be an admission that they have been militarily unsuccessful. It would also be seen as negotiating with an enemy which has killed substantial numbers of foreign troops. Furthermore, it will reveal the truth that such engagement should have been pursued from the outset and that the Bonn political process, which leading experts have appropriately described as inappropriately narrow, in 2001 could have averted, to a certain degree, the violence of the last six years.<sup>503</sup>

310. In a similar vein Christia and Semple argue that “in the short and medium terms, it seems highly unlikely that Taliban leaders will be willing to strike a broad deal with the Afghan government”. They add that although “leaders and commanders who are influential within the movement are open to rapprochement, [...] a dialogue conducted through a single authorized channel could be hijacked by Taliban hard-liners”. [...] They caution that reconciliation is an incremental process, and it should start before the pursuit of any comprehensive settlement.<sup>504</sup> Others say that the Taliban who are willing to meet and talk have little influence, and those who do have influence believe that they are currently in a strong position and thus have no need to compromise.<sup>505</sup> It is also argued that offering the prospect of negotiations may be seen as a sign of international weakness that could increase the Taliban’s resolve to ‘outlast’ the international community’s intervention.

**311. We conclude that a negotiated, Afghan-led political settlement with broad popular support represents the only realistic option for long-term security and stability in Afghanistan. However, we further conclude that there can be no serious prospect of meaningful discussions until Coalition Forces and the Afghan National Security Forces gain, and retain, the upper hand on security across the country, including in Helmand, and are then able to negotiate from a position of strength. For these reasons we conclude that the current increased military activity is a necessary pre-requisite for any long-term political settlement.**

### ***Ensuring credible elections***

312. To a large degree the prospects for a political settlement in the short term depend upon Afghanistan’s forthcoming Presidential and provincial elections which are set to take place amid tight security on 20 August. The elections were originally meant to be held in the early part of 2009 following the planned completion of geographically phased voter registration by the end of February. However, in early February, the deteriorating security situation led to warnings from both the Afghan Independent Election Commission and the

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503 “A Strategic Conflict Assessment of Afghanistan”, *Post-War Reconstruction & Development Unit*, November 2008, p 54

504 Fotini Christia and Michael Semple, “Flipping the Taliban: how to win in Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2009

505 “Talking to the Taliban has failed before”, *The Guardian*, 9 March 2009

UN that the credibility of the elections would be severely undermined if the elections were not delayed. The UN also cited problems deriving from manpower limitations and budget shortfalls.<sup>506</sup>

313. We have been told by many interlocutors, witnesses and the FCO that it is crucial that credible elections are held. Daniel Korski told us that the election offers an opportunity for whoever becomes President to re-assess current strategies and provide direction on how to achieve change,<sup>507</sup> while Lord Malloch-Brown told us it was important that:

there needs to be a competitive election which delivers a result that people believe in, and where they believe that the campaign has allowed a real debate and airing of the issues. Frankly, there is a bit of a sense of stifled democracy in the country and of a leadership that has seemed out of touch, locked up in Kabul and not connected with the needs of people. For us, this election - not just who wins it but the very process of candidates getting out there and debating and engaging—is critical to the political renewal of the country. Without this, arguably neither the Afghan government nor the international community will find it difficult to make progress.<sup>508</sup>

314. Although President Karzai's term formally expired on 22 May 2009, he announced in April his intention to continue in office until the election, a move which prompted considerable constitutional and political controversy. We were told by a number of interlocutors that the US's silence over his decision to continue in office was perceived by many Afghans to amount to tacit US support for President Karzai in the forthcoming election. We were also told that although the US had not intended this to be the case, it had nevertheless proved unhelpful in attempts to demonstrate to Afghans that the Presidential election result is not being dictated by the international community.

315. Whether the elections are perceived to be credible will also be determined by how fair the voting process is deemed to be. Additional security has been provided by the international community to deal with the expected upsurge of violence ahead of the election and to ensure that the elections are not derailed by the poor security situation. According to Dr Gohel, "the eyes of the world will be on what happens there. Groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban will want to try to exploit the situation by trying to carry out attacks and creating chaos and disruption".<sup>509</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown told us that the elections had the potential to strengthen democracy if it is "accepted by the great majority of Afghans as a credible test of their leadership, and that whoever wins it has a mandate that people accept as genuine and real".<sup>510</sup>

### *The impact on women*

316. During our inquiry a number of witnesses and interlocutors spoke about widespread concern that any political settlement in which conservative forces dominate would risk

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<sup>506</sup> The full electoral process is anticipated to cost up to \$500 million and according to the FCO, more financial support from a wider donor pool is still required; Ev 85

<sup>507</sup> Q 169

<sup>508</sup> Q 216

<sup>509</sup> Q 172

<sup>510</sup> Q 180

reversing the small gains that women have made in terms of political involvement and their greater access to health care, education and employment.<sup>511</sup> Elizabeth Winter told us many Afghans were worried that the international community's focus on securing an exit strategy through reconciliation would be "at a cost, particularly of women's rights. They will go to the wall". She added that "Bringing back the Taliban, with all the unhappiness that their regime caused, is something that people are very frightened of".<sup>512</sup>

317. The US strategy states that "practical integration must not become a mechanism for instituting medieval social policies that give up the quest for gender equality and human rights".<sup>513</sup> Lord Malloch-Brown told us that he acknowledged that there was a risk in this respect, and that there was "no reason to believe that their spots have changed when it comes to the treatment of women". He added:

That is, [...] another reason why it is so important to understand the nature of the dialogue that we would support in the reconciliation process. [...] [It is about] talking with those who have supported the Taliban, and maybe ultimately with elements who might even be described as Taliban, but it is not arriving at an agreement with the hardcore traditional Taliban leadership and their hardcore, hard-line allies. [...] The second point is that it is about winning those groups back into a system of governance based on elections and the democratic rule of law which is being established [...] and so I would hope that the system and the checks and balances it would provide mean that the rights of women would be protected, but I acknowledge that this is going to be a very difficult area.<sup>514</sup>

**318. We welcome the commitment of the US and UK governments to ensuring that human rights are not undermined in any future reconciliation process and we conclude that the meaningful participation of women is an essential element in any negotiated reconciliation, as has been the case in many other post-conflict peace processes.**

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511 Ev 178

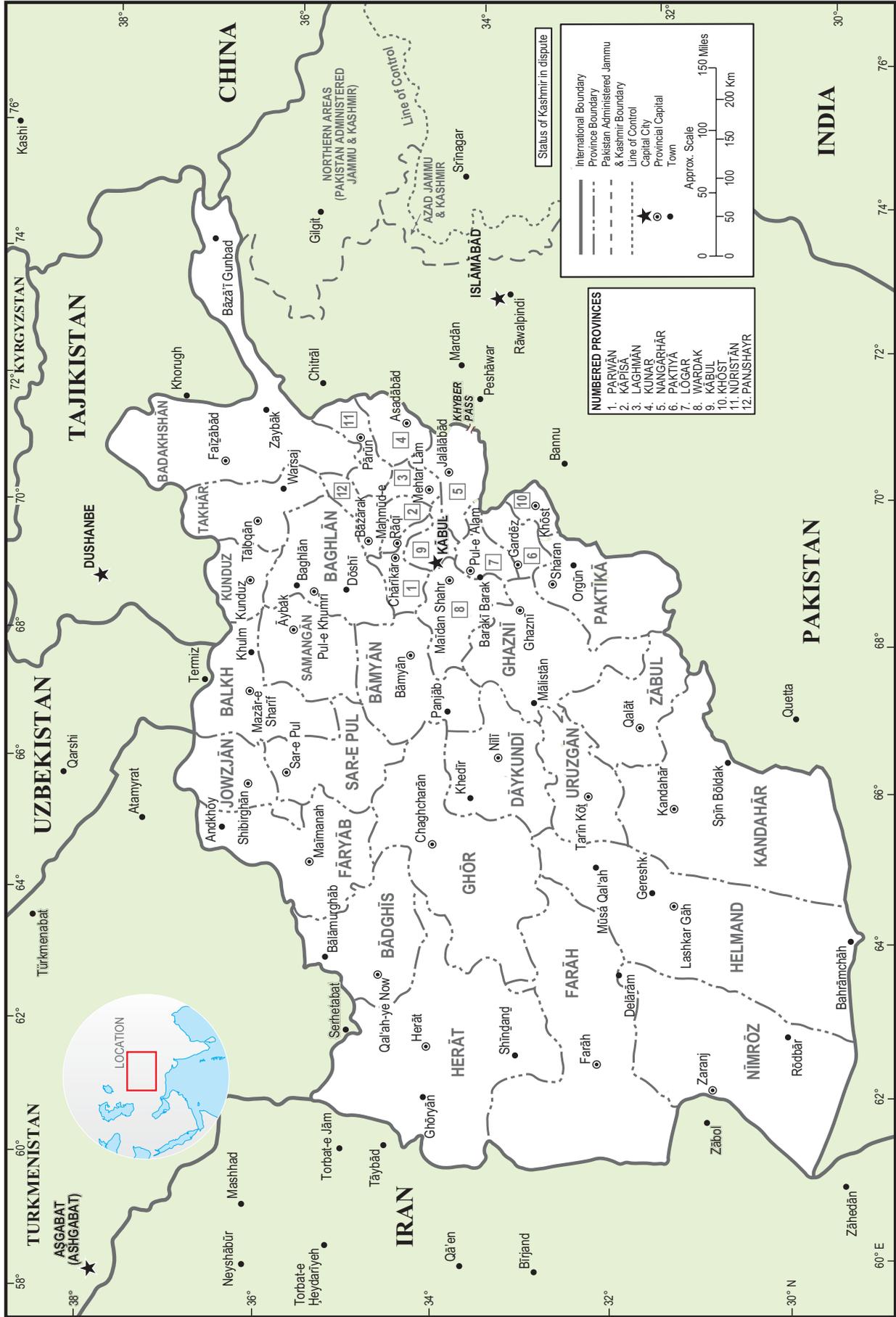
512 Q 78 [Elizabeth Winter]

513 "US Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan", *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report*, April 2009

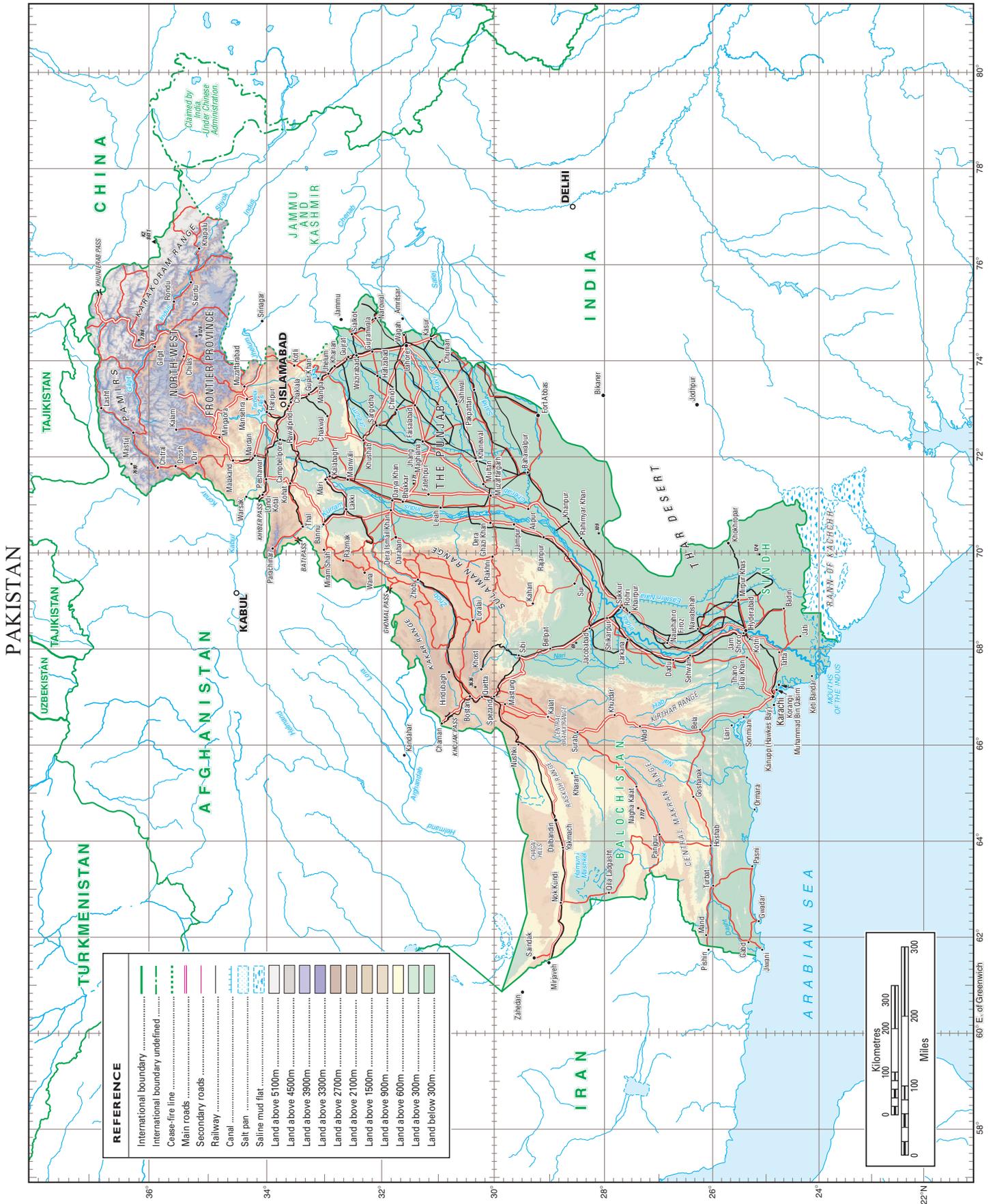
514 Q 221

# AFGHANISTAN

## WORLD BRIEFING MAPS







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# Pakistan / Afghanistan Border Area



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# Annex

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## Foreign Affairs Committee visit to Afghanistan and Pakistan

**26 April–1 May 2009**

Participating Members:

Mr Mike Gapes (Chairman), Rt Hon Mr David Heathcoat-Amory, Mr John Horam, Mr Paul Keetch, Mr Malcolm Moss, Sandra Osborne, Rt Hon Sir John Stanley, Ms Gisela Stuart

### ISLAMABAD

#### **Sunday 26 April**

Meetings with:

Mr Robert Brinkley CMG, High Commissioner, Islamabad, and officials

Commentators and journalists

Heads of Mission

#### **Monday 27 April**

Tour of, and briefing on, the work of the High Commission's Visa Office, the Consular Division and the Forced Marriages Unit

### KABUL

#### **Monday 27 April**

Briefing with Mark Sedwill CMG, HMA Kabul, and senior Embassy team

Meetings with:

Abdul Rahim Wardak, Defence Minister

Farooq Wardak, Education Minister

Mohamad Hanif Atmar, Minister of Interior

Ehsan Zia, Minister of Rural Rehabilitation

Ron Hoffman, Canadian Ambassador, Frank Ricciardone, US Ambassador, Dr Marie Ricciardone, USAID, Marshall Elliot, Head of DfID Office, Mark Bryson-Richardson, Political Counsellor

### **Tuesday 28 April**

Briefing with the Embassy's Counter-Narcotics and Rule of Law team

Tour of British Embassy Estate

Meetings with:

Sital Dhillon, Director, British Council, Afghanistan

Women parliamentarians

Senior British military personnel

Kai Eide, UN Secretary-General's Special Representative

Major General Formica, Commander of Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan

### **Wednesday 29 April**

The Group divided:

#### **Kabul party**

Meetings with:

Dr Rangin Dadfar Spanta, Foreign Minister

Foreign Relations Committee

Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group with the UK House of Commons

Ahmad Zia Massoud, 1st Vice President

Abdul Karim Khalilli, 2nd Vice President

Key ambassadors, NGO representatives

Visit to Ferdowsi Girls School, Kabul

#### **Helmand party**

Meetings with:

Governor Gulab Mangal

Hugh Powell, UK Senior Representative, Brigadier Tim Radford, Commander Task Force Helmand, and senior military and civilian personnel

Visit to Police Headquarters, Helmand

### **Thursday 30 April**

Meetings with:

Matt Waldman, Oxfam

General Khodiadad, Counter-Narcotics Minister

### **ISLAMABAD**

### **Thursday 30 April**

Meetings with:

Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani

Standing Committee on Foreign Relations, National Assembly of Pakistan

### **Friday 1 April**

Briefing with Mr Robert Brinkley, High Commissioner

## Glossary of Terms

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AIHRC	Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission
AOG	Armed Opposition Groups
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
BAAG	British and Irish Aid Agencies in Afghanistan Group
CENTCOM	US Central Command
CMMH	Civilian Military Mission in Helmand
COMISAF	Commander of ISAF
CSTC – A	Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme
DfID	Department for International Development
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
EU	European Union
EUPOL	EU Police Mission
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
FCO	Foreign & Commonwealth Office
FDD	Focussed District Development
HMG	Her Majesty’s Government
IEC	Independent Electoral Commission
IED	Improvised Explosive Device
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LeT	Lashkar e Toiba
MISFA	Micro Finance Investment Support Facility of Afghanistan
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NDCS	National Drug Control Strategy
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
NSID (OD)	National Security, International Relations and Development Cabinet Committee
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PCRU	Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit
PGF	Pro-Government Forces
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
RC (S)	Regional Command (South)
PTS	Strengthening Peace Program (PTS is its Afghan acronym)
TFH	Task Force Helmand
TNSM	Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

# Formal Minutes

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**Tuesday 21 July 2009**

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Sir Menzies Campbell	Mr Malcolm Moss
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory	Sandra Osborne
Mr John Horam	Mr Greg Pope
Mr Eric Illsley	Mr Ken Purchase
Mr Paul Keetch	Sir John Stanley
Andrew Mackinlay	Gisela Stuart

Draft Report (Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 22 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 23 read.

An Amendment made.

Another Amendment proposed, in line 5, after "countries" to insert ", particularly the United Kingdom. This is particularly felt in relation to the deployment in Helmand."—(*Andrew Mackinlay*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1	Noes, 9
Andrew Mackinlay	Sir Menzies Campbell
	Mr David Heathcoat-Amory
	Mr John Horam
	Mr Paul Keetch
	Mr Malcolm Moss
	Sandra Osborne
	Mr Greg Pope
	Mr Ken Purchase
	Sir John Stanley

Another Amendment proposed, in line 10, to leave out from "caveats." to the end of the paragraph, and add "The United Kingdom must make it clear that the unwillingness of other countries to commit combat troops is unacceptable. Countries cannot absolve themselves of their obligations under Article V by praying in aid caveats or by seeking to help in logistical support or in non combat roles as a substitute for their full engagement."—(*Andrew Mackinlay*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1

Andrew Mackinlay

Noes, 10

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Mr Greg Pope  
Mr Ken Purchase  
Sir John Stanley

Another Amendment made.

Paragraph, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraphs 24 to 60 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 61 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 62 to 84 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 85 read, as follows:

We conclude that, while most Afghans do not like or trust the Taliban or share their extreme views, in the absence of a functioning, formal justice system, the Taliban's willingness and ability to dispense swift justice has been accepted in some Pashtun communities.

Paragraph disagreed to.

Paragraphs 86 to 88 (now paragraphs 85 to 87) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 89 (now paragraph 88) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 90 to 101 (now paragraphs 89 to 100) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 102 (now paragraph 101) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 103 to 114 (now paragraphs 102 to 113) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 115 (now paragraph 114) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 116 to 126 (now paragraphs 115 to 125) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 127 (now paragraph 126) read.

Amendment proposed, at the beginning, to leave out to "While" in line 5.—(*Mr Ken Purchase.*)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5

Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Mr Greg Pope

Noes, 7

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam

Mr Ken Purchase  
Ms Gisela Stuart

Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Sir John Stanley

Another Amendment proposed, in line 10, to leave out from “unlikely.” to the end, and add “We therefore conclude that the system of lead roles for the G8 countries should be comprehensively reviewed.”.—(*Mr Ken Purchase.*)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 2

Mr Greg Pope  
Mr Ken Purchase

Noes, 9

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Sir John Stanley

Paragraph agreed to.

Paragraphs 128 to 132 (now paragraphs 127 to 131) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 133 (now paragraph 132) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 134 (now paragraph 133) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 135 (now paragraph 134) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 136 to 145 (now paragraphs 135 to 144) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 146 (now paragraph 145) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 147 to 161 (now paragraphs 146 to 160) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 162 (now paragraph 161) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 163 to 196 (now paragraphs 162 to 195) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 197 (now paragraph 196) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 198 and 199 (now paragraphs 197 and 198) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 200 (now paragraph 199) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 201 to 212 (now paragraphs 200 to 211) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 213 (now paragraph 212) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 214 (now paragraph 213) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 215 (now paragraph 214) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 216 to 224 (now paragraphs 215 to 223) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 225 (now paragraph 224) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraph 226 (now paragraph 225) read.

Amendment proposed, in line 10, to leave out “first and most important priority” and insert “most important priorities”.—(*Sir John Stanley*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 3

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Sandra Osborne  
Sir John Stanley

Noes, 8

Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Mr Greg Pope  
Mr Ken Purchase

Paragraph agreed to.

A Paragraph—(*Andrew Mackinlay*)—brought up and read, as follows:

Despite the Government’s recent stated commitment to seek the approval of the House of Commons before deploying troops abroad,<sup>515</sup> we note that there has been no affirmative and unambiguous resolution of the legislature to approve the deployment to Afghanistan, or more particularly to Helmand. We view this as a democratic deficiency, especially in the light of the gravity of the situation in which British troops currently operate. We acknowledge that the deployment is now a matter of fact, but believe that the Government should seek to have its decision to deploy British troops in Afghanistan endorsed by the House of Commons as soon as possible. We conclude that this should be the case for any such future deployment.

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 3

Mr Paul Keetch  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr Greg Pope

Noes, 8

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Mr Ken Purchase  
Sir John Stanley

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<sup>515</sup> Governance of Britain White Paper, July 2007, CM 7170, page 18 <http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm71/7170/7170.pdf>

Paragraph 227 (now paragraph 226) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 228 to 233 (now paragraphs 227 to 232) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 234 (now paragraph 233) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 235 and 236 (now paragraphs 234 and 235) read and agreed to.

Paragraphs 237 and 238 (now paragraphs 236 and 237) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 239 to 248 (now paragraphs 238 to 247) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 249 (now paragraph 248) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 250 to 278 (now paragraphs 249 to 277) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 279 (now paragraph 278) read.

Amendment proposed, in line 7, after “Afghanistan”, to leave out to the end of the paragraph.—(*Sir John Stanley*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Sir John Stanley

Noes, 6

Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Mr Greg Pope  
Mr Ken Purchase

An Amendment made.

Another Amendment proposed, in line 9, to leave out from “on” to the end and insert “its highest priorities”.—(*Sir John Stanley*.)

Question put, That the Amendment be made.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 5

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Sir John Stanley

Noes, 6

Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Mr Paul Keetch  
Mr Greg Pope  
Mr Ken Purchase

Paragraph, as amended, agreed to.

Paragraphs 280 to 294 (now paragraphs 279 to 293) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 295 read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 296 and 297 (now paragraphs 295 and 296) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 298 (now paragraph 297) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 299 to 310 (now paragraphs 298 to 309) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 311 (now paragraph 310) read, amended and agreed to.

Paragraphs 312 to 318 (now paragraphs 311 to 317) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 319 (now paragraph 318) read, amended and agreed to.

Annexes agreed to.

*Resolved*, That the Report be the Eighth Report of the Committee to the House.

*Ordered*, That the Chairman make the Report to the House.

*Ordered*, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report, together with written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 4 March, 6 May and 24 June.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 21 October at 2 pm.]

## Witnesses

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### Wednesday 25 February 2009

Page

**Professor Theo Farrell**, Professor of War, Department of War Studies, King's College London and **Colonel (retired) Christopher Langton OBE**, Senior Fellow for Conflict, the International Institute for Strategic Studies Ev 1

**Professor Shaun Gregory**, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford, and **Sean Langan**, British journalist and documentary film-maker Ev 10

### Wednesday 25 March 2009

**Dr Jonathan Goodhand**, Lecturer, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) and **Elizabeth Winter**, Researcher and Social Scientist, Adviser to the British Agencies Afghanistan Group Ev 19

**David Mansfield**, Freelance Consultant and **Fabrice Pothier**, Director, Carnegie Europe Ev 29

### Tuesday 21 April 2009

**James Fergusson**, Journalist and author, **Christina Lamb**, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, Sunday Times, and **David Loyn**, International Development Correspondent, BBC, and author Ev 36

**Dr Sajjan Gohel**, Director of International Security, Asia-Pacific Foundation-, London, **Dr. Stuart Gordon**, Lecturer, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, and **Daniel Korski**, Senior Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations Ev 45

### Thursday 14 May 2009

**Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown**, Minister of State, and **Adam Thomson**, Director, South Asia and Afghanistan, Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ev 56

## List of written evidence

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### FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE

1	Memorandum	Ev 73, 188
2	Letter from Lord Malloch-Brown, Minister of State	Ev 187
3	Letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from the Chairman of the Committee	Ev 161
4	Letter from Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs from the Chairman of the Committee	Ev 161
5	BBC World Service and Global news in Afghanistan	Ev 147
6	British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group	Ev 169
7	Colonel (retired) Christopher Langton OBE, Senior Fellow for Conflict, the International Institute for Strategic Studies	Ev 111
8	Sean Langan	Ev 167
9	Sajjan M Gohel, Asia-Pacific Foundation	Ev 132
10	Professor Shaun Gregory, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford	Ev 162, 168
11	Rizwan Iqbal	Ev 112
12	Majid Karzai, Second Secretary for Political Affairs, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, London	Ev 186
13	Daniel Korski, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations	Ev 154
14	Peter Marsden	Ev 176
15	Adam Roberts	Ev 113
16	The Redress Trust	Ev 142
17	"RAM" Seeger	Ev 179
18	Andrew Tyrie MP	Ev 160
19	Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the High Commissioner for Pakistan, High Commission for the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, London	Ev 189

# Oral evidence

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## Taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday 25 February 2009

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr Fabian Hamilton  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam

Mr. Eric Illsley  
Sir John Stanley  
Ms Gisela Stuart

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*Witnesses:* **Professor Theo Farrell**, Professor of War, Department of War Studies, King's College, London, and **Colonel Christopher Langton OBE**, Senior Fellow for Conflict, the International Institute for Strategic Studies,<sup>1</sup> gave evidence.

**Q1 Chairman:** This afternoon, we have a session on Afghanistan, and then Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are very pleased that both Mr. Farrell and Colonel Langton have come along to share their expertise. Before we begin, may I ask each of you to say a few words about who you are, what you do, or what you did do?

**Colonel Langton:** As it says here, I am Colonel Christopher Langton and I currently work at the International Institute for Strategic Studies—or the IISS as it is known—and I was previously in the British Army for 32 years. My final appointment was defence attaché in central Asia and my current job includes being the focus for Afghanistan in the IISS.

**Professor Farrell:** My name is Theo Farrell and I am the head of military research with the King's College war studies group, which covers the departments of war and defence studies. My actual expertise is in contemporary military operations, particularly military innovation, but for the last 12 months or so I have been studying the UK military campaign in Afghanistan. So I approach this as somebody with a general background in military operations who has been doing quite a lot of recent work on Afghanistan.

**Q2 Chairman:** Thank you. May I begin by asking you both to assess the current state of the insurgency's threat in Afghanistan? What are the main causes and drivers of that insurgency?

**Colonel Langton:** The first thing to point out, in my view, is that the context and background against which the insurgency is set are somewhat different today from when forces first went to Afghanistan in 2001. The insurgency has undoubtedly spread into various areas across the country. In my view, it would be incorrect to say, as some reports have indicated, that the Taliban, who, shall we say, lead the insurgency—although not all parts of the insurgency are mainstream Taliban—control large swathes of the territory, in as much as they take it and then continue to occupy and effectively govern it. They have freedom of movement—that is for

sure—and can carry out a widespread range of activity, which has also changed over time, in different areas of the country. One good example is Badghis province on the Turkmenistan border in the north-west, which has always had Pashtun and Taliban influence within it. The province became militant about 18 months ago and has seen a significant increase in insurgency. Of course, we do not often think of the north as having that sort of problem, but it does today. Tactically, the insurgency can be looked at in a number of ways. There is an increasing amount of guerrilla-style combat carried out against international forces and the Afghan national army. In traditional guerrilla fashion, that principally happens in groups that are either as large as 200 or maybe more, or very small groups operating hit-and-run tactics. The use of improvised explosive devices has increased in the last two years and continues to do so. Suicide attacks, which, I am sure everyone knows, are the chosen tactic for attacking centres of urban populations, particularly Kabul, have also increased.

**Professor Farrell:** To be clear here, there are three phases in the campaign. There is the initial phase, where we went in under Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001–02. There was the middle phase, between 2002–06, when control was handed over by degrees to NATO, ISAF and expanded north, west-north and east. Finally, in 2006 NATO pushed down south, which is what we will be focusing on today, where a lot of the conflict kicked off. If we look at the situation between 2006–08—I entirely agree with Colonel Langton that you have to distinguish between the various kinds of attacks that we faced—we see that the total numbers of attacks have gone up, which is quite worrying. There are different kinds of attacks. The basic distinction that Colonel Langton draws is helpful. There are combat operations, which I would call formation warfare, where the Taliban or other groups gather in company-size formation—between 50 and 200 soldiers—and launch a formation attack against one of our patrol bases, or even against a forward operation base. On the other hand there are terrorist attacks, which would comprise suicide bombs,

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improvised explosive devices and sniper fire. The important point to realise is that this past year, as I understand it, we have seen a significant reduction in formation warfare by the Taliban, and an increase in terrorist attacks. Some observers have said that that is very worrying, because they are moving to asymmetric tactics, which presents a great challenge for us. I see it as a positive development. The simple reason why they have moved to asymmetric tactics is that between 2007 and early 2008 we caused considerable attrition to their force structure. It is very hard to get reliable figures, but I understand from speaking to people in the Ministry of Defence that they think that around 6,000 Taliban have been killed. So we have gutted a lot of their lower command structure, which has forced them to move towards more asymmetric tactics.

**Q3 Chairman:** But why have they been able to succeed in moving into areas that, like Kabul, were previously regarded as relatively secure and stable, with attacks there which were not happening several years ago?

**Colonel Langton:** One has to understand what I could loosely call “the Afghan way of war”. It was written about a lot by the Soviets when they realised the fluidity of the Afghan method of operations, which is exactly what we are facing today, but with some technological differences from the Soviets. It means that people can move through the population, across a very large country, which could never be properly occupied and held. That has been proven by history; we do not need to revisit it. They move along many routes, in very small numbers and often with the assistance of some officials—maybe police at roadblocks who are open to bribery. All these factors play into the chaotic nature of this operation. Underneath that question is one about whether we could hold ground to prevent this happening. It is not that sort of campaign. This is a counter-insurgency campaign—the territory is the mind of the population; it is not geography. In that context, it is easy to see how, with the indigenous insurgency competing for the minds of its own people, we would find it hard to achieve instant results and control that sort of territory.

**Professor Farrell:** Again, I agree. The Taliban are conducting terrorist attacks into Kabul, and it is extremely difficult to stop such attacks coming into a major city. It will be interesting to see whether, in the next year or so, there is an increase. In August we handed over control to the Afghan national army, but there is a large French taskforce sitting in that part of Afghanistan—RC Central—and hopefully they are supporting the ANA in securing Kabul. But these are terrorist attacks and in this scenario it is almost impossible to stop them. They are worrying in so far as they have implications for the story that we want to project—the progress in stabilising Afghanistan. From a narrative perspective, demonstrating progress is a problem for us, but I do not think that the tactical or operational significance of the attacks is that great, to be honest.

**Q4 Sir John Stanley:** You will have seen the report, which is extremely prominent in one paper today, that there is evidence of an increasing number of English-speaking people among the ranks of the Taliban insurgents. Do you have evidence to corroborate that report?

**Colonel Langton:** No.

**Professor Farrell:** No, sorry.

**Q5 Sir John Stanley:** You both referred to an increasing number of IED attacks. Does the seriousness of IEDs relate just to the number of attacks or also to the increasing technological sophistication that makes them more difficult for our forces to defend against?

**Colonel Langton:** First, one has to understand that Afghanistan has been something of an arms dump. Materials from former conflicts and the present conflict are instantly available. In a conflict of this nature, expertise in such activity increases as the conflict progresses. We have seen a progression from very basic IEDs based on land mines and former Soviet anti-tank mines which are set off along routes by wires to the use of more sophisticated methods such as remote controls and mobile telephones.

There has been a low level of reporting on the use of explosively formed projectiles such as those used in Iraq. To my knowledge, which is not that great, there has not been anything as sophisticated as what is found in Iraq. There have been fairly crude EFPs. An insurgency does not need to lumber itself with complicated methods of attacking its enemy unless it has to. The more complicated an attack, the greater the risk of its failing. If insurgents can carry out their activity using the very basic materials that I described, that is the easiest option for them.

**Professor Farrell:** I can see signs of concern and positive signs. I agree with Colonel Langton that IEDs have become more sophisticated over time, particularly the trigger mechanisms. We have seen more sophisticated use of pressure pads that trigger when a particular weight is put on them, such as that of a military vehicle. It is less likely that we will see the explosive projectiles that he referred to because that technology was brought into Iraq by the Iranians. On the positive side, from the work that I have looked at, there is evidence that our taskforces have consistently got better at learning lessons internally. For example, the 52 Brigade developed an effective lessons-learned process to identify IEDs. It developed tactics to identify IEDs and combat them. It saw significant improvements in each month of its operation in the ability of its patrols to identify the threat. The most encouraging thing is that we are going to have much better protected mobility. Our commanders have complained about that area consistently. We now have the new Mastiff in theatre, which is a mine and blast-resistant vehicle. We have requested 280 Mastiffs, which will be sufficient to equip all our brigade-sized taskforces. As you know, in October the Secretary of State for Defence announced a protected-mobility package that would bring on-stream another 400 Mastiff-style vehicles or equivalent protected mobility vehicles. There will be significant uplift in our protected mobility

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capability, which will reduce the risk to our troops. That could be a positive development, which will come on-stream between now and the end of 2010 probably, or early 2011, when we shall have full capability.

**Q6 Sir John Stanley:** Why do you think that there has been such a serious deterioration in our casualties over the past 12 months?

**Professor Farrell:** I think there have been a number of reasons. First, the new protected mobility for combat troops has only come on-stream since 52 Brigade, which would be mid-2007. By now we have sufficient capability for all our combat troops, but what we do not have is protected mobility for combat logistics. The people who are bringing supplies up and down and the enablers—intelligence and communications folk—have to travel the same route as the combat patrols travel. In fact, there are quite a lot of combat logistics patrols up and down the green zone between the various forward operating bases. That gap has been identified and is being plugged by the protected mobility package, but that will take between now and early 2011 to reach full capability. The problem has been identified. It is being dealt with by the UOR [Urgent Operational Requirement] scheme, but that is possibly explaining casualties caused by improvised explosive devices.

**Sir John Stanley:** Does Colonel Langton want to comment on why our casualty rate has deteriorated so seriously?

**Colonel Langton:** The only comment that I would make is that the operational tempo of British troops in Afghanistan has increased.

**Professor Farrell:** There have been newspaper reports—not verified—that Mullah Omar has issued orders for the Taliban to try and overrun one of our bases, so there is pressure on the British in this current deployment in Helmand.<sup>2</sup>

**Q7 Mr. Horam:** Could we focus on Helmand province for a minute? As you may know, the Governor of Helmand is in London this week. I attended a meeting that he spoke at yesterday. He said that, of the 13 districts in Helmand province, eight were now dominated by the Government and only five by the Taliban. He also said that he had a monitoring team going around all districts, that the voter registration for the elections was going very well and that there was also good progress on getting farmers to change from growing poppy to wheat under that programme. I would like your comments on that—there are very different views from other quarters.

**Colonel Langton:** It is well known by now that Governor Mangal has made a significant difference to the operation in Helmand, and most of that is positive. However, one of the aspects of a counter-insurgency, when you get to this situation, is that you are producing a challenge to the opposition that must be met by that opposition with increasing intensity. This approach of Governor Mangal, which

is by far and away the best approach of any of the governors of Helmand since the thing started, is directly challenging the Taliban-led insurgency at a local and provincial level in a way that it has not really been challenged before. It is challenging it both militarily and, significantly, commercially—you alluded to the poppy revenue. That is not to say that I would necessarily agree that total control of eight out of 13 sub-regions has been achieved.

**Q8 Mr. Horam:** The governor said “dominated”. I could not work out what he meant by “dominated”.

**Colonel Langton:** I do not know exactly what he means. I was talking to him today and I did not ask him that question. What we can say, very positively, is that those eight sub-regions are under greater control of the Government than they were before.

**Q9 Mr. Horam:** That does not necessarily mean a lot, does it?

**Colonel Langton:** I would have to disagree; it does mean a lot, because there has not been such a level of control in Helmand for a number of years, and that must be significant.

**Q10 Mr. Hamilton:** In its submission to this Committee, the Foreign Office argues that it is “vital to immediate UK national security interests that Afghanistan becomes a stable and secure state that can suppress terrorism and violent extremism within its borders”. In what ways do you think Afghanistan still represents a direct strategic threat to the UK, and how has the nature of that changed since 9/11?

**Colonel Langton:** I think that that is part of what I started off saying: the context seems to have changed. It has changed not just because of the reason that we went there—we must never forget that, but we seem to occasionally—which was to remove a nexus of terrorism that was directly challenging us and other countries. That still remains. But there is also an increasing regional aspect. If we look at the threat in different ways, we can see that if we reduced our effort or withdrew, it could reconstitute a safe haven for international terrorism. Afghanistan remains a rentier state, and it is very far away from being able to stand on its own two feet. In those conditions, any withdrawal creates a vacuum, and I am quite sure that those who wish us ill know that very well. There is the obvious narcotics problem. Cultivation might have reduced in the last 12 months, but let us not fool ourselves that that can be continued. Other things have happened; for example, the production of methamphetamines is now proven to exist in Afghanistan. That is part of the market that heroin and cocaine operate in, and when dealers are challenged, they choose a different part of the market. We, in this country, are the buyers, and that is another part of the problem. Sometimes I wonder if we understand how serious that is to our society, and it feeds the international terrorism agenda by weakening our society. The other aspect is what happens, if we reduce our efforts or withdraw—I am not just talking about the UK, but the international community, which is largely western—in the context of India and Pakistan. India

<sup>2</sup> *Note by witness:* I have been unable to get confirmation of this point and so I now consider it to be inaccurate.

is a well known ally of Afghanistan. That alliance is known very well to irritate Pakistan, which regards Afghanistan as its strategic depth. India is not a mainstream part of the international coalition—it does not provide troops. It provides donor assistance, aid, road constructions and some training to border guards, but that is it. If you ask what would happen if we withdrew, vis-à-vis India, the chances are that India would wish to stay, and that is probably where I will stop, because you can see where that leads, in terms of the very tenuous relationship between Pakistan and India.

**Professor Farrell:** That is the key question, is it not? It is a really important and fundamental question, and not one that has an easy answer. Part of the problem that we face is that we are in an era where the military threats to our national security are much more difficult to define and assess now than during the cold war. I think that it largely hinges on your view of the threat from al-Qaeda, because the bottom line is that in so far as this is a threat to UK national security, it is because it would leave Afghanistan open for the Taliban to come back into power, and then al-Qaeda would be back, operating out of Afghanistan.

**Q11 Mr. Hamilton:** That was going to be part of my question. I think Colonel Langton alluded to this. If ISAF leaves, as well as US troops in the coalition, how is that going to allow al-Qaeda to return? Will they return? I think it sounds like they will. How will that change the nature of Afghanistan? Will it revert to what it was before ISAF and the US were involved?

**Professor Farrell:** I think one can predict with fair confidence that the Afghan Government would last a little while and then collapse. The Taliban would push back in and then in short order we would see al-Qaeda back in Afghanistan, operating out of it. In terms of how great the threat is from al-Qaeda, I am sure the Committee has seen Dennis Blair's report to the Senate. He is the US National Director of Intelligence. He downgraded the threat from al-Qaeda, in the context of the global economy being a bigger threat. But it is still the No. 2 threat. It boils down to the two views on al-Qaeda. One view is represented by Bruce Hoffman, who is now in Georgetown. He was previously the director of RAND's Washington office. His view is that it is a networked organisation, and commands and resources can come from the centre down to the various groups within al-Qaeda, so that represents an extreme danger to us. It is also an organisation that is continuing to try to acquire a weapon capable of causing a mass casualty attack. The opposite view, represented by Mark Sageman, who is a leading counter-terrorist expert in America, says it is a network but a much looser network, more like a social network—a bunch of teenagers, really. There are various kinds of affiliates and branches, but they mostly draw inspiration from the centre. They do not draw on commands and resources. That is a less dangerous kind of network. You can isolate them and pick them off. It is interesting that Bruce Riedel, who recently published a book on al-Qaeda and is

now doing the review for Obama on Pakistan and Afghanistan, takes the middle ground. He sees a coherent al-Qaeda strategy. To my mind, it is the most pressing threat to UK national security. The military threat is from al-Qaeda. It is a no-brainer. We just cannot allow Afghanistan to fall to the Taliban and al-Qaeda to come back in.

**Q12 Mr. Hamilton:** The Foreign and Commonwealth Office says in its submission to us that al-Qaeda's expulsion from Afghanistan has seriously disrupted international terrorism. Do either of you agree with that?

**Professor Farrell:** That is the view of Dennis Blair. In his testimony before the Senate, he said one of the reasons why he downgraded the threat from al-Qaeda is that he believes that, since the invasion of Afghanistan by coalition forces, and in particular since we pushed down to the south and simply pushed the Taliban in large order out of southern Afghanistan, it has caused significant attrition to the capabilities of al-Qaeda. That seems a reasonable view.

**Colonel Langton:** There is a slight nuance to this. We must be careful when talking about the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The Taliban that we are talking about, which is, shall we say, the Quetta shura headed by Mullah Omar, still has the sort of inspirational leadership of all the groups that operate. Apart from a rather commercial arrangement before Mullah Omar's own Administration fell—they were, after all, a Government of Afghanistan at one time—it is fair to say that there is not necessarily much love lost between bin Laden and Mullah Omar and their types. They come from different Islamic traditions, for a start. To play devil's advocate for a minute, if we ask the question would al-Qaeda necessarily regain its training facilities in Afghanistan if the Taliban returned, along with all the others who joined in the Islamic movement in Uzbekistan—the Chechens, etc—I do not think we know the answer. Would the Taliban want to risk a repetition of what happened before?

**Q13 Mr. Hamilton:** What is your best guess? Would al-Qaeda regain its bases?

**Colonel Langton:** It would try to.

**Mr. Hamilton:** But the Taliban may well reject them.

**Colonel Langton:** It depends on the terms.

**Professor Farrell:** There was a report in *The New York Times* about the Uzbeks and those elements within al-Qaeda and the Taliban gaining more ground within Waziristan. That is presenting a problem for Inter-Services Intelligence, the Pakistan intelligence service, which complained because that was hindering its abilities to negotiate with the local Taliban. That seems to indicate that the groups that were driven out of Afghanistan are now operating in Pakistan, and would simply flow back into Afghanistan if we pulled out of the south.

Another issue that we ought to raise is that of knock-on costs and consequences. The knock-on costs and consequences of our operation in Afghanistan is the potential to destabilise Pakistan. We could say that there is another overriding UK national security

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interest—that of stabilising Pakistan. That gets into the question of whether we should be pushing as hard as we are in southern Afghanistan.

I am not a Pakistan expert, but as someone who studies military affairs it strikes me that we are pushing the Taliban and al-Qaeda on to their back foot. We are driving them into Pakistan and causing trouble there. However, my understanding is that there has always been trouble in the federally administered tribal areas of Pakistan. If our operations are pushing down into that area, the more the better. This is a war and we should prosecute it as such.

**Q14 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** We have heard that a Taliban victory, in whatever form, is likely to recreate a base for terrorism of some sort in Afghanistan, even if it is not al-Qaeda. That is not the same as saying that if we succeed in Afghanistan we will be secure. The Foreign Office says that success in Afghanistan is imperative for British security, but if we succeed there and the terrorists simply move to other bases, we will be no more secure. Does not the whole strategy suppose that there is something unique about Afghanistan? We know that the 9/11 attacks were planned in plenty of other countries, including some in Europe. Can we examine a little more carefully the idea that if we succeed in Afghanistan, that will make us more secure? I do not find it logical.

**Colonel Langton:** That is a very good point. It may not make us more secure, but it would make us less secure—if I can use my own regimental tradition to explain a point. The point is that Afghanistan is historically the trading crossroads in its region. In the 19th and early 20th centuries we successfully broke that system and we are now seeing some of the consequences. If we feel that we can withdraw, and recreate a civil war that we went in to stop, I would have some moral difficulty with that. To address your question directly, international terrorism, or terrorism of any type, does not sit still—as we in this country well know. If we succeed on mainland UK, activity goes up in Northern Ireland. That has happened in the past. It is rather like growing opium. If we eradicate the fields in Kandahar, Nangarhar will start growing poppy again. We will never achieve a wonderful black and white idea of success. If the international community succeeds in Afghanistan, it could restore a country that has been destroyed and which would always be used by those who wish us ill, partly because of history and what we did there before. I do not suggest that that would solve international terrorism or the threat to this country from a few terrorist attacks, but it would send a very clear message.

**Q15 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** It is obviously helpful if we succeed in Afghanistan, but I am probing the assertion that our domestic security depends on that and we have to do it. That argument falls if the terrorists can move to other bases, unless we are prepared to invade every country that might harbour terrorism. I ask Professor Farrell that question.

**Professor Farrell:** I think that I can answer that in a number of ways. Overall, you are raising a very important point, which is that the Government have yet to articulate clearly the national security interests of being in Afghanistan. That point comes up time and again whenever I am at seminars with members of the Government or senior military officers. I agree with Colonel Langton that the problem that we face is from various parts of the world that are poorly governed. They are generally quite lawless badlands. The federally administered tribal areas in Pakistan and places like Somalia are perfect areas for terrorist organisations, particularly al-Qaeda and its affiliates, to develop the capabilities they need. They need to generate the force to attack us, and those are the areas that they can do that from. The question was why we should spend £3 billion-odd trying to stop the threat. That is a fair question. My answer is that that is because we are there now. We went in in 2001, and now we are there. What are the costs of our not doing it? The obvious cost is that the Taliban will almost certainly come back into power or take a large chunk of Afghanistan back. They would almost certainly see al-Qaeda come back and be able to generate the force from Afghanistan to attack us. There are also costs to NATO. We are back in a Kosovo situation, where NATO cannot afford to fail in its operation.

**Q16 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Do you detect the same drift in war aims that we saw in Iraq? We went in to suppress weapons of mass destruction and it became justified by removing a dictator. Well, here, we went in to stop a platform for terrorists, and now it has become all about suppressing the insurgency, installing good government, and making sure that women get educated. Those are all highly desirable aims, but we have come a long way since the original avowed aim of making our own country secure by stopping terrorists training and organising in another country. Neither of you have denied that that can happen in other countries. There are plenty of hilly parts of the world with lots of money, which are badly governed. Are we saying that the original war aim is unattainable?

**Professor Farrell:** I would not say that there has been a drift in war aims. The aims of the campaign have evolved, where previously the focus was on defeating al-Qaeda or at least pushing them out of Afghanistan, and that remains our major aim. The emphasis is now on stabilising the country and building the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan and popular support for them. That is obviously very challenging. There has been a slight reordering because that is recognised as being the key to ensuring that the Taliban do not come back into power.

There are unstated aims. It is not in the FCO report, and the Government will not talk about it, but it is obvious that the unstated aims of our campaign in Afghanistan are to ensure the credibility of NATO and our reputation with the American allies. Those are perfectly reasonable aims. That may not be stated Government policy, but they are reasonable.

**Colonel Langton:** There is another point. There is always somewhere, but I do not necessarily agree that there is somewhere quite so fertile as Afghanistan/that region for terrorism. There is Sudan, Somalia and other parts of the Middle East. There has been progress in parts of the Middle East, such as in Yemen and Saudi Arabia, in dealing with this modern problem. For my money, Afghanistan/the border areas with Pakistan, the FATA and the North West Frontier Province remain a threat to the future security of this country, not least because of our incredible links to north-west Pakistan. That kind of activity is increasingly cropping up in India. As we know, since Mumbai last year, it is now spreading.

**Chairman:** We need to move on to other areas, but I have seen Eric Illsley and Gisela Stuart both indicate on this point. Eric, will you speak briefly first?

**Q17 Mr. Illsley:** Presumably, there is no alternative to our presence in Afghanistan. We cannot achieve our aims by any other method, such as controlling Afghanistan from outside, because the vacuum would still be filled by al-Qaeda. There is no alternative. Given our record and the establishment of a Government so far, which has been practically zero outside of Kabul, we are looking at a very, very long process.

**Professor Farrell:** It is very hard to predict the future with great certainty. That is what we learned from Iraq. We all thought that Iraq was going down the tubes in 2006 and it seems to have turned a corner. That said, I do not think that there is an alternative because we have to stay for the long term to help build Afghan Government capability, particularly beyond Kabul, which is very poor, and we have to build the Afghan national army and police. There is some progress, but more resource could be put into that. So we are there for the longer term.

**Q18 Ms Stuart:** Forgive me, I was stuck in another Committee earlier. Listening to you and looking at a map of the area, and given that 82%, I think, of Pakistan's borders are contested, is talking about Afghanistan not muddying the waters? It is not a question of a block of land called Afghanistan; it is a region of extremely contested borders, which may or may not belong to one country or another, and of extremely inaccessible terrain in which terrorist groups of various names and descriptions can hide. Is it meaningful, therefore, to talk about this in isolation? I have two questions. First, would clarifying where the contested borders are help us? Secondly, the last time we were in Afghanistan we were told that al-Qaeda was approached almost as three groups: the real al-Qaeda threat, with which we have to militarily negotiate, about 30% who can be purchased at a price, and about 50% who are essentially camp followers. Is it still thought of in that way?

**Colonel Langton:** On the question of the borders, I happen to agree that a conversation on the Durrand line would go some way to addressing one of the key issues. We in this country, and other partners, have looked at Afghanistan as some kind of island for a

very long time, and I think that it is absolutely right to look at it as a regional issue. I think that I mentioned that. The Durrand line being unresolved—disagreed by the Afghans, agreed by the international community and the Pakistanis—is an anomaly and it splits communities. There are 12 divided villages within which the levels of prosperity are different on either side. That in itself is cause for disquiet. I totally agree with the attempted resolution, but it will not be solved by Christmas or for several years, because there is no room for negotiation at the moment, but it could be promoted. When you spoke about al-Qaeda, I got the sense that perhaps you were talking more about the Taliban.

**Ms Stuart:** You are absolutely right.

**Colonel Langton:** There are Taliban on both sides—the Afghan Taliban and the Pakistani Taliban, called the Tehrik-i-Taliban—and other groups that all play into this. It is a sort of syndicate. There is massive franchising between them, so they buy in capabilities from each other when they need to for a particular attack or operation. I do not think that we quite know how to control that and it may be uncontrollable; it is part of this thing called the Afghan way of war. So splitting them is extremely difficult, and dangerous if we pretend that we know enough.

**Professor Farrell:** In military command there is usually a distinction between tier 1, 2 and 3 Taliban. Tier 1 are the hopeless cases—you just have to kill them. Tier 2 are the ones that you can negotiate with and perhaps try to break away because that is what they will attempt to do, and tier 3 even more so. I think that it is understood in our campaign plan that we are trying not only to win over the population, but to break off some of the groups that are fighting against the coalition—they might be called Taliban, but they are tier 3 and possibly tier 2 groups—and win them over to at least not opposing us militarily. I have to be perfectly honest and say that I do not know how particular groups are assigned to tier 1, 2 and 3 levels. That is the conceptual framework, and there is a practical example of how it has been used in operations—for instance, the big operation that was conducted by the British in late 2007 when we retook Musa Qala up north in Helmand. That operation became possible because the local leader, Mullah Salam, who was with the Taliban, switched sides. Clearly, he was not tier 1. He switched sides and gave us an opening, and then the British campaign plan, between October and December, was to move military forces up and begin to put pressure on the Taliban there, to try to break off some of the Taliban groups that were less committed before the assault started in December and they retook the town. It is clearly in our campaign design, both at an overall strategic level and tactically, in terms of how we prosecute the campaign.

**Q19 Sir Menzies Campbell:** In the course of the last moment or two, you have made some interesting observations. May I ask you about a couple of them? You say that you believe that the unstated aims of our presence in Afghanistan are to maintain NATO

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and to demonstrate that we are good allies of the United States. Why do you think that those aims are unstated? Could it be because they might not be very popular? First, the relevance of NATO is under question with the end of the cold war. Secondly, public opinion in this country on the United States is still affected by the operations in Iraq and a general attitude towards the previous United States Administration.

**Professor Farrell:** I entirely agree with you. My view is that this is part of the problem that the Government have had in articulating our reasons for being in Afghanistan. There is the shadow of Iraq and, of course, the loss of public trust in the Executive branch as a result of the circumstances under which we entered Iraq. That is a shame because this a very different campaign and I think that a very strong case can be made for why we are there. There are also very real political reasons why we are in Afghanistan that, arguably under any circumstances, could never become part of the publicly stated reasons why we are there, but they are very important reasons.

**Q20 Sir Menzies Campbell:** If the Government are labouring under the difficulty that you have just outlined, that would make it, on the face of it, all the more important to articulate a good security reason for being there.

**Professor Farrell:** Absolutely.

**Q21 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Yet your evidence is that in spite of rubbing shoulders with senior military figures, the Government have yet to make that case.

**Professor Farrell:** Yes, but the view that I expressed is a view that I think that several other senior, non-Government commentators would hold. Michael Clarke, the director of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, is on record as making that point, and he is absolutely right. The case that we are trying to demonstrate NATO credibility in conducting these operations is very important. I think that if we do not succeed in Afghanistan, NATO will become a very different kind of organisation. We just have to give up on the expeditionary mission that it has set out on. We face the exact same test that we faced in May 1999 in Kosovo. It is not publicly stated, but it is very clear in internal documentation that a high-level concern for our military is, quite rightly, that we be capable of going into operations with the Americans—not fighting as Americans, but with them. This country gains significant benefits from that close relationship, which is already strained by what has happened in Iraq, and I do not think that we can afford to have a second strain of that nature in Afghanistan.

**Q22 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Let me ask you this question and then Colonel Langton. How does all that fit with what Mark Carleton-Smith said when he left Helmand last September? He is reported to have said that a military victory over the Taliban is “neither feasible nor supportable . . . What we need is sufficient troops to contain the insurgency to a

level where it is not a strategic threat to the longevity of the elected Government”. That is a long way short of an articulated, good security reason—a good, UK security reason—for our being in Afghanistan.

**Professor Farrell:** In fairness to him, assuming that those are indeed his words—

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** We have to assume that for the purposes of the question.

**Professor Farrell:** That is not wholly inconsistent with his campaign plan when he went in. He felt that the key to success during his brigade’s tour was not to engage the Taliban directly in kinetic activity—not to fight them—but to try to undermine their legitimacy and the governance that they were trying to establish in the parts of Helmand that they were controlling. It was about building local support for the Government of Afghanistan and about containing the Taliban. For instance, one of the things that 16 Brigade did during the tour was to put a lot of effort into developing a number of large projects that would demonstrate the public good that the Government of Afghanistan could bring to the people. There was very much an emphasis on building support for the Government rather than directly trying to defeat the Taliban militarily.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** Colonel Langton, would you like to comment on those observations that were attributed to Mark Carleton-Smith?

**Colonel Langton:** I tend to agree with what Professor Farrell has said. I think that the headline was slightly misleading. Brigadier Carleton-Smith was alluding to what most military officers would understand as conventional counter-insurgency strategy—in other words, a long-term goal. It is not a military campaign in the first instance; it is a political campaign supported by the military. I think that sometimes in our rush to get this solved we forget that.

**Q23 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Do you think that proposition that you just put to us—a political campaign supported by the military—is at the heart of, and is understood that it should be at the heart of, British Government thinking?

**Colonel Langton:** Yes, I think it is.

**Q24 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Why is it not more successful then?

**Colonel Langton:** A senior Pakistani official speaking the other day on this topic said that the international allies in Afghanistan fail to understand, first, that it is a political campaign and, secondly, the need for patience and perseverance—we are trying to get things done too quickly.

**Q25 Sir Menzies Campbell:** And more troops?

**Colonel Langton:** More troops may be necessary at some times. Take, for example, this year with the elections. Clearly, there is a need to stabilise certain parts to achieve a successful election so that we can move on. There is occasionally a danger in more troops. When you inject more troops into Afghanistan in particular, you create a reaction and you have to be in control of that reaction; it needs to be the reaction that you want. If it means more

civilian casualties because it generates more insurgency, then the argument goes against more troops. That is the assessment that has to be made.

**Q26 Sir Menzies Campbell:** As you know, there were some allegations of excessive use of firepower by the British which was said to have alienated locals and made the battle for hearts and minds more difficult to win.

**Colonel Langton:** That is true. It has happened periodically. It is not just the British. It is true that most of this has been the result of the use of air power. The nature of Afghanistan is that most of the population live in villages. Some of the population are insurgents and they live in villages. When we attack those villages to kill the insurgents, occasionally there are civilian casualties. The civilian casualty issue and the way the civilian population of Afghanistan is treated by international troops are critical. We still hear reports of people's houses being entered. That is an insult in Pashtun law.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** It is a violation.

**Colonel Langton:** Exactly. That is one of the problems when you continually inject batches of new troops into this campaign.

**Professor Farrell:** The issue of the military being the supporting arm to the civilian element of the campaign is clearly understood in all the campaign designs in recent years for our taskforce in Helmand. It is built into how the taskforce is now configured. So the Civil-Military Mission [in Helmand] is the planning cell of the brigade that is deployed which is embedded in the Provincial Reconstruction Team [PRT]—it is clearly in our design. On the issue of excessive civilian casualties, to be very clear, there are two ways in which casualties are killed by air strikes. There are planned air strikes and there are Troops in Contact [with enemy forces] where troops urgently require assistance. The planned air strikes are planned by the Joint Targeting Board, on which sit civilians from the PRT and military planners. That is designed to reduce collateral damage and its effects. The practice of air strikes being called to support our Troops in Contact has changed in the last six months. We have deployed a new weapons system called the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System [GMLRS]. Our forces now call on GMLRS strikes rather than air strikes to support them when they get into contact. That is to break the contact so that they can recover and counter-attack. There is a strong awareness among our forces when calling air strikes, they appreciate the political damage that they can cause to the campaign. There has been a change of practice and you should not be misled too much by newspaper reports.

**Chairman:** Thank you. We have just five more minutes before we must conclude this session because we have other witnesses.

**Q27 Sir John Stanley:** You have both spoken several times about succeeding in Afghanistan. I would be grateful if you could each tell the Committee what you see as the key requirements for us achieving success in Afghanistan.

**Professor Farrell:** Just to be clear, there is a difference between requirements and metrics, or how we might measure success. The requirements would include an extension of Government services beyond Kabul. It is a very centralised state.

**Q28 Sir John Stanley:** To clarify, I am asking you to set out, as best you can, how you think we can achieve an Afghanistan where the insurgency has ceased—ideally totally or to the greatest possible extent—and where there is a stable Government in place, who hopefully are democratically elected and respect basic human rights and in particular the rights of women.

**Professor Farrell:** That is a very challenging question. I will say two things on the centre of gravity—the key thing that will unlock success in the campaign. Currently, the centre of gravity is building the capacity of the Afghan security forces. There are 85 battalions in the Afghan national army. It is very small with only 68,000 troops. We must double that force size. More battalions must be able to operate independently. Of the 85 battalions, one can operate independently at battalion level and only 26 can operate with ISAF support at battalion level. We need to increase the training and capability. We must increase the Afghan air force, which is pathetically small. The key to getting out of Afghanistan is to build the Afghan forces. British practice on that has been very good over the last year. They have increased the co-embedding of Afghan and British battalions. An Afghan battalion is partnered with every British battle group in the Helmand area of operations. However, more could be done. For example, the operational mentor and liaison teams are 40% under strength. We must put more resources into building the Afghan air force and national army. That will give us success.

**Colonel Langton:** I agree with that, but in order to do it the international forces must have a unified strategy, which they do not. They must have a unified command structure, which they do not. This is not necessarily about NATO. NATO happens to be leading the international security assistance force, but it has been led by other bodies. NATO is not essential to this function. We could revert to Turkish command, which is how it all started. However, there must be more unity of strategy. I have heard Afghan Ministers complain that individual countries are delivering their individual strategies through their embassies. I have struggled to find another example of where that has happened.

**Professor Farrell:** To emphasise one small point, British commanders report that the guidance that they receive from ISAF when they come into theatre and have to draw up their campaign plans tends to be very tactically oriented. They tend to draw on the British guidance they receive. A British commander receives guidance from the British national command authorities and from ISAF. The British guidance is more strategic—we actually have a strategy in Helmand. ISAF tends to be more tactically oriented in its so-called strategy.

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**Chairman:** Thank you.

**Q29 Mr. Illsley:** There have been several reports that the UK's capability and performance has been a cause of concern to the US. Is there any truth in the suggestion that the UK could be being sidelined by the Americans in Afghanistan, given that they now have control of ISAF?

**Professor Farrell:** Yes, the Americans are about to deploy the 7,000-strong 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade into Helmand, and there is a very real danger that when they deploy forces into the south, there may be some pushing aside of the British as the Americans step up. The feedback that I have received from people in Washington is that the American view is that we were very good at counter-insurgency at one stage, and now we are not so good. All the operations surrounding the Charge of the Knights—our failure to support that operation and the fact that we lost control of Basra—is evidence to them that we have lost the ability to conduct COIN. There is also a lack of national will issue as far as the Americans are concerned. That is really worrying because if, as I believe, one reason why we are in Afghanistan is to support our relationship with the United States, we are kind of wasting our time if they think that we are not performing. That is part of a misperception on their part. It is about the attitudes that they are taking from the operation in Iraq into Afghanistan, and because of some errors and problems that were caused by the British campaign in 2006, through no fault of the commander's, because he was terribly under-resourced. Senior American commanders felt that we were tied down. They correctly perceived that the British were not sufficiently resourced in their 2006 campaign, so they have very sceptical eyes towards us right now.

**Q30 Mr. Illsley:** Is there any way that we can reverse that position? How can we win back that respect or whatever we need to win back?

**Professor Farrell:** We are about to deploy another 1,500 troops, probably, into Afghanistan, most of whom will be enablers, which are desperately needed, such as engineers and electronic warfare specialists. I would like another battle group to go in, because, my God, we could use another battle group. The British retook Musa Qala, which was one

of the big campaigns, but that was reported in *The Economist* two weeks ago as being an American-led operation, which is wrong. It was a British-planned and British-led operation, and it was so successful that people did not know we did it, because part of our campaign design was to give credit to the Afghans, so they went in with their flag up. We drew on the theatre task force, an American battalion that gave us a key combat capability, for that, but why did not we have our own battle group there to support that?

**Q31 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Where on earth do we get a battle group from to go there?

**Professor Farrell:** We are about to pull 4,000 troops out of Iraq. They cannot turn around and go straight in, but a battle group could.

**Q32 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Have you talked to Sir Richard Dannatt? He says that the Army has been running hot for years, that matériel has been heavily used much more than was intended, and that maintenance has had to be put to one side. It simply would not make sense to put a battle group in, would it?

**Professor Farrell:** That is a very fair, critical question, and there are two elements to consider. One is the deployment of troops, and whether we can raise the troops, and the other is kit. The major problem that we have had with putting additional troops into Afghanistan is not troop numbers but equipment, so I would like more supporting equipment.

**Chairman:** Colonel Langton, a last word?

**Colonel Langton:** I would be very cautious about overdoing the US-UK relationship. There is immense respect for the British soldier amongst the American military. There is criticism of the political approach and some strategic decisions, but I think that will be reversed with the new Administration. Next week, General Petraeus will issue his joint strategic assessment team report to Congress, and I think that we will note a degree of understanding of national difficulties in Europe in that report.

**Chairman:** Colonel Langton and Professor Farrell, thank you very much. We could have gone on for longer, but sadly we have to conclude this session now. We will now break for two minutes, and get our next witnesses in.

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*Witnesses:* **Professor Shaun Gregory**, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford,<sup>3</sup> and **Sean Langan**, British journalist and documentary film-maker,<sup>4</sup> gave evidence.

**Q33 Chairman:** Gentlemen, thank you for coming. I apologise for keeping you waiting for a few minutes, but we started the first session slightly late and inevitably ran on a bit. I apologise for that. Before we begin, could I ask you each to introduce yourselves for the record?

**Professor Gregory:** I am Shaun Gregory. I am a professor from the University of Bradford Department of Peace Studies where I direct a little think-tank called the Pakistan Security Research Unit, which is accessible online.

**Sean Langan:** I am Sean Langan. I make documentaries specialising in this area. My first documentary was called “Tea with the Taliban” made during the Taliban regime, and I made one called “Meeting the Taliban” during the insurgency. I was recently kidnapped by the Taliban and unfortunately did not get to make that film.

**Q34 Chairman:** We hope that we are not going to kidnap you here today. We just had a session in which we focused mainly on Afghanistan, but inevitably it spilt over a bit into what is happening in Pakistan. No doubt, you will try to focus on Pakistan, but will flow back to Afghanistan at times. Can I begin with some questions about the federally administered tribal areas and the nature of the Islamist extremist or militant threat there? Perhaps you could tell us what that threat is, how many groups there are, who they are, and what is happening there at the moment.

**Professor Gregory:** It is extraordinarily complex, and Sean will be able to put in more of the detail than I can. Broadly, we are looking at six main elements to this. The first of those is, of course, the Afghan Taliban—the groups that came over into the FATA and Pashtun areas of northern Baluchistan in the aftermath of 2001. The second group is broadly the Pakistan Taliban—Pakistan radical groups such as the TTP and to some extent the TNSM.

**Q35 Chairman:** Sorry, can you explain what the initials stand for?

**Professor Gregory:** Yes. There are two main Pakistan Taliban-related groups. One of them is called the TTP—Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan—which is Baitullah Mehsud’s organisation. It is a kind of umbrella for a variety of tribal and non-tribal Pakistani radicals and it came into existence towards the end of 2007. The other group that is important is the TNSM—the Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi—which recently de facto took control of Swat in the settled areas just on the edge of the tribal areas.

**Q36 Chairman:** What does Swat stand for, just for the record?

**Sean Langan:** It is a name, not an acronym.

**Professor Gregory:** We have Afghan Taliban; we have what might broadly be called the Pakistan Taliban; and we have what we could loosely label Punjabi militants made up of the organisations that

were largely created, or empowered, in the 1990s by Pakistan’s intelligence agency—the Inter-Services Intelligence. We are talking here about groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, which have been involved in things such as Mumbai.

In our fourth group, we are looking at al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda-related fighters, many of which are from places such as Turkey. There are also Egyptians, north Africans and some Chinese Muslims, who are called Uighurs, I think. Then I think that there are other fighters who are loosely affiliated with al-Qaeda. These are groups that actually have a regional agenda; Uzbek fighters, for example. I would draw a slight distinction between those groups and, for instance, north Africans, who are present in the region because of an affiliation with al-Qaeda. Lastly, the sixth group is what I would broadly call tribal militants, which is to say that they draw from the tribes in the federally administered tribal areas and are involved in the underlying tribal conflicts and sectarian violence. In a sense, they see all the other groups as invaders of various kinds and certainly as greatly complicating the underlying tribal dynamics. So there is a very complex interplay of essentially six groups, although I should say that those groupings are slightly artificial, because the boundaries between them blur. Nevertheless, I think that that is a useful way of at least beginning a discussion.

**Q37 Chairman:** What kind of numbers are we talking about? If there are six groups, are we talking about thousands or tens of thousands?

**Professor Gregory:** We are certainly talking about a total that is in the tens of thousands. To give you an example, Fazlullah’s militants, who have taken control of Swat, are supposed to number about 3,000, but I have seen figures of 50,000 for the Afghan Taliban. Would you agree with that?

**Sean Langan:** Before I was kidnapped, I crossed from Afghanistan into the tribal area. I went to Peshawar in last March and drove to the Bajaur agency, and what I saw there was a de facto safe haven and sanctuary. The main bazaar in Bajaur was heaving with armed Taliban who were on leave from the front line across the border in eastern Afghanistan where they were fighting the British and the Americans. It was completely open and reminded me of Jalalabad during the Taliban regime. I also saw Arab mujaheddin in the bazaar, and on the drive up from Peshawar—it is only a six-hour drive on a nice tarmac road, because it is not deep in the mountains—I noticed that the Pakistan military and frontier police stations had been bombed out and flattened by the Taliban. I know that, prior to the recent fighting, there was a Pakistan operation there, but I really was shocked by what I saw. During my three months in captivity in a house in Bajaur, I was surrounded by Taliban training camps that were test firing light arms and heavy weaponry. I remember at one point the Taliban kindly gave me a radio and I listened to an Afghan spokesman on the BBC World Service saying that the tribal areas were now a safe haven for the Taliban, while a Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> Ev 162, 168

<sup>4</sup> Ev 167

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spokesman denied it, but I could not hear his denial because the test firing was so loud, so I had to turn the radio up. To give a journalistic and anecdotal summary of what Shaun has said, it has struck me, dealing with the Taliban in Afghanistan over the past few years, that the people I would call when I wanted to meet them were in Pakistan. That applied to the Taliban in Quetta and to Siraj Haqqani's group. I went to meet them and they kidnapped me in the Bajaur tribal agency further north. It did not matter if I was meeting commanders in any district in Helmand or Zabul, I always had to call Pakistan first. All the commanders I met, including the Taliban governor of Zabul, were regularly going back and forth to Pakistan's tribal areas. It seems to me, from dealing with the Taliban in Afghanistan, and my visit to the tribal areas, that it backs up the reading that I have done, which suggests that al-Qaeda and the Taliban have just moved wholesale across the border.

**Q38 Chairman:** What kind of threat does that situation—those groups—pose to the NATO and US operations in Afghanistan?

**Sean Langan:** In 2005 and 2006, I spent two blocks of six months in Afghanistan, largely with the Taliban fighters. There is a great quote from an American general, describing what NATO is doing in Afghanistan—specifically in Helmand—as like mowing the lawn—the seeds are sown in Pakistan. For every successful insurgency, you need a safe haven, a sanctuary, and that is what the tribal areas provide to the insurgency. I spent time with British forces in Helmand, during the time when it was, I think, still being described as a peacekeeping operation, and saw that they were up against hundreds—they were outnumbered by the Taliban. When I then met the Taliban, they would just cross the border, and they could come and go. Taliban fighters have leave, when they go back to their jobs in the tribal areas, in Peshawar. Really, without dealing with the safe havens, the counter-insurgency will, I think, be just an ongoing war in Afghanistan. The thousands of madrassahs that still exist, funded in part by Saudi donors, are churning out cannon fodder for the Taliban. So the symptoms may be in Afghanistan, in Helmand, but the causes are in the tribal areas, and it strikes me, having been in that region for 10 years, that without dealing with that, which is the focus, the counter-insurgency strategy will not succeed.

**Professor Gregory:** I support that absolutely. If you look at the pattern of the return of the Afghan Taliban between 2002 and now, it has flowed out of the Pashtun areas—there is no question about that. We make a conceptual mistake if we think of the border as some sort of meaningful line. The Pashtun areas need to be seen as an entity, across which family, tribal, clan and other dynamics operate completely freely. In no sense, therefore, except for a few checkpoints, is there actually a physical border between the two. So it is no surprise that the comeback for the Taliban has been launched from Pakistan. There is a question, which I hope we will come on to, about exactly what role the Pakistan

army and the ISI has played in that comeback. But the notion that the militants who we are fighting can scurry across a line, after which NATO or the US does not follow, means that they have an inviolate sanctuary. If you have military experience, you know the importance of that—to be able to retreat, rest and retrain forces and pour more troops in is absolutely indispensable. That is a problem that we simply cannot address.

**Sean Langan:** That is the other reason why the situation has been described by the Foreign Secretary as strategic stalemate in Helmand: the existence of a sanctuary across the border.

**Professor Gregory:** Can I add one other thing that is also key, and keeps being missed? Pakistan, the tribal areas and northern Baluchistan are all so important because they are the main arteries of NATO logistics. Paradoxically, something like 80% of NATO and US matériel and logistics and 40% of the fuel passes through Pakistan. We offload it in Karachi, and it pops up somewhere on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border between one and three weeks later. The modalities of what happens in between are largely left to the Pakistanis. When you know that, basically, there are three main crossing points that go through northern Baluchistan and the others through the tribal areas, you see that it is important to view that as a sort of jugular vein. The Pakistanis can switch the logistics line on and off. Let me give an example of that. Last year, exasperated by the fact that the Pakistanis were not moving against militants in the tribal areas, the Americans launched ground incursions on, I believe, 12, 24 and 25 September. The day after the Americans launched those incursions, which were deeply resented in Pakistan, the Pakistanis shut down NATO supply routes into Afghanistan. We have seen in the past six to eight months a huge escalation in attacks on those routes. My understanding is that a specific Taliban commander, Haji Omar, has been deployed to harass NATO and US supply lines. I think that the newspapers today or yesterday were carrying a story about assaults in which the Taliban had taken possession of American vehicles—Humvees. They are either destroying or interdicting the logistics. They are attacking depots outside Peshawar where lorries are backed up because of the slow movement of traffic through the crossing points. We have to understand that the FATA and northern Beluchistan are important not just because of their implications for the war in Afghanistan but in relation to logistics.

**Q39 Sir John Stanley:** Could you give us your assessment of the policy that has been adopted from time to time by the Pakistan Government and which is now being adopted locally—for example, in the Swat valley—under which a ceasefire is traded for concessions for the application of Sharia law, taking women and girls out of education, and basically a significant transfer of political control to fundamentalists? Do you assess that as being a sensible way to proceed? Alternatively, do you see it as a policy of what we would in an earlier age have called appeasement, which is likely to lead to our

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reaping the whirlwind in security terms, and to destabilisation in Pakistan and probably more widely in the long term?

**Sean Langan:** Reaping the whirlwind is definitely an issue. Just backtracking slightly, yes, there have been peace deals in the past few years in Waziristan with Baitullah Mehsud. The American forces noticed that when a peace deal was done in the tribal areas, attacks on American forces would spike, and when there was fighting in the tribal areas, fighting across the border would go down. Those are the data collected by American forces. To backtrack slightly to the context to your question, it is also very clear that the Taliban groups that do not fight Pakistan forces in the tribal areas rarely come under attack by the Pakistan military. Those who are based in the tribal areas and are fighting in Afghanistan against the British and Americans, like Jalaluddin Haqqani and Siraj Haqqani, who is in charge of the eastern command of the Taliban now, are very much left alone. They were rarely caught up in fighting until the recent fighting in Bajaur. The political party the JUI, which was in power in the North-West Frontier province until last year, set up a lot of negotiations and peace deals while openly proselytising in the mosque about the need for jihad in Afghanistan. The MMU were one of the partners with Musharraf in the Pakistani Parliament. In fact, I was visiting the North-West Frontier province when Zarqawi in Iraq was killed, and the Parliament took a vote, which I think was successful, on a two-minute silence for Zarqawi. These are the people who are making peace deals with the militants, and it has done nothing to stop the spread—the Talibanisation—from that area right into Peshawar and down across the whole of Pakistan. The idea that they could contain these militants and use them as proxies was playing with fire, and it has proven unsuccessful. To draw back from that, I must say that, although the Taliban are often described as the Afghan Taliban, it is debatable whether they were born out of, and created by, the tribal areas of Pakistan, with the help of the ISI. When the Taliban swept up through Afghanistan, from 1994–96, it was—as now—with recruits from the madrassahs who poured out of the tribal areas with Pakistan weapons. It was developed under Bhutto as a proxy force for the Pakistanis, just as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed in Kashmir were proxy forces. Pakistan proxy forces were created by Pakistan, and they may not be under their control now, but they are still used by them and deals are still made with them, and one thing I have noticed is that they have coalesced with the Taliban and al-Qaeda. The people holding me were in contact with Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's No. 2, and with Lashkar-e-Taiba. My guides were Lashkar-e-Taiba, under the pay, they informed me, of the ISI. They had fought in Kashmir. The people who brought me over from Kunar were also connected to the Pakistan plotters behind the failed liquid bomb attack on British planes in 2006. These people, some of whom are making peace deals, are increasingly coalescing, and elements in the Pakistani establishment still hope to secure peace deals with them.

**Professor Gregory:** I broadly agree. However, if we are at least to start to grasp the complexity of the situation, we need to separate the two main groups, leaving aside al-Qaeda for a moment. There is a big throughput of fighters for the Afghan Taliban from the Pakistani madrassahs, as Sean says, and that includes many Afghan refugees, as well as Afghans whose families send them for all sorts of reasons to madrassahs on the Pakistan side of the border. The Afghan Taliban agenda is the control of Afghanistan, and that, broadly, is what Pakistan wants. It does not want the Karzai Government, who are permissive of Indian influence, and it does not want NATO and the US in theatre, because they complicate Pakistan's own calculus and prop up Karzai and Indian influence. So, whether you believe that Pakistan and the ISI actively support or merely tolerate the Afghan Taliban, the critical point is that the Pakistanis do not have any motivation to go after those groups, because they serve Pakistan's long-term strategic interest in the region. That is different from Pakistan Taliban groups—Baitullah Mehsud's group, for example—whose aim is the Pakistani state. They want it overthrown, because they consider it to be pro-western, and they want it to become a much more radical, fundamental state. The paradox is that some in the army and the ISI—I think the army and the ISI, full stop—believe that they can have their cake and eat it. They believe that they can continue to deal with the Afghan Taliban in terms of their long-term interests in Afghanistan, but contain the Pakistani Taliban. There is an interesting dynamic here. The Americans and others have been putting Pakistan under pressure for many years to move against Mullah Omar. Everybody knows that he is sitting there with his shura in Quetta in northern Baluchistan, but the Pakistanis fiercely resist doing that, partly because Mullah Omar's Taliban serve their interests. However, in recent months, an understanding has emerged that Mullah Omar is in some senses checking the power of the TTP. In other words, Mullah Omar is now saying to the Pakistani state and the ISI, "I know that the Americans are putting you under intense pressure, but you must not move against us, because if you do, we will unleash the full force of the TTP and so on." My understanding is that, although the Taliban are decentralised, Mullah Omar has become hugely powerful on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border.

**Sean Langan:** In relation to the question about reaping the whirlwind, dealing with these people is like mutually-assured destruction, but unlike the Soviet Union and the United States, some of the people cannot wait to be martyred. When you describe it, it can seem quite complex, but the sum total is that Pakistan is on the precipice. It has lost control. It is an incredibly critical situation that has enormous impact in Afghanistan and here in Britain, because of the close links. When you step back from the detail—it can be very confusing with all the acronyms for all these groups—I have discovered on the ground a much greater overlap. We talk about Baitullah Mehsud, pro-Pakistan Taliban, Afghan Taliban and so on, but these people

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know each other. It is a rural society, and there is a great overlap. They are coming together much more after 30 years of war. However, the sum picture is a very bleak one, I think.

**Chairman:** We must make some progress, so I ask the witnesses just to hold on.

**Q40 Sir John Stanley:** Did you have a concluding point?

**Professor Gregory:** I suppose I want to slightly condition what Sean just said by saying that the question that we need to ask at some point is: what is preventing the Pakistan army and the ISI from going decisively after the Afghan Taliban and other Taliban-related groups on their side of the border? The answer is that they still believe that the Taliban will serve their regional, strategic interests. They do not believe, therefore, that they have lost full control of those groups or that those groups now imperil the state of Pakistan.

**Q41 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Some of the terrorist attacks in this country, especially in London, have been linked to the troubled areas and to al-Qaeda or associated groups. Is the threat still a very real one? How worried should we be?

**Professor Gregory:** Let us look at the figures in the public domain. As the Prime Minister repeated recently, we have some 75% of those who the security services are watching in relation to planned or intended plots in this country. That number seems to float somewhere between 1,600 and 2,000 individuals in the UK about whom the security services know. Some 75% of those are of Pakistani origin. The interesting figure is that only 43% of UK Muslims are of Pakistani origin, so clearly something is going on here in relation to the flow of expertise, training and so on. I think that there are some 400,000 movements of individuals between the UK and Pakistan each year, so it is an enormous two-way flow. Of course, not everyone going to Pakistan, or vice versa, is a terrorist. However, the conduits are in place. The FATA has become so important not only because of the presence of al-Qaeda and related groups, but because many of the groups to which UK-based terrorists have been linked in the past, such as the 7/7 bombers, spent time at Lashkar-e-Taiba training camps in Azad Jammu and Kashmir as part of their training in Pakistan. Many of those groups, as I mentioned at the outset, have relocated to the FATA, so not only is it completely beyond the reach of the west and, perhaps, of the Pakistan army, but we need to see it as a tremendous concentration of militancy and of knowledge and skills. The paradox is that many of the groups that are passing on this knowledge on insurgency, terrorism and so on are the ones that, in the past, were trained in insurgency by the Pakistan army or by the ISI: Afghan, Taliban, LET, Jaish-e-Mohammed, etc.

**Sean Langan:** From my own experiences on the ground, first in Kashmir in 1998 and then in Afghanistan, where I visited training camps during the Taliban regime, including Pakistan militant Jaish-e-Mohammed training camps, and in my last

few years in Afghanistan, I would concur with British intelligence, which has said that it poses the greatest strategic threat to British national security. This is where it is slightly separate to the Afghan Taliban. Afghans do not travel well. It is much more in Pakistan. All the Pakistan militant groups that were set up initially to fight Indian forces in Kashmir signed up to al-Qaeda in 1998, including Harkat al-Ansar. They changed their names, but these Pakistan militant groups, which were initially configured to fight in that region, have signed up to the global jihad. They are in the tribal areas. I have met members of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was held largely responsible for the Mumbai attacks. It is said—I have seen it on the ground and I concur—that al-Qaeda, logistically, has tapped into these Pakistan militant groups, which now provide the logistical ability and capability of al-Qaeda. Lashkar-e-Taiba has a desire to be on the global stage. Because of the problems with America, Britain is seen as the soft underbelly. It is the Trojan horse—the way to get into the west, because of the close links between Pakistan and Britain, the high number of dual nationality passports and the numbers of people crossing and going between the two countries every year. On average, visitors from Britain spend 40 days a year in Pakistan, which is enough to go to a wedding, but also to receive training in the tribal areas. These people are very focused. They have time and space, and they are planning the next attacks in London. If someone asked me, I would say that when the next attack occurs in mainland Britain it will be linked back to these groups in the tribal areas. It is a case of when, not if.

**Q42 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** It sounds as though we have invaded the wrong country. Does it follow from what you say that if we succeeded in Afghanistan in pacifying the country, supporting the Government there and driving out the training bases and so on, that would not do any good, because the real threat comes from the Pakistani side of the border and, in fact, there could be a switch from Afghanistan to the tribal areas? So Afghanistan is not the key to our security.

**Sean Langan:** Certainly not. It was only ever a host to al-Qaeda and the host has changed—it is now Pakistan. Al-Qaeda and the Pakistan militant groups, which always had links, are very close now. In fact, I would question the point, even if we stabilise Afghanistan. My impression of what Shaun has said, and what I feel very strongly, is that we cannot pacify Afghanistan or solve any of the problems there without first dealing with Pakistan. We need bases, primarily for British national security interests, but the threat comes from within Pakistan not Afghanistan. Even with the problems in Afghanistan we must first deal with the tribal areas. I have read Shaun's written evidence and we are both speaking today. I am not saying this only to salvage any small chance I have of ever getting a visa again from the British High Commission here in London—

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**Chairman:** You mean the Pakistani High Commission.

**Sean Langan:** The Pakistani High Commission. It is worth mentioning that the policy of using terrorist groups as proxies was not dreamt up by Pakistan. It was developed and funded by America, Saudi Arabia and the UK during the jihad against the Soviet Union. That is when Inter-Services Intelligence was created, or reconfigured, to become an organisation that ran a jihad. I wanted to say that, but not only for visa reasons. It is worth mentioning.

**Q43 Chairman:** It is 30 years on. We can look at the origins, but we are dealing with the situation now.

**Sean Langan:** It is interesting that you mention 30 years. What do we do now? The Islamisation process of the ISI, and dealing with those proxy forces has fed back into the Pakistan establishment. It thought that it could hold these proxy forces at arm's length, but there has been a cross-fertilisation. The problem of Pakistan and the strategic threat to Britain will not be dealt with in Afghanistan or by mowing the lawn—mowing down young Taliban in Helmand province. It will take a concerted effort and needs to counterbalance 30 years of the process whereby billions and billions of dollars have been funnelled into Pakistan and the madrassahs from Saudi Arabia.

**Q44 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Could I ask Professor Gregory about the possibility of nuclear terrorism having its origins in Pakistan? You gave some interesting written evidence and I would like you to expand on that, particularly if you can give any evidence for it.

**Professor Gregory:** When I first went to Pakistan, my background in no small measure was on the nuclear side. I looked at that very carefully over a number of years with the close collaboration of the Pakistan strategic plans division—the organisation within the army that deals with the command and control, and safety and security of Pakistan's nuclear weapons. After Pakistan became an overt nuclear weapons state with the weapons test in '98, it was keen to reassure the west that it had tight control of those weapons. It therefore opened the door to people like me with a degree of nuclear expertise and I had access to people at the very highest levels inside the SPD. I can report that the Pakistanis have in place very robust measures for the safety and security of their nuclear weapons. It is important to put on the record what that means for us in the west. A second reason—there are many others—why we cannot leverage or put serious meaningful pressure on Pakistan is not only because it has its hands on our jugular through the logistics, but because the Pakistan army and the ISI are all that stands between nuclear weapons and the terrorists. I have called this a custodial strategy. In other words, the Americans will put up with almost anything the Pakistanis do—within limits—as long as they keep tight control of their nukes and stop those weapons from getting into the hands of terrorists. Do I think that the Pakistanis have

completely secured their nuclear weapons against the terrorist threat or nuclear-related technologies? The answer to that is a firm no. I have written extensively about this; there is a short paper on my website should members of the Committee want to have a look. It essentially boils down to a number of issues. First, paradoxically, is the very interesting geographical issue that when the Pakistanis developed their nuclear weapons, their principal concern was that they would be subject to being overrun by the Indian army if it poured across the Pakistan-Indian border, across the Lahore plains. They therefore moved all the nuclear weapons infrastructure to the north and west of Islamabad, so that the key centres are at Wah, Taxila and so forth. There are one or two exceptions, such as Sargodha, which is not in that area. But a substantial proportion of Pakistan's nuclear weapons-related infrastructure is to the north and west of Islamabad, which is of course close to the tribal areas and precisely the instability that we have been discussing this afternoon. That was not on Pakistan's agenda when it was making early decisions about its nuclear weapons.

There are two or three areas of concern for us. One is that there is evidence in the public domain of there being direct contact between some of those who have nuclear weapons-related experience and know-how, and al-Qaeda.

**Q45 Chairman:** Are you referring to A. Q. Khan?

**Professor Gregory:** No, I am not. A. Q. Khan is a side issue which I would be more than happy to talk about. There is a documented example of two very senior Pakistan atomic energy commission individuals—Chaudhry and another one, whose name I forget.

**Sean Langan:** I know about them meeting Osama bin Laden.

**Professor Gregory:** They went to meet bin Laden in 2001. The Pakistanis tried to dismiss this as irrelevant, but A. Q. Khan tells us that it is not knowledge of specific individuals that matters; what matters is the relationship between those individuals and the networks that they can reach—that is a very important meeting. One of the dynamics that we need to be worried about is the risk of transfer in that way. Another is the direct physical threat to these weapons and weapons-related infrastructure. They could, for instance be blown up, or catch fire and could certainly create a radiological hazard. If that sounds implausible, last year suicide bombers attacked one of the entrance points to Wah cantonment—a weapons production facility where part of nuclear weapons are thought to be assembled. Another huge issue of concern—certainly in my research—was the possibility of collusion between those with extremist, Islamist sympathies inside the army and the ISI, with terrorists or extremists. The Pakistanis have put a huge amount of effort into trying to mitigate that problem. But they recognise, as we all do, that you cannot have 100% assurance that the people who have day-to-day control over nuclear weapons are wholly reliable in that way. As Sean said earlier, one

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of the key dynamics here is what might broadly be called the Islamisation of the Pakistan army and of the ISI, which has been under way since the time of Zia-ul-Haq. There are at least three or four major areas of concern for us in this nuclear-terrorist relationship.

**Chairman:** We could obviously explore these matters in greater detail, and if you would like to send us a note afterwards, we would be happy to receive it. However, we need to move on to some other areas.

**Q46 Ms Gisela Stuart:** That leads very nicely to what I wanted to ask. To what extent do you think that the policy aims of the ISI and the military are the same? Much more to the point, what degree of control do you think the new Pakistani Government have over the military?

**Professor Gregory:** My own view is that there is virtually no separation any more. I know that during the 1980s and the years of the Soviet-Afghan war, huge amounts of American and Saudi money poured directly into the ISI and, as a consequence, the ISI to some extent became empowered as a state within a state. Actually the situation has changed profoundly since then. It began to change after the end of the Soviet conflict, but it has certainly been tightened up since the military coup in 1999. When President Musharraf came to London in September 2006, he gave an interview to *The Times* in which he was quoted as saying that the ISI is a disciplined force doing what the military Government tell it to do. That is virtually verbatim. What were Musharraf's grounds for saying that? I have written a lengthy paper about the ISI.

**Q47 Ms Stuart:** That was Musharraf. I am worried about post-Musharraf and the current Government.

**Professor Gregory:** Of course. Let me go through this bit, and I will then get to that. Musharraf introduced the notion of rotation, or at least he developed the notion of rotation, so 80% of the ISI is comprised of army officers who rotate into the ISI for between two and three years. Not only that, but there has been a series of changes in terms of the leadership of the ISI away from individuals such as Hamid Gul and others who are deeply sympathetic to Islamists to people who are considered to be more pro-Western. When it comes to post-Musharraf, Kiani is chief of staff, and you may have noticed that in the immediate aftermath of Kiani's appointment, an individual called Taj was appointed director-general of the ISI. The Americans did not like Taj, and put the army under intense pressure to replace him with someone called Pasha, who is now the director-general of the ISI. That tells me that the Pakistan army wants at least to convey to the west that it is serious about keeping pro-west individuals and being responsive to the west, and particularly the American agenda. My view is that the practical changes that have been introduced, particularly rotation—by the way, that still leaves the other 20% of the ISI who are career servers and operatives and so on—essentially tied the army and the ISI extraordinarily closely together under Musharraf. I am not saying that at the fringes of the organisation,

individuals are not acting alone or even under the influence of foreign intelligence agencies, or have not seen local opportunities in relation to drugs and so on to do a little on the side, but the ISI and the Pakistan army are broadly one and the same beast.

**Q48 Ms Stuart:** What about the Government?

**Sean Langan:** After the atrocities in Mumbai, Zardari immediately announced that he was sending the head of the ISI to India, and that was an incredibly critical moment between the two countries and neighbours. He announced that he was dispatching the head of the ISI, and it then turned out that that was a clerical error, and that the Prime Minister had not asked permission from the right people, so it was vetoed and someone else was sent. That is a clear indication of who tells what to whom. The ISI has been described as a state within a state, but, even on paper, I think it remains a fact that the political Government have no control over foreign policy and nuclear policy. The most important strategic areas of government are under the direct control of the military, and there is no pretence that they are otherwise. From my experience in Pakistan over the years—I spent a lot of time with Benazir Bhutto—I cannot imagine that the situation is very different with her husband running things. He is seen in the same light by the military establishment. Benazir Bhutto had very little control and was pretty powerless. By all accounts, the same state of affairs exists today. Turning to the other side of the question that you asked me, I am not sure how monolithic the situation is. There is hope for British efforts to convince elements of the Pakistan military that the future lies with closer ties with India and in the Commonwealth, because a strong Anglophile strain of influence exists in the military. Although ISI it is made up of military people, it has its own ethos and cadre, and I would not say that it is a monolithic block. Clearly, politicians are in office, but not in power.

**Q49 Ms Stuart:** I have two questions on FATA and dealing with militancy. First, to what extent are the Government committed to dealing with it? Secondly, and more to the point, do they have the money, given the resources that are needed and the poverty of the area?

**Sean Langan:** There was a recent large-scale operation in Bajaur, which I would say is the classic safe haven. The fact that hundreds of thousands of refugees left the area and crossed the border was, to me, a sign that the Pakistan military operation must have been real. Unlike previous operations in other areas, the scale of the fighting was such that people left the area in large numbers. That began last August or September, I think, and it is ongoing. The fighting or the Taliban moved to Swat because it was like pressing down on one part of a balloon—it reappeared somewhere else. The Pakistan military have said that they were being provided with weapons for those operations on that occasion. I think the figure is \$12 billion that they have received under Bush—since Bush—most of which has been in

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military aid. Bajaur is just one agency out of the seven, and I am sure that what I saw there is not dissimilar from the other agencies, where there are not such operations. Before that operation, there was a complete lack of Pakistan military presence. The Frontier Corps and the military and police stations were flattened, as if a joint direct attack munition had been dropped on them. That was a clear sign from the Taliban that that is Taliban country. You would have seen no sign of the Pakistan military in the streets. I am talking about not the middle of the mountains, but tarmac roads. There would be a checkpoint, manned by two men, but even as a British man in a land where foreigners are banned, being driven there by a mullah and a Taliban, I was waved through the checkpoints. So the security is pretty tight.

**Professor Gregory:** We must not get seduced by the idea that if we can simply give the Pakistanis more money or material, they can or will make a difference in Bajaur. As Sean said, they have had billions of dollars, but look where they have gone. They have gone into the kind of military hardware that is useful only in relation to India. They have gone, to some extent, on propping up Pakistan's balance of trade. Paradoxically, they have also gone towards expanding the economic presence and role of the military. The military has been buying up half of Pakistan—land, ports, companies, fishing and so on.

**Q50 Mr. Illsley:** I think you have covered most of the questions I was going to ask about the Pakistani military and how it has selected targets in FATA and so on. What are the consequences, or the effects, of the recent decision to impose Sharia law in the North-West Frontier province? I know that in the west and the UK, the phrase "Sharia law" conjures up all manner of images, but what have been the practical effects?

**Professor Gregory:** I would say a couple of things about that. We need to keep in our minds the kind of dispensation that existed in Swat and elsewhere before. In other words, there is a track record of Sharia and other local forms of justice and law being tolerated and accepted. The introduction of Sharia is not, on one level, a great capitulation in its own terms. But that is not the significant thing, really—it is to whom the Pakistanis have ceded this area. Fazlullah, in particular, who has taken de facto control over the region, is a murderous thug, at the end of the day. The forms of Sharia that have been introduced and have been operating there in the past few months are brutal and barbaric. It is hugely significant not so much that we worry about Sharia per se, but how that Sharia is expressed and who is in control of the region. It is important in another way: Swat is not part of FATA, but is in what is termed the settled areas. That is hugely important, because for this to have taken place in part of the settled areas, relatively close to Islamabad in real terms, is very significant. One other issue to introduce is the notion of the Indus River, which runs down through Pakistan and which serves in a way as a mental metaphor, I guess, for the elite that runs Pakistan. As

long as the violence is on the west side of the Indus, to some extent, it can be tolerated and dealt with—as long as it is not impacting Punjab, Islamabad and other places on the eastern side of the Indus. That is why the Marriott bombing last year was so hugely important: it was a major shock to Pakistan's elite, and it explains to some extent—as I have said before—the way in which Pakistan, to some degree, has now become dependent on Omar's ability to check the TTP and the TNSM.

**Q51 Chairman:** May I ask you a couple of quick questions about the US role in Pakistan—the air strikes that took place? What are the consequences in terms of both the impact on any threat to US and western interests from al-Qaeda, and the consequences in Pakistan?

**Sean Langan:** I have been on the ground a lot there. A congressional hearing last week, I think, described as a colossal foreign policy failure the support that Bush provided for Musharraf. I believe Britain is already paying the price, with the attacks on the British mainland, and will continue to pay the price for following that failed Bush policy, which was to prop up Musharraf, who had a very blatant dual policy to support and fund the Taliban. Some of the \$12 billion—it has been commented on by the American military, and I have seen it myself—has wound its way back into funding the Taliban, and ended up being spent on killing British and American soldiers. The years of the US policy of propping Musharraf while quashing democracy and the civil society in Pakistan—Musharraf had a policy of funding, as Sean has pointed out, using the Taliban as a proxy force, and I have seen direct evidence of the supply lines—has been a failure.

**Q52 Chairman:** But specifically, in the Obama transition period, we have seen continuation of the policy of using air strikes.

**Sean Langan:** Can I finish on that? On one level they have been incredibly successful with the Predator drone and Hellfire missile strikes, which Obama has continued. There are always military successes and their wider implications. It is playing with fire and I think Osama bin Laden is more popular in Pakistan among the average people, when these surveys are done, than Bush was. That is perhaps a question of degree. Part of me thinks it is diplomacy by fire. But at the same time, it sent a very clear message to Pakistan. These people were there and everyone knew they were there. These missiles have been hitting their targets. It is perhaps too early to tell. What with everything else in Pakistan, everything is on the brink.

**Q53 Chairman:** But what impact has it had on al-Qaeda?

**Sean Langan:** I think it has had an impact on al-Qaeda.

**Professor Gregory:** I was going to echo some of what Sean said. Essentially there is a real conundrum here. You can understand from an American military point of view why, in the face of obfuscation of the

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Pakistan army and in the knowledge of certain al-Qaeda assets in the FATA, they feel the need to use air strikes. I can see the military imperative for this, but it is absolutely clear that these air strikes are radicalising young Pakistanis. There is a very well known quote that Baitullah Mehsud gave in an interview to *The News* or *Dawn* last year. He said that he would come into a town or village and he struggled to get 10 to 15 fighters, but if he came in the aftermath of an American air strike, he could get 150.

**Sean Langan:** I would disagree. For three months I am sitting in a house, and the tribal family can hear the CIA drones flying overhead. On one night I would hear a drone and a faint sound of the missile being fired and a little poof. Two days later on the World Service, I heard how an al-Qaeda house had been hit in Damadola, just across from where I was. I am sitting with a bunch of tribal people and they are completely acclimatised to the hum—the deep bee-like sound—of a drone. They do not have television, but they are used to hearing CIA drones every night. They are aware of it. It is precision bombing. It is not like the munitions being dropped in Afghanistan where there are civilian casualties. There have been civilian casualties, but it is not the same as the aerial bombing of Afghanistan on compounds. Many civilian lives have been lost. These are accurate munitions and there have been 29 strikes. What I have heard on the ground is that people are aware that these are precision strikes and they are hitting, to use the American parlance, the bad guys. I do not think that it is adding much more to the anti-American feeling that already exists. It is happening anyway. I do not know whether it has made a big difference.

**Q54 Chairman:** Perhaps, Professor Gregory, you can confirm my interpretation of what you said: the perception in wider Pakistani society is that it acts as recruitment for radicalisation?

**Professor Gregory:** Absolutely. I have given you the quote from Mehsud. I accept some of what Sean has said, but I disagree with other elements of it. There are two other issues that we must not lose sight of here. First, this is seen as a violation of Pakistan's sovereignty. That plays very badly in terms of western and anti-western sympathies, particularly in the Pakistan army and ISI. They resent this. It is fuelling that sentiment, which obviously has the knock-on effects that we have been talking about. The other concern is that although Sean is right that some of these strikes have been very good in terms of the intel. They have killed al-Qaeda leaders and possibly Rashid Rauf and so on. Others have not done that. Others have fallen on villages and killed innocent people. Indeed, one of them struck Pakistani soldiers and killed 11 of them. That played very badly indeed inside the Pakistan army, I can tell you. That is an issue. The third point about these strikes, aside from fanning general anti-western and pro-Islamist sympathies in Pakistan in the army and ISI, is the danger that they will provoke wider unrest in the tribal areas. At the moment, there are

thousands of potential fighters there who are staying out of this for one reason or another. There is just a possibility of the so-called rising of the Lashkar.

**Chairman:** I have to bring in the last questioner because we have gone way over time.

**Q55 Mr. Horam:** My question is simple. In the light of the dangerous situation that you have described graphically, what is the right US and UK strategy towards Pakistan?

**Sean Langan:** Thank you for asking that question. It is not military. My answer goes back to the quotation from the US general about what NATO is doing in Afghanistan being like mowing the lawn. It will not be achieved by Predator missile strikes. I believe that the key is Pakistan. It will need an enormous diplomatic effort on the part of Britain and America to convince Pakistan to support them and not to use a stick, or the modern day equivalent of a stick.

**Q56 Mr. Horam:** To convince them that there is an existential threat to the Pakistan state?

**Sean Langan:** I think that there is finally hope on the horizon after so many years. Let us not forget that ISI was itself attacked in Rawalpindi last year by the militants. I genuinely believe that the wider public in Pakistan are aware that an existential threat is posed by this Frankenstein's monster.

**Q57 Mr. Horam:** So the Americans have to convince them of that. What policy should they have? Is it a matter of finance or of diplomacy?

**Sean Langan:** This is the key. They have been talking about Petraeus's success in Iraq and the Sunni Awakening, in which Sunnis were turned against al-Qaeda. The key to Afghanistan and Pakistan is to turn ISI, first and foremost, rather like the Sunnis were turned.

**Q58 Mr. Horam:** Is that doable?

**Sean Langan:** That is the question. There has been a de-Islamicisation process under Musharraf. He sacked a number of groups. It must be put in harsh terms to Pakistan that it is in a do-or-die situation. I believe that the American military has been speaking in harsh terms vis-à-vis the strikes. It is for Parliament to ask what the FCO is doing—vis-à-vis the strategic threat in Britain—to tell the Pakistan Government that they have to make stark choices for their future and survival. ISI needs to be turned, but I do not know if that is possible. On the wider level, the diplomatic route works. As we have said, this process has been going on for 30 years. We have spent £12 billion buying F-16 fighter jets that have not been used and it is costing Britain money to station forces in Helmand. Some money and an enormous effort should be put into state education in Pakistan to start to close down the madrassahs.

**Q59 Mr. Horam:** Are the Saudis still funding the madrassahs?

**Sean Langan:** There are hundreds of thousands of madrassahs.

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**Mr. Horam:** That is Saudi charitable money; not Government money.

**Sean Langan:** I think more and more it is private money. The Saudi official policy previously was to export the Wahhabi, anti-American, anti-western view. I have been to madrassahs. They get children at the age of 5 and by 15 they are—

**Chairman:** Members of the Committee went to a madrassah on a visit to the region.

**Sean Langan:** An enormous effort is needed. I would not want to sit here and—

**Q60 Chairman:** Do you agree with that Professor Gregory?

**Professor Gregory:** No. I agree with the diagnosis, but the treatment is not practical. ISI cannot be turned in that way. Anybody who reads about Pakistani history and about the Pressler sanctions will know that it cannot be done. I would suggest four ways forward. First, NATO and the United States have to reduce their strategic dependence on Pakistan to enhance their leverage over it. As long as we are vulnerable, we cannot exercise leverage.

**Chairman:** Professor Gregory, Mr. Langan, I regret that we must conclude our discussion because of other meetings. We have run over our period of time. I thank you both for coming. It has been extremely valuable. If you wish to follow up with any notes on issues that have not been communicated, you can do so through our Clerk and we will deal with them.

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## Wednesday 25 March 2009

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Mr Fabian Hamilton  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Andrew Mackinlay

Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Sir John Stanley  
Ms Gisela Stuart

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*Witnesses:* **Dr Jonathan Goodhand**, Lecturer, School of Oriental and African Studies and **Elizabeth Winter**, Researcher and Social Scientist, Adviser to the British Agencies Afghanistan Group, gave evidence.

**Q61 Chairman:** I apologise to our witnesses for starting a little bit late—we had some important business to sort out. Welcome to this session. You are both experts on Afghanistan. For the record, would you introduce yourselves?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I am special adviser to the British Agencies Afghanistan Group (BAAG) on policy and advocacy, and also to the European Network of Non-Governmental Organisations in Afghanistan (ENNA). I also act as an independent consultant to the United Nations, Governments and Afghan civil society.

**Dr. Goodhand:** I am from the Department of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies. I have been doing research on Afghanistan for many years.

**Q62 Chairman:** I am going to begin by asking you some questions about what has happened since 2001. How important is the reform of the security sector to the future of Afghanistan, and what is your assessment of the current position and how things are going?

**Elizabeth Winter:** It is obviously extremely important and it has been going very slowly. There have been some gains. The Afghan National Army has improved in strength and quality, but the Afghan National Police force is lagging distinctly behind. Afghans certainly do not feel secure in their own country, and neither do people who go there to work, whether with the UN or Governments or as aid workers. One reason is that security was not given the importance that it should have had right at the beginning. Research shows that if you treat it as one of the key factors in developing a state or in bringing it back to function, you have a better chance of its being workable. That lesson was lost at the beginning.

**Q63 Chairman:** Why was that?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I do not think that I have the real answer to that, except to say that we had a lead-nation status programme in Afghanistan which meant that countries were taking lead responsibility for particular issues, and security sector reform was divided up. For example, the Germans initially did the training of the army and the police. The Americans have come in with a lot of pressure and money now, and things may change and improve. The British, for example, took the lead in counter-narcotics and so on. This kind of stovepiping

perhaps led to responsibilities not being taken as seriously or as jointly, or in as co-ordinated a fashion, as they should have been.

**Dr. Goodhand:** One very important point to make here is that the reform of the security sector was basically a reflection of external priorities. Initially, the priority of the US was pursuing a war on terror. Because of that, a number of things happened that, arguably, undermined the potential for long-term sustainable security-sector reform. First, CIA funding of military strongmen in the provinces, in order to pursue the war, contributed to the fragmentation of the means of coercion. Secondly, it prioritised the army over the police—essentially, prioritising war fighting over the security of Afghans. It has generally been seen, as the witness said, that stovepiping reflected priorities. The army was prioritised, reform of the police essentially was delayed, and when the reforms happened there was a wholesale incorporation of militias into the police force, which has continued to be a problem today. Finally, there were delays with the legal pillar, which the Italians were leading. Most people believed that this was the laggard, if you like, in the security sector reform process, so we are still grappling with the problem of the rule of law and legal reform now.

**Q64 Chairman:** So this is really a criticism of the European Union—the EUPOL system—and divisions within the EU, whereby it is not joined up, because one country was doing one part and another country was doing another part. Is that a fair criticism?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think it is fair to say that none of the countries has been joined up, not just the EU ones, although as you know we argue in our paper that there should be a stronger European lead on various things. One of the problems has been with the police. Where do you find the mentors and trainers to go out to Afghanistan? The UK has been asked to provide some and is finding it extremely difficult, because people here are saying, “Sorry, we need them here; we can’t actually send them out to Afghanistan to train people there.” So, I think that it is difficult for everyone. At least it has been recognised now that this is an issue that has to be taken seriously and something needs to be done. Our concern, however, is that there are actions of desperation now in Afghanistan—people wanting to get out, wanting an exit strategy, as Obama has been saying recently. Therefore, they are setting up things

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that perhaps in the short term might appear to be answers but in the long term are not. So the Afghan Public Protection Force—the force that we talk about in which communities are asked to defend themselves—is rather short-sighted. It is going to be armed with Kalashnikovs, and so on. It seems to me a desperate situation in which we are saying, “We”—the international forces and the Afghan forces—“cannot provide security for you, so you have to do it for yourself.” We risk enormous amounts of problems with local, anti-Government elements, getting taken over by people who are local power-holders. It may be setting up problems in the long term. There is no quick fix and we all have to decide that we are in it for the long term and have to be wise in how we spend our money and plan to improve things in the country.

**Dr. Goodhand:** The security sector reform has not been an out-and-out failure. The reform of the ANA is generally regarded as a successful part of the SSR process. The US took the lead on that. There has been a level of success there. I think that \$6 billion has been spent on the police force. It was described in a report last year by Andrew Wilder as a shop for selling jobs. There have been major problems. That also reflects the failure to reform the Ministry of Interior—it is a reflection of a more deep-seated problem. The police force is clearly the challenge being faced at the moment. There is a worrying trend, which we were just talking about, towards the paramilitarisation of security sector institutions, which should essentially be about protecting Afghans’ lives and security. They are now increasingly skewed towards counter-insurgency measures.

**Q65 Chairman:** Is one of the problems that all that money you referred to has gone in but has not actually got down? Elements of it—significant amounts—have somehow been leaked out to people’s personal income at either central or local level, and it has not got down to paying the people on the ground who are supposed to be doing the job. Is that true?

**Elizabeth Winter:** People are very poorly paid, whether they are Government officials or police, and that certainly is an element. The positive side is that, as Jonathan was saying, it is not a total failure. There is currently an effective Minister in charge of the Ministry of Interior. There is a much more coherent policy for security sector reform in the Afghan Government.

**Q66 Chairman:** How long has he been there?

**Elizabeth Winter:** Two or three months. He is a relatively new appointment; originally he was at the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, and then the Ministry of Education.

**Dr. Goodhand:** It is true that aid is not filtering down, but it is not just about greedy Afghans grabbing the aid. There is a whole infrastructure, which is kind of auto-consuming the aid—I am thinking here of private sector contractors and security firms. A lot of the money is not even leaving Washington, so there is another part of this story.

**Q67 Sir John Stanley:** When members of the Committee last saw police training taking place in Afghanistan—some three years ago now—we saw new police recruits coming in to be trained, and we were told that a significant number of them were illiterate. Is there any basic educational or literacy qualification for entry into the Afghan police force? If there is no such qualification, do you think—in an Afghanistan context—that that is a handicap?

**Elizabeth Winter:** It is a handicap. Many of them come in not just illiterate, but also barefoot—without any basic education or understanding of their role. They are also, I think, probably the group with the highest level of casualties—they are picked off all the time and blown up—so it is not a profession that people necessarily want to go into, either. That takes us back to education in Afghanistan, which was poorly invested in by the international community, both in terms of the refugees and in terms of Afghanistan itself. Even now, it is mainly primary school education that is funded, and it is very difficult to get money for secondary and tertiary education. That is storing up trouble for us, if we do not think about that and improve the way that we support and fund it.

**Dr. Goodhand:** You have to realise what Afghanistan is coming from in terms of its base levels. In its levels of literacy and so on, it is near the bottom of the international league. The criticism of the Germans, who were leading initially, was that their standards were almost too high, and did not reflect the needs of the actual context; it took a long time for officer training to happen. So there has been an attempt to start contextualising to some extent, but there are still very fundamental problems about equipment, salary, and mentoring post-training—basic follow-through, which has not happened to the extent necessary.

**Q68 Mr. Horam:** Even if this was a very great deal better than it obviously has been on the security front, there would still be the problem of insurgents disappearing over the border into Pakistan. As you were saying, the money and resources are probably increasingly skewed towards counter-insurgency. How do you solve that problem? That makes the situation almost impossible to solve, does it not?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I hope that it will not be impossible. It looks very difficult at the moment, and I think one of the reasons for that is that people were not willing to see what was going on in Pakistan. They were blinded by the fact that their diplomats were often telling them that Musharraf was at great risk and it was not advisable to put too much pressure on him. Instead, he was playing both ends against the middle, probably. He had his own people to satisfy as well, so he was certainly in a difficult position. But the information coming out of Afghanistan and Pakistan was contradictory, which meant that it was only fairly recently that people, including the American Government, started to say, “Actually, we need to deal with Pakistan.”

**Q69 Mr. Horam:** How do you deal with that problem?

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**Elizabeth Winter:** We need a long-term solution, with international assistance going in, in a wise way. The Government there is already very unpopular with its people, so long-term issues of governance are crucial. You have to deal with FATA—the fact that it is not part of the general policy in Pakistan. Ahmed Rashid writes very convincingly about this, and how you should deal with that now—the sooner, the better—by bringing FATA into Pakistan as a whole. None of these things will be easy and none will be solved quickly. It needs long-term commitment. It needs all the actors getting together and having a strategy, having benchmarks, and then actually judging them and looking at what is going on—and evaluating what they are doing. We are all pretty poor at evaluating the success of our programmes and are much more interested in throughput, as it were. We need to step back and ask Afghans and Pakistanis, “What have you experienced in our programmes? What has worked? What would you like us to do again, or expand? What has not worked? What should we forget about?” This is capacity development, in particular of Government Ministers and so on. There are horrendous tales of people being given vehicles and computers but not being given training. Consultants are coming in, and because the international community wants things done quickly, they are actually writing the reports rather than mentoring Afghans and helping them to do them. It is not entirely gloomy. There have been improvements, and Afghans are certainly a lot more able to talk on their own behalf now than they were in 2001. But there is still a long way to go, and there is a lot of patronising from foreigners.

**Dr. Goodhand:** May I come in on the question of Pakistan? Without going back into deep history, I think it is very important to understand this context. First of all, the Durand line has always been a point of contention between Pakistan and Afghanistan, and it is still disputed. Secondly, the Pakistani state has always had security concerns in relation to India, and it is trying to address those through what is called a policy of “strategic depth”, so it is attempting to find pliant neighbours in relation to its conflict with India. Thirdly, it has always supported—occasionally but quite consistently—radical Islamic groups to counterweight nationalist groups, particularly Pashtun and Baluch nationalism. To understand what is happening now, you have to understand that this is part of a long-term strategy and a long-term project of the Pakistani state. Unless the existential and security concerns of Pakistan are addressed somehow in relation to India and Kashmir, I do not think there will be a fundamental rethink. While Pakistan sees it as in its interests to pursue a policy based on asymmetrical warfare, it will continue to do so. It probably also goes back to the Bonn agreement; Pakistan felt that its concerns were not reflected in that agreement. It was essentially an elite pact between members of the Northern Alliance and international actors, which left out parts of the Pashtun south and the concerns of Pakistan.

**Q70 Mr. Horam:** Returning to the present, and the security problems we have in Afghanistan, how far do you feel that the justice system that they have

attempted to set up is part of the problem? It appears to me that you are trying to mix three different sorts of things—trying to mix traditional, tribal justice or modern, western-oriented types of justice with sharia law. Is that the case? Can it work?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think people have been fairly confused about it. As Jonathan has already said, the lead on this was given to the Italians initially and they found it very hard to make progress. People felt that they perhaps took the wrong approach in the beginning. They themselves blamed other members of the international community for not supporting them, but the upshot was that very little was done. I think there are ways in which the international forms of law and Islamic law can be complementary to each other. But what is happening at the moment is that people are falling back on traditional systems of dispute resolution, which are not particularly satisfactory. There are methods used, taking a bottom-up approach, by various civil society organisations that are helping with this, looking at the longer-term peacebuilding in Afghanistan, and they have been far more successful than the original traditional forms, because there are no losers. I can explain that further if you would like me to.

**Q71 Mr. Horam:** Are they compatible with traditional forms? Do they build on those or are they quite separate?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think they can build on them. I do not think they have to be entirely separate, but I think it is something that Afghans need to look at themselves, with some international assistance—working on those and looking at what protocols they have signed internationally and how they can be married together and what will actually work. I think the Afghans have, like other people, an innate sense of fairness, and that is what you need to strive for. Whether it uses sharia law, Islamic jurisprudence or western jurisprudence, or whatever, Afghanistan needs to develop something that will actually be fair in its outcomes for the people who need to have recourse to it.

**Dr. Goodhand:** The UN human development report last year argued strongly for an approach that engaged with the non-formal, customary law and sharia law. In Afghanistan now, 90% of disputes are resolved through the non-formal, rather than the state, sector. People try to avoid the state sector because they regard it as predatory and biased. To ignore that would be very wrong-headed. This is an issue that is related across the board in Afghanistan—about state-building and state formation. The greater part of the economy is also informal. The legal system and the legal processes are also informal. So how do you engage with these informal institutions and structures?

**Q72 Ms Stuart:** Dr. Goodhand, you referred to the problems with the police, and the partial absorption of the militias was a difficulty in that. But that still leaves us with some armed militias. What is your assessment of how much the existing armed militias are still a problem? In a sense, when they are

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absorbed into the police they are a problem, but there are still some which have not been absorbed into the police. Could you say a little more on that?

**Dr. Goodhand:** I should say that I do not claim to be an expert on the security sector. Essentially, post-Bonn there were two kinds of processes that were attempting to deal with armed groups in Afghanistan. One was the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, which was at best a flawed success and which was headed by Japan. Then there was the DIAG process—the Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups initiative. The consensus on that is that it has been a massive failure. There is a range of reasons for that. First, there has been a constant trade-off, post-Bonn, in terms of trying to support the emergence of a state and trying to bring about a level of stability. One way of trying to deal with armed groups has been to incorporate them into state structures—what has been called “warlord democratisation”. At the same time, as the insurgency has grown, there has paradoxically been an attempt to rearm, or arm, militias and groups in the south. This has led to big north-south tensions. The northerners are saying, “We have to go through this DDR process, yet you are now arming groups in the south.” What many Afghans see are very contradictory processes going on: arming some groups to pursue the war on terror and the war against the Taliban, while disarming others—particularly in the north. But one should say that the disarmament process has been very uneven and partially successful and that there is no shortage of men and militias in Afghan society.

**Q73 Ms Stuart:** Where has it been successful? Why has it been successful there and not successful in other areas? You may also want to think about whether the Ministry of Interior is the right place to supervise that process.

**Elizabeth Winter:** The Ministry of Interior has responsibility for that. As far as I am informed, it is currently having regular weekly meetings with the other people in the Government responsible for security in Afghanistan. They are getting to grips with a whole slew of things, whether it is corruption or, in their view, assisting with this APPF process, or identifying militias who are on their side and those who are not. It remains to be seen whether they have the time to deal with that, which they are trying to do before the next elections. But it will be extremely difficult for them to do so and it may be that after the next election there will be a change of command in any case. But Afghans certainly resent the fact that people whom they really would not want to have in any position of power—locally or nationally—have been armed. That has caused great resentment. As Jonathan has said, the north-south divide is another matter. Then those areas which are relatively secure are felt to have benefited least from international assistance recently because the funding has gone to areas that are insecure. I was sent some details on that yesterday. Samangan, with not a single insecurity in seven years, gets 1.5 km of roads, no electricity and the least health and education support. Paktia, on the other hand, with all

insecurity, gets 250 km of proper road construction, a city generator, more schools and more clinics. This is something that BAAG has argued about for some time now: there are areas that would have benefited from development assistance in Afghanistan over the last few years and they have not had it because the emphasis has been on these difficult areas. That needs to be redressed as soon as possible.

**Q74 Ms Stuart:** If the argument for security reform, with all its associated problems, means that you need to have those who have the military means not to be part of the state system, you essentially have to make it worth their while to be inside rather than outside the system. If I were an Afghan warlord I would make a very simple calculation: am I better off inside or outside the system? That is an argument for giving the most insecure areas the most money.

**Dr. Goodhand:** I think there is an argument for that. I would add the proviso that you have to look at the terms “warlord” or “military entrepreneur.” You have to break down the categories. There are different kinds of military entrepreneur and different kinds of regional strongmen, with different sets of ambitions. Some did not have an ambition to be absorbed into the state. They wanted to maintain their regional autonomy. Others, such as Mohammed Atta in Mazar, were seen as a successful case in many ways. You need a very fine-grained analysis of the incentives and disincentives. Going back to your earlier question about where it has worked, it has worked where there is a level of confidence in the new political dispensation. You could argue that in parts of the north it has been mixed, but to some extent it has worked. In my view, DDR is not what brings about security; security enables DDR to happen. We are looking at it the wrong way in terms of cause and effect relationships. The other thing to say about the DDR is that it is reintegration—the R—that is the critical thing and which has been the weakest. How do you kick-start the economy? How do you invest in the rural economy to give people options? An AK47 is a means of sustenance. That side of the equation has generally been seen to be weaker.

**Q75 Sandra Osborne:** May I ask for your views about the APPF coming under the Ministry of Interior? What would you see as the risks associated with bringing local defence forces in to deal with local insurgency, criminal behaviour and so on? Why are they having to resort to this sort of quick fix? Is it because the international community and the Government have not properly co-ordinated the security response?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think it is partly for the upcoming elections. It is partly something that the British Government have been talking about for some time too. As I said, I think it is an act of desperation. If you look internationally at where these things have been tried before, very often even if they have succeeded in the beginning, they have not after a while and they have caused more problems than they have solved. There can be capture of those forces by anti-Government elements, for example. It

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will not necessarily solve the insecurity if they become a force that the Taliban or other anti-Government elements want to fight against. Small communities with a few Kalashnikovs will not necessarily be able to provide security for their communities. They will make the sort of calculation that Gisela Stuart talked about: which is it better for us to do, to apparently support the Taliban or to apparently support the Government? In some areas they are at physical risk of assassination, maiming or whatever. Their girls going to school might be too. They have to make very good calculations about where their best interests lie. This approach seems to us to be short term. A far better use of the resources would be to increase police training and increase the support to the police. I am told that it is being piloted in Wardak at the moment. We have information that people in Wardak are not all that satisfied with it so far. But to be fair, one has to give it a chance to operate, to see whether there is an Afghan solution that has escaped us in our researches. The Minister certainly thinks that it might be one way to go. Perhaps we have to give it a little more time. We are certainly extremely worried about it.

**Dr. Goodhand:** You also have to look at Afghan history here. There is a very mixed record of deploying local militias—the *arbakai*—in tribal areas of Afghanistan. Certainly the Soviets tried that, and many of these militias ended up fighting against the Soviets. There is a danger that this is leading to the decentralisation of violence. It is countering, supposedly, the attempt to build a strong state. One could argue—critics certainly say this—that this is really about regime survival rather than about state building. You can see all sorts of possibilities for these local forces to reflect local animosities—tribal, ethnic and so on. There are certainly a lot of dangers.

**Elizabeth Winter:** There are wry smiles around the former Soviet Union, and from the Russian ambassador to Afghanistan in particular, who is saying, “You are making all the same mistakes we made.” So we have to look at that.

**Q76 Mr. Hamilton:** As we know, one of the most corrosive factors in any sort of governance in any country in the world is corruption. In 2007, it was estimated that only 30% to 40% of the aid given to Afghanistan was used for its intended purposes, partly because of corruption, partly because of mismanagement and partly because of lack of expertise. We understand, and Integrity Watch Afghanistan has reported, that of the \$25 billion given in aid to Afghanistan since 2001, only about \$15 billion had been spent, and that for every \$100 spent, sometimes only \$20 reached the Afghan recipients. What impact do you think UK and international efforts to improve governance and reduce corruption in Afghanistan are having?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think the UK Government is one of the better Governments in supporting the development and the capacity of the Afghan Government, so there have been benefits from that. Dealing with corruption is extremely difficult when you have very low Government salaries, but, as in

other countries, Afghans are capable of deciding when something is really just to oil the wheels, and when something is out and out corruption and they really find it intolerable. Some of that is going on. Where you have good Ministers who manage their Ministries well and are able to find good staff to support them—going back to the question of education, there is a real gap there—corruption is being rooted out and is lessening. But, again, it is going to take some time. You have to have real civil service reform, you have to have education that brings people into civil service who are able to do the jobs, and you have to have salaries on which people can live. Again, it is a long-term issue.

**Dr. Goodhand:** First of all, we know from other post-conflict war-to-peace transitions that they are often associated with corruption. There is literature on this, and there is an argument that levels of corruption may be functional and may play a stabilising role. There is always going to be a trade-off with the ill-gotten spoils of war, which people are allowed to hold on to in order to stabilise the peace. If we look at what is happening in Kosovo, and if we look at what is happening in Cambodia, this is not unique to Afghanistan. Secondly, to understand this, you have got to understand the environment in which so-called corruption is taking place. Afghanistan is a highly insecure environment at the moment, and people do not have confidence in the future, so the risk-opportunity calculus is, “I need to make money now, while there is a possibility,” so you are skimming off money because of that. You are responding to an environment of insecurity. This is not just a few immoral people trying to use public office for private gain, although, of course, there is that as well. It is about changing that environment which makes corruption perfectly functional and rational in the current context. That is not to say that it is not an issue, but I am very sceptical about the ability of anti-corruption commissions or stand-alone anti-corruption measures to do anything. These kinds of commissions get instrumentalised—they reflect power relationships within the Government, and they achieve very little. If you look at the Ministry of Interior, where there is a good person in place who is trying to shift the jobs around and make a difference, you can see that progress can be made, but I do not think that it is going to happen through an anti-corruption commission without a more nuanced and political view about what corruption means in this context.

**Q77 Mr. Hamilton:** Can I pick up on something that you said? There are many other countries in the world where corruption is endemic and corrosive, and some where it is, perhaps, a transitional phase to a more stable Government of greater integrity, but Afghanistan has slipped, according to Transparency International, from 119th out of 159 countries down to 154th in the corruption league tables, such as they exist. Surely that says that something is going badly wrong? It is not going in the right direction, is it?

**Dr. Goodhand:** First, I would treat any such data with extreme circumspection. David Mansfield will be talking about drugs and we will, I hope, be talking

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about data as well later. You need to treat any data with some caution. Secondly, I agree: clearly things are not moving in the right direction, but I go back to my original point. If one starts to address the security issues and people start having a level of confidence in the future, those things will change the incentives and create a more disabling environment for corruption. It also goes back to questions about leadership. We have not spoken about that yet, but it is clearly an issue as well.

**Q78 Mr. Hamilton:** Sorry to interrupt, but I was just going to come on to that. How far do you believe that the weak and weakening leadership of the central Government has contributed to support for the insurgency?

**Dr. Goodhand:** Clearly, it has had a major effect. For instance, if you read the work of Antonio Giustozzi, who has written the most authoritative work so far on the Taliban, you will see that that is essentially the core of his argument—you can only understand the growth of the insurgency as a legitimacy crisis of the state. That legitimacy crisis is partly to do with an inability to centralise the means of violence, and it is partly due to the state's inability to deliver services to its citizens in terms of health, electricity and so on. That crisis is also related to the so-called, dual legitimacy problem, whereby the state is seen to be a puppet of outsiders and is not seen to have domestic authority.

**Elizabeth Winter:** Not only that, but those outsiders are seen to be about to abandon Afghanistan again—that is the fear. That is the real fear at the moment. The language being used by the new American Administration is not helping—“We need to have an exit strategy” and “We need to look after American interests first”. All of that is very reminiscent of them abandoning Afghanistan the last time around. I was in Pakistan when they did that and they said, “The Russians are out, we're off. We're not funding any more aid. We're not funding the agencies that we supported to help ordinary Afghans with their agriculture, health, education and so on.” Afghans fear that that is what is going to happen again. If it does, the country is going to be fairly chaotic. Therefore, they are making decisions: “Who should we go to for support?”, “Should we just keep our heads down?” and “Should we make our own exit strategies from Afghanistan to prepare for it?” Some richer families already live in Dubai or have members outside the country. There is a great deal of fear. The other fear that has been expressed to me by many Afghans recently is that negotiations will go on with the Taliban so that the international community can get out, and that exit strategy is going to be at a cost, particularly of women's rights. They will go to the wall. That is a huge fear. Bringing back the Taliban, with all the unhappiness that their regime caused, is something that people are very frightened of.

**Q79 Mr. Hamilton:** I am not surprised. Finally, going back to corruption, do you think that the west should have prioritised the importance of a sound judicial system and the rule of law far earlier on? Have we left it too late?

**Elizabeth Winter:** We have left it extremely late. I am reluctant to say that we have left everything too late, because that is too depressing. We must strive to do better—we collectively, as the international community, together with the good parts of the Afghan Government and whoever will be elected next, because there is still just about a chance that we can turn things around. The other aspect is lack of real international strategic co-ordination. We have already heard about stovepiping, but setting up complicated mechanisms of co-ordination in Afghanistan has not been terribly successful either. That issue needs to be addressed in a practical, straightforward manner. Listening to Afghans is another thing that has often been neglected, except at the very high level and that is an unfortunate thing, too.

**Dr. Goodhand:** To know what to do now, we must look back on those lessons and not draw the wrong conclusions. There are a lot of reasons why human rights and the rule of law were deprioritised, and that reflected the politics of the time. In the Bonn agreement, the issue of transitional justice was purposely kept opaque and back-pedalled on because essentially the mujaheddin were brought back into power and they did not want to address those questions. An amnesty Bill in Parliament in 2007 drew a line under that. We have to understand the politics of the time. Was there an opportunity to push this more strongly in 2002? I think that there was. In civil society and in society more generally in Afghanistan, there was a demand to bring these people to account, but by making those early decisions—sins of omission and commission—it then became very difficult to address it. In many ways, the opportunities and the openings for intervention have successively narrowed since 2002. We are in a very different situation now from where we were in 2002.

**Elizabeth Winter:** Those Afghans who would have supported it in the Government were fearful of even attending the launch of the Human Rights Commission report on the strategic plan. The only people who went were the President—reluctantly, we are told—and the Foreign Affairs Minister, Spanta.

**Q80 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Let me ask you about human rights, in particular the attitude of ordinary Afghans towards what may be seen as western human rights ideals. The UN has been critical of the failure to protect women's rights in Afghanistan, and we know that there is widespread discrimination against women. Indeed, girls are attacked if they attempt an education, so it is obviously highly desirable to spread respect for woman. Does that resonate widely in a traditional society or are we in danger of putting a lot of effort into something that is not a priority for ordinary Afghans?

**Elizabeth Winter:** The way in which we did it was at fault. Westerners found it very difficult to do it in an effective manner. Very often, they appointed women to do the job—very young, inexperienced Afghan women at that—who were told that they were focal points for gender, and human rights were often just seen as women's rights. You had grandstanding by

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many senior members of the international community in their own countries. In fact, in my experience, some of the people who most respect women are Afghans, so it is not the case that Afghans do not respect women. Traditional customs militate against women having the rights that we would like them to have, but it is a much more complex issue. Doing things slowly and using Islam as the pointer is going to be more effective. Men in this country and in the international aid agencies also get extremely uncomfortable when these things are brought up, sometimes finding it easier to hear from men what it is that they ought to be doing, but men are often frightened about the whole issue and how to deal with women here, never mind in Afghanistan. It is a complicated business and, as I said, I do not think that we have dealt with it particularly well. Afghanistan has signed all the major protocols, but it has not put a great deal of effort into actually following them. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was very under-funded, and usually in charge was a Minister who had very little experience or clout. That has changed now. You now have the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and it is more active than it was before. Maybe the Ministry is going to be more able to do things. The Human Rights Commission is certainly very active in trying to do something about it, but it is going to be a long-term, uphill struggle. The people who are going to get their rights are the women who fight for them. There is a very good history of Afghan women human rights defenders who are fighting for their rights and for the rights of the women and children with whom they are working, whether it is in shelters for women, or by talking to the Chief Justice or whoever and persuading him that what has happened to this or that woman is unfair, and that he therefore needs to do something to ensure that she has a better life from now on. There are small, incremental gains. BAAG is applying to the Foreign Office for money for a human rights development strategic programme to do something about this and to help those human rights defenders in their advocacy and policy development and so on. It is going to take time, but it will happen. Any of you who have been privileged to hear Afghan women talk about this here will have been very impressed.

**Dr. Goodhand:** This is a reflection of a wider question about modernisation and reform in Afghanistan, which has a long history. Historically, attempts to fast-track modernisation have always come unstuck. The key words that Elizabeth used were "incremental" and "slowly" in relation to change. The other thing is that this has been a highly internationalised effort at state building. Internationalisation has very paradoxical effects. With human rights and gender, the perception that this is internationally driven has had perverse effects for Afghans who are interested in pushing the questions and pushing the boundaries. Women have become a banner issue that is being used by the Taliban and the mujaheddin to mobilise legitimacy. When international actors engage in these questions, they are hitting some very sensitive nerves. The key

issue is looking historically and moving carefully without becoming an apologist for the essentialist view that culture never changes.

**Q81 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Can I ask you about the death penalty? I understand that it is now in use again after a moratorium. The Foreign Office told us in its evidence that the resumption of executions has been a highly popular move among Afghans, although we continue to raise concerns about its use. It is slightly odd for us to oppose something that is popular when we are unpopular out there. I happen to be against the death penalty over here, but I would be very hesitant about telling other people how to deal with their own criminals when so many innocent people are being blown up and killed and otherwise abused in a holocaust of weak government and so many other problems. Are we slightly in danger of imposing our own values? Again, that creates resentment among Afghans who are not Taliban but who nevertheless think that it is a matter for them.

**Elizabeth Winter:** Apart from the fact that I am obviously not in favour of the death penalty, the crucial issue is that you do not have the rule of law. Even those Afghans who, actually, would ask for the death penalty, feel that it is not appropriate right now, because you cannot prove that a person has done whatever they are accused of doing. I had a very interesting round-table meeting—I am researching civil society development in Afghanistan—on various things. The people with whom I had the meeting had just been at a meeting that Karzai attended in which the death penalty and, in addition, public executions, were called for. It was explained to me that the reason was that everybody was so terrified about kidnappings. There was a particularly horrible one: an elderly man and a non-related young boy were stuck down a drainage hole for about a week and given a glass of water and a piece of bread once a day. In addition, there have been civilian and other casualties. People felt that the death penalty was the only answer. We had a long discussion about it. At the end, all the Afghans bar one were in favour. The one who was not was a woman who had done research overseas. She had looked into this, and she said that research showed that having the death penalty did not decrease the incidence of events such as murder, but increased it. It is going to be a long-term issue before people come to our view that it is not appropriate. Everybody in the room said, "We cannot think of any alternative. If people are being kidnapped and beheaded, what can we do except impose the death penalty?" They had the proviso that they must have the rule of law to ensure that people are guilty.

**Q82 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** So you are rather making my point that if people want something, we should allow that.

**Elizabeth Winter:** No, I am sorry if I gave that impression. We should continue to have the discussion and to look into research that shows it is not the appropriate thing to do. Above all, we should ensure that there is the rule of law in

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Afghanistan so that if, God forbid, people are found guilty and executed, at least there is a proper process to get to that point. I think it is a matter of education, lobbying and advocacy. There will be human rights defenders in Afghanistan who do not want to bring about the death penalty. It was just this particular group of people I was with, who were civil society activists.

**Q83 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** The point about playing into the Taliban's appeal is that people see a lot of westerners coming in and the first thing they try to do is to stop tribal justice and impose their own values. You do not think that that is a danger.

**Elizabeth Winter:** Not particularly. The danger we have with the Taliban and others is that we have allowed them to win the propaganda war. Their PR is much better than ours. We are not transparent enough. We do not confront head-on the fact that they have caused a lot of civilian casualties through their activities. We need a much more nuanced approach in our dealings with them. We need to be much more public about why we are in Afghanistan and what we are doing. I am waiting with bated breath, presumably like everybody else, to see what the Obama Administration's plan is for Afghanistan. I fear that it will be more of the same: more soldiers and more money into reconstruction, but what they will actually want to do is to safeguard their own interests and get out. I think that would be very short-sighted indeed and would upset everybody all over again. Let us wait and see. As I said, I think we need to be more nuanced in our dealings with the opposition and to bring them on board.

**Dr. Goodhand:** Can I just make one point? When the Taliban emerged in '94 and '95, they had quite a level of popularity. That was born out of their ability to bring a brutal level of security and law and order. They are trying to deliver that now in the areas of Afghanistan over which they are attempting to assert control. I am not saying that there is a demand for what the Taliban delivered then, particularly in the north of the country, but we should reflect on what kind of state is realistic in Afghanistan and what kind of state people want. They want a state that is able to give a level of predictability and security to their lives so that they can go about their economic business and so on. I am essentially saying that there is a need for much more modest ambitions about what an Afghan state is able to deliver in the medium term.

**Chairman:** Thank you. Sir John Stanley has some questions on this, then we will move on.

**Q84 Sir John Stanley:** You will have seen the extensive publicity that has been given—probably most conspicuously in *The Independent*, which has been running a campaign on it—to the young man who accessed things on the internet about women's rights. He was handed down an appalling sentence in the local court and appealed to the Supreme Court of Afghanistan. About a fortnight ago, he was

handed down a 20-year sentence in the Supreme Court. When people in this country see that, they ask themselves what we are doing in Afghanistan. We have been there for all these years and still the official Supreme Court is handing down utterly monstrous sentences for things that would not be contemplated as criminal offences in most parts of the world. Do you regard this as something that is immutable or unchangeable in Afghanistan?

**Elizabeth Winter:** No, I do not think it is immutable or unchangeable. I think it gives us even more reason to be there, to try to support the people who do not want that kind of thing to continue. It is a minority—that is a local political squabble that that unfortunate chap was bound up in. I think it was his brother they were actually after. I was told it was highly unlikely that he would be executed. In fact, his death sentence was commuted.

**Q85 Sir John Stanley:** Even so—20 years?

**Elizabeth Winter:** Yes, it is appalling, of course. But at some point, I am told, they will probably allow him to leave the country and go somewhere else. Not that that is a good result either. Being forced to leave your country is not a good result at all. Several people have been forced to leave Afghanistan because they are in danger. It just shows even more that we have to stay there: we have to help them develop an education system that is going to bring people into the country who are able to manage in a way without these miscarriages of justice and bring in the rule of law that prevents that kind of thing happening.

**Q86 Ms Stuart:** Elizabeth Winter, I think you mentioned in relation to the death penalty that it is supported because of the absence of the rule of law.<sup>1</sup> Is it not also the absence of any prisons capable of holding anybody, or has that changed?

**Elizabeth Winter:** There are prisons, but they are in an appalling state. There have been attempts at prison reform, but at the moment that is very small beer compared to what is actually needed. One or two people were brought in to advise on prison reform and how to improve the prisons. That probably has not received the international funding it needs. One person who was brought in was assassinated. I think that has stopped it for a bit. I am not up to date on it, however, and if you would like more information I would be happy to try to get it for you.

**Q87 Ms Stuart:** It would be helpful to know if there are any prisons which are secure enough so that anybody that the rule of law wished to detain could be kept there.

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<sup>1</sup> *Note by witness:* It was not “mentioned in relation to the death penalty that it is supported because of the absence of the rule of law”. On the contrary, while there is popular support for the death penalty in certain cases of murder, kidnapping and child abuse, it is also understood that the current absence of the rule of law, fair judicial process etc, means that convictions would be unsafe.

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**Elizabeth Winter:** It isn't only the prisons that need to be secure—it is also about the people who have clout to get people out. Once someone has been convicted, a week later you find they are out again. I will follow up on that.

**Q88 Ms Stuart:** What I wanted to pursue a little more is the fact that we have evidence that Afghanistan was used for extraordinary rendition. We know there are memorandums of agreement between the allied forces and the American Government. Currently, the understanding is that anybody captured will be handed over to the Afghan authorities. Can we be certain that they will not be tortured?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I do not think we can be, no. Experience has shown that we cannot be sure. However much one might like to think that negotiations and keeping a watching brief would prevent it, I think it would be much better not to hand them over, to be honest.

**Q89 Ms Stuart:** Could the UK Government be more robust in this area?

**Elizabeth Winter:** Yes.

**Q90 Ms Stuart:** How would that show itself? How would robustness display itself?

**Elizabeth Winter:** By publicly and privately making sure that people realise that this Government do not support it, are not going to support it and will do all they can to keep people out of that kind of situation.

**Dr. Goodhand:** The obvious point is that the UK could have been more critical of the US, particularly in the early days post-2002.

**Q91 Ms Stuart:** If we say we cannot be sure about torture, can we be sure it is no longer a base for extraordinary rendition?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I could not be sure about that. I wouldn't know. Again I can try to find out from people who might, and what the rumours are. Whether I could get you any actual information I don't know. My guess is that everybody, including the British Government, is going to be fairly careful now about what they do and try to avoid it because they do not want bad publicity, to put it at its crudest.

**Q92 Mr. Horam:** On health, education, general welfare and, to some extent, the infrastructure side of things, do you think the progress that has been made can be sustained?

**Elizabeth Winter:** On health care it probably can. I go back to education, of course, which is needed to ensure that you have good people at all levels and that progress is maintained. Many Afghans have learned on the job. Some came up through the NGO world, where they learned to manage programmes, and perhaps there will be an increased demand from civil society for services to be maintained. If, however, the international community is really going to abandon the country—I do not think that the

British Government are going to do that, and we commend them on that—and if the Americans, with all their money, decide to pull out, it might be more and more difficult, because the income that the Afghan Government have to play with is relatively small for the services they need to provide for their people.

**Dr. Goodhand:** Can I come in on that? I disagree slightly with Elizabeth. I do not think that it can be maintained if the current trends continue. For a start, the Taliban are targeting infrastructure, health centres and schools—the visible symbols of the Afghan state. It is a clear strategy. Secondly, the costs of aid delivery are going up all the time, particularly in the south. It is becoming much more expensive to deliver aid, because it is so insecure, so aid organisations are having to get protection or work under the shelter of provincial reconstruction teams and so on. A third factor that means it might not be sustainable is that—I need to check my facts on this—roughly a third of the aid going to Afghanistan goes to the Government budget, and the rest is delivered off-budget through contractors and non-governmental organisations and essentially is not contributing to the state-building exercise. That leads to questions about how sustainable those projects will be in the future.

**Q93 Mr. Horam:** So what do we think will be the right policies in this set of circumstances where there is a kind of conflict between security and sustainability?

**Dr. Goodhand:** Security first. There is no empirical evidence, either historically or presently, to support the notion that development will win hearts and minds and help play a pacifying role. It is completely wrong-headed to think that. Bringing a level of security means addressing the insurgency, not just militarily, but politically. That seems to be a precondition for any kind of sustainable development. Secondly, I think that Ashraf Ghani, the former Finance Minister, basically got it right in arguing for aid donors to work with the Government and make state building their priority, and this kind of fractured aid response, such as going through consultancy firms, is not contributing to the building of a legitimate political authority, which is what state building is about.

**Q94 Mr. Horam:** Is that recognised locally, and do people realise the mistake there, or is it just carrying on as it always did?

**Dr. Goodhand:** It has been recognised to an extent, but I would argue, as Elizabeth did earlier, that the insurgency has shifted the thinking much more into responding in the short term.

**Q95 Mr. Horam:** From what you have said, and if security is the sine qua non of all this, one can understand that people will think we should deal with the insurgency first.

**Dr. Goodhand:** One of the problems with intervention since 2002 has been the idea that all good things come together and that we can pursue

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the war on terror, reinvent the NATO alliance, address drugs and bring democracy and development to Afghanistan, but we cannot do so. We have to make some priorities here.

**Q96 Mr. Horam:** So what are your priorities?

**Dr. Goodhand:** Security is the first priority, and that is clear, but the proviso is that you cannot address security without looking at the political dimensions of insecurity. That brings us to the question of renegotiating a grand bargain for Afghanistan which is more inclusive.

**Q97 Mr. Horam:** So security and politics are more important than governance, as it were?

**Dr. Goodhand:** It is a question of sequencing. I am not saying that it is more important.

**Q98 Chairman:** Do you agree with that, Ms Winter?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I think it is very complicated. You cannot do everything at once and at the same speed; it is a question of sequencing. But I certainly think there are things that we could have done, and could still do, to help sustainability. One of those is to improve the way in which we develop the capacity of Afghans. For example, another Afghan Ministry that was not supportive in the way it should have been was the Ministry of Agriculture, which is now responsible for irrigation and livelihoods. That Ministry now has a good Minister who may well retain his post if Hamid Karzai is re-elected. Although we need to concentrate on the rule of law and security, I certainly think that we could at the same time assist the Ministry of Agriculture and others. In other words, I do not think that we have to stop what we are already doing—and can do—and say, “Okay, we’re going to concentrate on politics and security.” That would mean everybody else having to go to the wall.

**Dr. Goodhand:** I am not saying that development has to be put on hold until the insurgency is addressed. There are many parts of the country where development can take place. The point about agriculture, which has been one of the failures of the new construction effort, is absolutely fundamental. Investing in, and supplying aid to, the rural economy to create jobs and invest in value-added activities in the rural sector are things that can still be done in particular parts of the country. More can be done in such areas.

**Elizabeth Winter:** And providing employment for people so that they generate income that then gets spread around a bit. At the moment, people at all levels, not just the senior one, are using foreign contractors by bringing in workers from China and so on, instead of using Afghans for public work programmes and so on.

**Q99 Chairman:** Thank you. We are conscious of the time, as we are expecting a vote in the House at 4 o’clock and need to begin to question another group of witnesses before then. Our final questions

for you are about domestic politics. How democratic is Afghanistan, given the assessment by the Economist Intelligence Unit, in which it is ranked 134th out of 167 countries in the world? How much power do the warlords and regional strongmen still have within the system?

**Elizabeth Winter:** I will answer that by first saying that Afghans are democratic. The system in place at the moment is relatively democratic, and I think the international community needs to concentrate on supporting free and fair elections in Afghanistan as far as possible. I am with Jonathan in saying it is very difficult to interpret or necessarily agree with rankings in such situations. But Afghans are certainly democratic; the fact is that they turned out in droves for elections in the first place and stood waiting for hours, and the hope that they had in the democratic system was enormous. That hope is still just about there in, I would say, just over half the population, and I think that they would still vote.

**Q100 Chairman:** You referred to forthcoming elections. What are the prospects for credible presidential and provincial elections in August?

**Elizabeth Winter:** Credible in the sense of credible candidates or in the sense of how the elections are conducted?

**Chairman:** Both.

**Elizabeth Winter:** In all the discussions that I have had and the reports that I read, it seems fairly clear that at the moment there is no credible alternative to Hamid Karzai. There are candidates who are credible in some senses, but they are not necessarily going to get the same volume of votes as he is expected to get. There has been talk of coalitions of candidates—two or three of them—but the prospects of them subsequently being able to work together, or even being able to decide which of them is going to be President, are fraught with difficulty. I say to people, “Cometh the hour, cometh the man,”—and of course in Afghanistan it would be a man—but that man has not yet come. Hamid Karzai still retains his popular appeal; he is weak on many things, but his popular appeal means that he is a past master at talking to people.

**Q101 Chairman:** Dr. Goodhand, do you agree with that view?

**Dr. Goodhand:** I wanted to answer the question on how democratic Afghanistan is. There is a question more broadly in the assessment of peace building since the 1990s about sequencing, and whether democratisation can take place in those contexts. If you look at the case of Afghanistan, democratisation has accentuated conflict and power battles. There is a view—someone called Roland Paris has written about it—that you need institutionalisation before liberalisation and democratisation. I think that there is a strong argument to be made on the Afghan case. Many Afghans you talk to outside Kabul would not be asking that question. They would be asking more

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fundamental questions, such as, “Can I get from A to B, without going through roadblocks?”, or “Can I get my goods to market?” These are basic issues about security and welfare, which I think are really important. On the Afghan elections, I think that the jury is out about what the result may be, so I will leave it at that.

**Chairman:** Thank you very much. We could have gone into some other areas, but unfortunately we do not have time. I am grateful to you both, Ms Winter and Dr. Goodhand, for coming. Thank you very much for your time.

**Elizabeth Winter:** Thank you for the opportunity.  
**Dr. Goodhand:** Thank you.

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*Witnesses:* **David Mansfield**, Freelance Consultant and **Fabrice Pothier**, Director, Carnegie Europe, gave evidence.

**Q102 Chairman:** I thank the next witnesses for waiting and welcome them. Perhaps you could introduce yourselves.

**Fabrice Pothier:** I am Director of Carnegie Europe, part of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. I have been working on Afghanistan for the past five years, mostly focusing on the connections between insurgency, drugs and the reconstruction effort.

**David Mansfield:** I am one of those consultant-type characters. I come at the drugs issue from a rural development background. I have had the joy of spending the last 11 years wandering around rural Afghanistan talking to farmers, typically opium poppy farmers, although they are increasingly hard to find. I do that work for a range of different bodies, including bilaterals and NGOs.

**Chairman:** In this session, we are going to concentrate on the narcotics, or drugs issue. First, I call Sandra Osborne.

**Q103 Sandra Osborne:** I think that you have made comments about the opium statistics that have been produced, Mr. Mansfield, and the fact that the term “poppy-free” is used as a measure of success. Can you tell me if you feel that that is a useful measure, or does it just hide the fact that traders have moved up the value chain from cultivation to processing, or into cannabis and hashish?

**David Mansfield:** My main point on issues around cultivation is the fact that too often we just look at annual figures and we fail to reflect on what drives those numbers. Be it an issue around statements on poppy-free provinces or arguments around success and failure, they are typically based on an annual statement about a particular province or a particular area. They do not capture the cause and effect. For instance, if you look at some of the areas that have reduced poppy cultivation, we have to look at why, historically, they went into cultivation. This is something that is often forgotten. The paper that I think you are referring to touches on the perception that the Taliban ban was a great success—this “resounding” success of the Taliban ban. I was around in those days and I spent a lot of time prior to the ban and during the ban talking to farmers and I actually saw the ban as highly problematic. If you take out that level of cultivation from the local economy, you drive up the price of opium poppy and you drive up debts, which are often held in opium poppy—monetised opium-denominated loans. To a large extent, it was no surprise that poppy

cultivation came back in abundance in 2002. The price went up from around \$50 or \$100 a kilo—depending on where you were in the country—to about \$500 a kilo. The kind of areas that I wander around, such as Ghor, did not grow much poppy in the late 1990s—or in 2001 even. Suddenly, it was at \$500 a kilo. When you are getting only 2 kg a jerib—a jerib being a fifth of a hectare—and when it was \$50 a kilo, it was not worth it. But when it was \$500 a kilo, suddenly you change the economics of it. So we saw a lot of areas that had not touched it before go into poppy cultivation. I still go around these areas, and you see them growing poppy. You are that close to saying, “Look, guys, what you need are some decent seeds, which you need to thin and weed.” What we have seen over the last few years is that poppy prices have come down post-Taliban ban. The Government of Afghanistan inherited the results of the ban, and I argue that in many ways the Taliban ban made it easier to get rid of the Taliban. You cannot alienate all the rural population all the time, and when we were out in 2001 talking to farmers, many of them commented on that fact. In a very subtle, often Afghan, way, you would ask what happens if a ban goes into 2002, the second year. In the south, many people said, “There have been many amirs in my lifetime, and I am sure that there will be many more.”—Amir al-Mu’minin being Mullah Omar. There were some very strong undercurrents of the threat in the east as well. The Machiavellian deals that were struck to bring about this ban could have very easily come unstuck—but of course, we will never find out because the Taliban fell in November of that year. The new Government, Hamid Karzai’s Government, comes in and inherits a \$500-a-kilo price. Subsequently, many people go into opium poppy cultivation—it suddenly becomes different. Now, prices are down to about \$65 a kilo. Many of those marginal areas have very little interest in growing poppy. We may argue that some of that is due to the effects of governors and their efforts to reduce poppy, but when you look at the terms of trade between wheat and poppy—they fundamentally switched back. It now makes no sense to grow opium poppy to buy wheat when you can get more wheat by growing it on your land. I think the critique on the number scale, the hectareage number, is a useful overall indicator. But unless you break it down and look at the context—you can break it down by province, and even within province—and look at what is driving change, it is slightly distorted, and pursuing these annual figures can be quite unhelpful.

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**Fabrice Pothier:** If I may add, poppy-free does not necessarily mean free from the opium threat. I think that that is where the concept can be slightly ambiguous, if not misleading. Indeed, you have 18 provinces that have a near-zero poppy cultivation level, but that does not mean that they do not have trafficking and processing activities. I am thinking mostly of the western and northern regions of Afghanistan, which are major hubs for the opium and heroin going to the destination markets. The point that I am making is that it is important to have concepts. We understand that the UN Office on Drugs and Crime needs some success—it is a donors' agency and relies on yearly donations from its donors—but it should not narrow our understanding of the situation. Second, poppy-free does not mean that it is free from effort. It is very important to ask ourselves the question: how can we sustain progress in the regions that are not as affected by the opium problem as in the south? I will finish on the broader point that is connected to what David said earlier. The quantitative assessment of the opium problem in Afghanistan—hectare and tonnage, so mostly production and cultivation—is important, but is not enough. The problem is much more comprehensive, so you need a more comprehensive grid to analyse the problem, which should include security, trafficking and governance data to truly understand the context in which the opium problem is happening.

**Chairman:** The Division bell is about to ring. We will have to suspend and come back. If there are two votes, it will be around 30 minutes, unfortunately, and I apologise for that. But as soon as we return here with a quorum, we will continue with questions. We will be back as soon as we can.

*Sitting suspended for Divisions in the House.*

*On resuming—*

**Chairman:** Sandra, had you finished your line of questioning?

**Q104 Sandra Osborne:** I have a question about the overall strategy. I get the impression that you feel the present Afghan Government strategy on drugs is not sufficient. What do you think of the UK's role in the whole situation?

**David Mansfield:** One of the issues is that counter-narcotics has too often been seen as a distinct pillar. There has been an increasing realisation of that. It is a bit like pursuing this hectare target. You adopt a number of different approaches by which to reduce hectare. On the consequences of reducing poppy cultivation, as we have seen in some provinces, if you reduce it dramatically, as we saw with the Taliban ban, you can undermine the efforts in terms of governance, security and overall economic growth. It is about having a balance. Counter-narcotics does not sit distinct as a separate strand from the overall effort. It is a cross-cutting issue. I have often argued that if you look at cultivation in the south, one of the things that would probably deliver a greater counter-narcotics effort than anything over and above the issues around eradication, would be dealing with the checkpoints which are making the movement of

legal goods highly problematic. If I grow onion in Helmand and I try to take it to the market in Kandahar, I have to go through 14 checkpoints to get the goods to market. Everyone wants some baksheesh. By the time I get to market I am very much a price taker and I am at a loss. I have case studies of farmers who have gone through that calculation. They have good land. They have enormous agricultural potential. But when it comes to actually getting their goods to market, it is not worth it because of the costs of checkpoints and of moving down what is perceived to be a very dangerous road. So people grow poppy on their land and let people come to them. Now removing the checkpoints or, mentoring the checkpoints so that they are not taking baksheesh, and constraining the movement of legal goods is fundamental. No one calls that counter-narcotics, but it would have a counter-narcotics outcome. It is similar with local procurement: buying Afghan goods, the Afghan First initiative, involving the UK military and other militaries—some of this has been explored—increasing the market for Afghan goods rather than flying goods in from overseas. We need to boost that. The Americans have been ahead of the game on that in buying Afghan water rather than flying water in. So, boosting the economy, building the demand for local goods and allowing those goods to travel freely, will all have a counter-narcotics outcome. But too often, you have this set of distinct activities such as eradication—so-called—and alternative livelihoods, rather than good rural development in which the causes of cultivation are understood and integrated into design and implementation rather than broader governance efforts in which the impact on counter-narcotics is understood. I think we have seen that realisation. In fact you increasingly see the language around drugs as a cross-cutting issue recognised. I think the UK has for a long time recognised that. Then there is the capacity to deliver that in the face of some of the ways that budgets are produced—particularly with the US. The US Congress has its certification process. The drugs budget is set by Congress as part of whether you have co-operated with the US on anti-drugs efforts. It is a distinct budget. Now whether that will change under the new Administration is yet to be seen. But there is the realisation that this can no longer be dealt with in isolation. It is part of the effort, but if you get the balance wrong and go in too hard on counter-narcotics too quickly you can risk the progress that has been made in some areas. I see it quite regularly in some of the field work I do. You go to areas where people have abandoned poppy. They are earning more money today than they did when they grew poppy because they have a range of different crops. They have a short season inter-crop. They have multiple harvests and they bring in more money than poppy, particularly at today's prices. They are quite content that poppy has gone. They recognise it as having caused insecurity and they have an alternative. Some people will say, "Even if they let me grow poppy, I would not go back to it." The problem lies in other areas where those options are not available because we are not doing the right

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things in terms of investment in economic development and easing the kind of transaction costs and nuisance taxes that exist.

**Q105 Sandra Osborne:** This is probably a naïve question, but why is it so easy for the people buying poppies to get to the farm and then get the stuff out? If there are all these road blocks, why is it so easy for them?

**David Mansfield:** I was talking to a trader not so long ago—it is a strange part of my work—and he was expressing how, typically, he would try and avoid a road. With opium, it is a high value, low weight product—you can knock it about on a desert road and it is not going to perish. It is different for tomatoes, it is different for melons; you need stability of the road surface, otherwise you are not going to have much of a crop left. This particular trader was commenting on the fact that, when he travels to Government territory, or where the Afghan National Police have checkpoints, he needs to make sure that, if he is going through a checkpoint, he has some kind of arrangement to facilitate the movement of goods. You do not need to travel on the roads with opium, but you do need to for other crops, fundamentally.

**Fabrice Pothier:** On effectiveness, I would say that the problem in Afghanistan with counter-narcotics so far, is that it is trying to be too many things at the same time. David mentioned the fact that there were different strategies, with different actors, going on at the same time on the ground, so I will not elaborate on that. I think the basic problem is that we have still not addressed the opium dilemma that we face in Afghanistan. That is, we do not want to inflame the situation, nor do we want to accommodate it, and we have not yet found the right middle ground. It seems that a new approach could be to think more in terms of cost-efficiency and risk. By cost-efficiency, I mean how much difference do you make by investing in interdiction, or investing in education, or investing in comprehensive rural development? On risk, how much are your drug policies going to help you to lower the risk that the local rural population faces and make the risk of trafficking higher? We need to move from the usual political wisdom that is often the basis of counter-narcotic strategy to one based on a rational appreciation of cost-efficiency and risk. I would give, as an example, the discussion on merging counter-insurgency with counter-narcotics. This has been discussed for the past year or year-and-a-half, and it is really a step in the wrong direction. That is because, first, counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics have very different sequencing, a very different timeline. In counter-insurgency, you need to deliver progress within the next few years for political reasons, not only at home with public opinion, but also on the ground to gain the support of the local population. In counter-narcotics—as we saw in Thailand, Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, in Latin America—this is a generational effort, so you do not want to link something that is going to take 25 years, with something where you need to deliver results in the coming years. Probably a step in a better direction is

to have a two-pronged approach. One prong is to embed counter-narcotics within the broader comprehensive rural development strategy. This is something that I know the UK Government are trying to do by connecting the counter-narcotic ministry with other ministries. That is key to understanding that drugs are about not just crops, but a complex rural economic system. If you want to address that, you need to set complex policy and a complex set of incentives. The second level of this new approach could be to really focus on the interdiction; not only interdiction in Afghanistan, but interdiction out of Afghanistan—outside, in the region. If you look at Colombia and at Plan Colombia that was developed in the 1990s by the Colombian and US Governments, what you see is that the war on land—the war on drug production in the field—was the most inefficient part of the effort. The most efficient was the war on the drug routes, not only the routes inside Colombia, but also outside in the Caribbean and reaching to the US market. Here you have an opportunity to think more in terms of cost-efficiency, lowering the risk for the local population and making trafficking, and also corruption, a higher-risk enterprise.

**Q106 Sir John Stanley:** One point where, inescapably, counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics come together is on the cash front. The figure that I have—I think that it is also a UN figure—which has been confirmed today, is that the Taliban, in very round terms, are creaming off about \$100 million a year from the narcotics business in Afghanistan. That is a wall of money that makes it extraordinarily easy for them both to corrupt governmental systems and to hire their fighters at the going rate of \$10 a day. How is that money creamed off and moved about? Is it moved around essentially in cash, or is it moved around electronically? Do you think that there is more that the Afghan Government, and possibly the Pakistan, British, American and other NATO Governments, can do to try to interdict this wall of cash, which must start out as cash, getting into the hands of the Taliban? If it gets into the hands of the Taliban, can they try to freeze it there? May I have your thoughts on that?

**Fabrice Pothier:** The right hon. Gentleman raises a very important point about the connection between drugs and the Taliban. It is also a very loaded point. You mentioned that \$100 million a year will flow to the Taliban from the opium economy. That is the equivalent of 40% of the alleged Taliban war budget, and that is the only figure that we have. I want to raise three very strong points of caution over the concept of a drug-Taliban nexus. First, as I mentioned earlier, there is only one figure, which is a UNODC-produced figure. It is mostly a statistical extrapolation over what, potentially, the Taliban could generate by taxing up to 10% of the production in the areas that they want control over. Therefore, the evidence is very weak so far, and there is very little documentation about the extent and the type of relationship between the Taliban and the drugs economy. Are they taxing, protecting, facilitating or integrating the drug economy in their

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war strategy? In Colombia, the FARC have direct control over the drug economy because they have direct control over the arable lands—the lands that are used to produce opium. Is that the same with the Taliban? It seems that the evidence points at no because the control that they exert is much more complex and more mixed than direct territorial control. If you look at the historic relationship between the Taliban and drugs, it is one of ambiguity and opportunism, rather than a symbiotic relationship. Earlier, David mentioned the Taliban ban on opium, which shows that they go for or against opium when it serves some higher political purpose. Therefore, we have to keep that in mind. My second point of qualification is that looking at the financial link, we are missing the more important political link between drugs and the Taliban—the fact that the Taliban are using the poppy as a political tool to have leverage over the local population and to get involved in the local power play. It is a call for us not only to have a PR strategy that tells the people that we are not here to threaten them, but to integrate our counter-narcotics strategy in our comprehensive rural one. Finally, this notion of a link between drugs and Taliban is also a distraction from the much more threatening systemic threat, which is the link between drugs and governance. That is threatening the efforts of the British and Afghan Governments and all the other donors to build a set of Afghan institutions. If the Taliban generate \$100 million from the drugs trade, which is a questionable figure, how much is there for the corruption system that flows into the local, regional and national institutions? I would add a strong note of caution on that. I agree that there is a need for thinking how we can interdict the flow of money that is less sophisticated than the one in Latin America because the drug economy is still at a less sophisticated level and is not as integrated in terms of cartel as you have in Latin America. You do not have the kind of sophisticated transaction that you will see between Latin America and northern America with the drug money. But some mafia are starting to build their links in Afghanistan because increasingly more opium is being processed into heroin, which means that you have more value in Afghanistan now than years ago. Indeed, interdiction will be increasingly important in the next years if we want to at least contain the problem.

**David Mansfield:** I can also urge caution about some of the numbers. In a one-week period, we saw figures of \$100 million and \$250 million from UNODC, so there are a lot of doubts about just how much it is. That is not to say that there is not a relationship. Afghanistan works in a highly decentralised way. I have bits of field work saying, “Ushr”, the agricultural tithe. In some cases, the Taliban take 5%; in some cases, they take 10%. Let us look back at the Taliban ban and how that was implemented in different ways in different parts of the country. Who are the Taliban? Particularly today, who are the Taliban? They are not some sort of monolith. They are not an organisation that can impose its will across the entire country. We have very decentralised structures. Essentially, what we always had in

relation to militias, be they Taliban or not, were local commanders who were instructed to find money to pay for fighters, to pay for guns, and to feed those fighters. Whatever the lootable resource, if it was drugs, if it was onions or lapis lazuli, all of those things got taxed as did their movement. Drugs are particularly attractive, because they have a much higher financial worth, but how is that tax controlled and moved up the system, or is it kept rather localised? I suspect that it is the latter. That is not to say that there is not a relationship. That is not to say that certain commanders have a political advantage in adopting the relationship locally and, particularly, in relation to portraying themselves fundamentally as nationalists. Fabrice touched on this, but the perception, whether right or wrong, in the south is of a Government who are potentially more involved in the movement of drugs than the Taliban. I do not have an evidence base for that, but it is the perception you constantly get in discussions with farmers. There is a degree of the politics of opium, and the way in which it has been used in a provocative way, when Talibs say, “Okay, we banned it in 2001, but we are good Afghans. You are good Afghans. We understand your problems. Feel free, grow opium.” In the 1990s, I heard anecdotes from farmers about the Taliban giving out seeds and agricultural extension advice, but at the time I never came across that in the years in which I was doing field work. Now you hear about something that is definitely more of an attempt to encourage cultivation. Is that only because of finance or is it part of a political strategy? Is it a provocation strategy to encourage cultivation and provoke aggressive eradication? Here would be an Afghan Government whom the people perceive to be more involved in drugs than the Taliban themselves; they would be perceived as corrupt in relation to the manning of checkpoints and preventing people from moving into legal production even if they choose to, and are essentially doing it for western consumers who have the drugs problem. That is not true. Afghans have a considerable drugs problem themselves, but the way that this has been played out in the field is very much an attempt to provoke, and we need to be cautious. Actions against the relationship between the Taliban and drugs are right, but similarly you need to balance them against the Government and drugs.

**Q107 Sir John Stanley:** Is your evidence that the Taliban fighters are being paid in US dollars or in Afghan money? If they are being paid in US dollars and they are on an annual rate of, say, \$3,500 per Afghan fighter a year, where is all the cash being held?

**David Mansfield:** I am way outside my comfort zone, but how things typically work, whether people are being paid money or whether they are being paid in kind in terms of three meals a day, is quite an attractive option for many Afghan rural workers, particularly in times of agricultural underemployment. As for whether they get a cash

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salary or an in-kind payment, it is probably the latter—but, as I said, to a degree I am way outside my comfort zone.

**Q108 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I wanted to focus on the degree of high-level political commitment to the anti-drugs strategy. We have heard how drugs are funding the Taliban and subverting the Government of Afghanistan. Could it be said that, despite what, I am sure, are sincere announcements of an anti-narcotics drive, drugs have nevertheless achieved a degree of tolerance by the Government? Could it also be said that because Afghanistan, unlike Iraq, has no oil, maybe drugs are seen in some quarters as a national source of income?

**Fabrice Pothier:** I will refer to the point raised by the previous expert, Dr. Jonathan Goodhand, about there being a functional—not to say acceptable—level of corruption. It is obviously very hard to determine precisely, but I think that it also applies to the question of the acceptable or functional level of a drug economy in a country. What is the point at which the basic institutions of the state and the market economy are not threatened? What is the point beyond which those institutions are threatened? Clearly, we are now in a situation in Afghanistan where the state institutions, as well as the market economy, are dependent on the drug economy. One needs to be mindful when talking about eradicating the drugs problem—which is something that everyone wishes—of the consequences of doing so. I think that the World Bank, in one of its previous reports, used an interesting term: “poppy shock”. That means, if you dry up all the sources of the poppy cash, you may actually end up shocking the national economy. It is not only 30% equivalent of GDP, it is feeding the GDP—the building sector, export-import. It is really sitting at the core of what Afghanistan is today. One has to apply a very smart, well-targeted strategy to progressively contain and, hopefully, shrink this economy without causing consequences worse than the problem itself. On the question of political will, I totally agree. I think that this is the pillar that is missing from the Afghan national counter-narcotics strategy. It is missing partly because of complex Afghan political reasons, which I think that we are all aware of, but also because of the west’s own strategy towards the drugs problem. You literally have as many strategies as you have actors in Afghanistan. The US has its five-pillar strategy, the UK has the maybe unlucky position of being the partner nation on counter-narcotics, then you have the EU with its comprehensive, rapid development strategy. So you have high fragmentation, and that does not leave much space for true Afghan capacity to develop. I shall conclude by referring to an example. The recent move by NATO last October to become involved in the interdiction of drug facilities and facilitators, however well intentioned, again reduces the space for true Afghan capacity. What you need is an Afghan capacity that can, for the next 10, 20 or 30 years, keep up the pressure on the

traffickers. What we are doing is importing this capacity from abroad, and obviously within some years it will have to leave.

**David Mansfield:** I deal with the perceptions of farmers. They are the people who, fundamentally, I spend my time with. When it comes to the discussions that we have with farmers, you can be in the middle of nowhere, in some remote place, and there is a perception to which they will refer: “You kharaji”—foreigners—“all you care about is drugs. How am I meant to give up opium poppy given my socio-economic position?” In some cases that is true, but in others it may not be. What am I meant to read from this when they name various characters, locally or nationally, whom they believe—whether right or wrong—to be involved in drugs? The perception of the farmers themselves is of a very mixed approach by the Government. What I have found over the years is how many are willing to take, to some extent, the hit of action against them if they believe that it is equitable in terms of action against the more senior people. People in remote Badakhshan growing opium poppy will say, “Look, they come and destroy my field, but the white house up on the hill is owned by a local commander who has these links. He is the guy who is more involved than anyone in this area. Why is it always me?” I think that this whole issue of the rural population’s perception of the state being involved in the business, and the fact that those state actors can somehow continue, while they often perceive themselves as the victims of counter-narcotics activity needs to be resolved. There is no doubt about that at all. I am far more agnostic than others on issues around NATO involvement. In the very early days—2001–02—people often asked, “How are we meant to read the international community’s position on drugs when soldiers will walk through a bazaar where opium is being traded and they say nothing, yet when it comes to poppy cultivation itself, there is a feeling that it is not acceptable.” There are so many mixed messages in how people perceive our actions as well as those of the Government themselves. Hamid Karzai has made a lot of statements against opium poppy, but again, the perception of farmers is that they are only statements. It is the classic situation: these anti-drug statements are made by the provincial shura, and it goes to the district shura, but to some extent they are window-dressing, because the action on the ground says something quite different.

**Q109 Mr. Moss:** I think that you almost answered the question I was going to pose, which relates to eradication. I think that Mr. Pothier was saying that there are so many different policies that this leaves a vacuum and nothing really gets done. How do you overcome this difference in approach and how would you go about formulating a single policy that people can buy into, but that is actually integrated with the Afghan Government’s actions as well?

**David Mansfield:** I think that there is a single policy, which is the position on eradication.<sup>2</sup> I have seen eradication work on the ground at one level and not

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<sup>2</sup> *Note by witness:* The current eradication policy is of only destroying the crop where viable alternatives exist.

work on others. Is there eradication where someone has a viable alternative? As I said earlier, you meet farmers who have adopted a range of different crops and this diversification of cropping systems. Because they are no longer growing poppy, which is incredibly labour-intensive, they free up some of their labour by adopting these other crops to go and find a job in the city. The combination of those on-farm, off-farm, non-farm income opportunities can be higher than poppy, but it is only available for some. In those areas, people perceive that the threat of eradication is real, they are near the provincial centre and it is credible. So it acts as a catalyst. People are not thinking, "Well, if I grow poppy and they come and destroy the crop, I will have lost all that money from poppy." They are thinking, "I could have grown a combination of green beans, onions and other crops, and sent my son to the city. That is the money that I have now lost by growing poppy and having it destroyed." There is a real opportunity cost associated with poppy cultivation. Eradication can therefore be catalytic. It forces people to make the decision that, in some way, they should have done. Some of these characters say, "Look, I recognise that the local commanders make money out of drugs. It exacerbates insecurity. I recognise that it is haram and I would much prefer to do something else and therefore I have done." The problem lies in other areas, where there is a very high population density.<sup>3</sup> People essentially do not have access to the markets for other crops—the high-value horticulture—and there are limitations on non-farm income opportunities. So when they give up poppies and there is a threat of eradication and all their crops being destroyed, they can end up just growing wheat. The consequence of that is that they do not have enough wheat to feed their family because their landholding is too small and the yields are too low. So you press them and when you press them, those characters will react. There are very clear examples of that. So the eradication strategy—the national drug control strategy—says, "eradication where viable alternatives exist". The question is, how do you measure where someone has a viable alternative? This is the continuing discussion. In Helmand the perception is that people have good landholdings—and it is true. Good irrigation—it is true. There are large tracts of Helmand where they have a viable alternative and therefore eradication is a justified act.<sup>4</sup> The question there lies in the issue of security and how insecurity prevents markets from functioning. As I mentioned about the onions earlier, the crucial issue is getting goods to market. That is what makes the difference between a viable alternative and agricultural potential that the farmer cannot realise. This is where there is much discussion, and I can see it in relation to fieldwork that was done in November. I am doing that report now, and I can see where farmers are shifting out of poppy cultivation. They are adopting the high-value

horticulture. That is a sustainable shift, and eradication can be catalytic in that environment, even in parts of the south. But as soon as you get to a situation where a farmer is getting rid of poppy and only growing wheat, you have to be concerned about the sustainability of that, and you have to be concerned about the role that eradication would play in that environment in terms of deteriorating economic growth and exacerbating the security situation.

**Fabrice Pothier:** I maintain that there are too many policies and actors. We have a policy on paper, but we do not have a policy on the ground, and what we need is a smart policy. It seems that those who have been smartest so far are the Taliban in using poppies to have leverage on the local population, creating problematic situations for NATO troops in the south. So what would be the smart policy? What would be the kind of basic criteria it would rely on? First, I think policy should be adapted to the local circumstances, as David just mentioned. Some regions are remote, with poor access to markets, and basic rural resources. Using eradication in that case would be counter-productive. Using eradication in regions that are more connected to markets and the main cities can be—if well-targeted—a useful tool. That is the first criterion. It has to be adapted to local circumstances. Secondly, you have to ask yourself the question, can the Afghans do it? And if they cannot do it, what can we do to help them to do it, and in the long term as well? The third criterion would be, what resources are available? We have not raised this point, but we do not have unlimited resources. Financially, but also politically, the policy was that the west can invest in such an endeavour. So we need to ask ourselves what we can seriously do and maintain to do—not for one or two years but for 10—that will make a positive difference. So I am just coming back to my basic notion earlier of the cost-efficiency notion for counter-narcotics.

**Q110 Mr. Moss:** Has anyone ever considered just giving cash, like we do in Europe for all sorts of nefarious activities now on farms? We do not pay for product—we just give the farmers cash for doing their hedgerows or cleaning the irrigation channels or whatever. It must cost the west a huge amount of money—not only the cream-off the Taliban gets and fighting the Taliban militarily, but in all sorts of other ways. Has no one ever considered going to the farmer and saying, "Stop growing poppies. Here is a cash payout"?

**Fabrice Pothier:** You are suggesting that we implement the common agricultural policy in Afghanistan? I understand the question. I think it has been tried, including by the British Government earlier—I think in 2002–03—and it was counter-productive because of the basic capacity problems of delivering the cash to the right people in an equitable way. More importantly, you cannot pay yourself out of the drug problem. The basic reason is that a very complex market system operates there. You could fix it for one year, but you would still have a criminal system there. In Thailand, they wiped out the poppy

<sup>3</sup> *Note by witness:* and small landholdings.

<sup>4</sup> *Note by witness:* Some argue that there are large tracts of land in Helmand where eradication is possible as they have alternatives. I would argue insecurity means that many farmers do not have alternatives.

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problem, but synthetic drugs have replaced poppies and, in fact, they use the same criminal system that existed before. You need a policy to dismantle the illicit market rather than trying to pay your way out of it.

**Q111 Mr. Moss:** Another way around seems to be targeting the so-called precursor chemicals. Is that a viable alternative to the policy?

**Fabrice Pothier:** It is not an alternative; it is a very important complement. Figures show that an increasingly high quantity of those chemical precursors is going to Afghanistan, which is an indication that the drug market is consolidating and increasing in value. According to UNODC, 70% of heroin is now produced in Afghanistan itself. Indeed, having a chemical precursor strategy would be an important and effective way of trying to cut the higher-value, and therefore more threatening, part of the drug economy.

**Chairman:** I am conscious of time. Do you have anything to add, Mr. Mansfield?

**David Mansfield:** I wanted to say something about buying the crop, which is a suggestion that often comes up. One of my big issues with it is that it would stimulate the opium market, when actually we should be investing our effort in buying up legal crops and stimulating legal production.

**Q112 Chairman:** A final question. The Committee visited Iran in 2007 and there was a lot of discussion about the millions of people there who are taking the products of Afghanistan and consuming them and becoming heroin addicts. Also, the Iranians talked about the hundreds or thousands of police officers that they had lost in battles with people in these convoys. This stuff has to go through either Pakistan or Iran to get out. What prospect is there for effective regional co-operation to deal with the problem? You talked about interdiction and how to stop the heroin getting to Europe or elsewhere.

**Fabrice Pothier:** That is a key aspect that has been given too little attention. How do you involve the destination markets? In that case, western Europe does not count; what counts is Iran, Pakistan, Russia and, increasingly, the central Asian markets. Some 2.8% of Iran's population are drug users and Afghanistan is close behind, at 1.4%. Iran has around 3 million drug users, to use a broad term—that does not mean injection drug users; it can also mean smoking heroin or using opium. So Iran has a huge drug problem. It has tried to take a more innovative approach to the problem by implementing some progressive health responses, such as a clean needle exchange in Tehran. However, obviously, the political context in Iran is highly unpredictable and difficult, so there are also reversals of policy. They have a problem of drug smuggling on their eastern border, especially with Herat, where thousands of the Iranian border forces have been killed in clashes with drug smugglers. That touches on the broader point of the need to involve Russia, Iran and central Asian countries, as well as Pakistan, in thinking about having comprehensive strategies not only in Afghanistan, but that reconcile supply with demand. If you are successful in Afghanistan, there will just be a balloon effect by which the market will move to another place, such as Tajikistan. You will still have a demon to deal with. I think the British Government could make a very helpful contribution in advising those Governments on how to develop more comprehensive and progressive approaches, which you still do not see. In Russia, 80% of the HIV/AIDS-infected people are drug users. A very comprehensive strategy is needed.

**David Mansfield:** When we talk about the wider Afghan effort, we cannot ignore the regional players. That is the same with the CN effort. When it comes to Iran, there is always an inroad on the drugs issue because they have the 3,500 martyrs—that is how they would express it—whom they have lost on the border. It has been easier to co-operate with Iran on that issue than on many other issues.

**Chairman:** Gentlemen, thank you very much. This has been an extremely valuable session and we are grateful for your time.

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**Tuesday 21 April 2009**

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr Fabian Hamilton  
Mr David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr John Horam  
Mr Paul Keetch

Mr Malcolm Moss  
Sandra Osborne  
Mr Ken Purchase  
Sir John Stanley  
Ms Gisela Stuart

*Witnesses:* **James Fergusson**, Journalist and author,<sup>1</sup> **Christina Lamb**, Foreign Affairs Correspondent, *Sunday Times*, and author,<sup>2</sup> and **David Loyn**, International Development Correspondent, BBC, and author,<sup>3</sup> gave evidence.

**Q113 Chairman:** This afternoon we are continuing our inquiry into Afghanistan and Pakistan. We are pleased to have two public evidence sessions today and a panel of three participants for each. Perhaps the witnesses could begin by introducing themselves before we start the questions.

**James Fergusson:** I am a journalist and author. I have written two books on Afghan affairs, most recently “A Million Bullets”, which is all about the British Army’s experience in Helmand in 2006, so that is where I am coming from.

**David Loyn:** I am a BBC correspondent specialising in international development. I have travelled in Afghanistan a lot and am the author of a recent book on the history of Afghanistan. Forgive me, Chairman, but I think you know that I will have to leave a little early for another engagement.

**Chairman:** We are very glad that you have been able to come at all, so thank you.

**Christina Lamb:** I am a foreign correspondent for *The Sunday Times* and have been covering Afghanistan and Pakistan since 1987. I have also written books on Pakistan and Afghanistan—we are all plugging our books.

**Q114 Chairman:** Thank you very much. I will begin by asking each of you for your assessment of the impact of ISAF and the events of the last seven years on Afghanistan.

**Christina Lamb:** I was in Afghanistan in 2001 when the first ISAF troops arrived, which were the British Marines. In stark contrast to what happened in Iraq two years later, the foreign troops who entered Afghanistan then were really welcomed. People were fed up with war. They had had almost 30 years of war and saw foreign ISAF troops as the only answer to ending fighting between Afghans, so there was a lot of welcoming and people came out on to the streets and were very happy to see them. I think that in the last seven years we have totally lost that consent that we had at the beginning, and I think that a lot of that is due to the behaviour of the ISAF troops and to having parallel operations going on at the same time. Quite a lot of it is to do with the

behaviour of the Afghan Government themselves. We could go into those issues in detail, but I think that it has been shocking to see the change in attitude. Right at the beginning we only had 4,000 troops in Afghanistan from ISAF. It is a country with 25 million people. Those troops were not allowed outside Kabul. People used to refer to them as the international shopping assistance force because all they did was hang about Chicken Street, where the shops are. I think that we wasted a huge opportunity at the beginning when there was support and when people wanted troops throughout the country. We just sent them in much too late and too little.

**David Loyn:** It was an opportunity squandered. There was enormous confusion on what the mission was right at the beginning. It was understandable as war in revenge for 9/11, but I do not think that the US, in particular, really had a coherent view of what Afghanistan was or what they had let themselves in for. In particular, they did not really apply any analysis to what the Taliban was and where they had come from. Huge mistakes were made at the beginning in not being generous enough with the Taliban’s enemies, nor sceptical enough of their allies. The Northern Alliance were given a far too easy ride, and warlordism returned very easily into this security vacuum, which Christina has described. There was a very small number of foreign forces, and it was seen as a casualty-free war from the United States’ point of view. Right from the very beginning there was a confusion on what the mission was. President Obama now says that it is very clear that it is about defeating al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan. He has laid down very clearly that that is now the US military strategy. Behind that, there is still not the really clear analysis required to establish exactly what the Taliban are, how they can be dealt with and how they could be divided from al-Qaeda, in particular. Speaking as a journalist who deals with ISAF and the international forces in Afghanistan, I do not quite know who to call if something happens. There are national forces, Operation Enduring Freedom, which is the US mission to take out al-Qaeda, and there is the ISAF mission itself. If a western journalist does not quite know how to navigate his way around that maze, you can imagine what it is like for Afghan villagers, particularly as they now face 3,000 bombs a year dropped from the

<sup>1</sup> Author of “A Million Bullets” (2008)

<sup>2</sup> Author of “The Sewing Circles of Herat: My Afghan Years” (2004)

<sup>3</sup> Author of “Butcher and Bolt” (2008)

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air across Afghanistan, and President Karzai has protested about that. The military strategy and the way it has been run on the ground now confuses Afghanistan on the reason why foreign forces remain there.

**James Fergusson:** Just briefly, I have to agree with that. When, in 2001, we began all this and Karzai was appointed and so on, there was literally dancing in the streets, even in Kandahar, the headquarters of the Taliban opposition. The public came out and were overjoyed about the possibility of a better future for the country. Now, the latest polls show minority support for ISAF, which is very sad, so I completely echo the line about an opportunity squandered. It is very tragic.

**Q115 Chairman:** How much of it is due—you have alluded to this—to the tension between the ISAF operation and the US Operation Enduring Freedom, and to the fact that the Americans had a different agenda and a different role to some of their NATO partners?

**Christina Lamb:** I think that a lot of it is down to that. It creates confusion. I have been with British forces when they have gone into villages in Helmand on a sort of peacekeeping mission only to find that the night before Operation Enduring Freedom forces—the Americans—have been in smashing people's doors down and running over people's goats. There has been no co-ordination between them, and that continues despite the fact that there has been a lot of discussion about this. In my view, one of the most damaging things that the Operation Enduring Freedom forces did was to bring back warlords, as David mentioned. In 2001, when the Taliban fell, most Afghans, if you spoke to them, would say that they felt that the main reason for the problems in their country was the warlords, that they were the ones who had caused all the damage and had led to the Taliban coming in. The warlords themselves were running scared. There was a big meeting in the Intercontinental hotel in Kabul in December 2001 and all the main warlords were there. They thought that their days were finished. They had never seen anything like the American B52s and all the forces that had been there, and they thought that their days were over. They could not believe it when, shortly after that, American special forces were coming to them giving them briefcases full of dollars. I witnessed in Jalalabad a warlord being given a briefcase full of hundreds of dollars by somebody from Delta force. In return he gave a list of names that were supposed to be al-Qaeda people that the force was looking for. It was actually a list of names of his enemies, whom it would be very convenient for him to be rid of. The Americans had no idea. I said to these special forces guys, "How do you know that these are al-Qaeda people?" They did not really care. They said, "Well, we are going to enter the names in the computer and we have our list." So, they were quite happy. Seeing these warlords who had caused all this damage suddenly being paid huge amounts of money and being allowed to then become powerful again gave such a bad signal to ordinary Afghan people. Now a third

of the Parliament in Afghanistan, which we cite as a great victory for democracy, is formed of people who have committed serial human rights abuses.

**Chairman:** Do either of you wish to add anything on that?

**James Fergusson:** Very briefly, yes. You asked about the conflict of agendas. They are totally conflicting. The British, with ISAF, started out trying to "win hearts and minds"—that was the phrase that was used—when the Americans were trying to hunt terrorists. You cannot possibly do the two things at the same time; it never is going to work. I will give a very brief illustration. There was a small garrison of British troops in Now Zad, back in 2006, that was sent there originally to win over the locals and get them to support the Government. While that was going on, an American plane came into their area of operations and made an attack as part of their own operation, and a few hours later a truckload of body parts arrived at the British camp with Afghans saying, "You people are responsible for this." Of course, the Afghans do not make any distinction between the British and the Americans. Why would they? The Brits were trying to win hearts and minds but how could they possibly do that when they were not even told about this attack?

**Q116 Chairman:** So overall, what will the legacy of the NATO operation in Afghanistan be?

**David Loyn:** The operation has a long way to run yet. Talking about legacy, I think that NATO forces will be in Afghanistan for several decades to come, certainly the way they are deployed at the moment. You have to remember that it is the first deployment abroad, outside of the NATO area, that NATO has been engaged in, and so there has been a huge amount of learning in the NATO machine since 2006. Christina has talked about empowering the warlords back in 2001; we are seeing the same problems in Helmand today. If you talk to British officers fighting in Helmand now, their biggest concern is that they may be on one side of what is, effectively, a drug war. If 60% of the police in Helmand are heroin addicts and you have drug barons with a considerable connection to the police, then this same list of names against your enemy, which Christina described was going on in 2001, is still going on in Helmand in what is a really difficult war for British forces to fight. So I think it is a bit early to talk about legacy.

**Q117 Sir Menzies Campbell:** I am rather taken aback by your prediction of several decades. I wondered whether you thought that that was consistent with the actions of the new Administration in the United States—a kind of a surge equivalent to Iraq; Richard Holbrooke appointed to a particular position with more extensive responsibilities than any other American diplomat has had; and the fact that, I think I am right, Barack Obama has actually used the word "exit" in relation to Afghanistan. Is what you say a gloomy analysis of the extent to which the new American strategy is likely to succeed?

**David Loyn:** British Forces were in Northern Ireland for more than 35 years, as we know. It takes a long time to deal with these difficult, intractable insurgencies. If you talk to the most pragmatic people in the Ministry of Defence, those are the sort of time scales that they are thinking about in relation to Afghanistan. The troop surge is tiny compared to what would be required. Any reading of counter-insurgency doctrine would require 300,000 or 400,000 troops to manage properly in Afghanistan. The extra 17,000—most of them not actually combat troops—who are coming in at the moment will not make the significant difference on the ground without the changing politics of a far more effective development strategy, which is the bit of President Obama's policy that I am most sceptical about.

**Q118 Sir Menzies Campbell:** The implication behind that answer then is of a lack of overall co-ordination. If you think about it you have got the military, the political, the economic development—including schools, water and other infrastructure—and, of course, counter-narcotics. The received wisdom is that there has been no overall strategic approach to all four of these. Is this something, do you think, on which the UN could and should have been more effective?

**David Loyn:** I think the UN has made a number of really significant errors in Afghanistan. Most significantly, there are so many foreign people on the ground—particularly now—who cannot actually operate outside Kabul. The World Bank, in a very vivid report, stated that an "Aid Juggernaut" had descended on Afghanistan. This built up parallel institutions outside the state and did not effectively build up the Afghan state. Remember, we have been there nearly eight years and still, despite significant development improvement in some areas, the Afghan state remains extremely frail. We have not grown Afghan civil servants; not enough efforts have been made to Afghanise things that could have been done on the ground. So, the UN has remained mostly a pretty weak organisation, and when the British Government and others said let us have a—on the ground they call them a "super gorilla"; that was the nickname for the "Paddy Ashdown" role when he was supposed to go last year—

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** I am familiar with that.

**David Loyn:** Of course, he was vetoed by Karzai, partly because he is a Brit and partly because Karzai did not want this overall co-ordinating role between the EU, the UN and the different individual Governments.

**James Fergusson:** I think the US approach is the right one. What Obama has come back with—he is calling it the "comprehensive approach"—is exactly the plan that the Brits went in with in 2006. It did not work for the Brits specifically because it was under-resourced in Helmand. I think that the Americans doing this is good news, because they are the only ones, really, who now have the resources and the will to do it. As it is the only plan in town, we really need to get behind it. I think it is right. I am sceptical as to whether it will work now, because I think we are

out of time. We have lost the consent of the Afghan people because we have been going for eight years, but nevertheless the approach is right. Whether it can be made to work is another matter. I hope we can.

**Q119 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Ms Lamb, do you share the same sceptical view about what the UN has done and what it might be capable of doing in the future?

**Christina Lamb:** I do. The United Nations is just one of many players there who should take responsibility for a number of things. It is shocking that you go to Afghanistan today—seven and a half years after the Taliban fell—and only 15% of people have access to electricity. You go there and the airport is still in the same disastrous state that it was before. Actually, they have built a new one but they do not use it because they have not got any trained staff who can work in it. The roads in the capital city are all mud tracks with ruts and holes everywhere, and this is after all these years and all the millions or billions that have been spent on the country. We can talk about the Obama plan and the need for more development but, frankly, you are never going to resolve the situation in Afghanistan unless you do something about Pakistan. That is where the training is coming from, and the recruitment and funding. You can kill as many Taliban as you like, and you can build as many schools as you want to in Afghanistan, but you will not end the problem until you do something about Pakistan.

**David Loyn:** Can I add something about the UN? There are individuals at the top of the UN who are really excellent, and Kai Eide has done a first-class job since he came in as the head of UNAMA. There are people who have been there for three or four years, who really understand the country and are able to analyse it well, but beneath that there are rafts of foreign consultants coming in for three and six-month contracts, being paid grotesquely large amounts of money. Those people are really the problem. They do not provide very much to Afghanistan and, to quote from the World Bank report again, that "foreign presence undermines the very objective of building a credible and legitimate" Afghanistan.

**Christina Lamb:** I totally agree. The Russians, when they were there—I do not cite them as a great example—did at least send many people to go and be trained in Russia. Most of the trained engineers and, indeed, the Governor of Helmand, whom we cite as someone who we think is very good, was trained by the Russians. We are not doing that same thing of sending people.

**James Fergusson:** The Americans are now talking about that at least.

**Christina Lamb:** This is a country where, for 30 years, practically nobody went to school or was trained. To expect them suddenly to be able to run a country—there were not the people there to do it. I totally agree with David about these people who came on big salaries for six months at a time. This is a very complicated country. I have been going there

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for 22 years, and I do not pretend to understand all the interactions between tribes and things. People coming for six months is almost a waste of time.

**Q120 Sir Menzies Campbell:** One last question, if I may. What if the Obama plan does not work?

**James Fergusson:** We then proceed to our exit strategy, which is surely going to be a negotiated settlement with the Taliban.

**Q121 Sir Menzies Campbell:** That is something you have written about?

**James Fergusson:** Indeed, I have written about it, and I have met the Taliban myself. I think it is going to be the last option. There is nothing else we can do. We are already talking to the Taliban, I notice, and Obama has also been talking about talking to the “reconcilable elements”—that is the phrase that is used. I think that is certainly the way we are heading. We should do a deal with them. That is what it is going to come down to: we will say to the Taliban, “You can come back to some form of political power in the country on condition that you split with al-Qaeda,” because all of this is about—it is the reason we went there in the first place—keeping al-Qaeda out of Afghanistan. The Foreign Office is still saying that—the Foreign Office line now is that the reason why we are in Afghanistan is to prevent terror attacks on Britain. That is our direct reason for it. I take issue with that because, in fact, there has never been a Taliban bomb in any western city. The Taliban have no foreign policy. When I say Taliban, I mean the Quetta Shura—the “pure” Taliban. There is this rather lazy conflation of language. The Foreign Office now talks about the threats coming “from this area”, but, no, they do not—they come from Pakistan. The 10 named people we know about in the Manchester plot were all Pakistanis; there were no Afghans involved.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** Alleged plot.

**James Fergusson:** Alleged plot, of course—excuse me. But it is every time—you never hear of Afghan bombers.

**Christina Lamb:** I think they see the same lack of co-ordination, though, on the whole talking to Taliban, as we saw at the beginning with the military operations. Almost everybody you meet now is talking to the Taliban, but there is no co-ordinated approach, and it is not clear to whom they are talking. Obama talks about moderate Taliban, but who are the moderate Taliban? What are the names of these people?

**Q122 Sir John Stanley:** As of today, two major justifications are given by the Government for being in Afghanistan. One is about security and preventing the re-emergence of a safe haven for al-Qaeda or the Taliban; but the second, which is reasonable in theory, is that we are seeking to prevent a reversion to the gross denial of human rights to women and girls that occurred under the Taliban regime. On the latter area, in the last few weeks and days, we have seen legislation passed through the Kabul

Parliament that has been described, quite reasonably, as legalising rape. It has been reported that in the Upper House, the Bill concerned was not even read, let alone debated, before it went to the Supreme Court. Also, in the last few days, we have heard reports of the cold-blooded murder of Mrs. Sitara Achakzai, who was shot by the Taliban outside her home in Kandahar from a motorbike in a ride-and-shoot operation. She was one of the leading campaigners for women’s and girls’ rights in Afghanistan. Clearly, the defence of human rights of women and girls in Afghanistan is going seriously backwards. My question is whether you think that that is an irreversible trend, and, if so, how can we in the west face our electorates when we support a Government that are steadily eroding the fundamental rights of women and girls?

**David Loyn:** May I quote Malalai Joya, who is a prominent Afghan female MP and an outspoken activist?

**Christina Lamb:** Suspended.

**David Loyn:** Now suspended. She won the Anna Politkovskaya human rights award in London last October. In her acceptance speech, she said that rights for women in Afghanistan are now worse than they were under the Taliban. That is nothing for the international community to be proud of. Our expectations were far too high in that direction. A lot of very good UN officials on large salaries went in with gender awareness programmes to a country where these kinds of things will take a long time to develop. Yes, there was a huge appetite for girls’ education among the middle class, but in most Afghan society, we are a long way from the kind of equality between men and women that is commonplace in the west. It is far too high an expectation for us to demand it of Afghanistan.

**Christina Lamb:** You will not be surprised to hear me say that I feel passionately about this. I wrote the *Sunday Times* magazine cover story this week on the situation of women in Afghanistan, and I spent a lot of time earlier this year talking to a lot of women. It would not be wrong to say that there has been a betrayal of the women, given all the promises that were made in late 2001. Yes, the main concern of most ordinary Afghan women is security and being able to feed their families—it is an incredibly poor country. The types of programme that were introduced in 2001 were not suitable. There were all these gender rights projects and feminists coming in with different things that were not what most women wanted. There has rightly been a lot of outrage over the law, but I have to say that Afghanistan has the best laws for women in most of Asia because of the new laws that were drawn up after the Taliban were removed. The constitution gives women equal rights and 25% of the seats in Parliament are reserved for women. That is a lot higher than you have here. Yet that makes no difference because nobody complies with those laws. The only rape case I know of from the last few years in which the men were successfully prosecuted involved a girl who was gang raped; unusually, her family supported her and secured a prosecution. The President wrote a pardon for those people. He will not pardon the journalist who

downloaded information about women's rights and got a life sentence, but he pardoned those three men who gang raped a 13-year-old girl.

**Q123 Sir John Stanley:** May I ask a specific question? President Karzai gave an undertaking following the outcry about the passing of this new law, which has been reproduced in detail. There are appalling provisions in the new law that has gone through the Afghanistan Parliament. He said that he would review it. Can you give us your view on whether that is a token gesture or whether he actually has the political clout and will to do what should be done, which is to annul the law in its entirety?

**Christina Lamb:** You should ask him how many women he has working in his office, in the presidency. I can tell you the answer.

**Sir John Stanley:** But can you answer my question? Do you give any credence or not to President Karzai's statement that he will review this law?

**David Loyn:** Certainly not four months before an election.

**James Fergusson:** It was an electoral ploy, designed to bring in the Hazara Shi'ites, was it not? It was only 10% of the country, in fact, but it was a sop to the Hazara vote. So I agree with David on that. I think that that is right.

**Q124 Sir John Stanley:** So you hold out no prospect of an annulment?

**Christina Lamb:** My point is that there is no commitment from him to women's rights. He, in his own office, has not a single woman working for him. His own wife, a qualified obstetrician who used to work in a hospital in Pakistan, has never been seen publicly since he became President. That is his commitment to women's rights. If he was committed, he would be making an example. She would be coming out, leading the way.

**James Fergusson:** The international community does hold a big stick, on the other hand. There is the funding issue. He will, to some point, bow to western opinion. I think that he has got the point. There was a much bigger row about the Hazara law than I think he expected. I do not think that he probably even knew what was going on, frankly. I think that it was drawn to his attention rather late in the process.

**Chairman:** Thank you. I think that we need to move on to some other areas now.

**Q125 Ms Stuart:** It was suggested that, just as when Gorbachev came in and allowed the Russians to review their role in Afghanistan and essentially leave, Obama's action will have a similar dynamic. Any immediate responses to that?

**David Loyn:** I am not a prophet; I am a reporter, and I am not sure what will happen in the years to come as Obama's strategy unravels, but certainly the similarities with 1985 and 1986 are quite strong now: the sense of a troop surge and "Let's have one last go at this before pulling out." But Russia had far more troops in Afghanistan and far more will to fight than the Americans, and still they were beaten.

**Q126 Ms Stuart:** May I move on to yet another player? The European Union has poured enormous amounts of money into Afghanistan and intends to pour even more into it. Has it done any good whatever?

**David Loyn:** If I can take the question to begin with, the biggest failure on the European Union side is on policing. It took until last year before EUPOL, as it is called, was set up. At the Bonn summit, different bits of Afghanistan were carved out between different countries. You will remember that Germany said that it would do police training. Very little happened between then and 2007–08. The EU has put a lot of money into Afghanistan and a lot of that money has gone into the Government budget. There has been some effective aid alongside the World Bank and Britain, the two other big funders of the Afghan Government, but in terms of the things that the EU said that it would do on police training and standing up the police, that has not happened. We now see President Obama effectively taking it over.

**Q127 Ms Stuart:** Ms Lamb and Mr. Fergusson, are you equally pessimistic about the police force? We were very much told, "Afghan army good, Afghan police bad," and that restructuring was needed. Do you hold out any hope of the EU stepping up to the plate, or do you think that we have simply given up on them?

**James Fergusson:** The EU does not seem to have any profile in parts of Afghanistan. Traditionally, you see nice blue signs saying "Developed by the EU", but there is none of that, and it is not something that Afghans really talk about. It is not on their radar: "Oh, we're okay because Europe is helping us." You do not get any of that. I am not even particularly sure whether they see the police and think, "We need better police. Why isn't the EU doing a better job?" I think that they look at Kabul and blame Kabul for not doing it. It is all rather back-room stuff, but I do agree with "Army good, police bad," broadly speaking.

**David Loyn:** The UN reports that the locus of interactions between state institutions and criminal interests is in the Ministry of Interior. It remains the focal point of the worst corruption in the country.

**Ms Stuart:** Would you like to add anything to that, Ms Lamb?

**Christina Lamb:** Yes. There is no doubt that policing is the biggest problem, because for most Afghans, their interaction with the Government or the state is through the police. I have an Afghan friend whose husband was murdered: she went to the police and they asked her for a bribe even to report the crime. That is typical. Of course, if that is people's experience of dealing with the police, that would give them a very bad idea of the Afghan Government, and that is one of the reasons why the Taliban are able to come in and get support. One thing that people say that the Taliban offer is speedy justice—they come and sort things out that the police have failed to deal with. So it is a key area to be sorted out—much more important, in my view, than the Afghan army.

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**David Loyn:** May I reinforce that? When you go into Afghan villages under Taliban control—as most of the countryside is—and ask, “Why do you now support the Taliban?” they talk as if the Karzai Government have already gone. They say, “When President Karzai’s police were here, we had to pay them off for justice and there were all the petty officials you had to pay along the line. Now the Taliban are back, and we have good, clean sharia law again.” Remember, that is what they had under the mujaheddin. The Taliban did not introduce village sharia law into Afghanistan; it was what was there during the 1980s—it was the social glue that kept the country together during the years when they were fighting against the communists. That is why the Taliban were able to bring law and order pretty effectively to most of the country, once they had stopped the civil war that went on after the Russians left. Karzai and the international community failed dismally after 2001 to have any other effect on the countryside, so the Taliban are able to recruit much more easily again. It is the failure of the rule of law and the corruption in the villages and the police, which are the reasons why the Taliban are so easily able to return. Those are the things that matter in Afghanistan, not—with respect to Afghans—women’s rights.

**Christina Lamb:** I agree with that. Almost everybody is affected. You can imagine that, with so many people having been moved around during all the years of fighting, there is an enormous number of land disputes. Almost everyone you meet has to try to resolve a dispute, and they cannot get anywhere through the official system, so they are all reverting to the traditional justice system, which the Taliban does much more effectively, unfortunately.

**Q128 Mr. Keetch:** Briefly, before we move on, can I just roll in back to international co-operation? Every speech that I have heard by a British or American Secretary of Defence or Foreign Secretary in the last two or three years has consistently said that the caveats placed on NATO forces by other European countries have been a problem. Do you agree broadly with that criticism of some of our European NATO partners? You are all nodding your heads.

**David Loyn:** It certainly significantly weakens the ability. NATO planners in Kabul call the Germans and the Italians pot plants—“What should we do with the pot plants this week?” they ask, because there is so little that those forces can do in terms of effective military action. They will not go out at night; they will not fly helicopters in certain conditions; and they will not go to the south of the country. So you have a military force that was initially drawn from an alliance, which you cannot send into battle in most of the country. Support is very fragile: even in the countries that will go in to fight the Taliban now—Canada and the Netherlands—there are major political discussions. In fact, the Dutch are committed to pulling out, and the Dutch Ministry of Defence tells me that it hopes that it will manage to change the policy to that.

There is a very significant weakening of military will because of that and, again, the Americans are hoping to fill the gap.

**Q129 Mr. Keetch:** This has undoubtedly caused enormous resentment in the British and American forces in theatre, because they feel that they are not being backed up by some of their major colleagues.

**James Fergusson:** Yes, I think that they have given up, actually. I am not sure that the resentment is there any more; the other day, it was hardly mentioned. At this point, Obama, when he was over here, was not really asking for more troops from NATO because he knew the answer—he just did not bother asking, really. He was asking for police training and other things—he has moved on to civil-side development, which may be a good thing, because at least it might save NATO. I agree with Lord Carrington who said three years ago that if NATO cannot do that, what is it for? That is a very good question.

**Q130 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I must return to the question of human rights and what we are supposed to be doing in Afghanistan. In my view, President Obama has restated our Western aims to deny al-Qaeda a base, and that can be stretched to the need to suppress an insurrection against an elected Government, however unsatisfactory that Government may be. Although it is highly desirable to create a Western democracy with respect for human rights, particularly those of women—we all feel strongly about that—it confuses the picture, because we are dealing with a disjointed society, which is presumably traditional outside the cities. I am going there next week for the first time. We do not invade countries to influence the right of girls to go to school, otherwise we would be at war almost continuously, so what are we doing? Mr. Fergusson, your fall-back position is to talk to the Taliban and somehow to get them back into government? Where would that leave our human rights aims?

**James Fergusson:** In dire trouble. Our Government must decide why we are there. Are we there for our security and to prevent terrorist attacks and so on, or are we there to spread democracy and to make things better for schools and women’s rights? I am not saying that we should abandon Afghan women, but there are other ways of dealing with the problem, and surely we do not improve the lot of women in Afghanistan by sending in an invading army, which is what we have done. I believe that a better way is through dialogue, engagement and, most of all, education. Afghanistan is an extremely illiterate and uneducated country, and much of the stuff comes from the fact that there is no education. I advocate talking to the Taliban and engaging with them. Whenever I have done so, I have made progress. They are there to listen, and they like to listen. Their movement is revolutionary and work in progress. Believe it or not, not all Taliban are against women’s education. I know a maulawi who ran a girls’ school in Kabul all through the Taliban period with their approval. Such things happen, and the situation is not always as black and white as it looks. Yes, it is

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terrible, and I do not condone the Taliban's treatment of women, but there is scope for improvement.

**David Loyn:** I think there has been a problem of Afghanising the solution in Afghanistan. Assuming that with freedom of democracy, a neo-con agenda and a Parliament, everything would follow automatically with a McDonald's on every corner and rights for women—that is not far from the characterisation of what the Americans believed they might be able to do in Afghanistan—is clearly a long way from what has happened. We have been rather poor at the bits beyond just having votes and about building a democracy. They are about accountability, empowering a civil society, and having a free media, which is now very much on the back foot in Afghanistan and going in the wrong direction. We have been rather poor at defending those areas and building Afghan institutions that can stand up for themselves in an Afghan way. We have not even done the things that we said we would do. For example, at the Afghan compact in 2006—the last time all the donor countries came together to say what they would do—there was agreement that senior appointees in the Afghan community would be properly vetted for corruption and crime, but that has not happened. The idea was that Afghans would do that, but it has not happened, and no money has been put into that. The Counter Narcotics Trust Fund has not worked, and whole areas of public policy have been attempted in Afghanistan by Britain and others, but have not been followed up to provide the livelihoods and to create the Afghanistan that we wanted. Instead, there is a Western-style Parliament, which is beginning to operate as a bulwark against Karzai, but not much else at this stage.

**Q131 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Clearly, we want to build Government institutions to obtain a legitimate Government that does not terrorise the rest of the world.

**David Loyn:** With respect, Mr. Heathcoat-Amory, Afghanistan never terrorised the rest of the world. It was host to people who did. It is important to distinguish between the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

**Q132 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I was actually thinking of al-Qaeda. I want to deny them the use of another country, and to do that I accept that we have an interest in good government in Afghanistan. My question was more about this ideal of human rights. Are we not in danger of taking on the Afghan Government as well as the Taliban? From what has been said already, Sir John Stanley is right. We have grave doubts about the present Afghan Government. But we are just taking up another front there. He is facing an election, and it may be that, in the society out there, this is unobtainable. In pursuit of human rights, we are arguably using up a lot of political capital, whereas our primary aim and, I thought, our sole aim was rather different—to make us and our allies more secure.

**David Loyn:** I think you are right, but tactically we have to swallow some distaste about some of the things that happen in order strategically to get a more stable Afghanistan in the long term. If you will forgive me, I have to leave, unless there is anything else I can help you with. Thank you.

**Christina Lamb:** Can I make a point on that? I take your point entirely but I think it looks to Afghans that we are not very committed to human rights because of what we have done. We wanted a Parliament, so they had elections, but it is all for show—as if we had elections where we did not care who contested them. As I said earlier, a third of the people sitting in Parliament have committed serial human rights abuses and are regarded by most ordinary Afghans as the problem. It looks to them as though we are not genuinely committed to human rights. What is the point of having a Parliament full of those people? Many of the governors who have been appointed are the same.

**James Fergusson:** I agree with that. Look at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Add them into the mix and imagine how that looks—we are not exactly in a position to preach.

**Q133 Mr. Moss:** Can I return to something that Mr. Fergusson raised earlier—that the British strategy seems to be built on the assumption that if ISAF and US forces withdraw from Afghanistan, it is inevitable that al-Qaeda will return and use it as a base? What is your view?

**James Fergusson:** I saw the transcripts of one of your sessions and a witness said categorically that if we moved out, al-Qaeda would come straight back in again. My view is that there is no evidence that that is the case. Why would they? Why would the Taliban let al-Qaeda back in? After all, by hosting al-Qaeda in the first place the Taliban lost control of their country—they lost their Government. They said to me, “You have destroyed our country for just one man.” They were furious about it. The idea that they might let bin Laden back in again and go back to scratch, I find very implausible. Another point is, would al-Qaeda want to come back in? Originally, in the 1990s they were there with training camps and setting up their movement. At this point, I do not think they need training camps. I think their armies are trained and they are probably over here in Britain. We have moved on from there. You keep hearing this line that we have got to stay there because if we go al-Qaeda will come straight back into the vacuum, and we will be back where we started. I do not accept that at all.

**Q134 Mr. Moss:** To go back to your postulation of a potential end game—that we hand over to the Taliban—do you feel a guarantee to keep out al-Qaeda could be built into that agreement?

**James Fergusson:** I think that is a discussion that needs to be had with the Taliban, with the Quetta Shura. I think we would be very pleasantly surprised at the outcome of that. I think they would agree to it.

**Christina Lamb:** But I think you have to be careful not to look at the Taliban as a monolithic organisation. There are a lot of different groups,

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which is one of the problems with the whole “let’s talk to the Taliban” scenario. I do not have the same confidence that James does that the Taliban could stop or would necessarily want to stop al-Qaeda coming back. What I do think is, what interest does al-Qaeda have in going back to Afghanistan? It is in Pakistan, which is a much more useful place to be. You have got nuclear arms and an intelligence service that is largely sympathetic to what you are doing. It has everything you need. It has electricity everywhere. It is a highly technological country. Why would you go to Afghanistan, one of the poorest countries in the world, and run about in caves?

**Q135 Mr. Moss:** The Government’s strategy in Afghanistan includes a wide range of objectives. Some people argue that it has far too many priorities. What in your view should they be focusing on in the near future?

**James Fergusson:** It comes back to the question that we had before. Are we there to build a new democracy or are we there for our national security interests? The two things conflict. My own view is that we are going to have to take a hard-nosed realpolitik line on Afghanistan, which is about our security. We need to ensure that the West is not attacked again by terrorists from Afghanistan. How do you do that now? The whole thing has moved on to Pakistan. It is obviously a very different problem. I think you start by separating what is happening in Pakistan from what is happening in Afghanistan. There has been in the last year an interesting development: people now talk about “the Pakistani Taliban”. That has been going on for only a year or so. It is quite new, and it is rather lazy to say they are all part of the same thing. The Foreign Office does it all the time, saying, “The threat is from this area.” No it is not. It is from Pakistan and not Afghanistan. We need to separate them and perhaps we can start tackling the problem in a slightly different way.

**Christina Lamb:** We are lazy generally in our terminology of all these things. One of the problems in Afghanistan is that a lot of the things that are happening are tribal conflicts. We label them as Taliban because it is easier. When I say “we”, I mean ISAF or the military. Journalists do the same thing. The Taliban never deny responsibility for anything. They want to look as powerful as possible. It has made them look a much more powerful organisation than they actually are.

**Q136 Mr. Horam:** We have talked a bit about the differing aims of the various organisations in Afghanistan. Do you think that the British Government are now clear about their mission?

**James Fergusson:** No, in a word, I do not. I hear different things from different people. Stephen Grey interviewed several senior generals the other day. They all came up with a different answer. If the Army itself is not clear what it is—whether it is beating the Taliban or whatever—there is complete confusion. There are different agendas.

**Q137 Mr. Horam:** How far is it a desire to protect the investment already made, the lives already lost and so on?

**James Fergusson:** That must be part of it.

**Christina Lamb:** You cannot just abandon Afghanistan now. We have started something. I was there in 1989 when the Russians left. I was shocked at the way, overnight, everybody lost interest. I lived in Peshawar for two years covering war and literally overnight, diplomats, aid workers and spies all just left. No one was interested because it was just Afghans fighting Afghans. We suffered as a result of that. We cannot let the same thing happen again.

**Q138 Mr. Horam:** How far is that the consequence of what Mr. Fergusson proposed? And the exit strategy you have outlined very clearly, would that be perceived as just giving up and going?

**Christina Lamb:** That background is important because all Afghans know it. They never trusted when we came in 2001. They thought that the same thing would happen again and that these people would not be around. Because, for domestic political imperatives, no country went there saying that they were committed to being there for 20 years or whatever at the beginning, Afghans just felt that we were going to go and abandon them all over again. I remember going into a village in eastern Afghanistan in 2002 with some American soldiers who were setting up a clinic and helping all these people in the village. Each night that village would then rocket the base. So I went to the villagers and said, “You are being helped. They are building you a school. They are treating your kids. Why are you rocketing the base every night?” They said that it was because those guys would be gone soon but the bad guys would still be there.

**Q139 Mr. Horam:** But if we had the sort of exit strategy—

**Christina Lamb:** That is the danger of saying that you have an exit strategy.

**James Fergusson:** We are talking about exit, but I am not sure that we have an exit strategy. There is a difference.

**Mr. Horam:** Between talking about and having one?

**James Fergusson:** The comprehensive approach has a timeline to run. It depends on the consent of the people who live there. That is obviously time limited. They are not going to put up with it for ever. Fighting the Taliban while development goes into the middle is the comprehensive approach. My own view is that we have already run out of time; it is year eight of this war and there is intense public frustration at the lack of progress. Apart from little spots of development in places such as Musa Qala in Helmand, there has not really been the kind of development promised by either the Government in Kabul or the West.

**Q140 Mr. Horam:** But do you not think that officials here are already thinking what we would look like if we admitted it was too late and there was not much more we could do? Globally, that would be defeat and would leave Afghans in a mess.

**Christina Lamb:** Yes, I do not see how we could do that; we cannot withdraw just like that. There is much talk now of building up the Afghan army so that Afghans can secure the country for themselves, but that is going to take a very long time.

**Q141 Mr. Horam:** It is going to take decades, as Mr. Loyn said. What effect do you think the confusion of aims and the questions about how long we are going to stay are having on the British military?

**James Fergusson:** It is very tired. The marines have just been there for their second tour, and I have heard that they are complaining bitterly and have had several casualties. They were fighting in exactly the same places they were on their first tour, and a lot of them cannot see the point of it. I cannot speak for the whole Army, but you come across a lot of despondent views within it. They are very tired; a lot of the young soldiers who went out there for the first time could not wait to get there, but once they have done two or three tours it is amazing how the novelty value wears off. Many senior soldiers will tell you that this is not sustainable for ever. Apart from anything else, we do not have the equipment for it. We do not have the helicopters, as I am sure you know. In terms of Chinook forces, we have 40 Chinooks altogether, of which half are working and perhaps eight are deployed in Helmand at any one time. The Army is very small and we are asking an awful lot of it. It knows that and is very tired.

**Mr. Horam:** Do you share that view?

**Christina Lamb:** Yes, I do. Actually, I think it is remarkable how motivated they still are when you go out in the field with them, considering the situation. When you talk to them in quieter moments, many of them will tell you stories of how they lost a friend fighting for a small spot of dusty land that we have now lost and that they are having to fight for again, and they will say, "What's the point?"

**Q142 Sir John Stanley:** May I turn to Pakistan? Do you consider the Taliban's effective takeover of the Swat valley to represent the limit of their territorial ambitions in Pakistan, or is it a further step in Taliban creep towards Islamabad?

**Christina Lamb:** Unfortunately, I do not think that Swat is the limit of their ambitions. We have seen that Pakistan now has more suicide bombings than Iraq, and if you go to Karachi, the biggest city, you will see the Taliban operating very openly now, which is a very frightening situation. I think that they have much bigger ambitions than just Swat—I really do. They are very active in Punjab and, as I said, Karachi.

**Q143 Sir John Stanley:** What do you think is the ultimate Taliban goal in Pakistan?

**Christina Lamb:** There are a lot of people in Pakistan who were involved in the creation of, or originally backed, the Taliban, because that is what they saw as the ideal regime. Many of those people are now very happy to try to have it in Pakistan, which is very sad because Pakistan's population of, according to the latest calculation, 170 million is mostly made up of moderate people, but a tiny minority is able to carry

out a lot of things. Unfortunately, I believe quite strongly that we played into their hands because there is now no country in that region that is more anti-American or anti-British than Pakistan. Parts of Pakistan are being subjected to bombings and drone attacks, of which there have been more than 30 in the last eight months and in which many innocent civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands of people have lost their homes. But I have yet to see any evidence of any senior al-Qaeda people being taken out in those attacks. The Americans keep saying that they are removing al-Qaeda No. 3, but how many No. 3s are there? Who are these people? That is really alienating people and creating a whole new load of recruits for the Taliban. We have to do something about that very quickly, or this will be a much bigger problem than Afghanistan.

**James Fergusson:** I agree broadly with that, except that it is not for us to do. We will have to help the Pakistanis to do something about it themselves. It is really all about the army in Pakistan—it always is. On a quick point about Swat, it is not quite a done deal. We talk about the Taliban taking it over, but there is still talk about what kind of Sharia law will emerge in Swat. It is not settled yet. There has been a lot of talk in Pakistan about a kind of Sharia lite. It would be based on Sharia, but might not include the most severe punishments for theft and so on that we all know about. That might be a classic kind of Pakistani compromise. But who knows? That battle is going on at the moment. There is definitely a battle going on for the soul of Pakistan between the two. However, it does not look good.

**Q144 Sir John Stanley:** Against the background that you have both painted, what do you believe should be the British Government's key policy objectives towards Pakistan?

**Christina Lamb:** The single biggest problem is, where are all these people being recruited from? It is the madrassahs. Again and again, there has been talk that Pakistan will regulate the madrassahs and crack down on them, but nothing happens in practice. It is exactly the same with these militant groups, such as Lashkar-e-Taiba, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and all the others. When a lot of pressure is put on them, they will round up the leaders, but shortly afterwards they will all be released. Organisations might change their names briefly, but they still operate. Pressure has to be put on them to act on these things that they keep talking about. They and we know that that is the problem—that they do not actually do anything about it. If you have 2 million children graduating each year from madrassahs, even if only 1% of them are being trained to go and kill Westerners, that is still an awful lot of people.

**James Fergusson:** The short answer is that the priority in Pakistan should be our national security, because we have an enormous Pakistani community in this country. An experienced combat brigadier whom I spoke to the other day painted this nightmare scenario where he could imagine British troops fighting on the streets of Britain against, perhaps, holed-up suicide bombers in a terrorist

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house in Manchester. That would be the follow-on from civil war in Pakistan, if that does happen. I am not saying it will—it is not a prediction—but this was a soldier talking off the cuff about what he thought might happen. That is a consideration. And it is nuclear as well. The national security implications for Britain, therefore, are much higher when it comes to what is going on in Pakistan than they are in Afghanistan. We should not be worrying about trying to create a new liberal democracy in Pakistan. We cannot afford to and we have not got the resources. We need to concentrate on security issues.

**Chairman:** We could go into that issue at great length, but unfortunately we do not have time. The last question in this session is from Sandra.

**Q145 Sandra Osborne:** You have said quite a bit about what you think of the new US strategy. Do you have anything to add? Do you think that it will be effective? Will it address the past failings of the US policy? What are the implications for Britain?

**Christina Lamb:** The good thing is that everyone now recognises that the situation is a mess and that something has to be done quickly. That is a lot better than, say, a year ago, when people were still talking about it as though it was somehow successful. I think that that is good news. General Petraeus and his team are good news. There are very good people now trying to come up with answers. We have wasted a lot of time and have made it much harder for ourselves. As I said, we have lost consent and have not done the things that we promised to do. It is extremely difficult, therefore, but at the end of the day the majority of Afghans want peace. They do not want the Taliban back. At the moment they are being put in a very difficult situation: they are on the

fence, and on one side is the Taliban threatening them, but on the other side they have not really got anything, because the Afghan Government is not offering them anything. There has got to be a lot of focus on getting that Government working and delivering things to people. On the military side, the civilian surge—if you want to call it that—is extremely important and people have to see development. I cannot bang on about this, but it stuns me that when you go to Kabul, you find that after all this money and everything, it is still in the mess that it is in. If we can't sort out the capital city, we can't do anything.

**James Fergusson:** It's not all bad news; there is some good stuff coming out. The US strategy is the right one and we should support it. That is the short answer to your question. There are good things going on. I must say a word about the National Solidarity Programme, which Richard Holbrooke supports. It is an Afghan Government programme that has already helped development in 22,000 villages in the country, which is not negligible. I agree with Christina that civilian development is extremely important. The Americans in Kabul are very serious about it. I heard that they wanted to put 2,000 civilian mentors in with Afghan officials—to sit next to them at their desks in provincial governments and so on—as a means of training them up and getting rid of corruption. What an amazing thing to try to do. I hope it works. I am a bit sceptical about it, but we need to get behind that plan because it is the only one going.

**Chairman:** Miss Lamb and Mr. Fergusson, thank you very much for coming and giving us your expertise. It has been very valuable. We will now take a two minute break and have a change of witnesses. If any members of the public wish to leave, this is the time to do so.

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*Witnesses:* **Sajjan Gohel**, Director of International Security, Asia-Pacific Foundation, London,<sup>4</sup> **Dr Stuart Gordon**, Lecturer, Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst and **Daniel Korski**, Senior Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations,<sup>5</sup> gave evidence.

**Q146 Chairman:** We are now going to have our second evidence session on Afghanistan and Pakistan this afternoon. Will the three witnesses introduce themselves for the record?

**Daniel Korski:** I am Daniel Korski. I work for a think-tank, European Council on Foreign Relations, and I used to be a British civil servant working in Iraq, Afghanistan and Bosnia.

**Chairman:** And you were once an advisor to the Defence Committee, I understand.

**Sajjan Gohel:** My name is Sajjan Gohel. I am with the Asia-Pacific Foundation, which is an independent think-tank that looks at issues of security and geopolitics. I have been looking at the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and particularly at the ideological dimensions and their growth.

**Dr. Gordon:** I am Stuart Gordon from the Royal Military Academy and I have worked with the UK stabilisation unit as one of the co-authors of the Helmand road map.

**Q147 Chairman:** Thank you very much. I shall begin almost where we left off in our previous session. What difference do you think that the American strategy, particularly the additional combat troops and the mentors pledged by President Obama, as well as the additional NATO support, will make in the current situation in Afghanistan?

**Daniel Korski:** I take a slightly different view than some of the previous speakers in the sense that Obama's AfPak strategy is everything to every man. Those who want to read into it that it is a great nation-building exercise that is finally coming around to accepting that the rule of law is important can find solace for those views. Those who want to look for the exit strategy and the zeroing in on counter-terrorism can find solace for their views. In many ways, the importance of that strategy is not that it is saying anything that has not been said, but that it has allowed the US Administration to re-engage allies and the Afghan authorities on the strategy. The really important bit will be the surge of 21,000 troops—the 17,000 plus the 4,000 mentors—

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<sup>4</sup> Ev 132

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and the fact that the United States seems to want to change the strategic context in the south at least. That means not just being the biggest player in the south and the east, but possibly being during the next two years almost the only player. That is a very profound, strategic difference in the way that it has been proceeding until now.

**Sajjan Gohel:** One of the most important dimensions is that hundreds of agricultural specialists, teachers, engineers and lawyers will be brought in to help provide and improve the civilian and civil infrastructure that has been lacking for the past eight years. Those are important dimensions because we have to win hearts and minds at grass roots level, be able to educate individuals and give them the ability to enhance their own quality of life. The operation on the military segment is also very important. Come the summer, there will be some 60,000 US troops in Afghanistan. If we combine that with the British forces and those of the other European nations and Canada that are contributing, we are looking at more than 100,000, which ominously will echo the similar figure that the Soviets had before they decided to leave Afghanistan. Having troops there is important, but they also have to be engaging with the Taliban. I do not mean negotiating, but directly confronting them. Unfortunately, some of our European partners have not shown the willingness to send troops into difficult positions. Not enough has been done in that regard. It is all very well having them up in the north where it is safe, but they are not actually doing anything of substance. British troops, along with the Canadians, the Dutch and the Americans are actively engaging the Taliban. They should be applauded for what they have been doing, but they need more support. The US under the Barack Obama strategy has started it, but a lot more needs to be done.

**Dr. Gordon:** The key reform measure will be the use of the mentors in expanding the Afghan national army and probably the Afghan national police as well, with their numbers going up potentially to 134,000 ANA and 82,000 police. There is a danger that the surge will be seen as a US surge and the key is to build some form of social contract or political settlement between Afghans and their Government. Putting an Afghan face on security is essential and also reforming the Afghan Government sufficiently so that they can deliver tangible results on the ground to cement a political settlement is also key. I have seen different figures about the number of American civilians who will be deployed—from 400 to 2,000—but the key is to pick priority ministries to allow them to engage and cement outreach by district and provincial governors through a form of public service arrangement. The many Afghans whom I have spoken to would be very keen to see that. It would be a change in their experience of government. I have heard Afghans talking in terms of the Afghan police really being representative of the Government, and that that face is nasty, sneering and contemptuous. So reforming the Afghanisation of the security effort and also underpinning it with public service delivery is key.

**Q148 Chairman:** How does that aspiration, which is very noble, fit with the Afghan public protection force under the Ministry of Interior, which we heard about in the last session? Will there not be a contradiction between the aspiration to have the security sector reform be more effective, responsive and accountable policing on the one hand, and the interior ministry with the difficulties to which we have referred?

**Daniel Korski:** I think that we all recognise that we probably were far too ambitious considering what we could achieve with the police forces, and that the division of responsibilities that you talked about in your previous session—handing over the building up of the Afghan national police to the Germans and the judicial sector to the Italians—probably did not work. I would not hone in exclusively on the question of the militias and say, “Is this really the way that we are going to go in the future?” I think that over the past two years we have seen more conceptual convergence in Kabul on what we should be doing on policing. The US programme called “focused district development”, in which, district-by-district, they take the police officers out, send them for training for a couple of weeks and deploy a specialised force—a more gendarmerie-style force—called ANCOP, has proven reasonably successful in many areas that it operates in. Sure, there are problems; there are not enough ANCOP special troops to go in and, when the old police officers come back, people say, “Give us the special troops who were here before.” There are positive things going on in the policing sector. It may not be that wonderfully expansive vision of a democratically accountable and responsive security sector that we originally had, but it is not yet handing over guns to a series of militias unconnected to the security sector reform process.

**Q149 Chairman:** NATO countries have agreed to send 5,000 extra troops, but only until August. Is there any long-term commitment or agreement among the NATO partners of the US or, having rejected the proposals and the pressing from the US for a bigger commitment, have we had a kind of face-saving formula? Most countries are reluctant and therefore ISAF does not have a credible future, is that a fair assessment?

**Daniel Korski:** I think that it is fair to say that for diplomatic reasons a lot of European nations were willing to offer President Obama something in the run up to the elections. When I was in Kabul two weeks ago, a senior NATO general said that he thought that out of the 42 member states fighting in ISAF—in other words, more than NATO—only 10 could effectively be used for anything approaching counter-insurgency operations, but the truth probably is that it is five or so. Without a doubt, we are not going to get more forces, certainly not of the magnitude required, and they are not going to be operating, as Mr. Gohel said, in the south and the east. The real question is whether the Americans want that these days anyway. The sense that I get is that they have probably stopped asking for things that they do not think they are going to get and have

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switched to asking European allies to provide more on the policing and economic reconstruction side. I think that it is probably reasonable to say that we are not going to get a lot more out of European allies, by which I mean a strategically significant lift in capability, and that the US has to supply the main fighting force over the next couple of years.

**Sajjan Gohel:** It is basically a stop-gap measure and is going to be until the presidential elections. As has already been stated, they are not going to be doing anything in terms of fighting the Taliban, which is going to be the problem. I think that the US has accepted that other European nations are not necessarily willing to put their troops on to the frontline because they have seen how difficult it has been for everybody else. I have to make this point very clear: whatever the rights and wrongs were about Iraq, everybody was in agreement on Afghanistan after 11 September. There was unity and a coalition. It is disappointing that not everybody is willing to co-operate enough in providing troops. As I think was talked about in the previous session, this is an election issue in Holland and Canada. It has the potential to bring down Governments. If they withdrew their troops at some point, it would put a further burden on us in the UK and on the United States. Those countries that are not going to put their troops on the frontline can contribute to security sector reform, but it is not simply about reform, it is about transformation and trying to create something in Afghanistan that has not existed, such as an Afghan national army. The last time that we had something like that was when President Najibullah was there and, even then, the regime was propped up in part by the Soviets. There is also the reform of the police, which has been extremely corrupt in the past, and the ethnic imbalance. If European countries are not going to contribute troops on the ground fighting the Taliban, they need to do more to provide direct training and assistance on those issues where they can play a more meaningful role. It is a pity that they do not want to contribute in terms of tackling the Taliban.

**Dr. Gordon:** The interesting thing here is what you want the troops for. If you simply want more troops to hold ground and engage in garrison duties, that is a mistake. The trick has to be the right type of security, which immediately brings the debate around to the Afghan National Police and back to the Public Protection Force. My concern with the other kind of model is that there are experiences of it working reasonably well, where as a homogenous tribal grouping there are checks and balances within the community. We would need to look carefully at what the Public Protection Force model had in terms of checks and balances, but the Afghanisation is the only way forward. Expanding the number of Western troops on garrison duties is not necessarily the right line. That said, having enough troops to be able to manoeuvre freely and to use those troops as your manoeuvre element, but having the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police holding territory as the visible face of security for the average Afghan is the key. Simply having numbers of

troops, without the right checks and balances, we would have the same problems that we have had with the Afghan National Police, which is that predatory relationship.

**Daniel Korski:** I would like to say quickly that we have to think of creative ways in which European troops, who are unwilling to go to the south or east, can be used to train the forces that are ultimately deploying in the south and east. If the Germans are not willing to move south and east, is there some way that they can train kandaks of the Afghan National Army for deployment? Is there some way that we can use their presence where they are? Do they need to focus more on border security in the areas in which they are stationed?

**Dr. Gordon:** One of the models that has worked well with the Afghan National Army has been the mentoring—embedding foreign combat troops with the Afghan kandaks. I would be cautious about one organisation doing the training and one organisation doing the fighting. Where the Afghan kandaks, particularly in Helmand, have worked very well is where British and American troops have worked alongside them, in a partnership. That training element is key. The Obama strategy with a full brigade dedicated towards training is a real potential force multiplier.

**Chairman:** Presumably if you trained in the caveats as well, you would have an even bigger problem, but perhaps we will not go there.

**Q150 Sir Menzies Campbell:** The fundamental difference is that Afghanistan was the first implementation of the article 5 obligation. What we found in NATO is that making it as much a political alliance as a military alliance has not necessarily equipped us for the military purpose. Did you think that it was notable that President Obama in the end did not ask for very much when he came to Europe? Perhaps that was on the grounds that to be rebuffed—as he almost certainly would have been, apart from to the extent that the Chairman described—would have been damaging for him domestically. It would have made it more difficult to persuade American public opinion that America should assume the principal role in the way that all three of you have described.

**Daniel Korski:** I think that the Americans asked them for a lot, but on the civilian side. We know of US diplomats handing over lists of things that they would like to see Europeans deliver, but there is no doubt that they did not want to go to the first NATO summit—effectively the first security-related summit that the new President was to attend—and be rebuffed in any way, not just for domestic reasons but also not to get into a fight with allies. Coming back to article 5 and NATO, to a lot of allies this is not an article 5 operation. They see the solidarity expressed in article 5 following 9/11 as something separate. That is the reality that we have to deal with. We see it differently but, for a lot of allies, NATO is not just about Afghanistan, it is about the resurgent threat that they see from Russia, shipping lanes off the horn of Africa and so forth and so on. It is the sort of alliance that we share with a lot of different

people. We focus on Afghanistan, I think for the right reasons, but they do not. That is a real challenge.

**Q151 Sir Menzies Campbell:** But unless NATO's credibility is maintained or even enhanced as a result of its activities in Afghanistan, if you are sitting in the Baltics, the Russian threat will begin to look rather larger than it does even so far as you think it to be a threat at the moment. The integrity of NATO and its effectiveness is essentially at stake here, is it not?

**Daniel Korski:** I do not think that NATO is ever going to go away.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** I agree with you about that.

**Daniel Korski:** Because it is too important to us for a whole series of reasons. However, if you are a military alliance and you struggle to conduct military tasks, that is ultimately going to be a problem.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** It simply encourages Russian initiatives from Vancouver to the Urals. It has the effect, if not of destroying NATO, of undermining the perception of it.

**Chairman:** Can we move to the regional context?

**Q152 Mr. Horam:** One of the aspects of the Obama approach is the renewed emphasis on the regional dimension. Obviously, there is self-interest in all the countries around Afghanistan in not importing the chaos and problems into their countries. How do you see the regional dimension developing?

**Sajjan Gohel:** Do you mean in terms of Pakistan and countries like it playing a role?

**Q153 Mr. Horam:** Pakistan in the first instance. The question specifically relates to Pakistan, because of Holbrooke's remit and the remit covering Pakistan of Sherard Cowper-Coles, our former ambassador, but you could say that it could go wider. You could argue, for example, as one of our previous interviewees did, that you cannot deal with the Pakistani Army—getting them working the right way—until you deal with Kashmir. So then you have to include India as well. Where do you stop on the regional dimension?

**Sajjan Gohel:** Afghanistan's future and its stability are intrinsically tied to that of Pakistan. Unfortunately, because of the increasing radicalism and extremism emanating from Pakistan, Pakistan's own security as a result is at stake. The problem hinges on where does the Pakistan military lie in their agenda. We know that the Taliban were created in part as a strategic asset for the Pakistani military's policy of gaining strategic depth in Afghanistan. Ironically, now they have conceded reverse strategic depth in Pakistan.

**Q154 Mr. Horam:** You could say that it is a failed strategy.

**Sajjan Gohel:** It has proved to be, unfortunately, a failed strategy and a very worrying strategy, because the Taliban itself has evolved. It is not a homogenous group. You have the Afghan Taliban, of which there are many segments. Then you have the Pakistan

Taliban, which, again, is divided into many different groups. All of them have their own leadership, personnel and financing. Some are being supported by elements within Pakistan's own military. The problem—this is the big concern—is whether the Pakistan military sees Afghanistan in the same way that we do. I would say, unfortunately, they don't. It is a question almost of waiting for the west to get fed up with Afghanistan and the mounting casualties, the cost, the endless problems of corruption, and just withdraw. They are looking at the long term. We are looking at what is happening tomorrow, next week, perhaps until the end of the year. They have a much longer term strategy. One of the most interesting things I heard in Afghanistan was that “the west keeps looking at their watch, but the Taliban keeps the time”. Sooner or later, many within Pakistan feel that they will be able to reassert the Taliban into Afghanistan, and that of course is a big concern. So it is the Pakistan angle that I would say is the key to what happens in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

**Q155 Mr. Horam:** What about the attitudes of the Pakistani Army, which you mentioned? It is more concerned with India and Kashmir, is it not?

**Sajjan Gohel:** Recently, the Pakistani military has faced a lot of difficulty in the tribal areas, especially with the Pakistan Taliban. There is a kind of weird paradox: on the one hand, they support elements of the Afghan Taliban but are deeply opposed to the Pakistan Taliban, and the Pakistan Taliban and the Afghan Taliban actually co-operate in terms of sharing resources and weaponry. The military in Pakistan is tied up with trying to fight a very difficult battle with the tribal militants in North Waziristan and South Waziristan, Mohmand province, and as we have seen with the recent Swat valley deal, again, it shows just how difficult it is becoming internally. Kashmir has not blown up as a result of this. I would say actually that the situation is somewhat better than it has been for some time. The insurgency there does not seem to have increased over the past couple of years. It is, obviously, an ongoing concern, especially as Pakistan has become the home of all the different Taliban groups, al-Qaeda and Lashkar-e-Taiba and its affiliates, but that is not the immediate concern. I think that the instability within Pakistan's provinces is going to be the key issue and something that the military themselves are now having to deal with.

**Dr. Gordon:** There is a challenge that we can possibly contribute towards. The difficulty that the Pakistani army has is that it is configured for fighting a conventional foe. It is configured for dealing with what they perceive as an Indian threat. Certainly most Western armies have had some difficulty in transferring their capabilities, organisations and mindsets to fight a counter-insurgency campaign. We have seen huge organisational learning among the Americans in Iraq—

**Q156 Mr. Horam:** The Pakistan army have got the same difficulty.

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**Dr. Gordon:** Yes, exactly. Where a difference can be made is in terms of contributing to a recognition within the Pakistani army that some of their approaches need to be adapted in order to avoid some of the difficulties that I think other armies have faced in fighting insurgencies. The danger for Western policymakers is finding a point at which they can influence the trajectory of Pakistan, and limiting their aspirations. I think there are probably three areas. One was mentioned earlier—the regulation of madrassahs. The second one is looking carefully at the Pakistani military capabilities and seeking to produce a more nuanced counter-insurgency strategy, or helping them to do that. The third issue is really to look at the question of ISI support and what can be done there.

**Q157 Mr. Horam:** Do you think bringing in the other surrounding countries, such as China, Russia and Iran, is relevant and important in this context? Or is it really that the focus must be on Pakistan, and everything else is irrelevant or less important?

**Dr. Gordon:** I think you have to set a limit somewhere, and certainly defining a strategy towards Pakistan that contributes to the effort in Afghanistan is key. My mind goes back to looking at regional strategies over Iraq, for example—Iran's role and Syria's role. Both of those roles were fundamentally quite limited. How far do you really need to set the net? Certainly in the case of Afghanistan, people talk about Iran's role, China's role, Pakistan's role, India's role, and then the central Asian states' roles as well. The key is to focus on the key relationship, which is Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Daniel Korski:** It is fair to say that I think Richard Holbrooke's mandate includes India, even though it does not say so on the package—on the cover, as it were. But if I could add just one point to the list: I think we have to focus on policing as well.

**Q158 Mr. Horam:** Policing in Pakistan?

**Daniel Korski:** That is right. I think the Pakistani police force has rarely been given the kind of support that Pakistan's allies have been providing the army for fighting against a conventional enemy. We can look at the amount of money poured into the Pakistani air force, which is not particularly useful for counter-insurgency purposes, and contrast that with the very limited trickle of funding going into the policing sector. There has been some work with the frontier corps, but this is also a big area that I think we need to start thinking about in future if we want to craft a workable Pakistan strategy.

**Dr. Gordon:** With the Indians as well—I am going to contradict my earlier point to a degree, but I think the Indians have been quite interesting in the way in which they have engaged in Afghanistan. They have contributed to the building of institutions in Afghanistan in quite a unique way. The last estimates I had were that there were somewhere in the region of 4,000 Indians working in Afghan institutions and ministries, providing perhaps a very different way of going about building institutions in a conflict state. But of course that brings alarm bells

with it for Pakistan, so there is a sense in which the more the regional states contribute productively, the more other states perhaps have difficulties with them.

**Q159 Ms Stuart:** On the issue of Pakistan, but in particular the American strategy towards Pakistan, to what extent can we talk about a coherent view of the world within Pakistan, if you were to say the ISI, the Government and the military? Do they actually sing off the same hymn sheet?

**Sajjan Gohel:** The problem has been that under Pervez Musharraf, he was the military ruler and the chief of army staff. Theoretically you would assume that his job would have been somewhat easier, but in effect what we are seeing today in Pakistan and the knock-on effect in neighbouring Afghanistan is his legacy. He undermined the civilian institutions; he arrested politicians, lawyers, human rights groups. The only thing he did not dismantle was the terrorist infrastructure, which he was asked to do after 9/11. Ironically, the radical madrassahs, and we should point out that not all of them are breeding grounds for terrorism, but the few that have been identified, were not reformed. The training centres for terrorist groups were still active. The fact that so many Britons have gone there for training and been given the skills and the ideological guidance to come back to the UK to carry out attacks over the last few years is another indication. More needs to be done to support the civilian Government in Pakistan. They are not perfect. They have shown their weaknesses, especially with the Swat valley deal. There are divisions within the civilian Government. But supporting the military, as has been done in the past, is not a solution. Unfortunately, it is a failed policy. More needs to be done to empower the civilian Government. What President Obama had to say on the matter was interesting. He said that they were looking at not just one element, but all the different facets, including those within the civilian apparatus. They have been talking to President Zardari and opposition leader, Nawaz Sharif. Moreover, they have been trying to offer financial packages, but they are tied in to commitment and performance. In the past, there was a policy of blank cheques going to Pakistan, especially to the military who were using it to buy hardware rather than to fight against the insurgency of the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

**Q160 Ms Stuart:** Do you think that we have got the balance of conditionality right?

**Sajjan Gohel:** It is a starting point. It will take time to see whether it produces positive results. The language is right. The US Administration have understood that more needs to be done. If the country is going to receive \$1.5 billion a year as has been proposed, more needs to be done in terms of tackling the Taliban, al-Qaeda and domestic terrorism.

**Daniel Korski:** This weekend saw the first major donors' conference, which was held in Tokyo. The US tried to whip up support for Pakistan's civilian development. I think that that is part and parcel of the strategy of trying to get everybody to focus on

shoring up support for the civilian Government. We must be careful not to say, “There is the civilian Government and then there is the military. Then, of course, there is the ISI and the security forces.” Many of these entities are also riven with factions. The ISI is estimated to number some 10,000 different people. In any organisation such as that there will be different factions with different sentiments and allegiances to various different erstwhile friends and allies. We have seen ISI change leadership over the years. Every time there is a new general in charge, we say that we think that we can do business with him. We then find that even he struggles to implement change. Therefore, there is a lot of complexity at different levels.

**Q161 Ms Stuart:** The American strategy is silent on a number of issues. Mr. Gohel, in written evidence to us you mentioned the Durand line. I am wondering what our view is on that. Is there any chance of us talking about Pakistan and a coherence as long as 80% of its borders are so contentious? What is the likelihood of getting a deal on that?

**Sajjan Gohel:** The Durand line is a very important and sensitive issue, especially within the Pashtun community in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is one of our colonial legacies that has literally split the Pashtun nation in half. It not based on any conceivable logic, but on geographical realities. If we want to try and defeat the Taliban, which is an ideological movement, you have to have a counter-ideology, one that can appeal to the masses and specifically to the Pashtun community, such as promoting the assertion of a Pashtun identity. Give something to both sides that they can believe in. I am not saying that we dismantle the border and allow there to be further problems. It can be done with Pakistan and Afghanistan together, with them believing that there can be this identity in which they can believe. Create an academic institution for them to be able to use as an outlet for their identity because, unfortunately, we have the Taliban ideology that has been used to indoctrinate and foment its ideas within the Pashtun communities on both sides, but there is nothing to counter that. The best challenge is to promote a more tolerant belief that is in fact indigenous to the Pashtuns. They are perhaps conservative, but they are not fundamentalist by nature. The Taliban is an artificial creation that has actually turned into a Frankenstein’s monster. The Durand line issue is important. It has to be addressed in conjunction with all these reforms and has to get the Pashtun communities on board, because by and large they represent the majority of the people in Afghanistan and a sizeable portion in Pakistan.

**Q162 Ms Stuart:** What is your assessment of whether anyone will actually tackle this? It is sensitive and important.

**Sajjan Gohel:** I just want to conclude on this. It is a battle of ideas, and you need to tackle that. Unfortunately, no one is talking about that. Perhaps, because I am a bit of an historian, I look at these issues. This is what people on the ground want

to believe. If you talk to Afghans here, you will realise that their Pashtun identity is very important to them. We should play a role in encouraging that, rather than sponsoring it, which would have a negative connotation implying that it is a western concept coming from outside. You can start grass-roots support on both sides where the Pashtun identity can be promoted and encouraged and can play a role in countering the Taliban ideology. It has to be started, because the military concept is one strategy, but you have to have the battle of ideas and for hearts and minds. I think that this is one process that needs to be started, or talked about at the very least.

**Daniel Korski:** To answer your question directly, I see no chance that this will be high on anyone’s agenda. Unlike my colleague, I am deeply sceptical that we as outsiders have the wit, the ability, the flexibility, the smarts or the ground truth to make a serious go at this, however important it could be theoretically. I just do not think that we can do it. We have not been able to do many simpler things in that region, so trying to create a kind of counter narrative would be a real struggle for us.

**Q163 Ms Stuart:** Finally, if you sit in Pakistan and look on the one side to instability in Afghanistan and on the other to a perceived threat from India, what is your assessment of which side Pakistan will come down on, and what is more important, stability in Afghanistan or the perceived threat from India?

**Sajjan Gohel:** Relations have deteriorated somewhat between India and Pakistan, especially in the light of the attacks in Mumbai in November last year. The situation seems to have become more stable since the Pakistani Government, through the de facto interior Minister, Rehman Malik, publicly announced that the Mumbai gunmen were indeed from Pakistan and that the Government were apparently going to co-operate in the investigation. I do not think that the situation can deteriorate right now. What is interesting is that India is going through its national elections right now in a phased process. If there was an attack or some terrorist-related activity that created huge economic, political and social consequences and was again linked back to Pakistan, that would create a lot of turmoil and a lot of problems. It may not happen, but it is perhaps something to be aware of. At the moment, Pakistan’s priority is its own domestic problem—not even Afghanistan—and the fact that the Taliban is proliferating, growing and expanding its activities. The Swat valley is only a few hours away from Islamabad, and there is talk about the fact that militant activity is being seen in southern Punjab in Multan, and even in the northern part of Sindh. If that problem continues to expand, that will be the biggest challenge Pakistan faces, rather than looking eastward or westward to Afghanistan or India.

**Daniel Korski:** Let us be clear that Pakistan is an ally of ours out of necessity, not choice, and as a result we have to appreciate the different kind of objectives, shall we say, that various powers in Pakistan have. I think that the dominant strategic narrative is one that accepts turmoil in Afghanistan as being in the

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interests of the Pakistani state. It may be a short-sighted objective and it may now be coming back to bite them, but I still think that that is the dominant strategic narrative. They do see India's behaviour in Afghanistan as an attempt by the Indians to try to go around them and come through at the backside, and I think that we will have to work with this very troublesome and difficult ally.

**Q164 Chairman:** May I ask a direct question about the American policy? Is there not a contradiction between the more nuanced approach that President Obama has set out for relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan and the continuing use of drones, which leads to outrage in Pakistani society and undermines support for the democratic Government?

**Daniel Korski:** There is no doubt that there is a tension here. A third element that adds to the tension is the US stake in ensuring that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal is somehow kept secured, especially should developments take a turn for the worse. The fact that the US has continued to authorise these drone attacks after Obama's inauguration means that it clearly believes that it is hitting important people and that it is important for its Afghan strategy. The US was getting into a problem in discussions with the Afghan Government, who were saying, "Hang on, you are saying that the big problem is Pakistan, but all the bombing is taking place on our side of the border."

**Q165 Chairman:** So you have to bomb Pakistan as well just to keep the Afghans happy.

**Daniel Korski:** I do not think that it is a direct thing, but there was clear pressure from the Kabul Government for the US to step up its activities in Pakistan. I think that that was a factor that they contended with. I do not think that the US would have gone ahead exclusively on that basis, but it was a factor. The fact remains that the US believes that these bombings are effective and that they are somehow decimating the capabilities of various different networks.

**Q166 Chairman:** So you disagree with what was said in the previous session then.

**Daniel Korski:** No, I am saying that the US believes that the capacities of these networks are being decimated. I think that there is a wider strategic consequence that is turning the population against Pakistan's alliance with the US. What I am saying is that Washington knows that too, yet is still proceeding. The US must believe, based on its analysis of the intelligence that it still makes sense to do so. The really interesting question us academics and yourselves should also be exploring is the pattern of these bombing raids. Why do they take place in certain places and not others? Are there certain deals that mean that nobody has gone after various networks that are in Quetta as opposed to other places? These are interesting questions that it is worth asking.

**Sajjan Gohel:** To build on what Mr. Korski is saying, the Obama Administration have made it clear that they will do things differently to the Bush Administration, whether it is on Guantanamo Bay, Iraq or even climate change. The one thing that has remained consistent is the Predator drone strikes. You have to look at what is collaterally acceptable. On the one hand, innocent people have unfortunately been killed in these Predator drone strikes. On the other hand, senior members of al-Qaeda have been eliminated. Midhat Mursi was the one who directed al-Qaeda's CBRN programme. You may have seen the video on television after 9/11 of dogs going into convulsions after being exposed to liquid. He was the one who was creating all that. He was a very important person and he is gone. Very senior people in al-Qaeda's hierarchy such as Abu Hamza Rabia and Abu Laith al-Libi have been eliminated by Predator drones. As I said, innocent people have unfortunately been caught up. The problem is that the US has lost faith and trust with the ISI in rounding up these people on the ground. It felt that there was a leakage of information. Actionable intelligence was sometimes being passed to the terrorists. The solution that the Bush Administration came up with was Predator drone strikes, which are quick and decisive. The fact that the Obama Administration are continuing with that, as Mr. Korski mentioned, shows that it is having tangible results, albeit—for the third time—that lots of innocent people are unfortunately being killed as well.

**Chairman:** Thank you.

**Q167 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Turning to Afghanistan, but staying on the theme of identity and borders, do you think that Afghanistan is realistically a nation state that is or can be made to be self-governing with a central Government whose laws are recognised and obeyed throughout the country or will it always be a complete mess? Is our only hope to make it relatively safe for us?

**Daniel Korski:** I think that Afghanistan can develop into a state. It may not be the kind of state that we sitting here would recognise. It may not be the kind of state that you talk about when you conjure up images of a central Government with the ability to run their writ throughout the territory. It may never be that kind of state. If it ever becomes that kind of state, it will be in 100 years. That is not necessarily the objective. It is probably beyond our means to create that anyway. Is it, however, possible to create a different kind of state, where there is some kind of negotiation between the centre and the provinces, there is some kind of agreement about centrally provided services, there is some kind of trust in the governance, albeit in very limited areas, even at provincial level? Yes, I believe that that is possible. If you speak to a lot of Afghans in many parts of the country, they will tell you that they believe it is possible. We focus a lot on the south and east, correctly, but vast swathes of the country are doing rather well. We might not want to live there if we had the choice, but that does not mean that it cannot be a functioning state for the people of that country.

**Sajjan Gohel:** I very much agree. Afghanistan is a state of different nationalities, different ethnicities, whether you are talking about Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras or even Sikhs. The interesting thing about Afghanistan, which I have always found fascinating, is that despite all the different ethnicities, none of those groups has ever wanted its own separate homeland. They have always wanted Afghanistan as the unit—as the complete collection of different ethnicities—even under the Taliban. That shows that there is the prospect of creating a nation state that can work. In fact, before the Soviet occupation, before the country became a Marxist state, Afghanistan was relatively peaceful. There was stability. The King was the unifying factor, not just within the Pashtuns, but within all the different ethnicities. The problem has been outside influence. If you could cull that outside influence, especially from the Pakistan military's own strategic interest, you could create the potential of a state that can govern itself. It may not be perfect. It will have its problems. Some of it will be conservative. Some of it will not necessarily appreciate the way things are done, but it can work. It can be a country that is successful and a potential stabilising force in the region, but it all depends on what happens in relation to Pakistan, which again is very strategically linked to what happens to Afghanistan. If Pakistan's stability can be there, Afghanistan's stability will also be there.

**Dr. Gordon:** The Afghans I have spoken to in Helmand have highlighted that their experience of the state is not a happy one—that their experience is of a state that fails to deliver. There are contrasts with the Taliban's ability to deliver, particularly justice, which is a huge sticking point for many Afghans. I am referring to the idea that justice is something that you pay for—that it depends on your connections in society as to whether or not you get access to any form of justice. That is the other part of the face of the Afghan state. For many—this applies even to Helmandis—deeply conservative Pashtun nationalists, many of whom are terribly unresponsive of the presence of the international security assistance force—some of the ones I have spoken to—there is a sense of Afghan identity that transcends Pashtun identity. There is a sense that they have an expectation and an appetite for what the state can deliver, but the state has a significant track record of failing to deliver it and of delivering corruption and predatory behaviour. The trick—this is the interesting part about the Obama strategy—is a twofold strategy: one is containing the Taliban and the other is reforming the Afghan state's capacity to deliver against popular expectations. The trick is to identify the minimum level of popular expectations and to support that state to deliver it. I think that will be the benchmark for judging the success of the Obama strategy.

**Q168 Mr. Horam:** Do you think that the other part of the Obama strategy, whereby we can talk to the moderate Taliban, makes sense?

**Daniel Korski:** I know of no insurgency in history that has ever been vanquished or curtailed without some form of political engagement, so it makes absolute sense to seek to engage those who want to be engaged. Looking at Northern Ireland, we now know that it takes a long time. You have to speak to a lot of people for a long, long time before any kind of solution materialises. At the same time, we have to acknowledge that there will be people who are irreconcilable. They will not want to come to the negotiating table. For those, only kinetic effect will do, but I do think it is important to have the strategy. There is, though, the interesting question of how we proceed. The truth is that until now, the Afghan Government's approach to this has been incredibly muddled. It has been tied up in Hamid Karzai's re-election strategy. It has been hijacked by various different powerful figures inside the Government, so it is unclear who is running it and what the consequences are. What we have seen in the past is that people who have been supposedly reconciled and given parlay, if you will, have then been attacked by the security forces and so on, meaning that the attractiveness of engaging in conversation with us and the Afghan Government has decreased. To answer your question directly, I think that it is a very important part of the strategy. It has to be done in very close collaboration with the Afghan Government.

**Q169 Mr. Horam:** Can it be done before the presidential elections, or will it have to wait until after that?

**Daniel Korski:** I think that it now has to wait until the presidential elections. They are now going to happen in August. Who knows what will happen, but most analysts agree that it will be very difficult for Hamid Karzai to lose those elections, so probably from August onwards, there will have to be a new beginning to this. Indeed, the election of a new President provides that opportunity to sit down, look at the whole swathe of issues and say, "Right, how are we going to handle this?"

**Q170 Mr. Horam:** You said that it would take a long time, which it obviously will. How far is western opinion able to take the long view, or are we reaching the point at which we should disengage from this terrible mess?

**Daniel Korski:** These are the questions that I was hoping you would have a finer feel for than I do.

**Mr. Horam:** We are interested in your view as well. We have views too.

**Daniel Korski:** I think that the truth is that if you look at the alliance of 28 states, many of these will struggle in two or three years' time to maintain even the level of commitment that we have now. If you add to that the financial crisis and the pressures on budgets, I think that we can add an unwillingness to spend the kind of money that we are spending now, even though the Canadians and the Dutch may hope that the politics will change over the next couple of years, allowing them to stay on a bit longer in the south than they had originally imagined.

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I think that the truth is that the Americans have appreciated all this, and that is why I think we are seeing an Americanisation of the southern and eastern effort. In many ways, I do not think that we can maintain even the support that exists today, but it may not be as disappointing to the Americans as it would have been two years ago.

**Q171 Mr. Horam:** That puts the onus, again, on the Americans. Even some of Obama's people have said, "Well, we're talking about re-election in four years' time; that means out of Afghanistan in two or three years' time."

**Daniel Korski:** The mid-term elections are in two years, and I think that the US Administration would like to show something for their efforts, whether it is a regional—not settlement, but process—that Ambassador Holbrooke can instigate, or something else. They will want to show something after that two-year time frame. There is a clear sense in the Obama strategy that, if there is not an exit, they keenly understand that the American people are only so interested in staying for so long.

**Mr. Horam:** Do you agree with that?

**Sajjan Gohel:** Can I address the issue of the presence of the Taliban? It is a very important issue. We had been talking to the Taliban even before September 11, when the west tried to play a role in preventing them from blowing up the Buddhist statues. The Taliban were talked to in the aftermath of 9/11 in terms of handing over Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Negotiations and talking are still going on, but nothing has been achieved. I would say that there is no such thing as moderate Taliban or extremist Taliban. Moderate Taliban is somebody who will kill you with a knife or a pistol and not with an RPG or by blowing himself up. What we have is the ideological Taliban and those who join the Taliban for monetary purposes. If we can clinically extract those members of the Taliban—the different dimensions and the different types of Taliban—and remove them by offering them jobs, employment and economic opportunities, then that is possible. You cannot talk to the ideological Taliban. Their view and their agenda are totally different from ours. There have been deals with the Taliban, in North Waziristan. It lasted a week. In Musa Kala, in Afghanistan, the Taliban then burnt down the schools afterwards. This is not Northern Ireland. They are not the IRA. There is not a table that you can sit at and have a mutual point of discussion, not with the ideological Taliban. They are far too committed, far too ingrained in their own agenda, to have any discussion. I think that what President Obama was discussing was talking to those whom you can pull away from the ideologues, those who will react positively to financial inducements and the prospect of a better future. Let us be in no doubt that you cannot discuss anything positively with the ideological Taliban, other than to hand them back Afghanistan and say that the Afghanistan project has failed. This issue I am very fundamental on, because I find it very frustrating when we somehow want to use conventional logic with an entity that is very mediaeval with its intentions. The ideological

Taliban, by the way, are those who want to subjugate women, prevent them from being educated, and assert a form of their religion that is not something that most Muslims would adhere to. It is an issue of huge concern, and we have been talking for a very long time, and nothing has been achieved. Let us pull the ones that we can for monetary reasons; the ideological Taliban, we will never be able to talk to.

**Dr. Gordon:** I think there is probably a slightly different way of looking at it. If you are in a society where there is one political party which is dominant and has the power of life and death over you, there will be a whole series of marriages of convenience. Certainly, many of my Afghan friends in Helmand have described their support for the Taliban in those terms. That might, clearly, be something that I would wish, as a westerner, to hear, but there is a model of taking reconcilable elements of the Taliban and negotiating with them. Arguably, Mullah Salam in Musa Qala is an example of that. There is a sense that there is a middle ground somewhere between economic opportunists and the ideologues, where you have a group of Pashtun nationalists with conservative religious ideas, who, if they could be offered some form of alternative to the Taliban ideology and the promise of Taliban dominance—there were real commitments to security and stability—are able to be bought off into another political process. There are dangers with some of the models that are held by some of the west and the idea that development will simply buy you. The hearts and minds model is that pumping more cash in and providing more troops will provide you with stability and success. The evidence suggests that the political process needs to be at the heart of that, and that without the political process—having a strategic narrative which resonates in the south and the south-east of the country—development and a degree of externally imposed security will not work. I think the trick is to get that strategic narrative right, whether it is political outreach from a reforming Government in Kabul, or whether it is attention to Pashtun nationalism and the Durand line, the trick is to find that strategic narrative. A strategy without that narrative is unlikely to succeed.

**Chairman:** Thank you. Finally, John Stanley.

**Q172 Sir John Stanley:** Back to the British Government, who are ultimately the concern of the Committee. We will deal with Afghanistan, and then come to Pakistan. May I ask each of you, as far as Afghanistan is concerned, what you consider should be the British Government's top priorities in policy towards Afghanistan?

**Daniel Korski:** Perhaps there are two elements to this. There is a sort of Kabul level and a southern level. Perhaps I should start with the southern level. We have found ourselves, now, in a position, finally, in terms of civilian staff in Lashkar Gah, in terms of development assistance, to do all the things we all dreamt about. Unfortunately, the security situation has made most of that very difficult, and the new, American-led context needs to lead to changes in the way that we operate. I think there is going to have to be a much sharper focus on security and elements of

governance, and probably leaving aside many of the areas that we would like to work on if the environment becomes a little more benign. I think at the strategic level, if you will, at the Kabul level, we have to help to secure the elections. It is going to be absolutely crucial that these elections take place in secure conditions and that they are perceived as reasonably fair. That is a very important short-term priority. Then, subsequent to that, is the development of a governance strategy that works for Afghanistan—that does not necessarily create that centralised state, but at least allows the delivery of some basic services. We have created Potemkin institutions, if you will, in Kabul, and I think we have to be much clearer about what our priorities are.

**Sajjan Gohel:** To build on that, the focus has been, and needs to continue to be, economic, social and political and to assist in the background in terms of providing security for the central Government in continuing to engage directly and fight with the Taliban in the south. They need to prevent them from gaining ground and enhancing their position. The economic scenario is to continue with the investment and training to help build a civilian infrastructure and to educate people to be teachers and farmers and in the agricultural sector. We can play a positive role in all those different facets that Afghans want. As Mr. Korski mentioned, the elections will be absolutely pivotal. The eyes of the world will be on what happens there. Groups such as al-Qaeda and the Taliban will want to try to exploit the situation by trying to carry out attacks and creating chaos and disruption. In the short term at least, it is important that there is enough security on the ground to ensure that these different facets can go ahead successfully and peacefully, and can develop and grow in a grass-roots movement. It is also important to keep the ethnic compositions in a way that does not create tensions. The Tajiks traditionally dominated the Ministry of Defence or the Interior Ministry. They must not be seen to be favoured over the Pashtuns. Likewise, helping the Pashtuns should not be seen as a negative thing for, say, the Hazaras. We have a history and track record of a very positive role in nation building, not just in Afghanistan, but elsewhere. What we are doing is good and positive, but it needs to continue to be done perhaps at a greater level.

**Dr. Gordon:** The difficulty is knowing where to begin. With the creation of the Helmand road map, we were faced with exactly the same problem. Where do you begin? What are the key policy priorities? There are a number and without a number of them being addressed, you will not make progress. The key point that we got from most of the Helmandis who we spoke to was that they need a space in which they can collaborate with their own political authorities, which means a different form of security. That was the key element, which is why we focused much more on a paramilitary policing capability based not on vehicle checkpoints—or taxation points as they are often described—road blocks and physical security, but on intelligence-led policing and being able to co-ordinate with the Afghan national

intelligence service. Creating the space for political and economic collaboration between individuals and district authorities in key population centres would be an objective. The Government need to develop their legitimacy, and that means at the national level a narrative that resonates with the Pashtun and in particular the sense that the Pashtun place in the Government has not been eclipsed by the northern groups. However, it is deeper than that. It is also a sense that Kabul is able to deliver key public services—not every public service, but people need to see something tangible delivered. Certainly the international development approach is quite long term. It has been about capacity building and sustainability. Those are all laudable aims, but what is often required is a sense that the Government are doing something now. If they do not do something now, that hearts and minds strategy is doomed to failure. The next key point is that it is all very well using international development money to build capacity in Government and to do infrastructure-based projects—they have their place—but what a lot of Afghans, in Lashkar Gah, for example, want is mass employment. They often talk in terms of what the Soviets did and the Americans before them, which was to create structures that employed people. There was a sense that the state could provide some form of economic opportunity, apart from simply building highly visible infrastructure elements. The United States Agency for International Development is engaged in trying to create a demand-led economic recovery in Lashkar Gah and Gereshk through contract buying of agriculture. Providing some form of tangible stake in the economy is key. When you look at parts of eastern Afghanistan, you will see that the place where the Americans have argued that they have had success is where there has been domestic economic recoveries of some sort. Often that is in the illicit economy, but also often in the licit one too. It is a raft of measures, not one simple focus. It is about creating space for collaboration, a Government who are capable of developing their legitimacy through some form of public services, which are prioritised, and an immediate and demand-led economic recovery as well.

**Q173 Sir John Stanley:** Finally, let us turn to Pakistan. Again, what are the British Government's policy priorities in your view?

**Daniel Korski:** Let me be brief. I think that we need to support the civilian Government, strengthening relations between the Government and the military. We need to invest far more in police and judicial reform, especially in some of the border areas, and we need to have a new look at how we deliver assistance, in particular in some of these troubled areas, perhaps with non-traditional partners—it could be China, or Turkey. We need to find a way to help to provide development in these areas, much in the way that my colleague here has spoken about with regard to Afghanistan. Similarly, on the other side of the border, we need to help to provide an

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alternative to the kind of offers that are provided by the different insurgency groups to disaffected and impoverished youths.

**Sajjan Gohel:** We need to get more co-operation on the Pakistani side in terms of counter-terrorism, specifically information as to where British citizens go, where they end up being trained to take part in acts of terrorism against the UK. The ammonium nitrate plotters who had half a tonne of ammonium nitrate were convicted a couple of years ago, I believe. We know that they went to places such as Malakand and Kohat in the North West Frontier province. What is disturbing about that is that in Malakand there is a very large army presence and they would have been trained around the same area. So, one has to wonder where these individuals go, where they are trained and who is training them. We know that the ISI is a very powerful institution. It may have problems from within, but it is the most feared security institution in Pakistan. If it wanted to, it could certainly co-operate a lot more in providing the information that we need for our authorities here to be able to carry out their investigations successfully and disrupt and foil plots. At the same time, we need to help to shore up the civilian Government and prevent the military from interfering in the domestic scene. Unfortunately, far too often we have taken a back seat. We assumed that Musharraf would do the right thing, as I mentioned earlier, and unfortunately he did not. They say that General Ashfaq Kiyani, the chief of army staff, is not interested in politics. During the problems over the past couple of months in Punjab it looked as if he was playing all the civilian politicians against each other. The other thing that we have to bear in mind is that there is this reluctance to talk to leaders of the Opposition, such as Nawaz Sharif. Nawaz Sharif is seen sometimes by some as a fundamentalist. He is not a fundamentalist, he is a

conservative and there is a difference. In the next four to six years, if the post of Prime Minister or President exists in Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif will be one of them. He will come back to power and will be a very powerful force. I think that the UK has to consider talking to all the different leaders in that country, because if we do not, others will. Nawaz Sharif's biggest complaint, when he was in the UK a couple of years ago, was that he was ignored. The Saudis stepped in. They gave him armour-plated cars and support, and they have now got a lot of influence with him. We lost an opportunity there. So, we should be talking to the civilian politicians and helping them, shoring them up against any threat from terrorism and the military, but we should not be talking to the Pakistani Taliban and assuming somehow that they will come to the negotiating table.

**Sir John Stanley:** Thank you. That is very interesting.

**Dr. Gordon:** I have only one small thing to add. Clearly development assistance will play a key part in the future of Pakistan, particularly in the border areas, but it raises some interesting questions as to what type of development work will work and will achieve some sort of political or stabilising effect. It raises real questions about whether we have instruments that will work to that effect or whether we are expecting far too much of development assistance and financial aid. There are going to be significant difficulties in terms of channelling that funding. Who is going to be delivering this and what political message will it send? It raises real questions about which instruments work and under what conditions, whether they can be tied to political objectives in that way, and whether that is appropriate.

**Chairman:** Thank you, Dr. Gordon, Mr. Gohel and Mr. Korski. This has been very valuable and we are very grateful to you.

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Thursday 14 May 2009

Members present:

Mike Gapes, in the Chair

Mr John Horam  
Mr Eric Illsley  
Andrew Mackinlay

Mr Malcolm Moss  
Mr Greg Pope  
Sir John Stanley

*Witnesses:* **Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown**, Minister of State, and **Adam Thomson**, Director, South Asia and Afghanistan, Foreign and Commonwealth Office,<sup>1</sup> gave evidence.

**Q174 Chairman:** Good afternoon, Minister, and Mr. Thomson. We are pleased to see you before us again. It is a different topic this time, but I suspect that we may touch on some of the same issues that we did the last time you came before us. We, as a Committee, are looking at Afghanistan and Pakistan. Two weeks ago, members of the Committee were in both countries so we are on top of what is happening. We begin by asking you for your assessment of where we have got to since 2003. It seems that the basis on which we went into Afghanistan has shifted to what we are doing now. We went in on a counter-terrorist agenda and now we seem to be doing a lot about nation building and building state institutions. Do you agree with that assessment?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** The difficulty is that you can eliminate individual terrorists, but if you leave a country as a failed state and a seedbed for renewed terrorism, you leave your job unfinished. Perhaps the early statements of the mission were two-dimensional—one-dimensional, if you like—but the objective of leaving an Afghan Government, who are representative of their people and able to offer security to their people, and offer to the world a secure state that will not be a source of future terrorism, is an extension of the mission, not a change of mission.

**Q175 Chairman:** You wouldn't say that it was mission creep, then?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I wouldn't say that it was mission creep. A deepening of the mission might be a more accurate description.

**Q176 Chairman:** When we made the decision in 2006–07 to take on the main role in Helmand, was it expected at that time that we would now be in a situation where we are losing four or five British servicemen every week—sometimes in a single day—and that we would be engaged in such heavy fighting? It has been suggested to us that, based even on remarks made by some senior military figures, we had unrealistic goals when we initially deployed in Helmand, and that we are now suffering the consequences.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** There were famous statements at the time, not only from generals but from some of the Ministers involved, that it might almost be a walk in the park. It was a little misleading because the whole reason we were going in was that the

problem in Helmand needed the military commitment of a member of ISAF to contain what was clearly a resurgent Taliban threat. It is fair to acknowledge that the extent of the difficulties—the loss of life, the seriousness of the insurgency—was not perhaps fully understood at the beginning.

**Q177 Chairman:** We seemed to go in on the basis of peace support and counter-narcotics, yet we have ended up with counter-insurgency as the main priority. Would you accept that the original assessment, the basis on which we deployed to Helmand, was not correct? We should have been more realistic about the threats that would be faced.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Again, yes and no, in that we knew there was an insurgency that needed to be contained. In that sense, that was the rationale for the deployment. As always with these kinds of actions, you hope that you can do it through what you term peace support, but you have to be ready to up your game and commitment if that initial strategy does not work. So, I think that we remain consistent with the objectives that took us into Helmand: the purpose remains the same; the task has proved a lot harder than we originally estimated.

**Q178 Chairman:** Some commentators, in particular a book by Stephen Grey, have referred to the poor state of Army equipment and the political and military chaos in 2007, pointing to the tension between the military and the officials, and between different Government Departments. Is it fair to say that there was not a sufficiently co-ordinated and joined-up approach between DFID, the MOD and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 2007?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I think that there are two different issues. On the issue of military supplies, we have acknowledged—the Prime Minister has acknowledged to the Commons—that we have had to up our performance in that area, in terms of meeting delivery schedules and providing reinforced equipment that would protect our troops, particularly on the issue of vehicles that could survive the road ordnance put up by the insurgents. Just this morning there was a National Audit Office report on that, which gives us an improvement mark, but not yet a perfect score—there are still some equipment delays in terms of logistics and delivery. So, we have to keep on working at that, and I think that the Ministry of Defence would completely

<sup>1</sup> Ev 73

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share—if it had a representative here—the sense of urgency and the need to keep focused, so that our troops are properly equipped and protected.

On the second issue—co-ordination between the three Departments—again, as we have sought to have an operation that balances the objectives of development, political progress and security, we have recognised that we have had to improve our co-ordination arrangements. We now have in Helmand a senior Foreign Office official—although such an official, the equivalent of a two-star general in terms of ranking, could come from any one of the three Departments—on the ground to co-ordinate our efforts, to ensure that they are joined up. Clearly the thing was not as tightly knit as it should have been in 2007.

**Q179 Chairman:** You are referring to Hugh Powell. Members of our Committee met him. He is of a higher grade than was there before.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes. The previous arrangement, before Hugh, was basically that you had a military leadership down there, with a civilian PRT—provincial reconstruction team—but very subordinate to the military effort. Now, in Hugh, you have someone who is leading all the non-military operational activity there, and is seeking to integrate the activities of all three Departments.

**Q180 Mr. Pope:** I wanted to ask about our strategic objectives in Afghanistan, because when the Prime Minister made a statement to the House of Commons a couple of weeks ago, I thought that the objectives were all very worth while—we are talking about security, good governance and human rights. Is there a danger that those objectives will become ill-focused? Which, out of security, good governance and human rights, is the top priority?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I am genuinely not trying to avoid the question, but it is extremely hard to get one without all three. Security might seem separable, in that you might be able to have it without governance and human rights, but the lesson from recent years in Afghanistan is that that is not the case; in some cases, the absence of good governance has fuelled the insurgency. Similarly on human rights, we need to draw the human rights line at a reasonable level and not expect to get everything conforming to tip-top, impeccable, best western standards and practice. Again, this comes back to Afghans feeling that it has all been worth it, and that they have a Government who respect them and care for their rights.

I think you have to progress on all three objectives without taking your feet off the ground, which is, I think, what you mean, and aiming for the moon—trying to create a model state that is beyond reach and that would lead to an over-extension of our mission in impossible ways.

**Q181 Mr. Pope:** That leads me to my next point, which is that I fear that that is exactly what we are doing. Some of our objectives mention strengthening democracy, which we are obviously in favour of, and the Prime Minister has used the

phrase, “helping the Afghan people achieve prosperity”. Those seem to me to be open-ended objectives that almost invite mission creep. That is not to say that they are not good objectives, because they are, but if we are really going to strengthen democracy and help the Afghan people achieve prosperity, are we really saying that that is an open-ended commitment?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** If I take the two points you have raised, strengthening democracy breaks down to some pretty practical things, such as national elections later this year. When we talk about strengthening democracy, what we practically mean is an election that is accepted by the great majority of Afghans as a credible test of their leadership, and that whoever wins it has a mandate that people accept as genuine and real. It is not a 10-year Westminster Foundation programme to fine-tune democratic procedure, but although what I have just described is a practical project-like task, it is not straightforward or easy, and it poses a challenge.

Similarly, on improving life and the anti-poverty objective that you mentioned, you have heard the oft-cited figures of the extraordinary improvements in basic development outcomes: there are now 6 million kids in school as opposed to 2 million in 2002; a third of the students now are girls; and 83% of Afghans live in areas that now have basic health care assistance. Again, I think that on some of the very basic development goals, we have made some significant progress, because Afghanistan was literally at the very bottom of the global human development index, and now we are starting to nudge it up a bit. But nobody is being unrealistic; we do not expect to create an economic miracle there.

**Q182 Mr. Pope:** This is my last point for the moment. On the issue of being realistic, it is extraordinarily difficult for us as elected politicians—I am not making a cheap point because you are in the House of Lords—because we end up having constituents who fight and die in Afghanistan. Constituents of mine and of Andrew Mackinlay have died there recently, and it is very difficult to explain to our constituents what our aims are. The things that you mention—Afghanistan going up the education league table, education for girls and primary health care—are great and we can be rightly proud of them. But we need to be very realistic and honest with both the British and the Afghan people about what can be achieved in a realistic time frame, do we not? Otherwise, it just becomes an open-ended commitment.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I absolutely share your concern, and that is why I felt that some of the apparent objectives we were laying out in the early years were much too open-ended and seemed to imply a 20 or 30-year military commitment in Afghanistan by British troops. There has not been a war of that length since Britain became a democracy, and certainly not one prosecuted on the other side of the world. There was a detachment between objectives and what it is reasonable to ask people to put their lives in danger for. The reason we have asked for that commitment from our soldiers is not

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to bring about girls' education or development. To be honest, there are plenty of countries in the world that welcome our development pound but where we do not have to put in our army to ensure that it is used properly. If it were just about anti-poverty, we should take our money and spend it in Africa or poor parts of India, but we are not doing that.

The rationale for this war is that in this new global era a distant country such as Afghanistan, or indeed its neighbour, Pakistan, can pose huge security threats to people on the streets of our cities, as we have seen in terrorist incidents since 2001. So this, in its motivation and rationale, is a classic national security challenge, to which the solution is some measure of development, good governance and security that defuses Afghanistan as a threat to us. We must remember that the reason we are there, and particularly why our soldiers are there, is to defuse that threat from terrorism in our market squares, nightclubs and train stations.

**Q183 Andrew Mackinlay:** Lord Malloch-Brown, I jotted down some of the things you said. You mentioned that the task had proved a lot harder than we had anticipated and that some objectives were far too open-ended—you referred to the prospect of a 20 or 30-year commitment. When the Chairman asked whether there was mission creep, you replied that it was more of a deepening of the mission, and you also said that some Ministers, your predecessors and others, thought this might be a walk in the park.

I think your evidence has been very frank, candid and truthful. You were not a Minister when we went in, but you are the representative of the Government of the day, so I must put it to you that I am really horrified and frightened, because this has never been put to the House of Commons. If you remember, following Iraq there were protestations by Prime Ministers that there would always be a vote to deploy. We are deep in this, and there is no mandate from the British Parliament for it, and that is why I think "mission creep" is the appropriate term, but we can say "deepening the mission"—it doesn't matter. It raises big, fundamental, constitutional, and indeed moral, issues. I welcome the British Government's response to this.

In your reply to my colleague a few moments ago you referred to this, as I would expect you to do, as a classic case of combating terrorism and the threat in our nightclubs and so on, but at the end of the day, I am thinking, did we actually dig a deeper hole for ourselves? Has the threat been heightened by our deployment without a mandate or a proper discussion in the House of Commons, based on what Dr. John Reid, the then Minister, said: that he thought we might not even fire a shot? That was the inference, and I think that this is such a terrible, terrible moment we are at. I would like to hear your comments and observations on behalf of the British Government.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Well look, it was obviously that comment from Dr. Reid, which I think has been used in this Committee before, which made me say that there had been things in the past. I think that Dr. Reid, were he here, would say that that comment was

taken rather out of context. I was not around at the time, but that is my understanding. In that sense, I do not want you to misunderstand me as being critical, but a view has grown up that somehow Ministers presented it as too light at that time. Having not been there, I do not want to go through the rights and wrongs of that.

My point, the more fundamental one, is to acknowledge that the strength of the insurgent opposition we have faced in Helmand has surprised us; there is no way around that. In saying that, I hope that I am not being seen somehow as out of line or more honest than other Government Ministers, because I think that we have actually tried to do as good a job as possible of raising Afghanistan as an issue of concern in the Commons. The Prime Minister has been there several times. He came to the Commons, as promised, to update the House on the strategy for Afghanistan that he had presented more than a year earlier. So I very much hope that it is not true to say that somehow we are pursuing this without a full debate. Precisely because it is so difficult, and because young men and women have lost their lives, we are terribly aware of the need to keep the House informed and seek its support for the way forward. We have certainly made an effort not just to respond, as we always would to a Foreign Affairs Committee request, but to have three-monthly meetings—briefings—for MPs and Lords who are interested in Afghanistan so that we can be as forthcoming as possible. We realise the sacrifice that we are asking of people and we think it enormously important that we carry political and public opinion with us.

**Q184 Mr. Horam:** Just now you based your fundamental rationale for this operation in Afghanistan and Pakistan on the threat to British troops and security in this country. We have heard about that threat before, of course, on WMD relating to Iraq, and it proved to be a tissue of lies, as you are aware. So, why should we believe it any more now?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I am sorry, what was a tissue of lies?

**Mr. Horam:** Iraq.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes.

**Mr. Horam:** You made the point—

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** No, no, I agree, but just a minute. In the case of Iraq, the issue was that the original casus belli was the expectation of finding the weapons of mass destruction—we didn't find them.

**Mr. Horam:** They didn't exist.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Okay. In the case of Afghanistan there is no such doubt or debate about the presence in Afghanistan of the terrorists who—

**Q185 Mr. Horam:** Yes there is. Of course there is a big debate, isn't there?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** About their location there now?

**Mr. Horam:** Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden are not in Afghanistan.

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**Lord Malloch-Brown:** They are in the border area of Afghanistan and Pakistan, but my point is that there is no doubt about their presence and the role they played at the time of 9/11, at the beginning of this.

**Q186 Mr. Horam:** Yes, but are they a threat now? That is the point. Let us suppose that we were to withdraw from Afghanistan, and secondly let us suppose that the Taliban were going to come back as the Government of Afghanistan. What evidence do you have that they would welcome back al-Qaeda and Mr. Bin Laden? That is the fundamental assumption you are making; what evidence do you have to assume that?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Let me just say that al-Qaeda remains, it seems, and continues to operate principally—you are right—across the border in Pakistan at this stage. However, the presence of a strong Taliban-based insurgency in southern Afghanistan allows us reasonably to assume that absent control from Kabul, whether or not they were formally allowed back, would mean that there would be nothing stopping al-Qaeda operating again in Afghanistan. Perhaps the better answer to your question is the recognition that we cannot solve the terrorist issue in Afghanistan alone. That is why our own strategy has broadened to deal with both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**Q187 Mr. Horam:** We have got soldiers in Afghanistan who are risking their lives. We have got a huge effort that is costing this country nearly £3 billion a year now, as well as lost lives. There is a lot of evidence, from experts who have studied it closely, that the last time al-Qaeda people were in Afghanistan under the Taliban, they were not welcome at all. They broke the agreement with the Taliban. In particular, the Taliban are interested in their country; they are not particularly interested in our country. Therefore I come back to the question: what evidence do you have to make the assumption that if we pulled out of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda and Bin Laden would come back and operate from Afghanistan?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** My answer to that is that if we pull out under the right circumstances we will have a very good shot at ensuring that they don't come back. That is why, rather than relying solely on a military strategy to eliminate the Taliban, we are using military means, and the Americans are in line with our thinking—

**Q188 Mr. Horam:** With respect, it means that we are spending nearly £3 billion of taxpayers' money and losing 160 soldiers' lives, to try to do something based on an assumption for which there is no real evidence. You have produced no real evidence that al-Qaeda would come back, and we could spend that money and save those lives by improving intelligence in the UK.

**Adam Thomson:** I want to supplement the Minister's point about the question of how we do it. At the moment, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are collaborating on the Pakistani side of the border in operations into Afghanistan. So there is some evidence to suggest

that they have a continuing working relationship. It is not necessarily cordial. It may be simply a matter of practical mutual interest.

**Q189 Mr. Horam:** Let us look at it another way. Given what you have just said, why would al-Qaeda and Bin Laden want to come back to Afghanistan? They are in Pakistan now. They are working apparently with some freedom in the North West Frontier and the administered territories. Why would they want to come back? They do not need to, do they?

**Adam Thomson:** I am not an al-Qaeda expert, but I would suggest that that sort of terrorist group will generally go where governance is weakest. It is part of our objective in Afghanistan to equip the Afghan Government to be sufficiently strong to resist that.

**Q190 Mr. Horam:** I am just trying to get the basis of this assumption. It is easy to make an assumption, but you do not seem to be giving me any facts or evidence that this is likely to happen. Do you have any intelligence?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Our objective in going in was to make Afghanistan a legitimate functioning state which could protect itself against re-colonisation by al-Qaeda elements.

**Mr. Horam:** That is a different objective.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Well it is the one I described at the beginning.

**Q191 Mr. Horam:** It is one thing to make Afghanistan a functioning democracy. We would all agree with that. But that is a very different objective. Are you really saying that you expect British soldiers to risk their lives for the sake of making Afghanistan a functioning democracy and making Afghan girls go to school?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** No. As I said, we are not going to war for education. We are going to war for our own national security purposes. We have argued that an element of basic development success in areas like education or health, and the presence of good governance are the conditions that will make the country safe so that it does not get re-colonised by al-Qaeda. That is our basic argument. I would argue that it holds. You said, alternatively, pull back and use those same resources to improve our own intelligence-gathering or security around our national borders. Well I would point you to the example of Pakistan, where we are not and have no intention of engaging in such military activities, but where intensive intelligence and police work have not been able to protect us from a series of extremely serious terrorist threats and near misses. We argue that something like three quarters of the terrorist cases that are in our court system have a Pakistan root. This is a very dangerous part of the world for us.

**Q192 Mr. Horam:** Yes, but is it not true that most of the people who have been a threat to this country have been domiciled here? They may have originated some time ago from Pakistan, but they are domiciled in this country and have gone over there to be

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brainwashed or whatever in the madrassahs and so forth. In other words, they are people who are fundamentally British citizens.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Quite a few of them are British citizens. In this recent bomb incident, some were not British citizens.

**Q193 Mr. Horam:** Let us go on to another aspect of the security situation in Afghanistan. I went down to Helmand province and one of the things that concerned me was the lack of resources and back-up for British troops to contain the situation. I am not an expert on terrorism or al-Qaeda, but I understand that a successful counter-insurgency strategy usually involves 20 troops for every 1,000 of the population, which would mean, incredibly, 280,000 military personnel in Helmand—in the southern provinces, rather—alone, which is way below what we have actually got there. We have nearly 8,000 I think—more than 7,000 troops there. It seemed from my observations that they were barely able to contain the situation. Even the Governor of the province, Gulab Mangal, who is a good man backed by us, has to travel around in a British military helicopter, because it is so unsafe. We were not allowed out beyond Gulab Mangal's heavily protected fortress or our own military bases. Are you being serious, giving British troops so little support?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** We have concluded—and it is very much reflected in our strategy documents and submissions to you and others—that we cannot solve this through that classic counter-insurgency ratio of troops to population. That is another reason why we need a political-military strategy. We have to use our military presence to put pressure on the insurgent elements to the point where we create conditions for successful reconciliation by the Government, with elements of society who currently appear to support the insurgents.

**Q194 Mr. Horam:** The problem is that the situation is so insecure that they cannot do the development.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** That is why there are two things under way: a US-led surge to improve security in the short term, and a big focus on training the Afghan national army, with much bigger numbers to be put through than before, precisely to provide the only long-term credible security solution—which is better Afghan security forces.

**Q195 Mr. Horam:** How do you expect the American troops to operate when they get to Helmand province? You have 3,000 already there and another 10,000 or so expected. How do you expect the American troops to operate with the British troops there?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** There has been a lot of discussion about the right kind of command arrangements and, if necessary, Adam can elaborate on that. I think the American troops will operate very well with British forces. I have to say that the American troops have been having a very good war lately. They know the area quite well. They have not operated in Helmand, but they have operated in nearby places and the combination of knowledge,

language skills and military tactics has proved highly effective. It will be a welcome addition to what we are doing in Helmand.

**Q196 Mr. Horam:** Finally, I want to come on to the police. We found from our visit to Afghanistan that there is a great deal of concern about the police. The training of the Afghan army was regarded, by and large, as going quite well, but the training of the police was disastrous, frankly, with 40% of the police on heroin. It is a rabble, corrupt and in a dreadful state. The problem is that we do not have any spare police to send out there to help them. We have 120 people from the UK in the whole country, and we are rather short of police here. What on earth can we do about this serious situation? The point is that it is the police with whom the normal Afghan person comes into contact, not so much the army.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Various things are being looked at and I will turn to Adam for elaboration. We have been looking at supplementing the police with a so-called Afghan Public Protection Force—APPF.<sup>2</sup> We are currently running a pilot of that in Wardak province, with support from the US. It is basically a local community police force. There are issues of training, control, objectivity and performance which we need to track carefully, but I think we all agree that not nearly enough has been done on the police side. In addition to conventional police training, we need to look at some slightly out-of-the-box solutions to supplement the numbers of people we have who are willing to protect communities from Taliban activity.

**Adam Thomson:** I think we have about 60 personnel, some of them military, working on training the Afghan police. That is a very small contribution.<sup>3</sup> There is a much larger US one. We have 15 people in the European police operation as well, which makes us the third-largest contributor. Everyone acknowledges that the effort so far in building an Afghan police force that operates in an effective and non-predatory way in communities has not been a great success. Frankly, we are still experimenting to try to find what will work best. One important thing is to recognise that you need different kinds of police for different situations. We have been slow to recognise that, so there is a European effort to focus more effort among those countries within the European Union that are able to do it on training a gendarmerie capability to operate in insecure environments.

**Q197 Mr. Illsley:** Following on from what my colleague said about the Taliban in Afghanistan, I appreciate your view. We have seen problems in the north-west frontier of Pakistan, which we will come on to shortly. To what extent is that because we have

<sup>2</sup> *Note by witness:* I incorrectly implied that there was UK involvement with this project. The Government of Afghanistan has been running the Afghan Public Protection Force pilot in Wardak Province, with support from the US.

<sup>3</sup> *Note by witness:* As of April 2009, 53 UK policing experts are deployed in Afghanistan, this includes 14 deployed as part of EUPOL.

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displaced the Taliban from Afghanistan into north-west Pakistan and they are likely to move back in, should the military presence be reduced? Or is it simply that the Taliban influence in north-west Pakistan has expanded, without reference to any exodus from Afghanistan? What are your views on that?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I think both. There has been a Pashtun belt with a major insurgency, which has crossed this border and pays very little respect to the border. On both sides its roots lie in some of the events—the Russian occupation of Afghanistan, the displacement of refugees into Pakistan, the Islamisation. A lot of factors hit equally on these people, whichever side of the border they were located on. But obviously we think the relative success of some of the military activity by our side in Afghanistan has had a displacement effect. People have retreated across the border into Pakistan, and would come back again if our activities were removed.

**Q198 Chairman:** Can I take you back to your answers about security generally and the reference to the US? It was reported that President Obama wanted the NATO summit to agree a much greater European contribution, and he was clearly disappointed. Although the US has announced 17,000 additional combat troops, we are making a temporary small increase only during the election period. From the Prime Minister's statement, it is clear that from some time after August we are going back down from 9,000 to 7,000-something. Clearly that, therefore, is a different approach and other European countries are not coming up with big numbers. Does this mean that the Americans will in effect be taking on the overwhelming majority of the burden, and that in practice ISAF will become just a convenient fig leaf for what will be an American-driven, American-run operation?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I hope not, and I think there is somebody who hopes not more than me, and that is President Obama, because I think one of his lessons, going back to the campaign, was very clearly that America had been too alone in the case of Iraq. It needed to be part of a multilateral effort, and that is why I think he and his colleagues, supported by ourselves, pushed hard for as much additional NATO contribution as possible. But you are right, Mr. Chairman: the outcomes are relatively modest in numbers. There are more Poles, more Spanish and more Italian troops and carabinieri to train the Afghans.

**Chairman:** There are only dozens.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Hundreds. You are completely right in your basic point that this increases significantly the proportion of Americans versus other troops. Operationally, inevitably that will lead to some consolidation of American decision making over military operations, because it is American men and women who will in many cases be in the front line. I think even if that happens, the US will not lose sight of the lesson of Iraq. It needs to be there in as broad an international coalition as possible, with the support of the UN Security

Council, and the authority and legitimacy that it brings. So you see the US still pushing for a big UN role on the non-military side and still consulting NATO about the military structures and decision making. I think that it recognises the issue that you have raised, and will do its best not to give in to the logic of a growing American ratio versus others.

**Q199 Sir John Stanley:** You said earlier that the strength of the opposition that we have encountered in Helmand province has come as something of a surprise. I wonder why it came as a surprise to the British Government, given the fact that in 2001, the al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban leadership were, unhappily, allowed to escape. The Afghan Taliban have more or less unlimited supplies of money through narcotics, to which we will come a little later; a 250-km, totally porous, mountainous border between Afghanistan and Pakistan; an effectively unlimited supply of fighters in Pakistan who can be recruited at between \$10 and \$20 a day, and a geographically more expansive safe haven for the Taliban and al-Qaeda in Pakistan than there ever was in Afghanistan. Against that background, it does not seem at all surprising that we have encountered the degree of opposition that we have in Helmand.

Given that those are the unhappy realities that we have to face—and, most importantly of all, that our service men and women have to face—do the British Government now accept that there is no way that we will achieve success in Afghanistan beyond a containment operation and by looking at policy simply in Afghan terms? Do they accept that the only way that we will achieve, effectively, the elimination of the Taliban threat in Afghanistan is if we concert with others and have an altogether more expansive, more positive and more direct counter-terrorist policy in Pakistan in conjunction with the Pakistani Government?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Let me take different parts of that, John. On the first part, I used “surprise” in a clear way, which was to say that we deployed in Helmand for the very reasons that you eloquently laid out. Clearly, there was a resurgent insurgency in Helmand that needed to be tackled. The porous nature of the border, the funding sources, and the fact that the leadership had escaped largely intact—all those reasons meant that we recognised that we faced a strategic threat, which is why the UK deployed to Helmand. I used the word “surprise” in a tactical sense, which is to say that the insurgents have been fiercer and more forceful, and have done better than we originally assumed would be the case. As with any good military action by this country over the centuries, we have stepped up our game and our commitment, and reinforced our effort to deal with an enemy who has been tougher than we initially thought would be the case. Please do not misunderstand me—it is not a surprise that we faced an insurgency in Helmand, which is the reason why we went there. We knew it was there, we wanted to take it on and it has been a hard fight—that, if you like, I clearly acknowledge.

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On your second point, which is that we cannot have a definition of success beyond a containment strategy, my answer is that we recognise it on the military side and have been frank about it. We will not prevail and win militarily if the success of a military win is eliminating all Taliban from Afghan soil and keeping it that way—that is not our definition of success. Our definition of military success is indeed putting sufficient pressure on the Taliban so that they recognise that a military victory will be denied to them, that the Government in Kabul will remain in power and draw the authority of an elected mandate, and that the Taliban therefore needs to engage in reconciliation with that Government on the terms that that Government set. Your third point was about the Pakistan end of it. We recognise that you cannot—some people have used this term—drain the swamp of terrorism without dealing with the Pakistan side of this as well. You can do all you want in Afghanistan, but if Pakistan remains a continuous human re-supply source for terrorism in Afghanistan you cannot get to a solution. You also need a successful strategy for Pakistan; we fully acknowledge that, and that is why all of our Prime Minister's strategy and everything else now regularly covers Afghanistan and Pakistan. Afghanistan alone is an artificial frame through which to seek victory on these issues.

**Chairman:** Andrew Mackinlay will ask questions on the issue of governance.

**Q200 Andrew Mackinlay:** We need some sort of carrot to increase our constituents' enthusiasm, and I think that they would like to see some material advance in tackling corruption. How can they measure success in that? What is being done to ensure that our assistance is contingent upon the Afghan Government demonstrably being able to deliver a war against corruption?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** One thing that we have been pressing on President Karzai, and indeed on others who are choosing to run for President in the elections, is the need for this not to be a personality and tribal-based coalition campaign but to be very much about manifestos and commitments. We have argued to President Karzai that corruption will be a decisive issue for people, and that it will be unacceptable for the people of Afghanistan to see leaders who condone or turn a blind eye to corruption.

Through DFID, we have worked hard both to make sure that our own aid money is not wasted and that we are building the kinds of institutions of governance—the checks and balances and controls over corruption—that start to clean this up. But one has to be honest—this is one of the real Achilles heels of the Kabul Government. Particularly at the regional level, there are governors appointed by Kabul who have a horrible reputation regarding corruption. We hope that this election campaign will be an opportunity for ordinary Afghans to air their grievance about that and demand of whomever they elect as President that they clean up their act.

**Q201 Andrew Mackinlay:** Outside of Kabul, surely the reality is that traditional forms of justice prevail. Is that acceptable to us?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** What exactly do you mean?

**Andrew Mackinlay:** Well, not a court system or a prosecution system as we know it but tribal punishments—I don't know the correct phrase, and I don't want to use emotive terms—that are probably not up to United Kingdom norms.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I am sorry—I just wanted to make sure that you were not suggesting that it was somehow just arbitrary justice. You are absolutely right: there are so-called shuras—local justice systems—and we are working to strengthen them. We think that that—justice that reaches out across the country—is a better model than trying to get some sort of court system that is highly expensive to operate, has huge gaps in the laws it would operate from and never really manages to provide timely justice beyond Kabul. Our own reporting suggests that, in terms of winning hearts and minds in insurgent areas, one thing that scores well for the Taliban versus Kabul is the rough and ready justice that the Taliban provide. They come into town, somebody accuses somebody else of stealing farm animals or taking land, and the Taliban are not coy about it—without reference to even an informal justice system they mete out punishment. In the rather lawless areas that is often welcomed, I am told. Informal justice systems, which are fair and deliver justice quickly, are a critical building block for successful political counter-insurgency.

**Q202 Andrew Mackinlay:** On governance, the way that I understand it is that there are clearly some provinces in Afghanistan where, while it is not up to our norms of governance, there is some governance and probably has been for a long time. Putting aside Kabul, where perhaps the writ of the Government runs, we are in Helmand, and the truth is that there is no governance in Helmand, is there? There might be a shibboleth of some Government official—a provincial or a district governor or a prefect—but the reality is that he is ensconced, almost imprisoned, in a Seventh Cavalry-type fort where, notionally, his standard flies, but outside of that little jurisdiction, his writ does not run. There is no governance, is there? That is the painful truth that my constituents and I have to face. There is no real governance in Helmand. We have been there a long time and that is the naked truth, isn't it?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Well, the truth that I would not disguise from your constituents is that we are in the middle of this, not at the end. We still have a long way to go in Helmand. You have Governor Mangal, who we think is an honest and able man, who, in some of the metrics of his performance, such as poppy field eradication and other issues, is making real progress. Therefore, Helmand is better governed now than it was a year ago.

There are local councils in the districts. I visited one of the district councils and I am sure that you did when you were there. It is not an easy life: one of the district councillors I met was killed shortly thereafter going to her home area. It is a dangerous business,

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and as a consequence too much development assistance to our taste still has to be delivered through provincial reconstruction teams because it is not safe enough to allow ordinary Afghan council workers to go out and deliver development projects in the way that we would like. However, compare Helmand to much of the rest of the country and you see that it is an extreme. In many parts of Afghanistan the process is much further advanced.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** Yes, but we wouldn't have the presence if it weren't for Helmand.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** That's right.

**Q203 Andrew Mackinlay:** I acknowledge that there are some provinces or districts that are different. I think that there are 13 districts in Helmand. How many of those 13 this afternoon are in the reasonable control—I have to use “reasonable” because I have to leave it to your judgment—of central Government? Where does their writ run in those 13? I don't simply mean that there is a fort, an office and a few people behind guns. Of those 13, how many can the Government reasonably move around in?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** About half of them.

**Adam Thomson:** Yes, I would say about half of them, but each district is different, and in some of the half where there is Afghan Government governance, it is still quite insecure. But if we compare Helmand 2006 with Helmand 2009, there is considerably more governance in considerably more district centres than was the case three years ago.

**Q204 Andrew Mackinlay:** Last autumn we were in the United Nations and we had before us the lovely gentleman who was the Afghan ambassador to the UN. We asked him the same question, and I remember him saying that a couple of weeks earlier there were about five districts. We all gasped. He then said, “As at yesterday”—we thought that he was about to say that the figure had lifted to seven—“there were two.” That was rather the wrong direction. You looked a bit anxious when I asked you the question, and you said, “About half,” but that isn't good enough, is it? We need to see that we are increasing and gaining qualitatively in governance, where the writ runs. I put that to you. I have a final question. This is an article 5 operation; surely it has wider implications. NATO has failed in it because implicit in article 5 is that everyone steps up to the plate. We did in relation to Helmand. I have said that I don't think there is any mandate, because it was a statement of fact that we were going in, but it has never been put to the House of Commons. It was reported to it, but it never mandated or endorsed it. Article 5 has failed. It is actually a serious failure for NATO. It was implicit that others would come in—we might make the biggest contribution, but it was all going to be one big heave. It hasn't happened, has it?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I looked anxious about the “half” because it's not clear what the measure is. It goes to your serious point that we have to have metrics and benchmarks of progress. We are trying to develop those. I really want to be clear that, while there have been setbacks in Helmand—the loss of

Lashkar Gah was the most infamous, if you like, but it was then recovered; no, Musa Qala, sorry, it was recovered and local government is now operating—the point is that the trend line is clear. We are prevailing, but as I said at the beginning of the answer, we are at the halfway point or whatever the right thing is. I am not trying to disguise the fact that we still have a hell of a hill to climb, but I use the comparison with the rest of Afghanistan for a reason. Yes, if you look at Helmand, it seems bleak, but if you look at Helmand as the worst province in the country and take a countrywide look at this, it is a lot less bleak. We are winning. That is the bottom line.

**Q205 Andrew Mackinlay:** Article 5?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** On the article 5 point, it is a huge challenge to NATO because, essentially, it is out of theatre for NATO. The real issue is that NATO's tightness and article 5 shared commitments came from the concept of an organisation whose purpose was self-defence in the European theatre. The threats have now become global, as we were saying at the beginning, and unfortunately NATO's sense of solidarity is not yet an expression of that. It is absolutely the case that NATO needs to think hard about its mission. Its member countries need to think hard about their commitments to it. If there are to be more of these kinds of actions around the world, the US is very properly—if NATO is going to be the vehicle for them—going to expect that others properly step up to the mark.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** And us.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** And us.

**Chairman:** Now we are going to shift to human rights issues. Sir John Stanley.

**Q206 Sir John Stanley:** Minister, I may have misconstrued your earlier comments, but I found your previous reference to standing up for the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan somewhat feeble and defeatist. I hope that you acknowledge that over a large part of Afghanistan, including way beyond the areas where the Taliban are still in control, the treatment of women and girls, which is measured perfectly reasonably from our point of view by the standards of the UN declaration of human rights, is frankly appalling. We have seen reports only this week of another gas attack on girls going to a school outside Kabul.

The Prime Minister was in Afghanistan at exactly the same time as us, although we did not actually see him as our paths did not cross. The specific point that I want to put to you relates to the fact that he rightly made very strong representations to President Karzai about his signing of the Shi'a family law, which has, in my view, been perfectly reasonably described by the media here as legalised rape within marriage. The issue is of huge concern to those very brave women in Afghanistan who are fighting for women's rights.

It was widely reported in the Afghan press, and more widely, while we were there that the Prime Minister obtained a concession from President Karzai, under which he said that he would amend the Shi'a family

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law, which he has now signed. Are the British Government going to ensure that the commitment made to our Prime Minister will be adhered to, or will it simply turn out to be an empty promise? If it turns out to be an empty promise, Members from all political parties on both sides of the House will have to deal with constituents who are concerned about our position in Afghanistan, and who cannot understand why servicemen should lose their lives for a Government who are prepared to institutionalise and legalise rape. Our constituents simply cannot understand why we should be in that position, and I have every sympathy for that point of view.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** The Prime Minister made in Afghanistan the same argument that you have just made, which is that it is absolutely unreasonable to expect British lives to be put at risk to defend a Government who would treat their country's women in that way, and that while we accept that different systems will address issues of rights in different ways, don't expect us to put our lives on the line for a regime that would do that. The Prime Minister, in what he said publicly and in what he said in private to President Karzai, was absolutely explicit and adamant—as were President Obama and Hillary Clinton—that it was unacceptable to expect us to play a role there under such conditions. Therefore, on 27 April, President Karzai announced that the law would be changed to bring it in line with the constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women, and with the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party. We are going to follow that very closely. For us, it is not a small matter to be brushed under the carpet—it is absolutely fundamental. While we, as I say, recognise the right of Afghans to write their own laws, there are some issues that are so fundamental that they go to the heart of why we are there.

I want to pick up your earlier point on women, who have had a hugely improved dispensation and deal since 2002. I have mentioned the fact that there are now huge numbers of girls in school who were not there before. You mentioned the fact that some of them were attacked when they tried to go to school, which shows the limits of what outsiders can do: we can fight for the provision of schools and press the Government to treat girls fairly and give them the same rights as others, but what we cannot do is change a country's culture overnight and police the behaviour of individual Afghan families and communities towards their women and daughters. We can press for that change in attitude, but I do not consider it supine, weak or apologetic to acknowledge that we do not have the ability to go family by family across Afghanistan and teach Afghan men to treat their women properly. That revolution in attitudes has got to come from Afghans themselves.

**Q207 Sir John Stanley:** I certainly accept that there have been some significant improvements since 2001, but it has to be clear on the record that we were starting, as far as women and girls were concerned, from a zero base—an absolutely zero base, from a

regime that was committed to ensuring that women were brought up illiterate and that their role in life was to be treated as chattels. I hope that the British Government will look not only at what has been done since that zero baseline, but also at what more needs to be done and at the numbers of Afghan girls who are still not going to school in Afghanistan.

We had two interesting and contrasting meetings in the Afghan Parliament. One was with the Foreign Affairs Committee, where there was just one woman, and all the rest were men—I say that with a degree of contriteness, as the women members of this Committee no doubt have some other pressing engagements, so I am sorry but we are all men here today, Minister. That was followed by a meeting, very happily, with the recently formed all-party Afghan-British parliamentary group in the Afghan Parliament. You will be interested to know, Minister, that at that meeting, which followed immediately afterwards, there was just one man and all the rest were women. At that point I do not think that they had had an opportunity to go to our embassy in Kabul, but I hope—indeed, I am sure—that, given the strong representation of women in the new Afghan-British friendship group in the Afghan Parliament, our ambassador and his staff will make every possible effort to see that they are warmly welcomed and very strongly supported by the British embassy in Kabul.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Thank you, Sir John. I shall pass that back to our ambassador, because I think that it is something that we should build on. I hope that one reason that there was that gender balance may well be that there is a recognition of the programmes that DFID, in particular, runs for women's rights in Afghanistan and that the women in Parliament see us as a friend of that agenda. I hope that that had something to do with why there were so many women in that group.

**Q208 Chairman:** We went to a girls' school in Kabul, which the British Council has been giving significant support to. That was an extremely valuable experience for all of us. Of course, none of those girls would have been in education at all in 2003.

May I probe you a little further on the Shi'a family law process? We were given contradictory impressions by different people that we spoke to as to what would happen, and whether there would be a need for an amendment to go through the Afghan Parliament or whether some other process would be involved. Some people suggested that it was all part of the electioneering and President Karzai had done this deliberately to bolster his base, and that once the election was out of the way the law would carry on through the process. Although he said that he might put it on hold or "review" it, there was no explicit commitment to amend it.

Can you clarify what process you or the British Government think will now be pursued within the Afghan political system? Might it be through the Parliament, which could resist it, because the Shi'a members might say to the Sunni ones, "It's nothing to do with you; this is to do with our religious codes"? Or will there be some other mechanism to

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ensure that the 300 or more clauses of the Shi'a code are adopted without the two or three that have caused these particular problems?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Chairman, I don't think I can clarify it. What you heard was an accurate reflection of what we are hearing. The embassy is still pursuing what the next steps are likely to be. What President Karzai said was that he had sent it to the Ministry of Justice for review. My interpretation of the electoral politics, though, is different from yours. It might be that there was less electoral advantage to President Karzai after the elections in allowing the Bill to have been brought forward, and he may be more amenable to tackling amendments to it after the election.

**Q209 Chairman:** We were told that the President had referred it back initially and then it had come back again. He asked, "Is it okay?" and was told, "Yes, it's fine." He then signed it and then realised what was in it. We were also told that the Ministry of Justice and the President had worked it out and it would be fine and that there was no problem. They had already worked out what needed to be done. Two weeks on from when we were told these things, have you any idea whether that is true?

**Adam Thomson:** No, I haven't—I'm sorry.

**Q210 Chairman:** Perhaps you can send us a note,<sup>4</sup> because when we do our report we will obviously focus to some extent on what this actually means. Our report is likely to be out before the Afghan elections.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I happened to be with the American special envoy Richard Holbrooke when this thing broke. The speed with which he was able to get Hillary Clinton out of bed at about five in the morning to call President Karzai shows that there was no doubt about the American position and the speed with which President Obama jumped in on it means that one thing I can confidently tell you is that we are not alone on this. The most significant external voice—the Americans—are at least as outraged as we are by it and are determined to make it clear that for them, who are making even more of a commitment and losing a lot of lives, this is every bit as unacceptable as it is for us.

**Q211 Mr. Illsley:** Before I come on to a question about international co-operation, I want to come back to the point that Sir John has been making about public perceptions of human rights abuses in Afghanistan and how they affect this country's views on what we are doing out there. A few moments ago you said that we can help the police force and the Afghanistan people in relation to their attitude to girls and women. I accept that and I agree with that. But there has to be some move towards them and presumably it has to start at the top.

Only a few months ago, a father murdered his daughter because she had struck up an acquaintance with a British or an American soldier. It was only a passing acquaintance. He murdered her in public

and the Afghan Government simply said that they couldn't intervene—that there couldn't be any prosecution because it was an honour killing and accepted in their country. There has to be some sort of pressure on the Afghan Government. I don't think this was in a tribal area. It was around Kabul. There has to be recognition somewhere along the line that this is wrong and should stop. I don't know whether you recall that incident.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I don't recall the specific incident. We will look into that.

**Q212 Mr. Illsley:** My question on international co-operation relates to the UN mission in Afghanistan and its efforts to channel funding into reconstruction and development. It appears that the US Government tend to ignore the UN programmes when providing funding and assistance for these programmes, whereas the British Government tend to use the UN programmes as a vehicle for putting investment into Afghanistan. Is there anything we can do to persuade the US Government to come on board in relation to the UN, so that there is a co-ordinated approach to this money going into redevelopment and construction?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I think yes is the answer. The last Administration was famously casual about its relations with the UN and did not use it as it might have done. Richard Holbrooke is very seized of this. The Americans had always steered clear of the UN mission in some ways, although they had been interested in getting Paddy Ashdown to head it at one point because they wanted a more effective UN mission. They felt that they did not have it and therefore worked round it. Peter Galbraith, an American who is extremely close to the Administration, has been brought in as deputy SRSG in the mission. The Americans are supporting UNAMA'S big election undertaking. As UNAMA itself has sorted out some of its own staffing issues which dogged it last year and has moved to open regional offices, putting it closer to the action outside Kabul, I think the US is gaining respect for it and supporting it more. We obviously were and will go on making the argument that if you want to give this whole thing a multilateral character and legitimacy, an effective UN mission which the US is seen to support is a key objective.

**Adam Thomson:** I might just add that Ambassador Eikenberry's first act upon arrival in Kabul as the new US ambassador was to join a meeting chaired by Kai Eide. It was a deliberate step.

**Q213 Chairman:** Yes, we met Kai Eide and were impressed by his efforts. But there is a deep level of frustration within the UN—not just in its headquarters but I suspect everywhere—about the fact that whatever the UN does, it does not necessarily know what the US is doing. The US has an estimated \$1 billion. On top of that, there is what the American military have in their so-called CERP—the commanders' emergency response programmes—which they can spend at local level,

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perhaps contradicting or duplicating what is being done by international organisations. So it does seem a bit absurd.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** There can be improvements. The US has been, if you like, a great piece outside the co-ordination efforts. On the other hand, truth be told, the CERP programmes tend to be operating in insecure parts of the country, where it is not as though there is a massive amount of UN or other assistance to duplicate. I think we can definitely improve on this but it is a little bit of a habit of UN people—co-ordination is right up there as one of the most enjoyable activities.

**Q214 Chairman:** You are speaking of your former role?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I am. Nothing gives me greater pleasure than committee meetings, co-ordinating this, that and the other, and there needs to be more of it. Equally we should not fall into a trap. The flexibility of the CERP programme is a rather good thing, we would say, and frankly, we wish we sometimes had a bit more like that.

**Q215 Chairman:** Can I take you to the presidential and provincial elections, which are due to be held on 20 August? They are obviously not the parliamentary elections—we have had very good engagement with parliamentarians. There have been some worrying developments. It is not clear whether you can say that the Afghan people will be presented with a real choice in these elections. This week a large number of candidates seem to have withdrawn, for whatever reason. It is also reported that President Karzai has two vice-presidential candidates: one is the current one whom we met—Mr. Khalili—and the other one is the former Defence Minister who has a rather chequered history. Is that not right? Is his name Fahim?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Fahim.

**Q216 Chairman:** Are we concerned that we might end up having a rubber-stamp election where there is no choice for the Afghan people?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** There is a risk and it would be a huge pity and a real setback were that to occur. We are very clear that there needs to be a competitive election which delivers a result that people believe in, and where they believe that the campaign has allowed a real debate and airing of the issues. Frankly, there is a bit of a sense of stifled democracy in the country and of a leadership that has seemed out of touch, locked up in Kabul and not connected with the needs of people. For us, this election—not just who wins it but the very process of candidates getting out there and debating and engaging—is critical to the political renewal of the country. I mentioned earlier the anxiety for clear manifestos, so that it is not like 18th-century British elections, which were all about interests, alliances and money, but instead really is about ideas and coalitions that cut across purely tribal alliances.

Although we are disappointed by the number of candidates who have withdrawn, there are a number of formidable candidates left. There are still a couple

of alternative Pashtun candidates, one of whom I know. He has been a senior Minister and a senior official at the World Bank and is quite an able guy. There are two other candidates who are much better known internationally: Abdullah Abdullah, who was the very successful Foreign Minister in the period immediately after 2001, and Ashraf Ghani, who did all the economic reforms. Only time will tell whether those characters will catch on and become national candidates and compelling figures, but my impression is that there will be enough demand among Afghans for a real contest. Even if a lot of candidates, ultimately, are not declared after the pushing, shoving and manoeuvring before nominations close, there are enough real names in the race that we can still hope that there will be a proper race.

**Chairman:** We will watch this space.

**Q217 Sir John Stanley:** Minister, I want to come back to counter-narcotics. It is a pretty close call as to whether the British got a more poisoned chalice from deciding to undertake the lead role in Helmand province or from deciding to take the lead role in counter-narcotics. Counter-narcotics is of course critically related to dealing with Taliban terrorism, as UN figures suggest that narcotics fund the Taliban to the tune of \$100 million a year and enable them to buy in any number of Taliban fighters from within Pakistan at the going rate of \$10 to \$20 a day. Why do the British Government, if they are still in that position, want to cling on to that lead role on counter-narcotics? I ask that because, although I cannot divulge details from the conversations the Committee had in Kabul, which were entirely private, we were told by a very senior and influential person that that role was basically obsolete.

If you look at our fellow Europeans, you will see that they have come to exactly the same conclusion on their respective roles. The Germans decided that their lead responsibility for Afghan police reform was a no-hope area for them and have now passed that across to the EU. The Italians came to exactly the same view on their lead role in reforming the criminal justice system, which they have now passed to the UN. So why do the British Government feel that they need to retain that lead responsibility for an area in which we simply are not in a position to deliver, where we get constant criticism and where the Afghan Government, or possibly the US, might be willing to take on the lead responsibility? It seems to me to be really very unfortunate that we continue to have the nominal lead responsibility for a crucial area when we simply are not able to deliver the goods.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** The issue of drugs is a bit different from police training and the German lead issue that you mentioned. I think that this role originally came when the G8 partners divvied up responsibilities, and certainly the G8 partner thing has become a little redundant, in the sense that it is not the formula for sharing out roles in Afghanistan. There are other co-ordination mechanisms that remain more important. Certainly, we feel that we are doing that more because someone has to than

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because we are hugely enthusiastic about it, so if others wanted to take it on credibly we would help them do it. Our whole effort is about strengthening Afghan Government capacity to do that, but the Afghan ministry in that area remains relatively weak. We feel that it needs a strong external partner to help it stand up against the rather contradictory demands on it from elsewhere in the Afghan Government.

The second big player on this is the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, of which we are a big funder, and again we encourage it to do as much as possible in Afghanistan.

The third player is the US. In the past we have had rather different views to those of the US on some aspects of counter-narcotics policy, particularly on the eradication issue. We have wrestled this down, even under the last administration, to a managed difference of emphasis. Now, under the current Administration we are basically in the same place. We are the second biggest contributor in this area, after the US which is the biggest, but I suppose my answer to your question is that we are trying at least to be a NATO country that meets our share of the responsibility on this. We are the second biggest troop contributor. We feel that we need to help the Americans by leading on different policy issues where they wish us to. Yes, it is not a comfortable position to be in. It is not great PR to be in charge of counter-narcotics, but as I say, it is an important part of this.

My closing point is that, while it is not great PR, it is not all a disaster. The winter survey from the UNODC, which comes out in January, is a clear indication that this year there will be more drug-free provinces and that cultivation in Helmand is down. What we have always said in the case of drugs is that it is probably a 10-year effort—that is what it was in Thailand, and in Colombia, arguably, still is—so there are no quick, easy wins. But we think our commitment in this area is slowly paying off.

**Q218 Sir John Stanley:** I don't think we should take too much comfort from the short-term change, particularly in Helmand, of Afghan farmers planting wheat last year, rather than poppy. It was explained to us very fully by the embassy expert in Kabul that this was not actually due to any pressure from ourselves in counter-narcotics, but owed much more to a quite dramatic change—a deterioration—in heroin prices and an escalation of wheat prices. He also made the point that, year by year, it is quite possible to switch from poppy to wheat on an annual basis. Obviously, we hope that the downward trend is going to continue. Can I put just one more really key policy point to you, Minister? There was a vitally important agreement by NATO, as you know, last October to extend the NATO remit on counter-narcotics. Previously the NATO role had been simply to support the Afghan army with eradication of poppy in the field. The change that was agreed, crucially last October, was that NATO can now target the facilities and the facilitators—those who engage in the processing of poppy, the creation of opium, heroin distribution and so on. This is a

proactive targeting arrangement under which we have the real possibility of actually trying to interdict the suppliers of processed poppy. The really disappointing feature is that, though this was agreed by NATO last October, only a handful of NATO countries—as you know, the usual countries: us, the Americans and just one or two others—are actually prepared to get their hands in the business and pull this boat along with the expanded counter-narcotics role. Can you tell us whether the British Government will do everything it can to try to get across to other NATO member states, all of whose troops face threats from the Taliban—threats can now come in any part of Afghanistan—that they all have a duty to cut off the crucial supply of cash coming to the Taliban from counter-narcotics and they had really better get behind the expanded NATO role in the counter-narcotics area?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes, I will answer that, but on the issue of wheat prices versus heroin prices, I completely agree with you and have got myself into trouble for arguing provocatively that what we need for Afghanistan is a common agricultural policy. But there is a serious point behind this. We have to do something about prices at the farm gate to make alternative crops attractive vis-à-vis heroin. I want to assure you that that is a priority that this new Administration in Washington share. They are also pushing for more development assistance for alternative sources of livelihood in the areas that remain narcotics-heavy.

It is worth telling you that we have 37,000 projects under way in the areas of agriculture, education, health, irrigation, power, etc. More than £211 million has been given in small loans to more than 436,000 families to help farmers and small business men develop these alternative livelihoods, and we have repaired almost 10,000 km of rural roads, generating 14 million days of labour. Indeed, DFID has committed almost £500 million over the 2009-2012 period to the Afghan national development strategy, of which a key priority is this alternative livelihoods point. So, I think that we get that. We are trying to make a major commitment to dealing with this because it is so critically a pillar going forward. If I may, I will just pick you up on the other point about NATO. Clearly, supporting Afghan counter-narcotics operations has now been added as a fifth ISAF strategic objective in NATO's operational plan, and therefore all NATO troops are expected to co-operate in this. While I take your point about some of the countries that are there, let me just point out—I am sure that you heard about this while you were there—that in February there was Operation Diesel, which was carried out by UK and Afghan troops and which destroyed four drug factories, laboratory equipment and 1,295 kg of wet opium, and confiscated a substantial amount of precursor chemicals. So we are doing it, but you are probably right that we need to do more, and to push the rest of ISAF to do more. But we have moved from a place where ISAF was arguing that it should focus on the other military objectives and leave this to a separate thing called counter-narcotics activity, to its mainstreaming it into the military mission, precisely

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because ISAF understands that it contributes to insecurity and is a source of funding for the insurgency. It is there now, as a principal military objective of ISAF's mission.

**Q219 Mr. Horam:** I wanted to ask you about negotiating with the Taliban. As I am sure you are aware, one aspect of the new American policy is an encouragement to the Afghan Government to negotiate with elements of the Taliban. In view of what happened in the nearby area in Pakistan, the Swat valley, when the Pakistan Government tried to negotiate, not exactly with the Taliban but with allies of the Taliban, is this a sensible thing to do?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Well, there is certainly negotiation and negotiation. What happened in the Swat valley shows you the real risks of doing this the wrong way, and this perhaps reinforces a point we were talking about earlier, which is the difference between the Swat valley and Helmand. The Pakistan Government negotiated from a position of weakness. They negotiated when they did not have the upper hand militarily in the valley, and so the agreement was perceived by the Taliban as a confirmation of a rout, as a sort of white flag from the Government. That, I think, validates what we are trying to do in Helmand, which is to ensure that the Afghan Government enter into any reconciliation negotiations with the upper hand militarily so that they are able to do this from a position of strength, and that their reconciliation strategy is not to hand over Helmand, as the Pakistan Government appeared to hand over the Swat valley, but to incorporate elements of soft Taliban support into the existing political arrangements.

**Q220 Mr. Horam:** So you would support negotiation on those terms?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** On those terms, yes.

**Q221 Sir John Stanley:** A quick, final question on Afghanistan. Just continuing on this crucial area of "talking with the Taliban", on past historical performance there has always been one guaranteed loser coming out of deals with the Taliban, and that has been women and girls. That is what happened with Musharraf's deal with the Taliban in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. That is what has come out of the present Pakistan Government's deal with the Taliban in relation to Swat valley. Minister, I would say to you that it is an almost certain likelihood that in any deal done with the Taliban inside Afghanistan, the real losers are going to be women and girls. It was put to us by some very brave individuals—women who literally walk with the threat of death each day—that there needs to be women's representation in any negotiation with the Taliban, otherwise women are going to get sold out.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** First, I acknowledge the risk. They have a terrible reputation on these issues and there is no reason to believe that their spots have changed when it comes to the treatment of women. That is, I suppose, another reason why it is so

important to understand the nature of the dialogue that we would support in the reconciliation process. While "talking with the Taliban", as you put it by sticking the inverted commas in it, is a glib soundbite, in two ways it does not clarify what is intended here. One, it is talking with those who have supported the Taliban, and maybe ultimately with elements who might even be described as Taliban, but it is not arriving at an agreement with the hardcore traditional Taliban leadership and their hardcore, hard-line allies. That is not what is in President Karzai's mind, or ours. It is about winning back groups who have gone over.

The second point is that it is about winning those groups back into a system of governance based on elections and the democratic rule of law which is being established. It is not delegating a province to them, and so I would hope that the system and the checks and balances it would provide mean that the rights of women would be protected, but I acknowledge that this is going to be a very difficult area.

**Q222 Chairman:** Now I am going to ask you some questions about the Pakistan-Taliban relationship. We were there two weeks ago when the Pakistani establishment politically was reassessing the relationship and the deal that had been worked out in the Swat valley. Since then, there has been a major military offensive going on and there are a lot of internally displaced people and big humanitarian consequences. What is your assessment of how serious the Pakistani Government is in tackling the extremist threat? How serious are the Pakistani military, and how serious are the intelligence and security services in Pakistan—the ISI, principally?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Let me first say that I think the Pakistani Government found that the deal that had been made in the Swat enjoyed support nowhere in Pakistan. The efforts that the Government and military have now made to recover control of Swat is, in the statements of politicians in Pakistan and in the polling and everything else that is available in terms of evidence, overwhelmingly supported. Pakistanis were as shocked as much as outsiders that there could be an al-Qaeda/Taliban presence that close to Islamabad. That analogy can be overdrawn because it may be close as the crow flies, but it is a long way in terms of the terrain between the two. Nevertheless, it was a shock to the system. In that sense, that shock was felt not only in public opinion but in the civilian Government, which realised that it was a test of their authority—a profound political test. Also, in the army, and I imagine, the ISI, everybody felt on the spot by this, and needed to turn the thing back.

I think that there are some real concerns about how the Pakistanis have gone about the matter, as so often is the case: largely aerial attacks or long-distance attacks, which are a lot harder to manage in terms of limiting civilian displacement and casualties. Ultimately, they are a lot less effective than using ground troops against these kinds of elements. The Government, the army and others have got their work cut out. We support wholly what

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they are doing, with this one big caveat of the need to try to look after civilians and protect them from displacement.

I was visited yesterday by a delegation of British citizens who have family in the Swat valley. While they were worried about their welfare and concerned with the tactics that are being used—the aerial bombardments, for example—they, too, felt that it was vital that the Government recover control of the Swat valley, because their relatives have already come under incredible abuses in the few short weeks of Taliban control.

**Q223 Chairman:** What about the Pakistani ISI? It has been reported that it has been funding and supporting militant extremist groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are also allegations of a relationship—at least at arm's length—with Lashkar-e-Taiba, who did the bombing in Mumbai. Are we convinced that it is on board on the strategy that the Zardari Government have?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** We are convinced that it is on board institutionally, and that the leaderships of both the army and the ISI are supportive of the president and his strategy, which is reflected through the meetings that we have had with General Kayani. There is a difficulty, that within the ISI, there may remain individuals who have some sympathy with these groups. Do you want to add to that?

**Adam Thomson:** That's fair. It is the case that, historically—at our behest, in part—the ISI developed relations with Islamic groups.

**Q224 Chairman:** This is about Afghanistan in the 1970s and '80s?

**Adam Thomson:** Yes, I am talking about Afghanistan. It has not proved that easy for it, as an institution, to turn that off and to turn it around quickly, but I think that it is working on it. To address the Lashkar-e-Taiba that you referred to, the fact that the Pakistani Government have been able to put a number of individuals on trial for responsibility for aspects of the Mumbai attacks suggests that the Government have support across the Pakistani establishment.

**Q225 Chairman:** What about the recent concern expressed forcefully? You referred earlier on to Secretary of State Clinton. There are also reported remarks—I don't know if they were public ones—by General Petraeus, who was wearied of Pakistan's excuses for failing to take on the Taliban. How much do you think the Pakistani Government are acting now because of domestic public opinion? Or is it more that they realise that the US will put much tougher conditions on assistance and support in the future if they do not take the threats seriously?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** As you know, President Zardari was in the United States last week and here in London yesterday. I think that he has been left in no doubt about the American view. The United States is giving massive support to his Government and to Pakistan, as are we. We are doing it on the premise that there is going to be clear Pakistani

action against these groups. Having said that, both we and the Americans equally are cognisant of the extremely difficult situation in Pakistan. The Government are weak, and they came to power through an election that was a cathartic event in some ways, but was marred by the assassination of Mrs. Bhutto. President Zardari himself did not have a direct personal mandate; he was elected by the Parliament. The coalition between himself and the main opposition, under Nawaz Sharif, has broken apart, and the pressure from the lawyers, and from civil society more broadly, has continued, although it was happily resolved, in part, by the restoration of the Chief Justice.

Pakistan is a country where the military has traditionally had a mind of its own and an independence from civilian control. There are major obstacles here that do not make it straightforward that London or Washington can say, "We are giving you a lot of support, we demand that you crack down." We all recognise that the politics are complicated, but the fact is that it has become absolutely critical to Britain's national security that the strategy succeeds in Pakistan and that a democratic Government are established who impose law and order and security, and suppress the terrorist groups. It is harder to think of a more important foreign policy priority at the moment for the UK than success in Pakistan.

**Chairman:** I think that that view would be shared—it is not just the Government—by the 800,00 British people of Pakistani heritage.

**Q226 Sir John Stanley:** Minister, I referred earlier to the 250-km porous border in mountainous country between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which, I suppose, is about as favourable a bit of topography as al-Qaeda and the Taliban could ever hope to have. This is all in the public domain. As you know, an up-and-running Afghanistan-Pakistan joint operational cell dealing with cross-border co-operation has now been established successfully along the eastern border. NATO is very anxious to get that extended further down the eastern border and along the southern border as well. Can you assure us that the British Government will do all that they can, with whatever resources they have, to support NATO to get the extensions required around the border of the Afghanistan-Pakistan joint operational cross-border co-operation activities?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes, and let me add that we make it clear in our new strategy that we will support a comprehensive approach. That covers development, governance, trade, military assistance and training, and support to that operational unit. We consider it to be an absolute key pivot of the policy to get the cross-border stuff right.

**Q227 Mr. Horam:** An important part of that co-operation is intelligence co-operation between our intelligence services and the ISI, which we obviously want. The Committee has had evidence that that is not going very well. People have said to us that the ISI is not pro-active in making its intelligence available to the West, that it has been unhelpful in

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relation to investigations into the 7/7 and 21/7 attacks, and that it has misdirected UK and US intelligence services. Is that a problem?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I think it has historically been a problem with two sides to it, with the ISI complaining that we have been reluctant to share operational intelligence because we have been worried about its security; both sides bring an argument to the table about this. Improved intelligence sharing and co-ordination was one of the outcomes of yesterday's meeting between President Zardari and the Prime Minister. It is not a new outcome; it is something that came up in the Prime Minister's recent trip to Pakistan, and it is continually debated at the official level. Obviously, it was, in a sense, a key issue in the aftermath of the Mumbai bombings when Pakistan was essentially saying, "Show us the intelligence—show us why you believe that people operating from here were involved in the attacks and why you believe it was Lashkar-e-Taiba." We did share, but there were many issues surrounding how much we were willing to share and demands were made for us to share more.

I suppose that our strategic issue is that, given the number of terrorist incidents and averted incidents in the UK that are sourced from Pakistan in one way or another, it has become absolutely incumbent on us that we build a more trusting intelligence relationship between the two countries. We need that for our security. The fact is that it has not been perfect, there have been problems and we are working to try to raise it to a new level. It is so important that we do that.

**Q228 Mr. Pope:** We are currently trying to deport some Pakistani nationals who were arrested in Operation Pathway last month. One of the obstacles to deportation in such instances, where we have enough intelligence to believe that these people are a threat to us, but not enough evidence to go before a court of law so we therefore look to deport, is whether their human rights will be infringed if they are deported. Have we considered memorandums of understanding with Pakistan, as we have with other countries, to ensure that their human rights will be protected if they are deported?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Yes. Assurances, as they are called, are very much part of the discussion.

**Q229 Mr. Pope:** One of the problems with this case, and I suspect with other cases as well, is that Pakistani nationals have come to the UK on student visas. In this particular case, they were not students—they were no more students than you or I—and we have heard unsubstantiated allegations that the visa section of our high commission in Islamabad has been compromised by people who are corrupt or criminal in some way. Are you satisfied that the system is rigorous and free from abuse?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I have to tell you that that was one of my first questions, because I had heard of another embassy in Pakistan that had had those problems and basically had to close down and start again. I have received very reassuring answers that

we are convinced that we have complete control over the integrity of that operation. It is the largest British embassy in the world precisely because of the size of the visa operation. As we have post-mortemed on this, I think that the issue has been more a case of making sure that we are doing a better job of checking the academic institutions at this end to which these students are purportedly going. I think that it is fair to say that that was probably the weak link, Adam, more than the screening process in Pakistan, although we clearly got it wrong.

**Chairman:** Still on visas, Sir John.

**Q230 Sir John Stanley:** Minister, we had a very helpful and extensive briefing inside the visa section in the high commission in Islamabad. We are very fortunate to have so many very dedicated staff working at very intensive levels there, dealing with a staggering amount of applications. We were shown illustrations of the sophistication of the forged documents that get submitted. There is clearly a forgery industry on a huge scale that is designed to get people into this country on the basis of forged documents. The scale of the forgeries, all of which hopefully our staff in Islamabad have intercepted, brings out the inescapable fact that people out there will be willing to pay substantial sums in order to corrupt the process. I hope that you can assure us that the FCO back in London will not fall into the same trap that it fell into in Tel Aviv, for example, where a serious scandal went undetected for a long period and was subject to a National Audit Office report that came before this Committee.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** I think that the UK Border Agency has built in an awful lot of checks.<sup>5</sup> You saw them for yourselves: the way in which there is screening and then secondary screening, checking and all the rest. The other piece to observe is that the biometrics technology is fundamentally changing a lot of this. One of our most senior spies complained to me that biometrics were making the whole spying industry redundant because nowadays you could travel only on one passport because your biometrics are attached to you; you have a human genetic passport from which you cannot separate yourself. We have controls that were not there before. But I completely agree with you, Sir John, that vigilance is the order of the day. Like you, I have toured that operation and have been impressed by the controls and the quality of our people, but you just know that it is almost impossible to get a 100% success rate with it.

**Q231 Mr. Pope:** On the different issue of India and Kashmir, the most recent Government strategy document on Pakistan does not mention India or Kashmir at all. As an old Kashmir hand, I fully understand the sensitivities of the Indian Government when the British Government raise Kashmir. But in terms of having a stable Pakistan, it is vastly in India's own interests at least to have a period of calm in relation to Kashmir. It was interesting that that was not mentioned in the

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strategy document. I realise that we are very short of time, but I would appreciate your saying something about the importance that the UK Government place on at least having a period of stability in relation to India and Pakistan, and to Kashmir, in particular.

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** You are very well aware, Mr. Pope, of the sensitivities. It was interesting that, when the American envoy was appointed, there was an immediate flurry when it was suggested that his remit also covered India. The Indians jumped to the conclusion that that meant Kashmir, and he had to clarify rapidly that that was not the case because there is sensitivity. The reason why Hillary Clinton and President Obama wanted him to have an Indian dimension to what he was doing was exactly your point—a point that I share 100% with you. While you have a Pakistan which considers that its first military purpose in life is to maintain 800,000<sup>6</sup> troops on the Indian border and to be ready to fight a conventional war with India and maybe a nuclear war with India, it is very hard to get it to focus, let alone train for, equip for and organise for an insurgency in the Swat valley, or for insurgencies in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. I agree that, until we can de-escalate the tension between the two countries and allow Pakistan to detach and demobilise itself from the Indian dimension and re-engage around its internal security problems, we shall never get an optimal outcome. That is not just an overnight strategic decision. It is all about trust building and all the rest, and it has a Kashmir component to it. Secondly, not only do you have to do it to get Pakistan engaged where it needs to be engaged, but ultimately, for Afghanistan's sake, until you can have the neighbours, which include India and Pakistan, sensibly sitting down and mutually guaranteeing Afghanistan's independence and security, you have not reached where you need to get to in terms of an enduring solution for Afghanistan.

**Chairman:** In our visit two weeks ago it was made very clear to us that there is a very strong perception among a large number of Pakistanis that somehow the problems in Pakistan were being imported from Afghanistan and encouraged by the Indians. Clearly that complicates the debate. At the same time, as you said, the focus militarily and politically on the Kashmir question means that the real threat, which is coming as we have seen from the Swat valley and elsewhere, is perhaps underplayed when, in fact, Pakistan focuses so much on the other side. What Mr. Pope said is absolutely my assessment of it. We have time for two quick questions: Mr. Mackinlay first and then Sir John Stanley.

**Q232 Andrew Mackinlay:** You touched, in your dialogue with the Chairman, on the whole question of aid—the United States' big growth in aid, and that of the United Kingdom. Between 2005 and 2011 our aid to Pakistan is doubling. That raises the question of conditionality. Many people in Congress are arguing that they want some reassurances on

nuclear. There is a suggestion that A. Q. Khan should be handed over, or that there should be access to Khan to find out what he has been doing. As a legislator, to some extent I think that's not unreasonable. I listened carefully to what you said. You said that we—also the Administration in the US—have to buttress this fragile democracy. However, it seems to me that we who vote the money should be saying that we want some strict conditionality. We want some reassurance about at least the safety of nuclear. I think that there is a case for our access to Khan. What say you on that kind of thing?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Look, as so often in these things, you have to balance two apparently contradictory objectives. First, Pakistan is potentially a very dangerous nuclear state, and people forget how close we came to a nuclear war between India and Pakistan not that many years ago. If the responsible military establishment were to lose control of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, it could be devastating to world security. At the moment we believe that there is no immediate risk of that happening, but it remains a threat while it is there, and we have to deal with it. The problem is really twofold. One is that Pakistan's nuclear programme is designed to combat India's nuclear programme, and therefore it is very hard to see how you are going to solve it without solving the India-Pakistan relationship. It is a consequence of that, and therefore you have to get to that root cause. But we have to bring Pakistan properly into the international community on nuclear issues, and nuclear management and security, because it is an undeclared nuclear weapons state. It is one of those that has nuclear weapons in defiance of the non-proliferation treaty. In a way, what happened with India—the deal that we supported was very good in handling India—has merely exacerbated Pakistan's sense of grievance about its nuclear status vis-à-vis India. There are real issues to be dealt with there. So, yes, we need to bring pressure, but we also have to remember—I am sorry, I shall be quick and leave time for the other question—that the relevant programme, which is now £665 million over the 2009 to 2013 period, which makes that the second biggest earner, is going through what is in its way a sophisticated Government, with a lot of smart people. What we have demanded from them is that they continue to meet their commitments to poverty reduction, good financial management and respect for human rights and other international obligations, including in this area. But we have to find the right balance, because if we do this wrong and make it too conditional and too political, it will backfire and not achieve the objectives that we want.

**Q233 Sir John Stanley:** We have referred again and again in this evidence session this afternoon to the critical importance of trying to establish co-operative relations with the Pakistan Government in dealing with the terrorist threat that they face inside Pakistan. Do you agree that almost nothing could be more damaging to those efforts to get alongside the Pakistan Government than the fact that from time to

<sup>6</sup> Note by witness: This figure should read c.300,000.

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time—it will be true in the future—civilian casualties will be caused by US drones operating over Pakistan, killing women and children and innocent Pakistani nationals?

**Lord Malloch-Brown:** Look, we are obviously concerned about it. Civilian casualties are a very inflammatory issue—they are also a desperate issue of unnecessary loss of life—but we have been very clear that this is an issue between the Pakistanis and the US. They have had an opportunity just this last week to discuss it at length. They need to work out between themselves how they want to handle it. We are observers, not participants, in this issue.

**Adam Thomson:** Could I just plead that we do not believe all the propaganda about civilian casualties? My impression—but it is only an impression and you will have to check, Sir John—is that the targeting of drone strikes is very carefully done.

**Chairman:** Lord Malloch-Brown, Mr. Thomson, we have had a very good session and covered a huge amount of ground, not just relevant for our Afghanistan-Pakistan inquiry. We shall also be shortly producing a report on proliferation issues, which will no doubt touch on some of the nuclear matters that you have alluded to. We are very grateful to you. Thank you very much.

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# Written evidence

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## Memorandum submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. It is vital to immediate UK national security interests that Afghanistan becomes a stable and secure state that can suppress terrorism and violent extremism within its borders, and contribute to the same objective across the border in Pakistan. The majority of attack plots against the UK come from this area. Our strategic objectives in Afghanistan remain:

- To ensure that core Al-Qaeda does not return to Afghanistan.
- To reduce the insurgency on both sides of the Durand line to a level that poses no significant threat to progress in Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- To ensure Afghanistan remains a legitimate state increasingly capable of handling its own security.

2. In addition we aim:

- To contain and reduce the drugs trade to divide it from the insurgency and prevent it undermining security, governance and the economy.
- To provide long-term sustainable support for Afghan Compact goals on governance, rule of law, human rights and social and economic development.

3. In pursuit of these goals we aim to work in close cooperation with our international partners, including the UN, NATO, the US, the EU and regional players and to promote maximise effective international engagement in support of Afghanistan.

4. The recent review of the UK's strategy in Afghanistan has reaffirmed the importance and continuing relevance of these strategic objectives. But the review has also identified the need for a strategic step change of effort in Afghanistan in which the international community's efforts are focused to greater effect behind a prioritised focus on governance, supported by politics, reconciliation, and the rule of law.

5. Much has been achieved across Afghanistan since 2001, as well as in Helmand and the south more broadly since the UK deployment there in 2006. We recognise that only a comprehensive political, security and economic approach will deliver sustainable progress in Afghanistan. The document attached<sup>1</sup> sets out in more detail UK policy and our assessment in each of these areas.

6. Notable achievements since 2001 include the first nationwide democratic Presidential and Parliamentary elections and ratification of a new Constitution. The UK has made a significant contribution to building the capacity of the elected Afghan government which has in turn steadily extended its reach across the country to deliver improved services and improved living standards. But the political process has lost momentum and local governance remains patchy. Presidential and provincial elections in 2009 and Parliamentary elections in 2010 provide a critical opportunity to reinvigorate the political process and to increase Afghan confidence in their government.

7. We remain convinced that reconciliation has a critical part to play in paving the way for the sort of comprehensive political settlement which will ultimately be necessary to provide a long-term foundation for a secure and stable Afghanistan. The UK supports Afghan-led efforts to promote reconciliation at both national and provincial level. But, although these efforts have considerable potential, we should not expect significant early progress.

8. Alongside the Afghan National Army and Police, international forces have extended their reach to a large part of Afghanistan. Together these forces are now responsible for security across the country. The number of international troops has grown steadily to around 52,000. The UK troop contribution currently stands at around 8,300. Large parts of the country eg in the north and west are now relatively stable. But significant security challenges remain in the south and east and progress is still fragile.

9. Extensive opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan continues to threaten improvements in governance and security. However, significant progress has been made: more than half of Afghan provinces are now poppy free. Corruption also remains a serious challenge. The issue is complicated by evidence of a growing link between the illicit drugs trade and the insurgency, with the insurgency exploiting the trade for income. Working with our international partners, the UK continues to attach a high priority to addressing these challenges.

10. Afghanistan is currently off-track for most of the Millennium Development Goals. However, progress has been made on achieving universal education, reducing child mortality and increasing immunisation. The challenge ahead lies in cementing gains made, expanding coverage and quality of services and preventing reversals in progress.

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<sup>1</sup> Ev 75

11. The UK has played an active role in advocating the close involvement of Afghanistan's regional partners in addressing its fundamental challenges, all of which have regional implications. We believe that these main challenges, including extremism, terrorism, poor governance, corruption, the need for increased economic development and combating the illegal narcotics trade, can only be tackled effectively on a regional basis. Afghanistan continues to build good relations with its regional partners. They, in turn, cooperate actively with Afghanistan in a range of areas.

12. Pakistan in particular is key to Afghanistan's future, as its largest trading partner, as a country that faces many of the same challenges and whose own security concerns impact directly on those of Afghanistan. We are encouraging the Governments of both Afghanistan and Pakistan to build on recent improvements in their relationship by stepping up the momentum of their engagement and to look for further ways to systematically embed the improved relationship.

13. UK efforts in Afghanistan are only effective as part of the wider international community's contributions. At the heart of the international effort, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan plays a crucial co-ordinating role, which we strongly support. The UK also financially supports EU initiatives in Afghanistan which have contributed greatly to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. The US is the single largest contributor of troops and bilateral aid, and President-elect Obama has already reaffirmed that America's commitment to Afghanistan will continue. The US is expected to contribute a substantial number of further troops in 2009.

#### ACRONYMS

ACT	AFGHANISTAN COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
ADG	AFGHAN DELIVERY GROUP
ADIDU	AFGHAN DRUGS INTER-DEPARTMENTAL UNIT
AICF	AFGHANISTAN INVESTMENT CLIMATE FACILITY
AIHRC	AFGHAN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
AISG	AFGHANISTAN INFORMATION STRATEGY GROUP
AMG	AFGHANISTAN MEDIA GROUP
ANA	AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY
ANDS	AFGHAN NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
ANP	AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE
ANSF	AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES
ARTF	AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION TRUST FUND
ASCT	AFGHANISTAN STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
ASG	AFGHAN STRATEGY GROUP
ASNF	AFGHAN SPECIAL NARCOTICS FORCE
ASOG	AFGHANISTAN SENIOR OFFICIALS GROUP
ASOP	AFGHAN SOCIAL OUTREACH PROGRAMME
AST	AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY TEAM
BBCWST	BBC WORLD SERVICE TRUST
BPHS	BASIC PACKAGE OF HEALTH SERVICES
CENTCOM	US CENTRAL COMMAND
CJTF	CRIMINAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE
CMMH	CIVILIAN MILITARY MISSION IN HELMAND
CN	COUNTER-NARCOTICS
CNPA	COUNTER-NARCOTICS POLICE OF AFGHANISTAN
CNT	COUNTER-NARCOTICS TRIBUNAL
COMISAF	COMMANDER OF ISAF
CPD	CENTRAL PRISON DEPARTMENT
CSTC—A	COMBINED SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND—AFGHANISTAN
DCOMISAF	DEPUTY COMMANDER OF ISAF
DDR	DISARMAMENT, DEMOBILISATION AND REINTEGRATION PROGRAMME
DFID	DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
DIAG	DISBANDMENT OF ILLEGAL ARMED GROUPS
EoM	ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
EU	EUROPEAN UNION
EUPOL	EU POLICE MISSION
FCO	FOREIGN & COMMONWEALTH OFFICE
FDD	FOCUSSED DISTRICT DEVELOPMENT
GDP	GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT
GMIC	GOVERNMENT MEDIA AND INFORMATION CENTRE
GPI	GOOD PERFORMERS INITIATIVE
HMG	HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT
IDLG	INDEPENDENT DIRECTORATE OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE
IEC	INDEPENDENT ELECTORAL COMMISSION
ISAF	INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE

IWPR	INSTITUTE FOR WAR AND PEACE REPORTING
JCMB	JOINT CO-ORDINATION AND MONITORING BOARD
JSSP	JUSTICE SECTOR SUPPORT PROGRAMME
MDG	MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL
MIGA	MULTILATERAL INVESTMENT GUARANTEE AGENCY
MISFA	MICRO FINANCE INVESTMENT SUPPORT FACILITY OF AFGHANISTAN
MOD	MINISTRY OF DEFENCE
NATO	NORTH ATLANTIC TREATY ORGANISATION
NDCS	NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY
NGO	NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATION
NJP	NATIONAL JUSTICE PROGRAMME
NJSS	NATIONAL JUSTICE SECTOR STRATEGY
NSID (OD)	NATIONAL SECURITY, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT CABINET COMMITTEE
NSP	NATIONAL SOLIDARITY PROGRAMME
ODIHR	OFFICE FOR DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS
OEF	OPERATION ENDURING FREEDOM
OMLT	OPERATIONAL MENTORING AND LIAISON TEAM
OSCE	ORGANISATION FOR SECURITY AND CO-OPERATION IN EUROPE
PCRU	POST CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION UNIT
PFM	PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT
PRT	PROVINCIAL RECONSTRUCTION TEAM
RC (S)	REGIONAL COMMAND (SOUTH)
SAF	STABILISATION AID FUND
SCT	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS TEAM
SOCA	SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME AGENCY
SPF	SPECIAL PROGRAMME FUND
TFH	TASK FORCE HELMAND
UN	UNITED NATIONS
UNAMA	UNITED NATIONS ASSISTANCE MISSION TO AFGHANISTAN
UNDP	UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME
UNODC	UNITED NATIONS OFFICE ON DRUGS AND CRIME
UNSCR	UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION

## INTRODUCTION

### *Why Afghanistan Matters*

1. We welcome this inquiry. It is vital to immediate UK national security interests that Afghanistan becomes a stable and secure state that can suppress terrorism and violent extremism within its borders and contribute to the same objective across the border in Pakistan. UK engagement in Afghanistan is aimed at ensuring that it becomes a state capable of delivering governance and services to the Afghan people and preventing the return of Al-Qaeda.

2. A stable Afghanistan, in a stable region, is vital to global stability and security. In the longer term, building up the Afghan Government's ability to tackle the narcotics trade is important to global action against illegal drugs, and in particular to UK action against illegal drugs. Afghanistan supplies around 90% of the world's heroin and the trade generates billions of pounds of revenue for global organised crime.

3. Afghanistan is a test for the international community, especially for the United Nations (UN) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). We have a direct interest in them succeeding, and being seen to succeed because failure for the international community would have far reaching effects not only for regional security but also for the authority and credibility of those key multilateral institutions that underpin the UK's security and support for the international rule of law. In addition, Afghanistan is an enduring US political commitment, reinforced by the President-elect.

4. The UK has contributed £1.65 billion in development aid and over £3 billion in military operations to Afghanistan since 2001. There are currently around 8,300 British troops stationed across Afghanistan, and around 210 civilian staff.

### *Our Strategy since 2001*

5. The international strategy for Afghanistan is built upon the Bonn Agreement in December 2001 and its successor, the Afghanistan Compact of January 2006. The Bonn Agreement set out the steps needed to recreate the institutions of government, leading to Presidential elections in 2004 and National Assembly and Provincial Council elections in 2005. In parallel, G8 countries agreed to lead reform in five key areas: counter-narcotics (UK); disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of militia (Japan); training of a new Afghan National Army (United States) and police force (Germany); and justice sector reform (Italy).

6. As the Bonn process came to a close, the UK played a leading role through 2005 in defining the terms for continued international community engagement in Afghanistan. Ministers agreed on 19 December 2005 that Her Majesty's Government's (HMG) strategic aim was to help create a stable, secure and self-sustainable Afghanistan. We hosted the major London Conference on Afghanistan in January 2006 at which the Afghanistan Compact was launched. Crucially, the Compact established a mechanism (the Joint Co-ordination and Monitoring Board<sup>2</sup>—JCMB) to keep the international community and Afghanistan Government focused on meeting the Compact's goals.

7. In February 2007 Ministers endorsed a comprehensive approach to Afghanistan, complementing moves in the international community for a more rounded counter-insurgency approach. This made clear that our strategic aim would only be achieved through a combination of economic development, governance, delivery of security and communication to the Afghan people as well as fighting the insurgency. Countering narcotics was also key and this had to be achieved by helping the Afghan Government strengthen its authority throughout the country.

8. At the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan (Paris, 12 June 2008), the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was launched and the international community reaffirmed its long-term support for Afghanistan's development, pledging a further \$21 billion.

### *The Current UK Strategy*

9. Building on the comprehensive approach agreed by Ministers, the Prime Minister's speech to the House of Commons on 12 December 2007<sup>3</sup> set out the current strategic principles for the UK's involvement in Afghanistan. These are:

- increasing Afghan responsibility for their own security by supporting the Afghan Government, army and police;
- strengthening national and local institutions and supporting the search for political reconciliation;
- supporting reconstruction and development; and
- working in partnership with the international community.

10. Specific UK objectives for an enhanced strategy on Afghanistan were agreed by the National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID(OD)) Cabinet Committee at the end of 2007. The three primary strategic objectives are to:

- reduce the insurgency on both sides of the Durand Line to a level where it no longer poses a significant threat to Afghanistan and Pakistan;
- ensure that core Al-Qaeda does not return to Afghanistan and is destroyed or at least contained in Pakistan's tribal areas; and
- ensure that Afghanistan remains a legitimate state and becomes more effective and able to handle its own security, increase the pace of economic development, and allow the UK and international military commitment to transition away from a ground combat role to security sector reform.

11. Three secondary objectives were also identified:

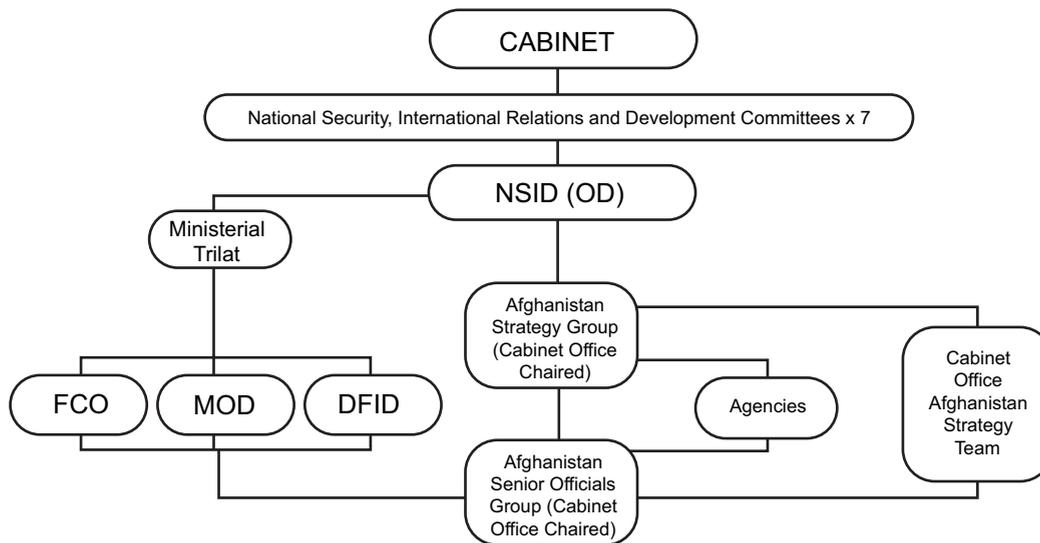
- contain and reduce the drugs trade to divide it from the insurgency and prevent it from undermining security, governance and the economy;
- provide long term sustainable support for Afghan Compact goals on governance, rule of law, human rights and social/economic development; and
- keep our allies engaged with us in Afghanistan.

12. These objectives form the November 2007 NSID Strategy document.<sup>4</sup> The strategy focuses on countering the insurgency within a clear, political framework; reducing the proportion of ground combat in favour of other more sustainable forms of Afghan security over time; and recognising that UK effort and costs in Afghanistan will remain at current high levels for the long haul, whilst transitioning from military to civilian effort.

<sup>2</sup> The Joint Co-ordination and Monitoring Board was constituted for overall strategic co-ordination of the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. It consists of seven representatives from the Afghan Government and 21 representatives of the international community. It is to be constituted for a period of five years from April 2006 to March 2011 and convenes meetings at least four times a year.

<sup>3</sup> Not published.

<sup>4</sup> Not published.

*Cross Whitehall Management***HMG STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT IN AFGHANISTAN - GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK**

13. The UK Strategy is owned and overseen by NSID(OD). In addition to the normal Departmental support provided by officials to Ministers there are two Cabinet Office chaired committees which meet weekly—the Afghanistan Strategy Group (ASG) and the Afghanistan Senior Officials Group (ASOG) who have oversight of the delivery against objectives and the prioritisation of efforts. All Departmental stakeholders are represented in these committees, including Her Majesty’s Ambassador in Kabul and the UK’s representation in Helmand Province, the Civil-Military Mission Helmand (CMMH). The Cabinet Office and the ASG have been recently enhanced by the creation of a cross-government Afghanistan Strategy Team (AST) whose primary roles are long term strategy development in conjunction with Departments and to undertake regular periodic reviews. In addition to the AST, two other cross-government teams have been established to support co-ordinated delivery: the Afghanistan Strategic Communications Team (ASCT) and the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit (ADIDU).

14. The Afghan Delivery Group (ADG) is the primary governance body in-country and co-ordinates activities on the ground in Afghanistan. It is made up of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the Department for International Development (DFID) and is chaired by HM Ambassador in Kabul. It reports to Ministers in the NSID through the ASG. Funding for ADG-approved activities comes from a number of sources: the Stabilisation Aid Fund (SAF), FCO programme budgets (Strategic Programme Fund (SPF) and Bilateral Programme Budget) and DFID’s Country Assistance for Afghanistan. Funds are spent in line with the British Embassy Business Plan, the Helmand Roadmap<sup>5</sup> and the DFID Country Assistance Plan.

*Delivery of UK Effort*

15. UK effort is delivered through nine interdependent strands, identified in the NSID Strategy. The interdependent strands of work and their medium term goals are:

- **Security**—Increased capacity of the Afghan Government and army and police to contain the insurgency;
- **Politics & Reconciliation**—Strengthened national and local institutions and support for political reconciliation;
- **Governance & Rule of Law**—Increased capacity and accountability of Afghan Government institutions to deliver basic services, remove corruption and provide justice for the Afghan people;
- **Economic Development & Reconstruction**—Economic growth and poverty reduction that improves the lives of Afghan men, women and children;
- **Counter-Narcotics**—Contain and reduce the drugs trade to prevent it from undermining security, governance and the economy;
- **Helmand**—Increased capacity of local and national government to contain the insurgency and deliver security and development to local people;

<sup>5</sup> The Helmand Roadmap is the UK’s integrated civilian and military strategy for advancing stabilisation in Helmand Province, in southern Afghanistan.

- **Regional Engagement**—Regional neighbours support the creation and maintenance of a stable Afghan state;
- **International Engagement**—More coherent international engagement supporting Afghan peace building and development; and
- **Strategic Communications**—Increased Afghan and UK public support for a peaceful and stable Afghanistan.

16. A stock-take of the November 2007 NSID Afghanistan strategy is currently being undertaken. The stock-take assesses progress against the UK strategic objectives by reporting on outcomes which together contribute to these strands. The written evidence that follows here covers all these strands of work, and is organised in this order, with the exception of the Helmand strand, reporting on which is incorporated into the other thematic areas.

17. The UK's contribution is part of the larger global effort in Afghanistan, involving the UN, NATO, donors, multilateral institutions and international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in partnership with the Afghan Government. As such, coordination of our activities with other partners is an important part of improving their effectiveness.

18. FCO representation in Afghanistan is based in the British Embassy in Kabul (around 150 civilian staff) and the CMMH in Lashkar Gah, Helmand (over 60 civilian staff) and in four Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) across Helmand Province in Gereshk, Musa Qaleh, Garmsir and Sangin (there is one Stabilisation Adviser in each FOB and a political officer in three of the four FOBs). FCO staff are co-located with DFID and MOD colleagues and contracted specialists working as governance, rule of law and justice advisers and contracted by the Stabilisation Unit.

#### *Stabilisation Unit*

19. The Stabilisation Unit, previously named the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit (PCRU), is jointly owned by DFID, FCO and MOD (the three "parent departments"). It provides specialist, targeted assistance in countries emerging from violent conflict where the UK is helping to achieve a stable environment that will enable longer term development to take place. The three departments agreed in June that the Unit should take on responsibility for recruiting, training and deploying all civilians in delivery roles in the CMMH except the head and one of the deputies. The unit also provides a contracted civilian expert to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)'s Regional Command (South) (RC(S)) headquarters in Kandahar.

### SECURITY

#### *Security Situation*

20. Since 2001 international forces have extended their reach to a large part of Afghanistan and are now responsible, together with the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), for security across the country. The number of international troops has grown steadily to around 52,000 and large parts of the country are now relatively stable. Challenges remain in the south and east but expanding areas of control are an indication of our military success against the insurgency. In these areas, development and better governance is happening—albeit more slowly than we would like.

21. Those opposed to the process of Afghan development, including Taleban extremists, local warlords, fighters from outside Afghanistan's borders and those with criminal interests, all share a desire to restrict the ability of the Afghan Government to provide for and govern its people. The international community's strategy is to support the Government of Afghanistan, working with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to expand security, increase Afghan government capacity at district, provincial and national level, promote the rule of law and support reconstruction and development.

22. There are significant differences in the security situation across the country. The insurgency is predominantly based in the south and east, although there have been incidents throughout Afghanistan. The insurgents often operate from across the porous borders with Pakistan, and addressing the situation in both countries in parallel is key. There is growing evidence of collaboration between the insurgency and the narcotics trade. The insurgency in the east is more fragmented than that in the south, made up of a range of jihadi groups, often operating from across the Pakistan border. The overall number of security incidents has risen in the south and east since 2006, often as a result of ANA and ISAF initiated operations.

23. The tactics of the opposition to the Government of Afghanistan have also evolved since 2001. Following the ousting of the Taleban, the non-state militias and warlords that had multiplied over thirty years of civil war, posed a potential threat. This has been addressed, largely successfully through the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) programme (see below). Following the substantial international, including UK, deployments to the south in 2006, the Taleban and insurgents conducted an increasing series of conventional attacks on Afghan and coalition forces, in which they were regularly defeated.

24. The majority of UK forces are deployed in Helmand, and progress has been made along the Helmand River valley—from Kajaki in the north to Garmsir in the south. We are expanding control, with the ANSF taking an ever more active role. However, these areas remain challenging. As the ANA and international

forces' footprint has expanded, the insurgency has increasingly resorted to asymmetric tactics. This is a counter-insurgency operation more complex in nature than conventional warfare with no easily definable front line.

25. The insurgency does not have a single coherent command structure or strategy, and depends heavily on support from safe havens in Pakistan. The insurgency is increasingly interwoven with criminal activity and the illegal narcotics trade. A lack of effective governance in many parts of the south and east has allowed the insurgency to flourish.

26. There has been an increase in deliberate attacks on humanitarian and development projects and workers as the insurgents seek to destroy the progress made by Afghans, including by targeting those promoting female education, and even schoolgirls themselves. Across the country, security and the perceptions of security have worsened in the past 12 months.

27. In recent months high-profile attacks, such as that on the Serena hotel in Kabul (January 2008), the ambush of French ISAF forces in the Sarobi district of Kabul province (August 2008) and the suicide attack on the Ministry of Culture (October 2008) have increased Afghan and international perceptions of insecurity. Separately, the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) has recorded a steady increase of reports of intimidation, kidnapping, extortion and criminality since 2007, furthering concerns that security in the capital is deteriorating.

28. Views of the security situation are also adversely influenced by high profile incidents resulting in civilian casualties. The alleged bombing of a wedding party in Kandahar in November 2008 and the incident in Shindand in August 2008 led to widespread condemnation throughout Afghanistan and the international community. Despite strenuous efforts by international forces accurately to target the insurgents, there are occasions when the ordinary Afghans are drawn into the conflict. Rules of engagement and procedures are in place and are constantly being updated in the light of experience, both to minimise the risk of civilian casualties and to investigate any incidents that do happen. However, the Taliban operate from within the community and residential areas, often deliberately drawing the innocent into the fight. International forces have made some progress in minimising these events and adhering to strict post-incident guidelines, and we welcome the involvement of Afghan authorities in jointly investigating alleged incidents. However we remain aware that poorly handled civilian casualty incidents undermine Afghan consent for ISAF and feed Taliban propaganda and international forces will continue to make strenuous efforts to reduce incidences of civilian casualties.

29. Building capacity in the ANSF remains an essential step in enabling Afghanistan to take responsibility for its own security. ANSF capacity is increasing. In 2008 the ANA was participating in 70% of ISAF operations, and leading 50% of them.<sup>6</sup> ANSF took on lead responsibility for Kabul City on 28 August 2008 and, thus far, are doing a good job in difficult circumstances. The transition in Kabul City was the first step in a phased transition of lead security responsibility for the whole of Kabul Province. In Helmand, where feasible, the ANA is taking the lead planning and executing operations and is taking responsibility for fixed locations along the Sangin valley.

30. The ANP is continuing to grow, with a large-scale training programme focussing on frontline officers being delivered by the US and an EU-led mission mentoring and advising the senior leadership and officials in the Afghan Ministry of the Interior to improve their capacity to successfully manage and implant reform programmes. Whilst the ANP suffer from serious problems such as corruption stemming from the narcotics trade and heavy casualties stemming from fighting the insurgency, some progress is being made. The Afghan Special Narcotics Force, part of the Counter-Narcotics Police made the world's largest narcotics seizure in June 2008 (see Rule of Law section).

31. The security situation will remain challenging and improving this is central to the UK and international community's strategy in Afghanistan. We recognise that this is a long-term mission, and that it is an economic, social and political mission as well as a military one. ISAF forces are clearly having a positive impact on the ground: without the intervention of the international community, it is likely that the country would once again have descended into chaos, providing a secure base from which Al-Qaeda could operate. The UK, alongside our Afghan and international partners, remains committed to enhancing the scale and capability of the ANSF so they are able to provide security for their own country and so enable its reconstruction.

### *Terrorism*

32. Since the effective expulsion of Al-Qaeda from Afghanistan, international terrorist activity has been disrupted and reduced to a relatively low level throughout the country. However, the insurgency's shift towards asymmetrical attacks has entailed suicide bombing and targeting of civilians. Furthermore, the significance of Afghanistan in the psyche of Islamist extremists, the potential for Al-Qaeda to use the current insurgency to galvanise a similar level of resistance to that witnessed in Iraq and their continuing aspiration to return to the pre-September 11th situation in the country leads the UK to view Afghanistan as amongst its highest priorities in countering terrorism.

<sup>6</sup> From NATO International Military Staff briefing to the North Atlantic Council of 17 December 2008.

33. Counter-terrorism features prominently in the UK's overarching strategy for Afghanistan. To achieve a stable and secure Afghanistan, restored to its rightful place in the international community and committed to eradicating terrorism, we must not only successfully counter the insurgency and narcotics threats but also the threat of terrorism. Success in this overarching strategy would be a strategic counter-terrorism victory against Al-Qaeda and international terrorism.

34. Our specific counter-terrorist objectives are to: (a) prevent Afghanistan's reverting into a safe haven for Al-Qaeda and other affiliated transnational groups and to see the Afghan Government and people committed to denying these groups the space in which to plan or conduct terrorist operations; (b) to reduce the threat to the UK and UK interests posed by terrorism from the region; and (c) to reduce the impact that Afghanistan plays in Al-Qaeda/terrorist propaganda. To deliver these objectives the UK works closely with allies and the Afghan Government to develop the capabilities of the ANSF and to counter terrorist messaging.

#### *ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom*

35. The UK has been an integral part of the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) against international terrorism since 2001. OEF was tasked with destroying the Al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan, and ending the Taleban regime that supported them. Military operations commenced on 7 October 2001 in Afghanistan against the Al-Qaeda network and Taleban. OEF troops fought alongside the Afghan opponents of the Taleban, notably the Northern Alliance, which contained some of the remnants of the last Afghan government to be recognised by the UN prior to their continuing civil war with the Taleban.

36. The Taleban had collapsed by the end of 2001, its remnants melting back into the Pashtun populace in southern Afghanistan and the Pakistani tribal areas. However, it was important to ensure that Afghanistan could not again support or provide the ungoverned space in which terrorists could flourish. International forces therefore needed to remain in Afghanistan to provide security and stability, to combat residual Taleban and Al-Qaeda elements, and to support the development of Afghan security forces.

37. In order to assist with this ISAF was created in accordance with the Bonn Conference in December 2001. ISAF's mission is to help the people and elected Government of Afghanistan build an enduring stable, secure, prosperous and democratic state, respectful of human rights and free from the threat of terrorism. ISAF works by conducting stability and security operations in co-ordination with the ANSF; mentoring and supporting the ANA; and supporting Afghan Government programmes to disarm illegally armed groups.

38. Deployed at the invitation of the Government of Afghanistan (then the Afghanistan Transitional Authority), ISAF was given a mandate by the UN Security Council through UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1386 of 20 December 2001. Its mandate is renewed annually, most recently with UNSCR 1833 of 22 September 2008 extending until 13 October 2009. ISAF currently has around 52,000 troops deployed from 41 contributing nations, and 26 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). It is currently commanded by General David McKiernan.

*Troop Contributing Nation:* The ISAF mission consists of the following 41 nations (the troop numbers are based on broad contribution and do not reflect the exact numbers on the ground at any one time).<sup>7</sup>

	Albania	140		Finland	80		Lithuania	200		Spain	780
	Australia	1090		France	2785		Luxembourg	9		Sweden	400
	Austria	1		Georgia	1		Netherlands	1770		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*	135
	Azerbaijan	45		Germany	3600		New Zealand	150		Turkey	860
	Belgium	400		Greece	130		Norway	455		Ukraine	10
	Bulgaria	460		Hungary	240		Poland	1130		United Arab Emirates	0
	Canada	2750		Iceland	8		Portugal	70		United Kingdom	8745
	Croatia	300		Ireland	7		Romania	740		United States	19950
	Czech Republic	415		Italy	2350		Singapore	0			
	Denmark	700		Jordan	0		Slovakia	180			
	Estonia	130		Latvia	70		Slovenia	70			
										Total (rounded)	51350

\* Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name

Current as of 01 December 2008

<sup>7</sup> Table taken from ISAF website: [http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf\\_placemat\\_081201.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat_081201.pdf)

39. ISAF was initially mandated to deploy in Kabul city, and international operations outside the capital remained under the control of OEF. In addition to forces that continued to target and disrupt terrorist activities, contributing nations also deployed PRTs<sup>8</sup> to leading regional and provincial centres.

40. ISAF was initially a coalition of the willing, under a rotating national command, until NATO formally took command of ISAF from January 2003. This was NATO's first out of area operation. In October 2003, the UN Security Council authorised the expansion of ISAF in UNSCR 1510. Under this plan expansion would take place in four stages, running counter clockwise around the country. As ISAF expanded geographically, PRTs operating under OEF transferred to NATO command. Expansion started with the north (2003/4), the west (2005), before moving into the south (July 2006) and completing expansion with the east (October 2006). Each of these areas is designated as a Regional Command under the ISAF command structure.

41. Building the capacity of Afghan security forces is essential to improving security across Afghanistan and both ISAF and OEF are heavily involved in this process. The Combined Security Transition Command—Afghanistan, (CSTC-A), under OEF control, leads on the training of the ANA, and also runs a number of large police training programmes, while ISAF also commands a number of Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) usually containing 20–50 military personnel embedded within an Afghan military unit. The OMLTs provide training and mentoring in support of operational deployments for units from the ANA, also providing a liaison capability between the army and ISAF forces. The OMLTs co-ordinate planning and ensure the army units receive enabling support, including on active missions.

42. ISAF will continue to be the main focus for the international community's support for security in Afghanistan. At the NATO Bucharest summit in April 2008, Heads of State reaffirmed their commitment to ISAF and its mission, setting out the four principles guiding ISAF's actions: a firm and shared long term commitment; support for enhanced Afghan leadership and responsibility; a comprehensive approach by the international community, bringing together civilian and military efforts; and increased cooperation and engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan. ISAF will continue to provide the lead for international support for security in Afghanistan in the coming months, and ISAF will play the key role in supporting the Afghan authorities in providing security for the elections scheduled for 2009 and 2010.

#### *UK Contribution*

43. Since 2001, 142 UK troops have lost their lives in Afghanistan (as of 20 January 2009). We commend their professionalism and their bravery. Total international casualties have increased year on year.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Jan</i>	<i>Feb</i>	<i>Mar</i>	<i>Apr</i>	<i>May</i>	<i>Jun</i>	<i>Jul</i>	<i>Aug</i>	<i>Sep</i>	<i>Oct</i>	<i>Nov</i>	<i>Dec</i>	<i>Total</i>
2001	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	5	4	12
2002	10	12	14	10	1	3	0	3	1	6	1	8	69
2003	4	7	12	2	2	7	2	4	2	6	8	1	57
2004	11	2	3	3	9	5	2	3	4	8	7	1	58
2005	2	2	6	19	4	29	2	33	12	10	7	4	130
2006	1	17	13	5	17	22	19	29	38	17	9	4	191
2007	2	18	10	20	25	24	29	34	24	15	22	9	232
2008	14	7	19	14	23	46	30	46	37	19	12	27	294
2009	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5

44. UK troops were first deployed in November 2001, when Royal Marines from 40 Commando helped secure the airfield at Bagram. 1,700 UK soldiers, Royal Marines from 45 Commando, were then deployed (as Task Force Jacana) in eastern Afghanistan to deny and destroy terrorist infrastructure. Task Force Jacana completed its tour and withdrew in July 2002.

45. The UK led efforts to establish ISAF and we remain a key contributor, currently providing the second largest deployment (8,100). Major General John McColl led the first ISAF mission with contributions from 19 nations. As well as providing the headquarters and much of the supporting forces for ISAF's first year, the UK contributed the brigade headquarters and an infantry battalion. Our contribution initially peaked at 2,100 troops, later decreasing to around 300 personnel after the transfer of ISAF leadership to Turkey in the summer of 2002.

46. The UK announced its first PRT in the north of Afghanistan, in Mazar-e-Sharif, in May 2003. A second, smaller, UK-led PRT was subsequently established in Meymaneh, also in northern Afghanistan. The PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif included staff from the FCO and DFID, who were brought together with around 100 troops to support development programmes alongside local Afghan authorities. Personnel from

<sup>8</sup> A Provincial Reconstruction Team is a multinational team of military and civilian personnel based in provincial areas of Afghanistan with the aim of helping to extend the authority of central government and facilitating reconstruction by contributing to an improved security environment, particularly through aiding Security Sector Reform. Each PRT has a great deal of flexibility in operations, depending on the local environment, so some PRTs are able to focus almost entirely on reconstruction, while others, such as those in the south and east conduct a greater deal of counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics activity. In 2008, PRTs across Afghanistan completed over 10,000 projects. While PRTs are usually led by an individual nation, it is common to find multinational compositions with several nations providing military or civilian expertise together.

Denmark, France, Romania, Lithuania and the US also participated in this PRT under UK Command. At this time, the UK also contributed the bulk of the troops for a new Quick Reaction Force based in Mazar-e-Sharif, bringing the number of UK troops to around 1000, while from September 2004 we also deployed Harrier GR7 aircraft to Kandahar to support OEF and ISAF missions.

47. In May 2006 the UK deployed the headquarters of the Allied Rapid Reaction Corps to Kabul for nine months to lead ISAF, and oversee ISAF expansion into the more challenging south and east of Afghanistan under the leadership of General David Richards. This expansion saw the UK move our focus of deployment to the south. Control of our PRTs in the north was transferred to other ISAF contributors, with Norway taking control of the PRT in Meymaneh in September 2005 and Sweden taking over the PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif in March 2006.

48. The UK then shifted its focus of deployment to Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, and established a PRT in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah in 2006. The UK troops deployed to southern Afghanistan have increased significantly since the initial deployment was announced on 26 January 2006 by the then Secretary of State, Rt Hon Dr John Reid MP. Initially deploying 3,300 UK military personnel, this number has been increased, to our current total of around 8,300 across Afghanistan.

49. The ISAF mission is divided into five regional commands: North, East, South, West and Capital, all of which are under the command of ISAF HQ in Kabul. The majority of UK Forces are deployed under the command of Regional Command (South) (RC(S)), as part of Task Force Helmand (TFH). RC(S) encompasses the neighbouring provinces of Helmand, Kandahar, Nimruz, Uruzgan, and Zabul and comprises forces from the UK, Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, Romania, Bulgaria, France, Lithuania, Georgia, Poland, Slovakia, Turkey, UAE and US. Command of this international force is rotated between nations. The UK commanded RC(S) from May 2007 until December 2007 and, under current plans, will take command again in September 2009.

#### *The Civil-Military Mission Helmand*

50. The role of the PRTs has continually evolved to best deliver results in different and changing environments. In June 2008 the UK's PRT in Helmand became the Civil-Military Mission in Helmand. The CMMH is an integrated structure bringing together the PRT and the military-led TFH in Afghanistan and is charged with delivering our comprehensive strategy in Helmand, as set out in the Helmand Road Map. It allows concentration of the UK effort to deliver a comprehensive, politically-led, counter-insurgency campaign. It is a permanent organisation, providing continuity into which the deploying Brigade will plug for its six month tour. Tasks such as planning, media and communications, which were previously largely carried out by civilians and military in parallel, are now conducted jointly.

51. The PRT is headed by the civilian UK Senior Representative working alongside the Brigadier who currently commands TFH. The UK Senior Representative reports to the Ambassador in Kabul, while the Brigade remains under the command of ISAF for all operational military matters. The Commander of TFH takes military direction from the Commander of ISAF (and is in close daily contact with the UK's Permanent Joint Head Quarters), but consults and seeks guidance from the UK Senior Representative in mounting military operations.

52. During 2008 the number of civilian staff in Helmand more than doubled, to over 60, working alongside their military colleagues to deliver stabilisation and civil effect in Helmand. Civilian advisors are also permanently deployed in a five district centres to maximise our delivery of civil effect in Helmand. The five centres, Lashkar Gah, Garmsir, Gereshk, Sangin and Musa Qaleh contain an estimated 60–70% of Helmand's population. Stabilisation work will continue to prioritise governance; security; rule of law; economic development and reconstruction; counter-narcotics and strategic communications.

#### *The Afghan National Army*

53. The ANA was re-established by Presidential decree on 1 December 2002. The original ceiling was set at 70,000 but increased to 80,000 as capacity grew. On the 10 September 2008, at the request of the Afghan Minister of Defence Abdul Rahim Wardak, the JCMB again increased the ceiling to 122,000 with a further 12,000 training slots. All recruits are volunteers. There is no compulsory national service. The President is the Commander in Chief, with day-to-day running through the Ministry of Defence and National Military Command Centre.

54. The ANA is made up of five Corps, one per ISAF region (North, South, East, West and Kabul). It is recruited centrally with manpower drawn from across the ethnic and tribal divide. All recruits undergo a 12-week training programme, run by the CSTC-A, at the Kabul Military Training Centre. The UK plays a role in both organisations. We also support the ANA on a national basis with places at Sandhurst.

55. The US is the G8 lead for the development of the ANA, which continues to progress well, with a force of around 68,000 now fielded or in training. Retention rates have increased. Instances of absence without leave have fallen. The ANA was at the forefront of operations to recapture Musa Qaleh in December 2007 and increasingly leads operations (more than 50% nationally). However further work is required to strengthen ANA mobility, combat support and combat service support. NATO assists the Afghan Government to bring the ANA up to operating capability through the provision of OMLTs. These teams

support training and deploy on operations in an advisory role. OMLTs play a particularly important coordinating and de-conflicting role between ANA and ISAF operations. Overall, OMLTs are key to the sustainable development of the ANA.

56. In RC(S) 205 Corps comprises of six Kandaks (Pashto for battalions) and elements of a 4th Brigade from Kabul. Whilst basic training is crucial, true capability is enhanced and delivered through mentoring, which is provided by either OMLTs or US Embedded Training Teams (ETTs). Kandaks in the south are mentored (17 OMLTs and 10 ETTs) and seven of the OMLTs are provided by the UK. While ANA progress has been one of the success stories of reconstruction and capacity building, the current and expected medium-term scale of sustainability remains its greatest challenge. It is unlikely that the Government of Afghanistan will be able to finance the Army or other elements of the security sector through its own revenue for some considerable time.

#### *Detentions*

57. In 2006 the UK agreed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Afghan Government in respect of the transfer of detainees captured by UK Forces. The Memorandum is available in the Library of the House. The Memorandum commits the UK Government to transferring detainees to the Afghan Government at the earliest opportunity. (The agreed ISAF policy is for transfer within 96 hours unless medical or logistic reasons preclude safe transfer within that time.) The Memorandum also obliges the Afghan Government to treat all detainees in accordance with Afghanistan's international legal obligations; not to impose the death penalty on any transferred detainee; to allow access to any transferred detainee by the International Committee of the Red Cross and to UK officials; and not to further transfer to a third party or outside of Afghanistan without written permission from the UK.

58. UK personnel, usually members of the Royal Military Police, visit transferred detainees regularly. The UK has also delivered training to prison officers, including in human rights issues, and has worked to improve prison accommodation in both Helmand and Kabul. As at 15 December 2008, the UK had transferred just over 200 detainees. There has been one allegation of mistreatment by a transferred detainee. This was thoroughly investigated and there was found to be no merit in the allegation.

#### *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Illegal Armed Groups*

59. A process of DDR, led by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) began in April 2003 to disarm the multitude of militias that existed in Afghanistan and provide demobilised personnel with the means to become economically independent (eg by giving access to training for civilian vocations). DDR disarmed over 62,000 former combatants and was formally concluded in June 2005, although reintegration programmes ran until June 2006. The success of the DDR process created the conditions to raise an ethnically balanced and professional ANA. The UK was the second largest donor to the DDR programme, providing £19.1 million. DDR was succeeded in June 2005 by the more challenging Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups process. More than 1,000 groups are engaged in this process and over 42,000 weapons and over 200,000 items of ammunition have been collected. However, more remains to be done to ensure that these groups do not continue to jeopardise Afghanistan's stability.

### POLITICS AND RECONCILIATION

#### *Democracy, Elections and Politics*

60. The collapse of the Taleban regime revealed the extent of Afghanistan's political, economic and social devastation. The challenge for the Afghan people and the international community was to rebuild a safe and sustainable state, with a strong and accountable government capable of providing basic services.

61. In December 2001, the signatories to the Bonn Agreement—including representatives of the various Afghan ethnic groups—set out the road map towards the establishment of a democratic and representative government in Afghanistan. They committed the Afghan Interim Administration—and its successor the Transitional Authority—as the repository of Afghan sovereignty—to act in accordance with basic principles and provisions contained in international instruments on human rights and international humanitarian law.

#### *The Emergency Loya Jirga*

62. The Interim Administration was inaugurated on 22 December 2001 and was appointed to govern for six months. From 11–19 June 2002, an Emergency Loya Jirga (traditional Afghan Grand Council) met in Kabul. Its task, as outlined in the Bonn Agreement, was to select a Head of State and decide on the composition of a Transitional Administration to rule Afghanistan until fully democratic elections could be held. More than 1,500 delegates from across Afghanistan elected Hamid Karzai as Head of State, by secret ballot, on 13 June 2002.

63. The Loya Jirga was the first opportunity in decades for the Afghan people to play a decisive role in choosing their government, and an important step on the path towards democratic elections. The UK gave £500,000 to support the Loya Jirga Commission in their work to organise the Emergency Loya Jirga.

64. Delegates were selected to attend the Loya Jirga from regional constituencies across Afghanistan. In addition to those selected from the regional ballot, the Commission reserved a number of seats for women, refugees, nomads, business people, intellectuals, religious scholars and ethnic minorities. In addition to 160 seats reserved for women, 40 women were elected at the regional level. This was the highest proportion of women included in any Loya Jirga in Afghan history, and as such was an important first step to ensuring that the views of women will be represented.

#### *Afghanistan's Constitution*

65. The Constitutional process began in October 2002, when President Karzai appointed a nine-member Constitutional drafting committee. The committee produced a first draft and passed it on to a 35-member Constitutional review commission. Seven of the commissioners were women. The commission also received suggestions from international experts. The UK contributed £500,000 to support the Afghan Transitional Administration, Afghanistan's Government, and the UN in organising public consultation on the Constitution across Afghanistan.

66. The final stage of the process was for an elected national assembly, the Constitutional Loya Jirga, to reach a consensus on the proposed draft. The Loya Jirga convened on 14 December 2003 under the chairmanship of former president Mojaddedi. The 502 delegates included representatives of all parts of the country and all ethnic groups, among them 114 women. The delegates elected four vice-chairmen (one a woman), and three rapporteurs, or secretaries (two of whom were women). A final text of the new Constitution, the eighth in Afghanistan's history, was agreed on 4 January 2004 and signed by President Karzai on 26 January.

67. The international community always made clear that it attached great importance to the inclusion of the legal protection of human rights as a fundamental part of the new Constitution. Some key elements of the new Constitution include:

- citizens, whether men or women, have equal rights and duties before the law. All ethnic groups have equal rights, and there are provisions for protecting minority languages;
- the state has an obligation to create a prosperous and progressive society based on social justice, protection of human dignity and human rights and democracy. The state will also abide by the six core international human rights conventions to which it is a party;
- Afghanistan is an Islamic republic. Followers of other religions are free to exercise their faith and perform religious rites within the limits of the law. No law can be contrary to the beliefs and provisions of the sacred religion of Islam;
- the National Assembly will consist of two houses; the directly elected Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and indirectly chosen Meshrano Jirga (House of Elders). Women will make up a quarter of the Wolesi Jirga and a sixth of the Meshrano Jirga;
- Afghanistan will have a presidential system of government. The president and two vice-presidents are answerable to the nation and to the Wolesi Jirga, which can also impeach ministers; and
- Pashto and Dari are the main official languages with other minority languages being a third official language in areas where the majority speaks them. We encourage Afghanistan to ensure that provisions for Islamic law in the Constitution, and implementation of the Sharia (Islamic law) in the new legal code are consistent with Afghanistan's obligations under international human rights law.

#### *Elections in 2004 and 2005*

68. Once the Constitution had been agreed, UNAMA worked closely with the Afghan Transitional Administration on preparations for democratic Presidential and National Assembly elections. Presidential elections were held on 9 October 2004—a testimony to the UN, the Afghan Government and in particular to the Afghan people, who registered in their millions to vote and then braved threats of intimidation and violence, as well as bad weather, to turn up and vote on election day. Of the 8.5 million who voted, 40% were women.

69. Out of 18 presidential candidates, the only female candidate, Massouda Jalal, came in fifth place—beating two-thirds of the male candidates. Two vice-presidential candidates were also female and Bamiyan became the first province in Afghanistan to have a female governor, Habiba Sarabi.

70. Parliamentary and Provincial Council elections were held on 18 September 2005. Around 6.8 million Afghans (51.5% of those eligible) voted at 26,240 polling stations around the country. The vibrancy of the campaign and the high turnout illustrated the desire of the Afghan people to engage in democracy. Parliament was inaugurated on 19 December 2005 and immediately began electing speakers for its Upper and Lower Houses. By 7 August 2006, after some debate, the Cabinet was approved. The first budget was agreed on 3 June 2006.

### *Democratic Development*

71. Political parties are still seen by many Afghans as responsible for the instability that led to the civil war and chaos of previous decades. This has meant that the importance of political parties to a functioning Afghan democracy has been underestimated. It is also possible that the development of well organised, strong political parties has been hampered by the electoral system (single non-transferable vote).

72. However, Afghan politics continues to develop; numerous political parties are licensed by the Afghan Ministry of Justice. There are also some larger political coalitions, such as the United National Front, made up of many of the members of the Northern Alliance, which helped oust the Taliban in 2001. But manifestos and campaigning are rare and reaching the electorate through tribal leaders and powerbrokers is commonplace. The 2009–10 elections will be another opportunity for Afghan politicians to reach out to voters, who are already being educated about the upcoming elections by the Afghan Independent Electoral Commission (IEC).

73. The UK has supported the development of Afghan democracy since 2001. A significant proportion of our funding has been used to help strengthen institutions, finance the electoral process and build Afghan civil society and political participation. Our financial support has been complemented by the continued political engagement of British Ministers and Embassy officials—encouraging change, raising concerns with the Afghan Government and lobbying internationally for support.

Examples of UK support to democratic development include:

- £500,000 to UNAMA to support the popular consultation process for the Constitution;
- £20 million to support the 2004–05 elections process;
- £500,000 towards a civic education programme run by the NGO Swisspeace;
- £500,000 for a five-year women’s empowerment programme run by the NGO Womankind—helping in part to increase the political participation of women; and
- over £1.75 million of support (since 2001) for the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC); helping foster Afghan civil society and protect the rights essential for a functioning democracy.

74. Political challenges still lie ahead. The Afghan Government, supported by the international community, has made huge progress building roads, schools and security services and extending healthcare (as detailed elsewhere in this report). However, in the eyes of many Afghans, who had very high expectations after the 2004–05 elections, progress has been slow and government is too often seen as corrupt or ineffectual. Working with the Afghan Government to increase its capacity to protect and deliver services, including justice, for its people will be an ongoing task for the international community. Tackling corruption will be a key challenge for any future Afghan Government. However the appointment of the capable Hanif Atmar as Minister for Interior in October 2008 is a positive step.

### *Elections in 2009 and 2010*

75. Presidential and Provincial Council elections are set for autumn 2009; Parliamentary and District Council elections are due in spring 2010. Geographically phased voter registration started on 6th October 2008 and is due to conclude by the end of February 2009. President Karzai, along with several other candidates, has indicated that he will run again. It is likely that more candidates will come forward as election day draws nearer.

76. It is unlikely that voter turnout in 2009–10 will be as high as in 2004–05—the first elections of a new democracy generally have a higher turnout than subsequent ones. But, according to the Asia Foundation’s “*Afghanistan in 2008: A Survey of the Afghan People*”, over three-quarters of Afghans surveyed said they were likely to vote in the 2009 elections, and nearly three-quarters expressed some level of confidence in their government’s ability to manage a free and fair election process.

77. The UK and the international community are committed to supporting the 2009–10 Afghan-led elections and are determined that they will be a success. The UK has already contributed an initial £6 million to support voter registration. Security will present a considerable challenge and we are working closely through ISAF to support thorough Afghan-led security for the elections.

78. UNAMA is already playing a key role in the 2009–10 elections. Through UNDP it is co-ordinating the efforts of the international community to support the IEC, which has lead responsibility for conducting voter registration and the elections in 2009 and 2010.

79. The full electoral process is anticipated to cost up to \$500 million and more financial support, from a wider donor pool, is still required. The UK will continue to lobby other donors to help ensure that the electoral process is adequately supported.

80. The UK supports the deployment of a substantial EU Election Observation Mission (EoM) to be deployed to monitor the 2009–10 elections. The EU EoM will be complemented by other international, regional and domestic EoMs to help ensure that the election results are credible.

*Reconciliation*

81. The UK strategy for Afghanistan is based on the premise that military means alone will not provide the solution in Afghanistan. At the same time as putting military pressure on the insurgents, the UK has therefore been trying to promote, develop and support Afghan-led initiatives to reach out to and if possible reconcile key insurgent leaders at local and national level. The UK's interest is in exploiting existing, and creating future, vulnerabilities in the insurgency in order to allow the Afghan Government to split and co-opt significant elements. These elements need to be brought into, and feel they have a stake in, a stable, sustainable and democratic Afghanistan. The aim will be to isolate those who will not reconcile, who are likely to be driven largely by ideology or criminal motives and who will need to be defeated militarily. In the longer term, the UK recognises that ultimately, political dialogue and settlement will need to be part of any durable solution in Afghanistan.

82. It is not for the UK to reconcile with those elements fighting in opposition to the Afghan Government. This process must be Afghan-led. The degree to which the UK can input into reconciliation will therefore be limited; progress on this agenda (or a lack of it) will be determined by the Afghans. President Karzai has made clear that the Government of Afghanistan is ready to talk to those who will abide by the Afghan constitution, renounce violence and have no close operational links to Al-Qaeda. The UK is supportive and ready to offer assistance to Afghan-led efforts to engage with those who fall within these boundaries. As yet, the military conditions have not been right and very few commanders have defected. However, in December 2007, the Afghan Government recaptured the town of Musa Qaleh with the help of Mullah Salam, a former Taleb, whose reconciliation was instrumental in bringing the town back under government control following its capture in February 2007.

83. The UK was previously supporting the Programme—Talkh-e-Solh, the official Afghan body responsible for reconciliation, established in May 2005 and led by Professor Mojaddedi, a former interim President of Afghanistan and speaker of the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House). Its primary goal was to encourage and provide former enemy combatants with an opportunity to recognise the Government of Afghanistan as legitimate, and to lead normal lives as part of wider society. However, a number of weaknesses in the programme, including lack of validation, monitoring and credibility, led the UK, in March 2008 and in concert with the Dutch and US, to suspend support in an effort to leverage reforms. UK financial support totalled £500,000 from 1 January to 31 March 2007, and £870,000 from 1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008.

84. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) is now leading central Government efforts to co-ordinate provincial-level reconciliation efforts led by Provincial Governors, and is developing guidance. The UK is ready to provide financial support to Governor Mangal's efforts to take forward reconciliation in Helmand, when he and the central Government have developed an implementation plan.

85. Prince Saud confirmed in late October that Saudi Arabia had hosted a meeting between the Afghan Government and former Taleban insurgents during the month of Ramadan and at the invitation of the Afghan Government. The UK supports initiatives such as this, which are designed to start the process of dialogue between the Government and the insurgency. But there will be no quick solution.

## GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

*Governance*

86. Years of external occupation and internal war, poor service delivery and widespread unemployment and poverty have led to a breakdown in traditional governance institutions in many parts of Afghanistan. This has undermined the relationship between communities and government institutions and has weakened the ability of both state and community-based governance structures to deliver social stability and peace. In constitutional terms, Afghanistan has a centralised administration under a powerful head of state. At sub-national level, representation is largely through informal and tribal structures. Government efforts are underway to formalise these into a coherent sub-national governance structure.

87. Governance in Afghanistan has made progress in service delivery and accountability. Improvements have been concentrated at central government level, and nationally, in the fields of health, education and community development. At the sub-national level, Provincial Council elections took place in 2005. District Council elections were originally scheduled to take place at the same time but because district numbers, boundaries and population figures were yet to be determined, they were postponed. The lack of District Council elections left a hole in local level governance that the Afghan Government and international community has struggled to fill.

88. The IDLG was set up by President Karzai in 2007 to help tackle these issues, with a mandate to extend sub-national governance. The IDLG is now implementing its strategic workplan, which has three main pillars: (i) policy development, (ii) institution building, and (iii) broader governance. The IDLG works to reform and restructure the administration of a range of insecure provinces in the south and southeast by establishing better relationships with district tribal leaders, building stronger sub-national governance institutions including governors' offices, and improving accountability between central government and citizens to increase stability and Afghan Government legitimacy.

89. The UK provided £1 million support to the IDLG in 2007–08, and is working closely with other donors to determine collectively how IDLG can best be supported in the medium term. Funding has also been approved to support IDLG's broad mandate on sub-national governance. Funds are being used to buy-in qualified capacity in niche areas, to support internal restructuring and reforms and to support IDLG's facilitation of a cross-government policy process on sub-national governance. Much of the UK's involvement so far has focussed on helping IDLG develop its strategic workplan.

90. In Helmand province the CMMH is working with the Afghan authorities to produce a governance roadmap for Helmand. The aim is to agree a single 12–18 month plan for priority governance reforms, against which resources can be mobilised. The governance roadmap will focus on raising the profile of Provincial Government in Helmand, bridging the gap between the province and Kabul, building the capacity of the province's administration to meet the needs of the population, and ensuring that resources are used effectively. The UK is also developing increased support to civil society groups to monitor Afghan Government performance, in areas such as provincial budget monitoring and service delivery.

91. But national reforms have been delayed and we are now at a key turning point. Without renewed progress the governance situation could worsen. Rule of law and basic security is lacking for large parts of the population. The heavily centralised nature of the Government prescribed by the Constitution has (in the absence of adequate institutional capacity) hampered the quality and accountability of service delivery at the local level. Measures to improve stabilisation and governance need to be undertaken by the Afghan Government, with co-ordinated international support.

92. Work still needs to be done to strengthen sub-national governance institutions. The Afghan Government's new sub-national governance policy (September 2008) will need to be translated into legislation and then implemented. Resources need to be distributed equitably across provinces and districts and local/national budgeting processes need to be better informed by local conditions.

93. The sub-national governance policy aims to clarify the roles and responsibilities within institutions at various lower levels of government: governors, municipalities, mayors, and elected bodies. IDLG will support institutional reform and development of bodies such as provincial and district governors, municipalities and Provincial Councils. A five-year programme of infrastructure IT and communications upgrading will be implemented. There will be a focus on engaging participation in governance, with women and young people a priority, as well as tribal outreach. IDLG also needs to tackle corruption in sub-national bodies and plans for this are still being developed. Other areas needing development include: delivering governance in vulnerable districts; integrating formal and informal structures; improving policing and community security; and improving strategic communications.

94. In parallel, IDLG has also launched the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) to strengthen the link between the local communities and the Afghan Government, and enable them to play more of a role in their own security and development. ASOP will establish community councils of 30–40 influential residents, which will be involved in drawing up District Development Plans that reflect communities' needs. In November 2008 the UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding pledging its support for roll out of ASOP in Helmand. The UK has a \$260,000 budget for this financial year to support ASOP pilots in four districts of Helmand Province; Nad-e-Ali, Garmsir, Gereshk and Musa Qaleh.

95. The UK has also committed in principle to support an IDLG initiative to introduce performance based budgeting for Provincial Governors. This initiative is based on a model used effectively in other conflict-affected countries. In the longer term, the only sustainable solution for governance is to build the capacity of the Afghan Government to deliver services to its people, and allow them to hold their government to account. Improving accountability, government performance and resolving the relationship between informal and formal structures will put governance on a more sustainable footing.

#### *Rule of Law*

96. In 2001 there were virtually no rule of law institutions or processes in Afghanistan. The lack of a functioning central government, modern constitution, legal code and effective formal justice system resulted in a state with little internal security or stability. The absence of a national police force allowed tribal militias and other non-state groups to impose their will on the general population; to commit human rights abuses regularly; and to engage in predatory corruption. The formal justice system dispensed an extreme form of Sharia-based justice on a regular basis with limited compliance with international standards for human rights and virtually no mechanisms to appeal sentences. Almost all disputes were settled through the informal system by village elders or religious figures using traditional tribal ethics codes, such as Pashtunwali, or Sharia. There was no capacity (or willingness) to investigate and prosecute narcotics trafficking offences. The few prisons and detention facilities that existed were mostly run by private individuals who often committed serious human rights abuses against prisoners with impunity. Endemic corruption often allowed the guilty to remain unpunished and forced financial and physical burdens on the wider population.

97. The Interim Afghan Administration and subsequent governments created the 2003 Constitution which established rule of law institutions such as the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court and Attorney General's Office. In April 2003, a Presidential Degree on Police Reform outlined the role and structure of the Ministry of Interior and Afghanistan's police forces, including the ANP.

*Afghan National Police*

98. The US is the largest contributor to police reform in Afghanistan, investing \$2.5 billion each year. As G8 Lead Nation, Germany re-established the ANP Training Academy in Kabul in August 2002 and between 2002 and 2006 trained over 4,000 officers in a range of policing skills such as criminal investigation and riot control. Germany has also supplied approximately €80 million worth of infrastructure and equipment. The policing lead has now passed to the EU Policing Mission (EUPOL) which began in June 2007. EUPOL provides strategic advice and mentoring for senior officials in the Ministry of the Interior and ANP, as well as providing training in specialised areas such as criminal investigation and forensics. EUPOL also works to strengthen wider rule of law institutions such as the Attorney General's Office. As of December 2008, there were 176 policing and rule of law experts from 21 different countries in EUPOL, and the mission was delivering training and mentoring in 14 Provinces.

Belgium	3	Finland	13	Italy	18	Spain	11
Canada	8	France	2	Lithuania	2	Sweden	8
Croatia	2	Germany	41	Netherlands	4	UK	22
Czech Republic	5	Greece	1	Norway	2		
Denmark	13	Hungary	5	Poland	4		
Estonia	1	Ireland	5	Romania	5	Total	176

National contribution of experts to EU Police Mission (EUPOL) (as at 18 December 2008)

99. As of January 2009, the UK was the third largest contributor to the EUPOL police reform mission, with 15 officers or retired officers deployed in Kabul and Helmand. These officers perform a wide range of duties including advising the Deputy Minister of the Interior on police reform, developing training programmes for uniformed police and teaching criminal investigation techniques to criminal investigation department officers. In Helmand they have been helping the Head of Police develop a provincial policing plan.

100. Alongside Germany's programme of specialised training, the US provided paramilitary-type training to over 76,000 patrolmen between 2004 and 2007. In November 2007, the US launched a new police training programme for patrolmen called Focussed District Development (FDD), providing a range of survival and basic policing skills in all of Afghanistan's districts in a rolling programme over four years. The UK provides three police officers to the CSTC-A who provide strategic level civilian policing advice on the implementation of the FDD as well as other programmes. Between November 2007 and December 2008, FDD and other US training programmes have been delivered to just over 25,000 policemen. As of December 2008, the total size of the ANP is just over 76,000 patrolmen.

101. Whilst the ANP continue to suffer from serious problems such as corruption stemming from the narcotics trade, low levels of literacy and heavy casualties as a result of fighting the insurgency, some progress is being made. In March 2008, the Afghan Government completed a Pay and Rank Reform process which rationalised the salary and ranking structure of the ANP, ensuring an agreed national pay scale for officers and reducing the numbers of senior ranks to create a more balanced force structure. In August 2008, the Afghan Government and the international community agreed a Police Vision which outlines the values of the police force, and further work is underway to develop a police plan setting out strategic priorities and activities. The Ministry of the Interior under the leadership of Hanif Atmar, is working with both EUPOL and the CSTC-A to tackle issues such as corruption and kidnapping and more effectively co-ordinate police reform.

102. The Policing Plan should allow the international community to identify where assistance is most required and where to target resources most effectively. The EUPOL and US Police Reform missions are increasingly working together on a range of projects, including supporting the reform of the Ministry of Interior, strengthening the police and security forces in Kabul and enhancing the effectiveness of the FDD programme.

103. The UK has also played a major role in the establishment of the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). The CNPA is the lead drug law enforcement agency of the Afghan Government, is currently just over 2,700 officers strong, and has a presence in all 34 provinces. The CNPA also contains the Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) which is mentored by UK personnel. The UK has provided equipment, training and mentoring at the Provincial level to the CNPA to improve its abilities to interdict narcotics smugglers. Both the ASNF and the CNPA are making an impact on the narcotics industry. The ASNF made the world's largest narcotics seizure in June 2008, and the Helmand detachment of the CNPA seized 17.7 metric tonnes of poppy seed in November 2008—enough to seed over three thousand acres of farmland with opium poppies.

104. In Helmand, the UK is providing advice and training to both the ANP and the CNPA to improve their narcotics interdiction capabilities, organisational systems, and human rights compliance. The UK has developed a comprehensive approach to supporting police development in Helmand, utilising resources drawn from EUPOL, the MOD Police and the military. This has allowed influence to be exerted at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of policing (provincial, districts and local communities).

105. Despite this, there is still more to do. Huge challenges remain in building the capacity and capability of the ANP. Strong leadership from within the Ministry of Interior is essential to tackle embedded problems of corruption within the Ministry itself, the police and other parts of the criminal justice system, as well as in providing a clear vision of the reforms required to build a national police force. There will be an ongoing requirement for continued technical support to the police, as part of wider efforts in support of the rule of law sector.

106. A deteriorating security situation has pushed the police ever-closer to becoming a state security force, with no form of proper accountability or connection to community needs. There is a real danger of isolating the police from communities and their basic function of upholding the law. International effort should be directed towards police reform and away from further para-militarisation. The short to medium-term aim is have the Afghan Government leading and supporting the ANP to provide basic security and policing functions in areas cleared by ANA/ISAF counter-insurgency efforts, and in the longer term to link into community government mechanisms. Overall, the challenge is to build a fully functioning, accountable police force that operates without international support.

### *Justice*

107. Italy led the international community's work on justice reform, with the drafting of a National Justice Sector Strategy (NJSS) and, alongside the UK, led the creation of the National Justice Programme (NJP) which delivers administrative reform, develops infrastructure and improves justice service delivery. Since 2003, the Afghan Parliament has passed a variety of new laws including a 2005 law on counter-narcotics. The international community has assisted with the creation of facilities, such as courts and law libraries, and the training of judges and prosecutors across Afghanistan through a range of bilateral and multilateral projects. In August 2005 the US established the Justice Sector Support Programme (JSSP) which provides a range of training and support across the formal and informal justice sectors. The EU has allocated \$60 million of funding between 2006 and 2010 for a range of initiatives. The US allocated approximately \$67 million of funding in 2007 and 2008 and has provided a wide range of projects including the reform of the Supreme Court, legal education for prosecutors, support in drafting civil and criminal law (including counter-narcotics) and gender access schemes.

108. The UK has played a lead role in developing the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) and the Central Narcotics Tribunal (CNT) since their establishment in 2005. The CJTF is an Afghan institution which investigates and prosecutes suspected narcotics traffickers, and the CNT is the body through which cases are tried and appealed. The UK provides both financial support and mentors to the CJTF to improve its capability to successfully prosecute narcotics smugglers under international standards. From June to November 2008, the CJTF secured 133 convictions before the Primary Court of the CNT and 125 before the Appeal Court.

109. We estimate that over 90% of justice in Afghanistan is delivered through the informal system and it is vital for the international community to engage more actively here, especially in developing linkages with the formal system. The NJSS also includes a commitment that the Afghan Government will develop policies to ensure compatibility of the informal justice systems with the laws of the country and with the principles and values of human rights, and makes useful reference to linking the two systems together eg by providing rights of judicial review. Further policy development is clearly needed and we will support the Afghan Government in this area, building on our work in Helmand, where we are working with both the formal and informal systems. We have assisted with the development of local shuras to help solve community disputes, which strengthen and build links between the Afghan Government and local communities. In addition we have also helped develop a Prisoner Review system which links tribal elders to the formal justice system. We have also helped to improve access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women and children, through the creation of a Women and Children's Justice Group in Lashkar Gah and the provision of training courses to female inmates in Lashkar Gah prison.

110. The Afghan judicial system also needs to expand its capacity and capability to prosecute high value targets in the narcotics trade and corruption cases. Alongside progress in this area, we are encouraging the Afghan Government to take a more pro-active lead on investigating and prosecuting corrupt individuals, especially those in the police and senior government positions as essential to improve public confidence in central government. Key priorities include developing Afghan capacity, in terms of investigative, prosecutorial, and judicial capabilities (especially for the security of judges and prosecutors) and penal facilities, to take on corruption cases; and encouraging the Afghan Government to become more transparent and address the concerns of Parliamentarians and civil society.

111. Progress has also been made in improving Afghanistan's prison infrastructure, with improvements made to the Pol-E-Charki prison outside of Kabul and a wider programme of prison building across Afghanistan, including two new large US-funded prisons in Wardak and Baghlan provinces, to improve conditions for prisoners and other detainees and ensure that those who have served their sentence have been released.

112. The UK is assisting with the reform of the wider Afghan prison system, with the provision of a five-strong training team from HM Prison Service who provide human rights training to Afghan prison officers. The UK has also funded the development of a special wing of the Pol-E-Charki prison outside Kabul to house narcotics offenders and is supporting the construction of a new prison in Lashkar Gah in Helmand.

113. Significant challenges remain in modernising Afghanistan's prison infrastructure and reforming the Central Prison Department (CPD). The poor state of most prison physical buildings in Afghanistan is exacerbated by the limited training given to most CPD staff, and the welfare of detainees remains a serious concern. Improving infrastructure, in particular improving security features to prevent mass escapes such as occurred at the Sarposa Prison in Kandahar in June 2008, is essential to ensuring the guilty remain under the control of the state. The CPD also needs support to recruit, train and mentor prison staff to ensure prisons are staffed by competent professionals; that prisoners' human rights are protected; and that sentences are fully served.

#### *Corruption*

114. The international community has regularly lobbied the Afghan Government to make a strong stand against corruption, especially against corrupt police officers and government officials, whose activities undermine the Afghan population's trust in government. The international community has provided anti-corruption experts to develop transparent financial systems and processes to minimise the risk of funds being misused. In 2007 the UK, UN, World Bank and Asian Development Bank produced an anti-corruption roadmap identifying where the Afghan Government could best target its resources against corruption networks. In September 2008 President Karzai announced the creation of an Anti-Corruption Commission which will seek to investigate allegations of corruption in the Afghan Government.

115. The UK is playing a key role in helping the Afghan Government to tackle corruption, with the provision of civilian experts to work with the Afghan Government to develop transparent financial processes in key ministries. In addition, officers from the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA) are working to improve the capabilities of Afghan law enforcement to tackle serious and organised criminality, and associated corruption. On 15 December 2008, the Prime Minister announced to Parliament his offer of a Multi Agency Anti-Corruption Task Force to assist the Afghan Government tackle corruption. The Task Force will be a cross-departmental unit, made up of representatives from DFID, FCO, SOCA, Crown Prosecution Service, and Crown Office Procurator Fiscal Service. An enhancement of an existing cross-embassy working group, the new Task Force will support the Government of Afghanistan's own anti-corruption efforts and will work alongside international partners. The Task Force will liaise regularly with the Afghan Government's High Office of Oversight, which is the Afghan Government's lead anti-corruption institution, and other relevant Afghan Government institutions.

116. Strengthening the rule of law across Afghanistan is a long-term endeavour. It will require significant financial and human resources for many years to come. Urgently required resources include civilian expertise to improve the capacity of Afghan Government institutions to manage and lead reform programmes themselves; for skilled and experienced police officers to advise the Afghan police through the EUPOL and US police reform programmes; and in the justice sector for civilian expertise in particular to help develop linkages between the informal and formal justice sectors to allow a greater proportion of the Afghan population access to appropriate justice system. Alongside additional resources, enhanced co-ordination between all of the government and NGO actors engaged in rule of law reform can improve delivery of reform projects and help identify priorities.

#### *Human Rights*

117. Afghanistan's human rights record was amongst the worst in the world in 2001. Taliban rule prevented women from working or receiving an education and religious and ethnic minorities were persecuted. Freedom of expression was severely restricted and many journalists fled the country or were killed. Those who survived within the country did so by strictly censoring their own work. With the economy in tatters, poverty had also taken its toll. Government agencies, where they existed, barely functioned and the population was left without protection or essential services.

118. Promoting human rights and democracy is integral to stability and security. Central to this effort and to improving the overall human rights situation is developing Afghan capacity to provide security, rule of law, development, democracy and good governance. We are supporting this in a range of ways, detailed elsewhere in this report, through a clear comprehensive approach, joining up our civilian and military effort to ensure maximum effectiveness. But building Afghan capacity will be a long-term endeavour.

119. The Bonn Agreement set out the road-map leading to successful national elections in 2004–05 to establish a democratic and representative government (see section on Politics and Reconciliation). Following a successful Constitutional Loya Jirga, a new Constitution was signed by President Karzai on 26 January 2004, a significant achievement. Key human rights provisions in the Constitution include:

- basic obligation of the state to protect human rights (many of which, political, economic and social, are elaborated);
- equal rights for men and women;
- discrimination made illegal;
- commitment on the part of the state to abide by the core international human rights conventions to which it is a party;
- minority language rights and provisions for religious freedom; and

- freedom of expression protected.

120. The new Constitution also confirmed the status of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC). Established in June 2002 and still chaired by Dr Sima Samar, the Commission has a particular focus on the rights of women, children and minorities.

121. The London Conference on Afghanistan (31 January to 1 February 2006) was co-chaired by the UK, the UN and the Afghan Government. Over 60 delegates endorsed Afghanistan's Interim National Development Strategy and the Afghan National Drug Control Strategy, and launched the Afghanistan Compact (the successor to the Bonn Agreement). The Compact set out how the Afghan Government and the international community were to contribute to the reconstruction process and included specific commitments to improving human rights:

“By end-2010: The Government's capacity to comply with and report on its human rights treaty obligations will be strengthened; Government security and law enforcement agencies will adopt corrective measures, including codes of conduct and procedures aimed at preventing arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, extortion and illegal expropriation of property with a view to the elimination of these practices; the exercise of freedom of expression, including freedom of media, will be strengthened; human rights awareness will be included in education curricula and promoted among legislators, judicial personnel and other Government agencies, communities and the public; human rights monitoring will be carried out by the Government and independently by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and the UN will track the effectiveness of measures aimed at the protection of human rights; the AIHRC will be supported in the fulfilment of its objectives with regard to monitoring, investigation, protection and promotion of human rights. The implementation of the Action Plan on Peace, Justice and Reconciliation will be completed by end-2008”.

122. Afghanistan has now ratified all the core human rights treaties.<sup>9</sup>

123. Although much remains to be done, hard work and significant investment by the Afghan Government, supported by the international community, is having an impact, for example gradually realising people's rights to freedom of expression, equality and a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being:

- there is now one government-run, 16 independent TV channels, around 290 newspapers and 60 independent radio stations;
- 6 million children are enrolled in school, over a third of whom are girls, and over a quarter of seats in the Lower House of the Afghan Parliament are now held by women;
- infant mortality rates declined from an estimated 165 per 1,000 live births in 2001 to about 129 per 1,000 in 2005—equivalent to around 40,000 more babies surviving per year now than in 2002;
- since 2000, under-5 mortality rates have dropped from around one in four to around one in five;
- the proportion of women receiving antenatal care increased from 5% in 2003 to 30% in 2006; and
- 82% of people now have access to basic healthcare, compared to 9% in 2002.

### *Key Challenges*

124. Ensuring security is vital for protecting human rights. The security situation in Afghanistan remains challenging. The insurgents continue to target innocent civilians—including beheadings, kidnappings, suicide bombings and attacks on NGO workers and schoolchildren. In November a group of schoolgirls and their teachers in Kandahar suffered severe burns after acid was sprayed into their faces by members of the Taliban. The attack was condemned by the Afghan Government as “un-Islamic”.

125. Afghans have embraced their right to choose their own leaders democratically—demonstrated by the successful elections held in 2004 and 2005. Presidential and Provincial Council elections are currently due to be held in autumn 2009 and Parliamentary and District Council elections in spring 2010. As the earlier section on Politics and Reconciliation details, we and the international community are helping to realise the Afghan people's right to vote.

126. Many women in Afghanistan still face significant hardships and unequal treatment—in part due to poverty and insecurity, and in part due to deeply held cultural views. A lack of legal protection and inadequate access to justice increases the risks women face in a society where the rule of law is still weak. Outspoken women still face severe risks—as demonstrated by the murder of the country's most prominent policewoman in Kandahar last September.

<sup>9</sup> Afghanistan has signed and ratified the following international treaties for the protection of human rights (with dates of ratification): Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (24 April 1983), Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (24 April 1983), Covenant on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (5 August 1983), Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (5 March 2003), Convention Against Torture (26 June 1987), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (27 April 1994) and its optional protocols on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and On the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (24 September 2003).

127. The UK works to enhance the status of women in three main ways: through policy engagement with the Afghan Government; through support for national programmes and services, which benefit women; and through bilateral programmes. We regularly discuss women's rights with members of the Afghan Government, Afghan Parliamentarians and NGOs.

128. The majority of our financial support is channelled through the Afghan Government, since gender inequality is a deeply embedded and long-term problem which needs a strategic approach. We worked with the Afghan Government to ensure that gender equality was integrated into the ANDS and that women are fully reflected in the development process. We have committed over £35 million to support the Afghan Government's micro-finance programme, giving women in particular better access to finance.

129. The UK is giving £500,000 to support a women's empowerment programme, implemented by the NGO Womankind (running 2005–10). The programme focuses on promoting women's equal participation in governance; building awareness of women's rights among civil society and policy makers; and on providing educational, health, community and psycho-social support to women affected by violence and conflict.

130. But we also work with local and international NGOs. The AIHRC now has representatives in Helmand province, who are helping support the new Women and Children's Justice Group, established in Lashkar Gah in August 2008. Run by prominent female members of the community, the group is developing and implementing practical programmes on the ground to support women and children's rights and justice issues.

131. Afghanistan retains the death penalty under the new Constitution. All death sentences require the approval of the President. 16 criminals, convicted of serious crimes, have been executed since 7 November 2008. These were the first executions carried out since 15 men were executed on 8 October 2007. A moratorium on executions ended on 20 April 2004 when President Karzai authorised the execution of Abdullah Shah, a militia commander accused of cannibalism, torture and murder. The death penalty had not been used again until the 8 October 2007 executions. The resumption of executions has been a highly popular move among Afghans.

132. The UK is strongly opposed to the use of the death penalty by any state and have regularly made our views on this subject known to the Afghan Government. We were very concerned to learn that the Afghan Government resumed executions on 7 November 2008. Regarding this latest use of the death penalty, we have raised our concerns in partnership with the EU, as well as bilaterally with the Afghan Government, including at Ministerial level.

133. If we have concerns about a particular case, we will raise them with the Afghan authorities. On 21 October, the Afghan Appeal Court announced that the sentence of Afghan Journalism student Sayed Pervez Kambaksh (who had been convicted and sentenced to death for distributing literature relating to women's rights and Islam) was commuted to 20 years in prison. We have serious concerns about the fairness of this and the original trial, and the verdict reached. We are following the case closely and, in conjunction with our international partners, are raising it with the relevant Afghan authorities.

134. Intimidation of journalists remains a concern. The UK has intervened in individual cases where journalists' freedom has been threatened. September 2008 saw the passing of a progressive media law, although the Afghan Government currently lacks the capacity to enforce this in a way that will have significant impact in the near future. We are working with both the BBC World Service and the BBC World Service Trust (the World Service's charitable arm) on projects to improve and develop the media in Afghanistan. For example, we are involving female Afghan journalists in "Afghan Woman's Hour" which informs and empowers women in Afghanistan.

135. The Afghan Constitution (Article 2) provides for freedom of religion. But abuses continue to occur. In February 2006, for example, Abdul Rahman, a 41-year-old Afghan citizen, was arrested in Kabul following a domestic dispute. During the court proceedings, it emerged that he had converted to Christianity 16 years earlier. The UK lobbied on his behalf. Despite widespread speculation that Rahman would be charged with apostasy, the case was adjourned, apparently on a technicality. Abdul Rahman left Afghanistan and was granted asylum in Italy.

136. Since 2001 the UK has given over £1.75 million to support the AIHRC, and will give a further £200,000 this financial year to support its 2009–10 Action Plan. The AIHRC has over 500 staff across Afghanistan—from Badakhshan in the north to Helmand in the south—actively tackling issues such as women's rights, child rights and false imprisonment, as well reporting on concerns.

137. In addition to supporting the AIHRC and small Afghan NGOs, we are also working with the United Nations Development Programme and international partners to create a Human Rights Support Unit in the Afghan Ministry of Justice. This Unit will support and co-ordinate Afghan Government efforts to protect and promote human rights.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION

*Economy*

138. Statistics from 2001 show that Afghanistan was in a bleak economic position;<sup>10</sup> Afghanistan ranked 169 out of 174 countries in the UN Human Development Index (1996). This ranking is unlikely to have improved between 1996 and 2001. Life expectancy was only a little over 40 years, and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita was estimated at \$150–180—one of the poorest in the world. 60–80% of the population were estimated to live below a dollar a day<sup>11</sup> and the UNDP said in its report: “Afghanistan is worse off than almost any country in the world. The country’s social and economic indicators are comparable, or lower than the indicators for sub-Saharan Africa”. The formal banking system had totally collapsed and the opium sector was the only sector to flourish, with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) estimating that the industry was worth \$91 million.

139. By 2001–02 the estimate for licit GDP was \$2.5 billion. Millions faced starvation, with the UN estimating that a third of the population needed food aid. Infrastructure had been severely damaged and traditional irrigation system had suffered from destruction and lack of maintenance. Agricultural production was limited, industry had ceased functioning and most skilled professionals had left the country. Even without official statistics, it is very clear that the economy, trade and the private sector were all in a dire state.

140. There has been considerable progress made across most areas of the economy since 2001. However, even with this progress, Afghanistan remains poor and is still at the very early stages of its economic development. Making progress to a fully functioning economy is only achievable over the long term. Nevertheless there have been significant achievements:

- economic growth (excluding the opium sector) averaged 15% between 2002–07, taking licit GDP to an estimated \$12.8 billion in 2008. GDP per capita, while still extremely low is significantly higher than 2001 at \$290;<sup>12</sup>
- inflation has begun to stabilise in recent years—reaching as low as 5% in 2006, although this year’s high global commodity prices saw an uptick in inflation once more;
- licit trade has increased dramatically with exports growing at double-digit levels, reaching over an estimated \$2 billion this year;
- unemployment remains extremely high, but given the lack of statistics prior to 2001, it is difficult to compare the improvements that have been made; and
- opium, remains a driver of overall economic growth, but in 2008 is estimated to account for a smaller percentage of the economy than in earlier years.<sup>13</sup>

141. Progress has also been made on the economic policy side, including:

- the introduction of the new currency in 2002;
- the tax code was restructured and clarified in 2005; and
- customs tariffs have been rationalized, existing trade agreements have been renewed and new agreements entered into force.

142. The private sector, while still in its infancy is improving:

- the Telecoms sector is an example how real progress in a sector can be made, with rapid expansion and international investment;
- the financial sector has also seen significant improvements, with 15 banks now operating in Afghanistan. The central bank has been supportive of the financial sector, and just recently demonstrated decisive action in response to the global financial crisis; and
- on a smaller scale, microfinance has been a successful tool in Afghanistan, with the Microfinance Institutions issuing over £150 million worth of small loans to over 400,000 Afghans.

143. However, there clearly remains many obstacles to the private sector, not least infrastructure and corruption.

144. The UK’s new Afghanistan Investment Climate Facility (AICF) is an independent private-public partnership (funded by donors and the private sector), that is led and run by the Afghan private sector. The Prime Minister pledged £30 million over the next three financial years to the AICF. It will be a proactive and responsive grant facility providing catalytic support to reduce barriers to doing business such as regulatory reform and cumbersome procedures. As a financier rather than an implementer, the AICF is designed as a fast acting, facilitating mechanism that will work strategically with existing initiatives and stakeholders to address key gaps in reforming priority areas of the investment climate.

<sup>10</sup> The collection of primary data necessary for statistical compilation virtually ceased in the mid 1990s with the collapse of the provincial reporting network. However, the statistics from the 1990s, as well as from 2001 when statistics collection was started again can give a picture of the situation in 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Statistics taken from IMF report on Afghanistan, October 2002.

<sup>12</sup> 2005–06 data. IMF PRGF 4th review, July 2008.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

145. The UK also supports the Afghanistan Investment Guarantee Facility, designed to help bridge the gap between investors' desires to tap business opportunities in the country and concerns about political risks. The facility, administered by the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency, aims to mitigate key risks for foreign investors by providing political risk guarantees (insurance) for their investments. The UK contributes £1 million to the facility.

146. The UK has been supporting the development of rural and alternative livelihoods, as part of wider economic development, and as part of the Afghan Government's counter-narcotics strategy. As part of this support, the UK spent over £33 million on improving opportunities for Afghan livelihoods in 2006–07 and expects to spend a similar amount this year. Activities include support to:

- the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) which has established over 18,000 Community Development Councils across Afghanistan to implement projects in some of the most remote and poorest communities; and
- the Micro Finance Investment Support Facility of Afghanistan (MISFA) which helps Afghans set up and expand small businesses. MISFA has issued over £150 million worth of small loans to over 400,000 Afghans, to help Afghans running small businesses. Over 70% of MISFA's beneficiaries are women, amongst the poorest in Afghanistan.

147. The UK has also given £18 million over three years to the National Rural Access Programme, which has generated over 14.3 million days of labour. Around 9,700 km of rural roads have been built or repaired, as well as schools, health clinics and water schemes. The UK has also provided training and mentoring to help establish the Central Bank.

148. There are many challenges for the Afghan economy: infrastructure, while better, remains poor; human capacity is low; access to markets is often extremely difficult; trade arrangements with Pakistan and others are difficult; corruption is high; rule of law is to a low standard; and the population remains poor.

149. The ANDS, launched in June 2008, includes economic development as a key component. It is important that the UK and other international players ensure that economic development fits within the remit of the ANDS. The UK therefore supports the ANDS and designs economic development programmes to support and complement the plan. The UK will also use facilities such as the AICF to identify what barriers can be broken down to support the Afghan economy.

150. From the non-governmental side, the international community will play an increasingly important role. Trade has been a driver of growth in recent years and it will be important that regional economies have trade policies, regional networks, and domestic economic strength conducive to further expansion. Further afield, international investment in the mining industries may also play a role for stimulating the Afghan economy.

#### *Millennium Development Goals*

151. The eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were agreed at the United Nations in September 2000, and form a blueprint to reduce extreme poverty according to a series of time-bound targets with a deadline of 2015. In light of its recent history, the UN has granted Afghanistan the right to modify the international MDG framework. The baseline is taken as 2000, with a target date of 2020. The list of indicators has also been adapted, adding additional detail on security. But data remain poor and often unreliable.

152. Despite these changes, Afghanistan is off-track for most of the MDG targets. Extreme poverty and hunger (MDG1) is worsening, with analysis suggesting an increase in relative poverty between 2007 and 2008 from 42% of the population to an estimated 52%, due to food prices. Progress has been made on achieving universal education (MDG2) and gender equality (MDG3), with 6 million children now enrolled in school, a third of which are girls, and 25% of parliament seats reserved for women. It is likely that child mortality (MDG4) has reduced—immunisation has certainly increased—but the under-five mortality rate of 191 per 1,000 live births is well above the target of 76.

153. Data is too weak to make accurate assessments of trends for MDG5 (on maternal health) and MDG6 (HIV/AIDS, malaria). Performance on environmental sustainability (MDG7) has been mixed, with access to water improving (now at 32% of the population) but access to sanitation facilities remaining low at 7%. On global aid partnerships too (MDG8) progress has been mixed, with aid increasingly untied and partnerships forming between donors, government and the private sector, but youth unemployment high and little progress on the trade system. The Afghanistan-specific target on security (MDG9) reflects good progress on reforms of the ANA, but the actual security situation remaining extremely challenging.

154. There are numerous reasons for this mixed progress. The vulnerability of the Afghan poor is extremely high given the nature of the security situation and both economic (rising food and fuel prices) and natural shocks (droughts). Inequalities based on social identity and geographical location are starkly evident and services are failing to reach both the poor and the non-poor. The challenge lies in cementing gains made, expanding coverage and quality of services and preventing reversals in progress.

155. The impact of prolonged conflict, poor government service delivery and the insurgency has been felt most acutely by women and the very young, as shown by health and education indicators. In the 2004–05 national elections only 32% of voters registered were women. Both the formal and informal justice systems

are biased against women, and access is extremely limited. Yet according to a December 2008 study from the RAND corporation, perceptions of “security” among Afghans are closely linked to equity of access to basic services, and so increased inclusion of women within development and governance initiatives can be an important stabilising influence.

156. Starting from a low service delivery base in 2001, achievements particularly in setting up health and education services have been impressive. Almost 85% of districts have access to primary health care. But the scale of the challenge requires long-term investments to improve access and quality of coverage across the country. An estimated 11 million Afghans are illiterate, and there is a critical shortage of basic as well as higher level skills in the population. The gross enrolment rate in tertiary education is 1%, the lowest by far of any country in the region.

157. The social and economic development pillar of the ANDS in particular targets achievement of the MDGs: education, health, agriculture, irrigation and infrastructure growth comprise 62% of the ANDS budgetary allocation. The international community committed \$21 billion in support of the ANDS.

158. The ANDS estimates that a projected \$50.3 billion will be required to address Afghanistan’s reconstruction and development needs in the period to 2012–13. The UK is the second largest bilateral contributor to the portion of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) (an internationally managed fund created in 2002 to support the Afghan Government’s running costs and investment needs) which covers the Afghan Government’s recurrent spending—financing most of its service delivery functions. We have pledged to deliver at least 50% of our total aid to Afghanistan through government channels over the next four years, ensuring it has the maximum opportunity to ensure Afghan ownership of the prioritisation process; and to enhance the co-ordination of donor funding.

### *Health*

159. In the immediate post-conflict period, Afghanistan’s health services were in a deplorable state. Availability and quality of health services were highly variable across provinces and between urban and rural areas. Only 5% of women had access to antenatal care in 2001; in 2002, only 9% of people lived in a district with access to a basic healthcare package; and the under-five mortality rate in 2003 was 257 per 1,000 live births. Major constraints included a lack of managerial and service delivery capacity within the Ministry of Public Health; a lack of physical infrastructure and qualified personnel; poor distribution of financial and human resources; and, uncoordinated and undirected efforts of the NGOs.

160. In response, the Ministry of Public Health and the major donors developed in early 2002 a new Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS). Independent evaluations show that the Ministry of Public Health has made considerable progress in making the BPHS accessible to most Afghans. By 2006, 82% of districts had access to the BPHS. 30% of women in rural areas now have access to skilled antenatal care, and the under-5 mortality rate has declined from 257 to 191 per 1,000 live births.

161. In Helmand, the UK-led PRT has included the re-establishment of basic health care across the province as a key area within their stabilisation planning and delivery activities. Over the last year the PRT has helped the Helmand Provincial Director of Health to plan and implement a Health Support Programme throughout the Province. This included helping restore basic health clinics in the districts of Musa Qaleh, Gereshk, Sangin and Garmsir, as well as renovating the main referral hospital in Lashkar Gah.

162. Progress has been made, but there is still a need for long term investment in the government’s ability to deliver and regulate universal health service delivery. Despite the improvements noted above, maternal and infant mortality remain amongst the highest in the world. Variations are wide: in rural areas only 19% of births are attended by skilled health staff. Geographical and security reasons for not seeking care are significant, but there are additional problems related to people’s willingness and ability to seek appropriate services, including the availability of other sources of treatment such as private providers or traditional healers in the marketplace. Gender discrimination in access to services as well as physical distance also restricts access—only a quarter of women use health facilities even when they are close by.

163. The international community will remain central to supporting the Afghan Government’s efforts to address these challenges. The US Agency for International Development, the European Commission, the World Bank and the UN are the major donors involved: between them, donors fund almost 70% of the health budget. The UK will continue to deliver a programme to meet immediate health needs in Helmand. Nationally, the extensive range of well-funded donors acting in this field leads us to assess that our efforts are best spent lobbying others to co-ordinate their support, while we focus on issues of particular need and UK expertise in economic growth and employment generation rather than social sectors.

164. Severe food shortages in Afghanistan, resulting from rapidly rising global food prices and a poor harvest due to drought, have left at least 4.5 million Afghans dependent upon humanitarian assistance. A UN/Afghan Government appeal was launched in July 2008 to avert a crisis but has faced a shortage of international funding.

165. The UK has been swift in responding to the Afghan food crisis (caused by drought and high global food prices), committing £8 million to the food security component of the UN/Afghan Government’s July 2008 appeal. This funding is in addition to the £5.5million committed to the agricultural recovery component of the appeal, and the £3 million given to the World Food Programme’s January 2008 appeal. We

have also provided £4 million in humanitarian assistance to the International Committee of the Red Cross—making our total contribution to alleviating the current humanitarian situation £20.5 million. The UK will continue to encourage the international community to commit greater support to the UN/Afghan Government appeal in the coming months.

### *Education*

166. In 2001, only a million Afghan children were enrolled in school. None were girls. A “Back to School” campaign beginning in 2002 resulted in more than 4.3 million children enrolling in grades 1–12, and a total of 6 million children are now enrolled in school, 35% of whom are girls. The Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive National Strategic Action Plan for 2008–13, which is included within the overall ANDS. The Asia Foundation’s 2008 survey of the Afghan people found that 70% of respondents believed the availability of children’s education to be good, and 44% thought that access to schools had improved over the last two years.

167. The UK provides significant funding to the education sector through the ARTF. Roughly one-third of our £240 million contribution over the last six years has been used to support education, mainly in the form of teachers’ salaries. In Helmand, Danish colleagues in the PRT lead the implementation of a programme of immediate stabilisation in the education sector.

168. But challenges remain. About half the school-age population is still out of school, with significant gender and provincial disparities. In both rural and urban contexts, working children may be their household’s primary income earners, especially in cases where a father is unemployed. Enrolment in urban areas is considerably higher than in rural districts, and in many urban areas there is almost a one-to-one ratio of girls and boys attending primary school. However, in southern provinces, more than 60% of the school age children are not in school. Overall only 10% of women compared to 37% of men report being literate.

169. The UK will continue to support the Afghan Government’s development priorities. We expect that a significant portion of that support will continue to be used for teachers’ salaries, and we will maintain a programme addressing teacher recruitment and management issues to ensure this has greatest impact.

### *Public Financial Management systems*

170. The recent (January 2008) Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability assessment of Afghanistan shows significant improvement within Afghan public financial management (PFM) systems since the last assessment of December 2005. Afghanistan’s ratings are better than the average for other low income countries and in some areas (like policy based budgeting) better than the average for middle income countries. Out of total 28 performance indicators, 17 indicators improved and four indicators deteriorated, while seven indicators remained unchanged. Among three donor practice indicators, two indicators deteriorated and one indicator remained unchanged.

171. Key PFM improvements include:

- *Legal Framework*: Legal reforms have passed with several key legislation (ie the public finance and expenditure law—2005, income tax law—2005 and the procurement law—2005) which provide strong legal foundations for PFM;
- *Technical Expertise*: PFM technical expertise within the Ministry of Finance is good and improving in several areas. However, a lot of the expertise is being supported through donor salary support schemes resulting in concerns about long-term sustainability;
- *Budget Credibility*: Credibility (especially on the operating budget) is improving due to relatively stable flows from domestic revenues and donors. However, the gap between budget and realization (ie the implementation gap) remains significant in the development budget;
- *Budget Comprehensiveness*: Budget comprehensiveness has improved but reporting and fiscal transparency needs to be strengthened. The Ministry of Finance needs to improve fiscal oversight over relations between the two official tiers of Government;
- *Budget Process*: Budgeting process is well based on multi-year fiscal planning and detailed at the level of ministries but there is still relatively little strategic prioritisation of public resources by Cabinet early in the budgeting process; and
- *Donors*: Donors’ practices for budget support are almost best practice as the support is well communicated and disbursements are in line with forecast.

172. However, these improvements must be viewed within the context of poor scores in other areas (eg audit/accounting). As a result the UK continues to work to further strengthen PFM and improve accountability.

173. UK activity on public spending reform involves the provision of direct support to the Afghan Government’s budget via the ARTF and the provision of technical assistance to the Revenue and Budget departments in the Ministry of Finance. The UK will also provide a £9.8 million programme over three years (November 2007 to November 2010) in technical assistance on public financial management/budgeting reform in key line ministries such as finance, health and education. This project is helping to improve the

Government's ability to effectively spend resources by improving the execution of the development budget. The UK will also provide £11.5 million project over three years (2008–11), designed to support effective domestic revenue mobilisation and Afghan Government tax reforms.

174. The UK will continue to work closely with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund country teams in assessing the health of Afghanistan's PFM system. We will also work closely with other bi-lateral partners to ensure effective co-ordination between technical assistance/capacity building project in key line ministries in Kabul and in the provinces.

#### COUNTER-NARCOTICS

175. The threat from drugs to Afghanistan ranks alongside the threat from corruption and the threat to security from the Taliban. There are no quick or simple ways of dealing with it. Progress on tackling opium cultivation is decidedly mixed. The many successes have been tempered by the overall increase—nearly doubling—of cultivation and its increasing concentration in five contiguous provinces in southern Afghanistan. Helmand is, and is likely to remain, the main cultivating province.

176. We should be wary of grasping for “silver bullets”—solutions which risk diverting attention away from our main effort. Achievement of a sustainable reduction in the production and trade requires effort over a number of years. Experience in other countries has shown this. In Thailand, huge public investment and market-led growth almost eliminated the problem, but this took 25 years. Significant reductions in Pakistan were also seen over 21 years. In both countries, comprehensive long-term development was accompanied by targeted law enforcement activity and development of government institutions (including in law enforcement). Cultivation figures actually rose before sustainable reductions were seen.

#### *Cultivation Levels*

177. In 2001, the UNODC estimated that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan stood at 8,000 hectares. However, 2001 was an abnormal year, because the Taliban had enforced a ban on poppy cultivation in 2000. Cultivation stood at 82,000 hectares in 2000 and climbed again to 74,000 hectares in 2002.

178. While the ban on cultivation was in force the Taliban did little to suggest that they were out to restrain the drugs trade. For example they took little action to destroy heroin laboratories or to inhibit the traffic in drugs. The ban was implemented for many reasons. It is now believed that it was primarily an attempt at a propaganda victory and an effort to attract international development aid. At the same time it had the effect of pushing up the price of opium from \$100 per kg to \$500 per kg. This significantly benefited traffickers (and it is thought some members of the Taliban) who held stockpiles of opium. The increased prices of opium increased the incentives in following years to grow opium poppy. In parallel the security situation worsened, which reduced access to licit markets. The Taliban implemented the ban through a combination of negotiation with influential tribes, promises of (unlikely) development aid, bribery and intimidation.

179. Opium poppy production saw a dramatic increase in 2004 and with the exception of 2005, when it fell due to a depression in price, has risen every year since, to 2007.

180. In 2008 there was a 19% reduction in cultivation to 157,000 hectares, with an increase in the number of poppy-free provinces from six in 2006 to 18 in 2008—over half of the country's 34 provinces. This includes some of the larger producing provinces with long histories of poppy cultivation. Badakshan's cultivation dropped by 98% between 2004 and 2008. Nangarhar, which in 2004 accounted for 22% of Afghanistan's poppy crop moved to poppy-free status in 2008. Balkh—another province with a high dependence on poppy cultivation in recent years—is also now reported to be poppy-free.

181. A key factor which helped reduce poppy cultivation in 2008 has been a nascent but growing recognition by the Afghan authorities of the value of a concerted approach to counter-narcotics, linking information campaigns, alternative livelihoods and enforcement activities. Rising wheat prices combined with a significant drop in the price of raw opium has been important in influencing poppy farmers to switch from opium to wheat cultivation. This is a situation which we are keen to exploit.

#### *Helmand*

182. Helmand is the chief opium poppy-growing area of Afghanistan. Typically Helmand has produced between 30% and 50% of Afghan opium since the 1990s (with the exception of 2001, when there was no cultivation). It is likely to remain the main cultivating province for the foreseeable future. In opposition to the national picture, poppy cultivation in Helmand rose in 2008 to 103,590 hectares—66% of all such cultivation in Afghanistan.

183. A significant forward step in 2008 was the launch of Governor Mangal's counter-narcotics plan for Helmand (the Helmand Plan), under which 32,000 households in Helmand—in five food zones across the province—have benefited from the distribution of free wheat seed. This distribution has been supported by an information campaign which has sought to persuade Helmandis of their responsibility not to grow poppy and instead to feed their families and community at a time of growing food insecurity.

184. Governor Mangal has held a series of Shuras (local discussions/community meetings), with supporting TV/radio and print media messages, to promote the distribution of wheat seed, warning Helmandis of the dangers of poppy cultivation, that it is un-Islamic and informing them of the risk of eradication if they do cultivate poppy. There have been reports of some villages being willing to challenge Taleban intimidation not to accept the wheat seed—an indication of the success of the information campaign. Conversely, there have been reports of the Taleban intimidating recipients of wheat seed in an effort to encourage them to revert to poppy. Early signs are that the Helmand Plan is making good headway (wheat seed distribution has been completed), albeit within a challenging security environment. Exactly how successful the wheat distribution strategy has been will be seen in early 2009. Areas within the food zones where opium poppy is still being grown will be targeted for eradication by both the Governor and the Afghan Poppy Eradication Force.

185. Achieving a sustainable reduction in poppy cultivation in Helmand will remain a challenge until farmers have a predictable security environment, as well as access to markets, irrigation, agricultural support and alternative long-term employment. External factors in decision-making include the relative prices of opium and of licit crops. The concentration of narcotics cultivation and production in Helmand and other southern provinces in Afghanistan demonstrates the need for greater action in tackling insecurity and weak governance—conditions which allow the trade to flourish.

186. For the province-by-province approach to tackling narcotics production in Afghanistan to work, we are encouraging other provinces/Governors to look to the Helmand Plan as an example for what can be achieved. The Helmand Plan includes some economic measures to help farmers transition away from poppy cultivation by integrating support for crops and access to markets. It also ensures the process is Governor-led and co-ordinated with other international donors. But it will be important that we go on to develop a more sophisticated approach in Helmand and other provinces, since an over-emphasis on wheat (one that encourages mono-cropping) as the appropriate crop substitution would threaten the sustainability of the emerging market in wheat and create an over-dependency on buoyant wheat prices. Diversity will be key. Development of plans for other provinces modelled on the Helmand Plan will need to be done in such a way as to ensure that the agricultural alternatives from poppy are sustainable.

#### *Drugs and the Insurgency*

187. The links between the Taleban and the drugs trade have been a long-standing arrangement of mutual convenience. The Taleban took income from the drugs trade and the drugs trade thrived in a relatively protected environment. These links were formed through tribal loyalties, business connections and personal relationships.

188. There is now increasing evidence of a consolidating link between the drugs trade and the insurgency in the south and, to a degree, in the east of Afghanistan. The narco-barons and the insurgents share a common interest in resisting the authority of the Afghan Government and of international forces. The UN estimated that in 2008 the insurgents (along with corrupt elements) exacted \$100 million of taxes from the drugs smugglers, which was, in effect, protection money. There is growing evidence of weapons caches and heroin laboratories being co-located and the same routes and vehicles are often used to transport drugs and weapons. In an ISAF-supported operation in the Nawa area in southern Helmand in December 2008, 400kg of opium were seized along with a sizeable haul of weapons including rocket-propelled grenades, mortar rounds, small arms and components for improvised explosive devices.

189. The UK has been at the forefront of efforts within NATO in pressing for ISAF to target more effectively the nexus between illicit narcotics and the insurgency. We welcomed the decision by NATO Defence Ministers at Budapest in October 2008 to direct ISAF to take action, in concert with Afghan security forces, on counter-narcotics, subject to agreement by governments of the forces concerned. The decision enables the UK to support the Afghan security forces in targeting those elements of the insurgency where there is a clear link to the illegal drugs trade. It is now important to ensure that ISAF has a positive effect in supporting Afghan work to tackle the narcotics-insurgency nexus.

190. UK action will focus efforts on targeting risk against narco-barons at the top end of the trade, both to dismantle the power base of corrupt officials and to reduce funding streams available to the Taleban. UK forces in ISAF will continue to target elements of the insurgency where there is a clear link to the illegal drugs trade, in support of Afghan-led operations and within the legal parameters as set out in the NATO Operational Plan. There will be a challenge to move NATO partners—some of whom are reluctant to commit their troops on any counter-narcotics operations—closer to our own position, so that more ISAF forces can be deployed on such operations. Over the longer term, the need to build up Afghan-led interdiction and disruption operations remain important, together with the (US-led) expansion and training of the ANA.

#### *UK Efforts*

191. The UK is G8 Partner Nation for Afghanistan on counter-narcotics. We are in effect therefore responsible for leading the international effort to engage in tackling illicit narcotics in Afghanistan, in particular in lobbying for support. To this end we have regular dialogue with key members of the international community, especially the US.

192. The UK and the international community at large supports the Afghan Government's National Drug Control Strategy (ANDCS)—which we helped establish in May 2003. Our own immediate goal is to achieve a drugs trade divided from the insurgency and prevented from undermining security, governance and the economy to the point where the Afghan Government can take responsibility for its own counter-narcotics effort. Our purpose is to ensure that arrangements are in place to provide economic incentives for farmers to move away from poppy while ensuring that the Afghan Government has the capability to create a credible risk to the drugs trade. The emphasis is on maintaining an Afghan lead. UK activity is therefore concentrated on:

- targeting the top end of the drugs trade (influential narco-barons), especially those supporting the insurgency;
- maximising Governor outreach and access to markets for farmers in Helmand; and
- building effective institutional and international development arrangements to sustain and expand poppy-free provinces.

193. From 2004 to 2008 the UK has spent nearly £160 million on our counter-narcotics programme in Afghanistan. This directly supports the implementation of the NDCS.

194. The UK has also supported the institutional infrastructure which supports that strategy. The Ministry of Counter-Narcotics was established in December 2004 and supported by a UK £12.5 million capacity building programme. The ANP was established in April 2002, the Counter-Narcotics Police (CNPA) in early 2003, the Afghan Special Narcotics Force (ASNF) at the end of 2003, the Poppy Eradication Force at end 2004/beginning 2005, the Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) and the Counter-Narcotics Tribunal (CNT) in May 2005, and the Afghan Government's Anti-Corruption Commission in September 2008. The CNPA, the CJTF and the CNT have all received UK support. The ASNF is UK mentored and latterly has been scoring significant successes against the narco-barons—for instance seizing 238 tonnes of cannabis in June 2008.

195. A particular challenge will be to mainstream counter-narcotics into broader Afghan Government business at national and local levels. To this end, the UK is looking to widen our capacity-building programme beyond the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics to other government ministries to address capacity across the Afghan Government. We shall also be seeking to help develop ministerial budgets to a level of robustness which will allow counter-narcotics budget streams to sit within them (rather than as aid assistance outside official budgets), and urging the case for responsibility for local management of counter-narcotics policies to be cascade to the local government level. For these policies to succeed, more work will need to be done on extending the authority of the national government.

#### *Poppy Eradication Policy*

196. Poppy eradication policy and implementation is the responsibility of the Afghan Government, as set out in the NDCS. This makes clear that the policy on eradication is that it should be ground-based and targeted towards farmers who have access to alternative licit livelihoods. The UK does not eradicate, but we do provide support for the planning and targeting work of the provincial Governors and Afghan Poppy Eradication Force. The UK, with the US, funds a cost-recovery scheme which reimburses Governors \$135 for every hectare of eradication they undertake. We also engage with the UNODC at a technical level on the monitoring of eradication and overall cultivation of poppy. But it is important to recognise that while eradication is a significant deterrent and can play a catalytic role in influencing farmers to give up opium poppy cultivation it could not solve this problem on its own. Eradication needs to be balanced with measures to interdict drugs, build institutions, bring criminals to justice, and encourage development of rural communities to provide alternatives for poppy farmers.

197. In 2007 DFID co-sponsored with the World Bank a report which outlined measures necessary to reduce poppy cultivation: "*Afghanistan Economic Incentives and Development Initiatives to Reduce Opium Production*". These included large-scale irrigation and infrastructure programmes, provision of higher-value horticulture and livestock opportunities, the scaling-up of micro-finance, and support for the development of small and medium enterprises. These incentives, combined with agricultural inputs to tackle food insecurity, need to be rolled out across poppy-free provinces with development ministries and Governors from 2008–09 in order to sustain progress.

198. The UK has already promoted community outreach and infrastructure development to help support farmers and improve market linkages: over 21,900 Community Development Councils have been established, disbursing over £248 million in grants; over 9,790 km of roads have been rehabilitated; and over £227 million in micro-finance loans has been disbursed to 443,740 Afghans. We are now taking forward the recommendations of the DFID/World Bank report by working with the Afghan Government on a new programme—the Sustainable Reduction in Poppy Programme—to support growth in the legal economy. Though supported by the UK this will be under Afghan leadership. With financial support from donors, the programme aims to provide rapid delivery of development assistance to the legal economy and communities—particularly the agricultural economy. It will be formulated on a district-based approach, focusing on those districts with significant economic potential, to cement the switch away from opium in the long term. The UK expects to spend £35 million in promoting licit livelihoods in 2008.

199. A powerful incentive for Governors to move their provinces towards poppy reduction and ultimately poppy-free status has been the Good Performers Initiative (GPI). This was established by the Afghan Government in 2007, funded by the UK and US, to empower provincial leaders to address local needs and reward action on opium production in a timely fashion. It is a quick-results initiative operating at local community level, offering high-impact development assistance directly to villages and communities leading the fight against poppy cultivation. Initially, the GPI only rewarded poppy-free provinces, but it has now been expanded to offer rewards to provinces which make significant progress in decreasing cultivation levels. Under it, the Afghan Government plans to award over \$39 million for GPI projects in 2008, with award money reaching 29 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. UK funding for the GPI has amounted to an estimated £6.8 million since 2007.

#### *The Future Challenges*

200. The growing number of poppy-free provinces and the emergence of stronger Afghan counter-narcotics institutions demonstrate the value of a multi-pronged approach to counter-narcotics. But this success is fragile, and sustaining it represents the chief challenge. Insufficient high-level political commitment in Afghanistan to counter-narcotics continues to present a problem, as does weak capacity in central government and in the provinces. Success could also be undermined by external shocks such as a worsening drought leading to food insecurity; a deteriorating security situation impeding progress on the ground; unrealistic expectations by Afghans or international actors about how quickly development can occur in a post-conflict environment; and any further deepening of the relationship between the drugs trade and the insurgency. Engagement on Afghan counter-narcotics is a long-term endeavour, which will require a regional approach, particularly with Pakistan.

### REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

#### *Regional Organisations*

201. The productive engagement of Afghanistan's neighbours, all of whom have an interest in a secure Afghanistan, will be crucial to ensuring the country's long-term stability. In 2001 the main mechanism for bringing a regional perspective to policy on Afghanistan was the 6+2 mechanism (Afghanistan's six neighbours—Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China—and the US and Russia), which excluded Afghanistan, as it was then still ruled by the Taliban. International refusal to engage with the Taliban regime (aside from the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) limited the capacity of regional organisations to engage on Afghanistan.

202. Since 2001 there has been a proliferation of mechanisms aimed at harnessing regional determination to help tackle Afghanistan's problems, which clearly impact also on its neighbours and the broader region. In addition to fora specifically created to focus on Afghanistan (which include the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration (GNRD), with a focus on counter-narcotics and the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference (RECC) focussed on regional economic integration), there are also existing fora which have accepted Afghanistan as a member and are useful in providing political support and international solidarity to Afghanistan. These include the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO),<sup>14</sup> to which Afghanistan is an observer state.

203. The UK has played an active role in advocating a regional approach to Afghanistan's challenges, and the Prime Minister underlined this point in his 12 December 2007 statement to Parliament. We believe that Afghanistan's main challenges, including extremism, terrorism, economic development and narcotics, are challenges that can only be tackled effectively on a regional basis. The UK was instrumental in setting up the RECC, with the first meeting in Kabul in 2005 co-chaired by the UK and Afghanistan. However, it is key that progress is driven by Afghanistan and its regional partners, to ensure long-term ownership and sustainability.

204. Afghanistan continues to build good relations with its regional partners. They, in turn, co-operate actively with Afghanistan in a range of areas (with Chinese investment, Iranian development assistance, Indian capacity building and road building, Central Asian co-operation on energy infrastructure projects and Pakistani partnership on security challenges, all being examples of existing co-operation). However, there is a lot of scope to do more, in particular on operationalising decisions and broadening the scope of bilateral co-operation between Afghanistan and each neighbour so that they become truly regional approaches.

205. The UK continues to work hard to encourage Afghanistan and its regional partners to prioritise joint work. We encourage them to build on the good dynamics they have established with agreement to concrete deliverables. A structured approach to regional issues that brings in key decision makers from government and uses their authority to deliver real progress driven by the region itself is key. This was the focus of a meeting chaired by France with Afghanistan, its neighbours and other key partners on 14

<sup>14</sup> The SCO is made up of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, with President Karzai attending since 2004 as part of a SCO-Afghanistan contact group.

December 2008. We welcome the offer from the European Commission to chair an expert level group to feed into the forthcoming RECC meeting in spring 2009. This is an important step forward in operationalising good relations so that they deliver concrete progress.

206. The international community can provide resources and expertise to Afghanistan and its regional partners as they work on shared challenges. Many are already engaged on the regional dimension; G8 partners like Canada, the US and Germany are supporting work on Af-Pak issues, the World Bank is playing a key role in getting energy infrastructure projects delivered, bringing in Afghanistan, Central Asian states, Pakistan and India and with non-governmental bodies like the Aga Khan Foundation are playing an important role in building relations between communities in Afghanistan and those across the border in neighbouring countries.

#### *Pakistan*

207. Pakistan was the only country which still recognised the Taleban as the legal government of Afghanistan when allied operations began in October 2001, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates having cut ties within weeks of the September 11th attacks. Pakistan provided aid to the Taleban government, and its military and intelligence services provided materiel and logistical support to their Taleban counterparts. Pakistan recognised the transitional government led by Hamid Karzai in December 2001 and the two have maintained diplomatic relations since. Pakistan is Afghanistan's largest (and a growing) trading partner. Relations between the two countries have peaked and troughed in the intervening period.

208. Both sides' public statements have reflected strained relations during times of crisis. Pakistan and Afghanistan both acknowledge that they share a common enemy of terrorism, and that cooperation will help them counter this more effectively. Pakistan has undertaken military operations in its northwest to deny terrorists safe havens. Pakistani and Afghan politicians and officials now undertake regular discussions bilaterally and as part of wider regional mechanisms, on subjects ranging from counter-terrorism to counter-narcotics and economic growth. In late 2008, both countries' Presidents publicly declared their desire to work together and to defeat terrorism jointly. This was the most emphatic statement of co-operation since before the fall of the Taleban.

209. The UK, through its regular bilateral and multilateral discussions, has encouraged both the Afghan and Pakistani Governments to strengthen their bilateral dialogue. We have given financial and logistical support to the Afghan Government to achieve this, and have advised and supported both countries on how to tackle religious extremism, which fuels terrorism in both countries. However, the bilateral relationship, without further broadening, remains susceptible to internal and external shocks. Domestic or regional political pressures may also distract both countries' leaders from pursuing improved bilateral relations. Deteriorating security in either Afghanistan or Pakistan could pose a threat to the other's stability. The Pakistani government and military continue to need reassurance that the international community will remain engaged on Afghanistan in the long term. Increasing civilian control over the Pakistani armed forces remains another major challenge.

210. Politically, broadening the Afghan-Pakistani bilateral relationship beyond high-level informal talks is the main task. Addressing both countries' wider concerns with a co-ordinated approach to shared challenges will make the relationship better able to withstand short-term shocks. Counter-radicalisation, counter-insurgency and strategic communications policies need to be co-ordinated as far as possible, taking into account the views of cross-border ethnic groups. A co-ordinated approach to security should go hand-in-hand with cooperation on development initiatives, including cross-border trade. Increased technical cooperation between the two countries' armed forces, police and border management services is also vital.

#### *Iran*

211. Iran had extremely poor relations with the Taleban, exacerbated by the execution of eight Iranian diplomats and one Iranian state news agency correspondent in 1998. Since 2001 Iran has improved its relations with the Government of Afghanistan, consistently and publicly backing President Karzai. Bilateral trade has increased and Iran's development and humanitarian activity in western Afghanistan has also grown. We believe Iran spent \$390 million in Afghanistan in 2007. However, there is a significant Afghan refugee problem in Iran. Conditions for Afghan refugees, especially for the majority who are unregistered, have significantly worsened following recent changes to Iranian law. This, in addition to the increased number of returnees, has caused some tension between Iran and Afghanistan.

212. Creating a structured dialogue with Iran, over a range of issues, is one way we have to influence internal Iranian debate on their involvement in Afghanistan. Though Iran has often been a constructive partner of Afghanistan, their links to the Taleban either through supply of munitions, training or funding remain a concern. The UK has consistently argued that this is completely unacceptable and undercuts the Iranian policy of support for the Government of President Karzai. We have registered our concerns with a number of senior Iranian Ministers and officials, and continue to monitor the situation.

213. The UK has sought to develop a regular dialogue on Afghanistan with Iran emphasising the importance of our shared objectives, and challenging unacceptable behaviour. The UK hopes that Iran will agree to further discussion, focussed in particular on the impact of narcotics, which are a serious problem in Iran. Engagement with Iran on the need for it to prioritise the positive aspects of its engagement in Afghanistan will be most effective if it is part of a concerted international effort.

#### *China*

214. China's relations with Afghanistan were very limited in 2001. Having established diplomatic relations in 1955, China withdrew its representation in 1993 with the intensification of the civil war, only re-establishing contacts in December 2001.

215. From 2001, China and Afghanistan started to deepen their relationship, with Chinese investment substantially increasing following the Afghan Government's opening of its energy, mineral and raw materials sectors to foreign investors. China has become one of Afghanistan's largest trading partners, with a bilateral trade volume of \$700 million in the year to October 2008. However, this was almost exclusively one-way (primarily export of construction materials from China to Afghanistan). We believe that China has provided around \$300 million official development assistance to Afghanistan over the last seven years.

216. The Chinese are investing heavily in mining (\$3.5 billion in Aynac copper mine in May 2008) and associated infrastructure, including roads (mostly around Jalalabad) and rail links between Tajikistan and Pakistan. They fund 35 post-graduate scholarships annually, and have trained 350 civil servants in China on short courses in 2008. We believe that China has dispersed \$62.3 million in aid, during the period January 2002 to March 2008 and has just signed an agreement for a further \$11 million in December 2008. The UK has encouraged China to increase the breadth of its contribution in Afghanistan. We will pursue further dialogue on Afghanistan (and regional security, including Pakistan) in 2009.

217. The key challenges are to ensure China's large programme of investment in Afghanistan will provide stable long-term economic growth for the Afghan people and to encourage China to become more involved in the international development effort in Afghanistan. There are legitimate concerns about Chinese investments, given the fiscal clout of Chinese companies, many state-owned, which distorts the market, as well as their lack of corporate governance and responsibility. But the investments will also generate employment, infrastructure, and enhanced revenues for the State, which in turn should help the State maintain control over the country.

218. China also has a deep (although not broad) relationship with Pakistan and has three priorities in that country: economic recovery, stability and support for combating terrorism. On the latter, China is increasingly worried about domestic terrorism (in Xinjiang in particular) with links to Pakistan.

219. The UK will seek to work with China to ensure that its engagement with Afghanistan is co-ordinated with the broader international community's assistance and that China's positive role in Afghanistan's economic development is recognised and used to optimal effect. We recognise that China has a strong preference to pursue its interests in Afghanistan through its bilateral relationship with the Afghan Government and is only likely to become more involved in international efforts if asked to do this by Afghanistan. Any discussions on working with China will therefore need the full support and involvement of Afghan partners.

220. The UK will also share with China our analysis of the main challenges in Afghanistan (terrorism, narcotics and reconstruction) and how these impact on the entire global community—including China. China has the potential to be a key actor in the international effort in Afghanistan. We hope that other countries active in Afghanistan will also engage with China to encourage its deeper involvement in Afghanistan's development and economic future.

#### *Saudi Arabia*

221. Saudi Arabia was one of the few countries that recognised the Taleban. But following September 11th it severed ties with the Taleban regime. Since the fall of the Taleban, the Saudi Government has contributed around \$200 million in humanitarian assistance to the democratically elected Government of Afghanistan. Recently they have facilitated attempts to initiate dialogue between the Taleban and the Government of Afghanistan.

222. The UK has actively lobbied the Saudi Government to secure more funding and has been supportive of Saudi reconciliation efforts. But we hope that more development assistance can be provided. Saudi Arabia has only pledged around \$200 million in aid for Afghanistan since 2001.

#### *India*

223. India cut off relations with Afghanistan during the Taleban era, and supported anti-Taleban groups during their overthrow. India has now become the largest regional donor to Afghanistan. India has pledged or disbursed around \$1 billion of direct aid since 2001, with its aid concentrated on road construction and capacity building for Afghan civil servants. It has maintained this assistance despite the killing of Indian construction workers and the bombing of its Embassy in Kabul in July 2008. Trade between Afghanistan

and India has also risen significantly. However, India's engagement with Afghanistan causes friction between India and Pakistan. Improving the India-Pakistan relationship is an essential part of getting full regional buy-in to supporting Afghanistan.

224. The UK's lobbying of regional players since 2001 has included substantial contact with Indian ministers and senior officials. Regular consultation with both India and Pakistan on regional issues will remain a key part of our policy on Afghanistan. We will continue to emphasise the need for continued responsible engagement by India. This message will be better received if it is delivered in concert with other major global players in Afghanistan, such as the US and EU. We will continue to co-ordinate closely on regional issues with these partners.

#### *Russia*

225. Russia's relations with the Taleban regime were poor, due to its support for jihadists who fought alongside Chechen rebels. Distrust of the Taleban continues to influence heavily the Russian approach to Afghanistan's development.

226. Given the Soviet Union's bitter experiences in Afghanistan during the 1980s, the Russians are wary of involving themselves too closely in the current international effort. However, Russia also recognises that a stable Afghanistan is important to ensuring the stability of Central Asia and its south-eastern flank, and in addressing the considerable flow of narcotics north.

227. Russia has expressed an interest in making a limited contribution to security sector reform, signing a defence co-operation agreement with the Government of Afghanistan in March 2008, and training some Afghans in counter-narcotics techniques at its Domodedovo centre near Moscow. The Government of Afghanistan has not yet taken up more recent Russian offers of bilateral assistance, including further police training at Domodedovo. Russia has also put Afghanistan high up the agenda during their current chairmanship of the SCO, but it remains unclear what sort of role the SCO hopes to play.

228. The UK and Russia share the same objective, broadly speaking, of a secure and viable Afghanistan. The UK regularly discusses Afghanistan with Russia. We will continue to work with Russia in a range of fora, most notably the NATO-Russia Council and the UN in New York, to explore how we can ensure that this shared perspective can best be leveraged to provide further support to the Afghan Government. We will continue to try to expand on existing Russian co-operation and to ensure that periodic tensions on broader foreign policy issues do not inhibit co-operation on Afghanistan's development. Co-ordinated and sustained engagement by the international community with Russia will be the most effective way to maintain a constructive approach to Afghanistan.

#### *Central Asian Republics*

229. The Central Asian republics bordering Afghanistan (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) were very suspicious of the Taleban regime. Uzbekistan was the most vocal of the three, though all were concerned about the spread of militant Islam and narcotics across their southern borders.

230. Initial Uzbek support for OEF soured following US protest at the Andijan massacre in 2005. President Karimov then expelled US forces based at the Karshi-Kanabad airbase. However, Uzbekistan has recently sought to play a role in the development of Afghanistan. Despite this renewed interest, the Uzbeks are yet to recognise the central role the Afghan Government must play in any lasting solution. They are currently proposing a regional forum on Afghanistan which does not include Afghanistan. The UK has welcomed renewed Uzbek interest in Afghanistan, encouraging them to work more closely with the Afghan Government and the rest of the international community.

231. Both Tajikistan and Turkmenistan maintain logistical support for ISAF operations, and are seeking to improve their border security and counter-narcotics programmes. The US has operated an air base in Kyrgyzstan since 2001 supporting the ISAF operation. The UK continues to encourage Tajik and Turkmen security and development programmes which assist Afghanistan.

232. We will continue our dialogue and encourage further engagement by the Central Asian republics through existing international fora, emphasising the importance of a regional approach to economic, development and security issues. The main challenge will be to ensure that they deliver their assistance in a way that works long-term to support Afghanistan's development, focussing on water management, energy, trade, transit and counter-narcotics issues. A more developed regional approach will need support from the wider international community in order to be fully effective.

### INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

#### *US*

233. Following the September 11th terrorist attacks, the US has been at the forefront of the international community's efforts in Afghanistan. The UK has resolutely supported the US response in Afghanistan, including our strong participation in OEF and ISAF. In his address to Congress on 20 September 2001, President Bush recognised UK support, saying "America has no truer friend than Great Britain" and we have maintained this close relationship both bilaterally and in Afghanistan ever since.

234. The US is the largest single contributor of troops to both ISAF and OEF, with around 20,000 troops currently deployed. It is also the largest contributor of bilateral aid, committing in excess of \$20 billion in reconstruction aid and pledging more than \$10 billion over the next two years. The US is the G8 lead nation on the training of the ANA and this is managed by the CSTC-A. US General David D McKiernan is also the current commander of ISAF, and in September 2008 the US streamlined their command structures by appointing General McKiernan as Commander of US Forces Afghanistan, giving him oversight of both the US ISAF contingent and the majority of their other forces in Afghanistan, including CSTC-A. As a result, General McKiernan reports both to NATO and to the US Central Command (CENTCOM), which is commanded by General David Petraeus.

235. President-elect Obama has already reaffirmed America's commitment to Afghanistan, and has pledged to increase military and non-military US resources devoted to Afghanistan.

#### *United Nations*

236. The UN presence in Afghanistan during the Taleban era was essential in providing basic humanitarian services, such as food aid and drinking water, to up to 50% of the population. UN staff were forced to leave Kabul (for the second time) in December 2000, leaving UN operations drastically reduced, and run by Afghan staff who faced hostility and obstruction from Taleban officials.

237. The United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established through UNSCR 1401 on 28 March 2002 in support of the Bonn agreement and the interim Afghan Government. UNAMA was also mandated to manage all humanitarian, relief and reconstruction activities. UNAMA's staff and resources were increased accordingly as the mission expanded. In 2005, the Security Council bestowed additional roles on UNAMA—to provide political and strategic advice in support of the peace process, and to promote international engagement with Afghanistan. In 2008, UNAMA's mission was redefined. In addition to the core activities outlined above, the Mission's mandate was further focussed on co-ordination, political outreach, support for sub-national governance (including human rights), humanitarian aid, elections and co-operation with ISAF.

238. UNAMA has increased the size of its mission in Kabul, and now has regional offices operating in seven provincial cities—Bamiyan, Gardez, Herat, Jalalabad, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz. UN specialist agencies, including the World Food Programme, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Health Organisation now have permanent operations across the country. UN operations have greatly increased the amount of humanitarian assistance reaching ordinary Afghans in need.

239. The UK has been a strong supporter of UNAMA. We have made this clear in the UN Security Council, both publicly and with behind the scenes lobbying of other Security Council members. We have also made our support for a UN co-ordinating role clear at major international conferences on Afghanistan. We provide a significant proportion of UN funding through our assessed contributions, and have pushed key partners in the UN system to provide additional resources to UNAMA as quickly as possible.

240. As part of the wider drive to have an integrated and civilian-led international approach to assisting the Government of Afghanistan, supporting the UN's role in international co-ordination remains a priority. Parts of the UN system remain to be convinced that Afghanistan should be a priority issue for the UN. As a result, the UN's operations on the ground in Afghanistan need continued support from the international community, and depend on the Afghan Government and ISAF providing sufficient security conditions. Expanding the UN's operations to cover more provinces will enable more comprehensive and effective support to the Afghan people and Government.

241. We remain strongly supportive of the UN's central role in Afghanistan and continue to work closely with UNAMA in Kabul and the provinces of Afghanistan, and are looking to provide practical support, where possible, including on staffing. We are working to step up this cooperation as the UN expands its effort in the region, including to Helmand.

#### *EU*

242. The EU has contributed substantially to the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan, disbursing \$5.2 billion between 2002 and mid-2008 (between member states and the Commission). An additional \$2.3 billion has been pledged for the period 2008–11. 16 EU embassies have opened in Kabul and 25 EU nations are contributors to ISAF, with 10 PRTs led by EU nations. The EU has also established a major police reform mission, EUPOL, which is making a substantial contribution to improvements in the rule of law. The EU sent an election observation mission to Afghanistan for the elections in 2004. Its thorough and rigorous observation of the process, and subsequent declaration on the conduct of the elections contributed to Afghan and international recognition that the process was free and fair.

243. The UK contributes financially to all of the above EU initiatives through its assessed contributions and some discretionary payments, such as paying the salary of 15 UK personnel in EUPOL. The UK is the largest bilateral donor to Afghanistan among EU nations and has been one of the major advocates of increased EU contributions to Afghanistan, both in terms of military burden sharing and development support. Much of our consultation with European partners over the last seven years has focused on

encouraging them to contribute more to security, reconstruction and development. The UK has also played a key role in harmonising international policy on Afghanistan, using its unique position to bring together US, European and other approaches.

244. The EU must continue to improve its internal co-ordination (particularly between the EU Special Representative, EUPOL and the European Commission) and its interaction with other international actors. One of the ways in which the UK believes that internal co-ordination can be improved is through the “double-hatting” of the roles of EU Special Representative and Head of European Commission delegation in Afghanistan. The EU can improve its influence and standing within Afghanistan by harmonising its political messaging and using its substantial financial and logistical support to leverage policy progress from the Afghan Government in return for its assistance. It can also support national capacity-building better by channelling more of its funds through national budgets.

#### *Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)*

245. The OSCE also contributed election assessment missions during Afghan elections in 2004 and 2005, jointly realised by its own Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and OSCE Secretariat. However, Afghanistan is a “Partner for Co-operation” rather than a full member and thus it was not assessed against full OSCE election standards. Instead, the ODIHR compiled confidential technical recommendations which it submitted to the Afghan authorities. Since 2005 the ODIHR has maintained a relationship with the Government of Afghanistan.

246. The OSCE first considered broader engagement on Afghanistan at the Ministerial meeting in December 2007. The Secretary-General, Marc Perrin de Brichambaut, briefed the OSCE Security Committee with preliminary ideas on 31 March 2008, with a set of 16 proposed projects issued in a June 2008 report. The proposed projects focus on the northern border of Afghanistan, with the aim of providing counter-narcotics training for Afghan police and security forces, in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Two of the projects are located in Afghanistan which has caused significant debate among OSCE participating states. Owing to these continuing disagreements the OSCE has not yet reached a decision on border security projects.

247. The UK has been supportive of OSCE efforts in the region, while advocating the need for OSCE projects to be co-ordinated with pre-existing international police and border security assistance programmes, stressing that it is for the Afghan Government to decide what training they want. We believe that for training to be most effective, it should be delivered in country, as the Afghan Government has requested. Support for the Afghan elections should be a clear priority for the OSCE in 2009. The OSCE has the expertise and experience to assist in the effective delivery of legitimate elections, building on its contribution in 2004 and 2005.

248. The UK will continue to support an OSCE focus on Afghanistan, particularly election assistance for 2009, but also efforts by OSCE members to identify other ways the OSCE can add value in co-ordination with the broader international community. Given the number of international partners active in Afghanistan, it will be important that OSCE work is carefully co-ordinated with the wider international community.

#### *Burden Sharing*

249. When the UN first authorised the deployment of an international force, following the Bonn Conference in December 2001, there were 19 troop contributing nations, led by the UK. By August 2003, when NATO took over ISAF, there were 30 countries contributing 5,000 troops. By the end of 2006, when ISAF completed expansion throughout Afghanistan, there were 36,000 troops from 37 countries. There are now (as at December 2008) 41 countries contributing around 52,000 troops. 37,000 of those troops are located in the less stable Regional Commands South and East. The UK is the second largest troop contributing nation, with around 8,300 troops.

250. In laying out the UK’s long-term comprehensive framework for Afghanistan in his Statement to Parliament on 12 December 2007, the Prime Minister noted the need for greater burden sharing by all partners and allies, shifting our emphasis from short term stabilisation to long term development. To that end, UK diplomatic effort has been deployed in encouraging others to increase their share of the military, civilian and financial burden in Afghanistan.

251. Recent announcements from allies have included the commitment by the US, by far the biggest contributor, to deploy an additional Battalion and Brigade Combat Team. Germany has recently renewed its mandate and increased the ceiling of its commitments to 4,500 troops. In December 2008 Japan extended the mandate for their refuelling tanker serving OEF. The French provided an extra battalion of forces following the 2008 NATO Summit. The Canadians are to enhance the air support capability in Kandahar. And the Estonians have extended their mission to Afghanistan, increasing their commitment from 150 to 170 troops. However, the Dutch and Canadians have recently announced the extension of their current mandates only until 2010 and 2011 respectively, after which they intend to play different, likely non-combat, roles in Afghanistan.

252. NATO, through the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements identifies the troops and material required to conduct the mission. This was updated prior to a Global Force Generation Conference on 4–5 November 2008. Amongst others, there are currently shortfalls in the required numbers of OMLT training teams for the ANA and helicopters. The UK provides seven of the 73 OMLTs required by the Statement of Requirements and has lobbied allies to provide additional OMLTs to meet the current shortfall (approximately 20). There are now 23 countries that either contribute to or have pledged to contribute to OMLTs. However, as the ANA expands, there will be an increasing requirement for more.

253. In 2008, the UK and France launched an initiative that allows countries who have the financial ability to support others (mostly Eastern European countries) who have the helicopter airframes to deploy to Afghanistan and elsewhere. To date, approximately €20 million have been pledged by nine countries (Iceland, Luxembourg, France, Finland, Lithuania, Norway, Denmark, Australia and UK). A number of other countries have offered in-kind donations, including Ukraine, the US, France, Estonia, Italy and Spain. The Czech Republic has donated 12 helicopter airframes to the ANA Air Corps. Six of these are now in Afghanistan and a further six have been refurbished and are awaiting transportation. Hungary, Bulgaria and Ukraine have all formally indicated a desire to make use of the initiative to increase the deployability of their helicopters.

254. Several countries place caveats on their forces. Caveats take the form of restrictions or limitations on what individual nations' military forces are permitted to do, ie only conduct operations in certain regions of Afghanistan or only conduct certain types of operation. These often reflect political sensitivities or practical limitations. However, they also limit Commander ISAF's flexibility to deliver the mission. There are no caveats on UK Forces and the UK continues to lobby other countries on their use of caveats.

## STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

### *International community communications*

255. In 2001 the international community was united in its public condemnation both of the September 11th terrorist attacks and of the role that the Taleban regime had played in harbouring those who had planned and executed those attacks. The message was clear: it was in the interests of international security to remove the Taleban regime. The Bonn Conference at the end of 2001 allowed the international community to coalesce around and support a clear Afghan articulation of the situation and plan for the transition.

256. As the coalition grew and the NATO mandate expanded beyond Kabul, the shape of the mission also evolved. The more stable security situation in the north and west enabled reconstruction and development to take place more rapidly. This meant that whilst some nations were telling their home audiences that their role in Afghanistan was primarily about rebuilding, other domestic audiences were focused on military action against the insurgency.

257. Communications was not seen as a priority by NATO/ISAF or many of its member states until 2006–07. NATO in Brussels and ISAF in Afghanistan were under-resourced in terms of staff (both on the media and strategic communications sides) and financial resources. As late as 2006, NATO had only one officer devoted to Afghanistan communications. However, by January 2008 this had increased to 14.

258. It is clear from debate between NATO, ISAF and individual member states that the international community has now shifted its understanding of communications. There is now a shared recognition that whilst showing military progress in domestic media is important in maintaining morale at home, communications are also a strategic tool to help deliver policy objectives in-country. There is also greater consensus that communications must be treated as a key element of counter-insurgency operations, and that co-ordinating all these different aspects of communications is vital.

259. Within NATO, the UK is seen as one of the leading nations on strategic communications. In 2006–07, the UK pushed hard to ensure NATO stepped up its communications efforts on Afghanistan. We hosted the first NATO Public Affairs conference on Afghanistan in May 2007. We were also the first to provide Voluntary National Contributions to help NATO build its Joint Media Operations Centre. The UK still staffs several of the key communications posts within ISAF and RC(S) headquarters.

260. In London, the UK Government chairs the RC(S) working group on strategic communications. However, the distinction between OEF military actions and ISAF military actions is often still unclear to both Afghan and UK/international audiences. This risks creating confusion about why international combat forces are in Afghanistan and under what mandate they are operating.

261. Every civilian casualty incident caused by international forces risks undermining the international effort and the credibility of the Afghan Government. The current Commander of ISAF, General McKiernan, has stated that he sees the issue of civilian casualties as his most important strategic communications challenge. The international community has worked to achieve quicker, co-ordinated and authoritative public responses to any such incident, but more remains to be done in this regard.

262. Ensuring domestic audiences understand that their governments are playing a role in a coherent international community effort is important in maintaining domestic support in key allies for the mission. To do this, media coverage needs to be wider than the purely military story: it needs to show context and

what the mission is aiming to achieve. Ensuring a greater share of the burden (including non-military) is borne by international partners will rely on sustained public willingness in contributing nations to support action in Afghanistan.

263. It has become increasingly apparent that security in Pakistan is crucial to security in Afghanistan. In light of this, a widening of the international strategic communications effort is needed in order to reduce misunderstandings and suspicion, by establishing a strong parallel ISAF narrative on the Pakistani side of the border. This must show that the Afghan counter-insurgency effort is crucial to Pakistan's own security and stability, and must be done in a way that is sensitive to the unique political, social and security structures in Pakistan.

264. Closer working with the UN is needed to harmonise messaging. On elections and development issues, this is already happening. But we need to work more closely to ensure we maximise the effect of our joint efforts.

265. One of the UK's key strategic communications objectives is to see more coherent and consistent messaging from Afghanistan's international partners about the international mission in Afghanistan (in their own domestic media). Equally, in the Afghan context, we are keen to see more "Afghanisation" of communications, with the Afghan authorities speaking directly and authoritatively to the Afghan people.

#### *UK Support*

266. Since 2001 the scope of the reconstruction task and the nature of the security challenge in Afghanistan have become progressively clearer to the British public. This has been combined with the effect on public morale of the British military death toll and a lack of clear public understanding about why the UK's engagement in Afghanistan is in the national interest.

267. This has led many in the UK to question how attainable the international community's vision for a free, stable and secure Afghanistan is, and whether British sacrifices in Afghanistan are worthwhile. A preponderance of "bad news" stories in the UK media (insurgency violence and British casualties) pose an ongoing challenge. In November 2008 the UK media gave prominence to a BBC omnibus polling question finding that 68% of the British public want British troops out of Afghanistan within the next year.

268. Data from ongoing Ipsos MORI polling commissioned by the MOD suggests that this is not necessarily the case, showing 52% of British adults supporting the UK military presence in Afghanistan as of October 2008. However, we are not complacent about the importance of maintaining UK public understanding of and support for our mission in Afghanistan.

269. The British media are interested in more "kinetic" military coverage and in focusing on Helmand—this is understandable given the scale of the UK military effort and the concentration of it in Helmand. However, this can give the British public a skewed picture of the overall security situation and of the progress being made in Afghanistan as a whole. A continued effort to raise the profile of the Afghan authorities in the UK is also necessary, so that the British public believes they are fit to govern, worth supporting and ultimately capable of carrying more of the fight themselves.

270. In the UK Afghanistan Communications Strategy, the support of the UK population and Parliament for Government objectives in Afghanistan is identified as a key strategic communications outcome. The UK strategy in this case rests on deepening domestic understanding of why we are in Afghanistan and what we are achieving, through broadening coverage beyond a kinetic focus and presenting a clear, realistic picture.

271. The UK has put structures in place to deliver more effective, varied and innovative programmes of media visits to Afghanistan, particularly looking beyond Kabul and Helmand, so that UK journalists can obtain a better picture of the situation in the country as a whole. We are also building strong relationships with the Afghan community in the UK, meeting them regularly and ensuring they understand the UK's position on Afghanistan. The aim is to make more Afghan voices available to the British media, to give greater depth to the public narrative about international efforts in Afghanistan. As part of this, we are supporting a conference in February bringing together UK and Europe-based Afghans to discuss security, development and human rights issues.

272. Our strategy involves focused cross-governmental outreach to interested groups within the UK audience, as well as an effort to keep the wider British public informed through the UK media, digital diplomacy (websites and blogs), outreach events, seminars, debates and visits. The FCO co-ordinates a regular NGO Contact Group meeting at which senior Government officials meet NGOs to brief them and discuss issues of concern; similarly, the FCO co-ordinates regular Parliamentary Roundtable events for Parliamentarians.

*The extremist narrative*

273. Military intervention by international forces in Afghanistan was a cause of concern to many in Muslim communities both in the UK and overseas. Extremists including Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have exploited this concern since 2001 when calling for attacks against the West, by arguing that military intervention in Afghanistan was part of some wider campaign against Islam. However, a wide range of commentators within the Islamic world do recognise that the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan is part of a complex nation-building and reconstruction effort.

274. We have implemented a programme of outreach to Muslim communities around the UK by Ministers and senior officials to engage on foreign policy issues. Recent outreach work by the Foreign Secretary has included a Question Time-style event with around 100 young British Muslims in Tower Hamlets. Senior government officials have recently taken part in roundtable events with British Muslims in Birmingham, Blackburn and Leicester as well as speaking at the Living Islam Camp in Lincolnshire on 19 July.

275. In addition the UK has put in place a programme of “Projecting British Islam” visits by prominent British Muslims to Muslim-majority countries. The aim is to provide a platform for British Muslims to share their experiences as Muslims in Britain today and engage in constructive dialogue and debate. An FCO-sponsored Projecting British Islam visit to Afghanistan in April 2008 was a good example of this. A media programme around the visit enabled the delegates to report back to UK audiences, helping to address possible misconceptions in British Muslim communities about what the UK is doing in Afghanistan.

276. The UK has also developed a grievances strand to their overseas counter-terrorism PREVENT strategy, designed to tackle such issues as aspects of foreign policy which may make an individual vulnerable to the radicalising global jihadist narrative. Examples of the work we are doing in this area include redrafting foreign policy public lines to rebut the conspiracy theories articulated by Al-Qaeda and linked extremists.

277. We have also worked hard to explain our foreign policy to the UK and international public in order to address inaccurate perceptions. We do this through media and public diplomacy work, including putting Arabic and Urdu-speaking spokespeople forward to media outlets such as Al Jazeera, and speeches, interviews and articles by Ministers and Ambassadors.

278. To break down Afghan misconceptions about UK life and the myths around UK motivations for intervening in Afghanistan, the UK strategy will continue to include public diplomacy and outreach efforts such as bilateral visits by prominent Muslim opinion-formers. The visit by Helmand Provincial Councillors to the UK, at the Government’s invitation, (4–11 June 2008) was a good example of the power of showing the diverse face of modern Britain to Afghan influencers. It is also important that the international community speaks coherently about its motives and actions in Afghanistan, and has the capacity to clarify disputed facts quickly, in order that international engagement in Afghanistan cannot be misconstrued.

*Afghanistan Government Communications*

279. Under Taliban rule, Afghanistan’s already minimal communications infrastructure was effectively destroyed. The Taliban’s hostility to modern media which they deemed “un-Islamic” included the prohibition of television sets, VCRs, satellite dishes, video and audio cassettes, and the Internet. Foreign newspapers and books were selectively banned, and there were very few regularly published newspapers. The Voice of Shariah, a Taliban radio station, broadcast only religious programming, although BBC Dari and Pashto broadcasts from outside the country were available. There were no laws providing for freedom of speech and of the press, and journalists were subject to restrictions, arrest and intimidation.

280. Although access to modern media remains very limited in Afghanistan (largely due to lack of electricity and the cost of telecommunications equipment), and low literacy rates mean many Afghans cannot access print media, the media landscape has changed enormously since 2001. There is a widespread demand for reliable and credible information.

281. The principles of free speech are enshrined in the Afghan constitution and further defined in a strong media law, passed by both Houses of Parliament in 2008. However the media law was opposed by the Palace and the Information Ministry and has not yet been implemented by the government.

282. There is a growing independent media sector in Afghanistan, although this is a fragile development. There are 60 local and national AM and FM radio stations (over 83% of Afghan households own a radio); 16 independent television stations, as well as the government-owned Afghanistan National Television; scores of local and national press publications; several independent Afghan news agencies and over half a million internet users.

283. In parallel with this there have been improvements in the Afghan Government’s own capacity to communicate credibly and authoritatively. The new Government Media and Information Centre (GMIC) in Kabul now provides an important platform for the Government to get its messages out to its people. It is part of the Office of the President’s Spokesperson, and the only government office working to co-ordinate public information efforts cross-governmentally and with international partners.

284. In Helmand, Governor Mangal is making impressive efforts to reach out to the Helmandi population both in person at shuras and over the radio. He is able to interact directly with them, react to events in the province and showcase progress in the province in a way that previous governors haven’t been

able to achieve. He has shown himself increasingly adept at getting positive messages out through both local and national media over the past year. His press team is coached and mentored by the CMMH Strategic Communications team.

285. The UK has contributed to international investment in the Afghan Government's communications capacity: the British Embassy in Kabul first proposed the concept of the GMIC, and helped to drive the project forward in concert with international partners. The start-up costs of \$1.3 million were shared equally between the UK, US and Canada, with a further \$174,000 from NATO: total UK spend on the GMIC up to April 2009 will be \$888,623. The Embassy has allocated £500,000 per financial year for 2009–10 and 2010–11 to support the GMIC, making a major contribution towards its estimated annual operating budget of \$2 million per annum. A communications consultant from the Embassy works regularly as a mentor at the GMIC. The UK is also supporting the GMIC with a UNDP-managed project aimed at building the capability of the Office of the President's Spokesperson and developing a government communications strategy (\$3.3 million from 2008–10).

286. The UK has contributed to the development of a still-fragile independent Afghan media by providing financial support for media development projects, delivered by organisations such as the BBC World Service Trust (BBC WST). For example in 2005 we provided £1.3 million (2005–08) in support to the BBC WST's launch of the weekly programme "Afghan Women's Hour", and the training of female Afghan reporters.

287. The UK also contributes to the BBC WST Afghan Education Projects (£250,000 in the 2008–09 financial year). This funds educational radio broadcasting initiatives such as "New Home, New Life", a popular radio drama produced in both Dari and Pashto, which has educational messages woven into its storylines. According to AEP research, nearly 75% of active Afghan radio listeners listen to "New Home, New Life" once a month or more.

288. The UK has also provided support for developing Afghanistan's communications infrastructure: for example, in the 2007–08 financial year the FCO allocated funding to the BBC WST for three extra FM radio transmitters to be constructed in southern Afghanistan. However, these are yet to be built as the BBC WST has not identified suitable sites or resolved security concerns around the project.

289. Lack of broadcast communications infrastructure remains a key challenge to better Afghan Government communications, and this limits its ability to reach as much of the Afghan populace as possible. Establishing a reliable electricity supply and protecting technical infrastructure from insurgency sabotage are examples of the kind of basic but necessary steps required to build a functioning communications environment.

290. Institutionalising the GMIC within the Afghan Government and standardising best communications practice across government departments will require reliable, long-term international funding and support. The Office of the President's Spokesperson currently offers little leadership, and the communications performance of Ministries is very varied. Ministries face practical communications challenges ranging from defunct press offices to intermittent electricity supply and lack of IT. Some Ministries which are central to the quality of peoples' lives fail to communicate with the Afghan public. There is currently no coherent international effort to help the Afghan Government address this situation, and the ANDS does not encompass government communications.

291. Ensuring that the Afghan Government implements the media law will also be a challenge: in areas of the country where rule of law remains weak, ensuring that the freedom of expression guaranteed by the Afghan Constitution is delivered is difficult. Journalists are still sometimes subject to intimidation and restrictions (both from the insurgency and the Government). Afghan Media Watch alleged that there had been 50 cases of violence against journalists during 2008–26 attributed to the Government, six to the Taleban and the rest unknown.

292. The Afghan Government increasingly has to contend with the insurgency's ability to wage sophisticated information warfare—the insurgency propaganda machine is highly reactive and not bound by the complexities of fact. "Traditional" communications channels (ie word of mouth) remain powerful, especially in the south of the country; in the absence of timely and authoritative government information, rumour and propaganda can easily dominate.

293. The UK Afghanistan Communications Strategy is clear that the first priority is to increase the Afghan Government's ability to communicate its credibility and authority, particularly in the Pashtun Belt (including through a developed private media sector). To this end, the UK will continue to support the Government in developing its communications capacity and capabilities, primarily through the GMIC but also through continuing investment in infrastructure development. The UK's aim in this respect is to support growing Afghan ownership of communications. We aim to work with the Afghan Government to establish a communications development plan as part of the ANDS. The British Embassy in Kabul is currently working on a two to three year development and funding plan for the GMIC with the Afghan Government and international supporters.

294. Improvements in security and rule of law, achieved both through international effort and increased Afghan capacity, will be necessary in order to deliver the conditions in which a free and independent media can thrive while the insurgency propaganda effort withers away.

295. The three major challenges for strengthening Afghan Government communications are that its ability and will to communicate with the public is weak, the independent Afghan media is inexperienced and fragile, and media penetration of much of the country is severely limited by lack of infrastructure. These problems are interlinked and the UK alone cannot remedy them effectively. The pressing need is for a coherent international programme to address all these issues simultaneously. Until such a programme is put in place, international efforts will continue to be dispersed, independent and therefore less effective.

296. Ensuring the continued growth and vibrancy of Afghanistan's private media sector will similarly require sustained international development investment, political pressure, and capacity-building through establishing centres of excellence for training and developing Afghan media.

#### CONCLUSION

297. A great deal has been achieved across Afghanistan as a whole since 2001, and also in Helmand and the South since the UK deployment in 2006. But the scale of the task and the complexity of many issues mean that there remains a long way to go and Afghanistan will continue to require significant international support for the foreseeable future. Given the situation in Afghanistan in 2001, progress to date—although slower than we would wish—has nonetheless been significant. The recent review of the UK Strategic Engagement in Afghanistan reconfirmed the validity of the three strategic objectives of the December 2007 strategy,<sup>15</sup> which frame our engagement in Afghanistan. However, the review also identified the need for a step change in Afghanistan including better focussing the international community's efforts on improving governance, reinvigorating the political process, encouraging Afghan-led efforts to promote reconciliation, and promoting the rule of law. Increasing Afghan institutional capacity remains a top priority and will be key to effectively and sustainably countering the insurgency.

298. Our efforts are focussed on supporting the Government of Afghanistan's delivery of its core functions—at national, provincial and district levels—in order to connect more closely with its people and provide economic growth and jobs. This rationale underpins our focus on the twin track approaches of Afghanisation and Localisation.

299. Security continues to be a major preoccupation. Recognising that security is about more than physical military presence, we are working to increase the Afghan State's capacity to deliver justice and basic services in order to drive a wedge between the people and the insurgency. Maintaining security and keeping up the pressure on the insurgency will also remain important.

300. As reflected in the first objective of the December 2007 strategy, it will only be possible to deliver sustainable progress in Afghanistan if the international community adequately addresses the regional dimension, including but not exclusively, Pakistan. The UK's Afghanistan strategy is increasingly being taken forward as part of the UK Government's approach to the wider region and we are giving our full support to proposals from the incoming US Administration for a regional envoy.

301. The UK and the Afghan Government's aim should be to deliver progressively improved governance on the back of Presidential elections in 2009 and parliamentary elections in spring of 2010, from which sufficient momentum can be generated that prepares the way to begin transition to greater Afghan primacy and ownership.

23 January 2009

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#### **Submission by Colonel (retired) Christopher Langton OBE, Senior Fellow for Conflict, the International Institute for Strategic Studies**

The United Kingdom's military involvement in the conflict in Afghanistan began in 2001. The original objective and rationale for the deployment of troops was in order to dislodge the Taliban regime which was hosting international terrorist organisations which posed, and still do, a direct threat to UK national security. The need to remain involved in order to prevent a return to the "status quo ante bellum" has meant that other missions have emerged. Principally these involve nation-building in order to allow a legitimate government to take full control of all aspects of governance and the rule of law; and dealing with aspects of counter insurgency such as the illicit trade in drugs.

The ousted Taliban and other non-state militant groups with jihadist tendencies have been able to relocate themselves in "safe havens" in Pakistan with relative ease. In the same way it should be considered probable that international terrorist elements would return to Afghanistan should the opportunity arise. Although there is a question—"how likely is it that a new Taliban regime in Afghanistan would allow itself to host al-Qaeda and affiliates given the consequences it suffered before in 2001?" But if the assumption is that there is a high probability that this would happen, the deployment of international forces remains essential as a buffer against the re-emergence of Afghanistan as a state held hostage by terrorist groups. The question is "are international forces, military and civilian, being used correctly with emphasis being placed in the right areas?" A second question is "what if the UK objective is to prevent Afghanistan returning to

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<sup>15</sup> Reduce the insurgency on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border; Prevent the return of Al-Qaeda; Build a legitimate self-sufficient state which can pursue the first two objectives itself.

its previous state". It must be expected that troops will have to be committed in significant quantities for some time to come. Such is the nature of counter insurgency operations which aim to capture human rather than geographical territory. Troops are enablers in this respect and not the deliverers of a final result. This lies in the hands of other agencies which provide the means for a nation shattered by 30 years of war to govern itself.

The UK military component is stretched. It is less obvious that the civilian agencies are operating at the levels of commitment on the ground, which are required by the mission. It is appreciated that this is easier said than done. However, it is the civilian component which provides the means that will eventually enable a reduction in military effort.

The UK remains the lead G8 partner nation in the fight against the illicit trade in drugs. So far there has been little real progress towards a sustainable reduction in poppy cultivation and heroin production. One reason is that, yet again, there is disagreement among donors on how to deal with the problem. A common strategy has to be found and implemented. At the same time it is argued that the whole trade has to be tackled and not just the "production" end. More should be invested in dealing with the problem in transit and in the market. To attack the "business model" of traffickers is more likely to produce results than an attempt to reduce cultivation alone. Neighbouring countries such as Iran have a vested interest in this respect and should be involved. But drugs are not the sole means of income for the insurgency; the "black market" generally produces the income needed by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. This includes human trafficking, and trafficking in luxury goods amongst other forms of revenue production. Perhaps a holistic approach to the financing of the insurgency should be examined. Furthermore, corrupt officials and others not involved directly with insurgents receive a large percentage of the money made through the traffic and have yet to be dealt with. Trafficking benefits from weak border security. The borders of Afghanistan are poorly controlled. Due to topography total security can never be achieved. But it can be considered feasible that the main trade routes used by an increasing volume of container traffic can be better managed. This requires co-operation with neighbours and particularly with Pakistan which hosts the emerging container port of Gwadar.

Afghanistan's poor relations with Pakistan make this difficult and heighten tensions making cross-border insurgency and smuggling easier. It can be argued that the UK is uniquely positioned to improve the poor relationship with Pakistan being a member of the Commonwealth and closely connected to the large diaspora in this country. Yet this fact heightens Kabul's suspicions of UK intentions—at least rhetorically. However, the UK relationship with both Pakistan and India is important too with respect to Afghanistan as Islamabad accuses New Delhi of establishing a presence in what it calls its "strategic depth"—namely Afghanistan. The role of the UK in calming tensions between India and Pakistan remains increasingly vital in this context as well as the historical sense.

There is confusion in Afghan governmental circles over the myriad of policies and strategies being adopted by different international donors. The lack of a common strategy hinders progress and a unified military command is long overdue. The adoption of unilateral country approaches to aspects of the overall mission confuses and gives rise to suspicion. For example, the UK has been criticised for its approach to operations in Helmand and for negotiating with insurgent elements.

It was hoped that the appointment of Kai Eide as UN Special Representative would bring more cohesion to the international effort. This has not happened to date and the profile of the UN as the one international body capable of energising nation-building remains small. Questions have been asked as to why some of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) do not fall under the UN. It is possible that a "blue beret" presence would provide less grounds for insurgents to claim they are fighting "invaders" and thus remove one of their main recruiting slogans.

A political settlement in Afghanistan is a long way from being achieved. The Taliban have some constituency and eventually an accommodation may have to be found as is frequently the case in this type of conflict. But the current terms of the Quetta Shura are unacceptable to Kabul. Attempts to find common ground should continue to be sought as an outright victory is unlikely to be brought about by the current Afghan government and its allies. This year is likely to be crucial in deciding a political future for Afghans; and it is essential that elections—if held—are successful. The Taliban will concentrate on disrupting the process and it is assessed that there is voter fatigue as well as dissatisfaction with the failures of government to improve the lives of people. Perhaps a more flexible approach to the electoral process should be found. The Single Non-Transferable Voting system is vulnerable to disruption. Afghans have their own form of traditional democracy based on the Shura at village level. This system has lost its traditional power during the period since 2001; but to allow some voting through this mechanism could bring back authority at a local level and allow more people to vote.

Finally, a crucial role for the UK is in its diplomatic efforts to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan, and Pakistan and Afghanistan. There is a growing sense that these tensions could run out of control. For this reason and the prevention of a re-emergence of international terrorist bases the UK and allies have to remain committed to the Afghanistan mission. This will take time and resources and some re-examination of policy and strategy. Arguably that policy and strategy should be better co-ordinated with allies.

### Submission from Rizwan Iqbal

1. Dear members of the Foreign Affairs Committee my name is Rizwan Iqbal, I confess I am not an expert on Afghanistan/Pakistan, or military tactics, or foreign policy, I am actually training to become an accountant. I am writing to you as a concerned citizen of this country, I am concerned because this country is a member of a coalition that is attacking another ally by drone attacks. I ask this committee if Pakistan is an ally in this war on terror then why US/NATO/ISAF forces continue to employ drone attacks against Pakistan?

2. My submission is specific to drone attack in Pakistan. The war in Afghanistan seems to have no military end and the war is spreading into Pakistan just like the war spread into Cambodia and Laos during the Vietnam War. I would like to inform the committee that I recently visited Pakistan, and I sensed growing anger in Pakistan partly due to drone attacks by US/NATO/ISAF forces operating in Afghanistan. I urge the UK government to reject, publicly, the use of drone attacks in Pakistan, and urge its allies in Afghanistan to show restraint. If credible intelligence concludes that a terrorist is hiding in Pakistan then this intelligence should be shared with the Pakistanis so that they can act on their side of the border.

3. I suggest this committee speak with people who understand Pashtun traditions and customs, and people who have travelled in the Tribal Belt. Only by understanding will be able to work with the Pashtun's in bringing terrorists to justice. I would like to recommend individuals who, I believe, are experts in this field. I have heard Imran Khan, the chairman of Pakistan Threek-e-Insaf, speak at great lengths about what is happening in the Tribal Belt and I feel that his input is important as he understands the people, and he has travelled to the Tribal Belt. I also recently read Robert Fisk's book *The War for Civilisation* and feel his input will be valuable as he has been to Afghanistan and reported from areas that have suffered from wars.

20 January 2009

### Submission by Adam Roberts

1. The central question that is explored in this submission is: what are the implications of wars in Afghanistan for international security—not only in the region but also more generally? The central question can be approached by looking first into four related questions about wars in Afghanistan and their influence on international security.

- What have been the effects of previous wars in Afghanistan, particularly in the 19th century and in the Soviet period 1979–89, on regional and international security?
- How should the almost continuous wars in Afghanistan since 1989 be characterized, and what have been the effects of their Pakistan dimension?
- What have been the roles of the United Nations in the long-running Afghan crisis, including in its post 2001 post-conflict peace-building role and in assisting the return of refugees?
- In the war since 2001, what problems have there been in fitting Western military doctrines, practices and institutions to Afghan realities? What has been the role of air power? How has NATO performed in this unanticipated commitment? Are counter-insurgency doctrines fit for purpose in Afghanistan? And how can progress be judged?

2. The exploration of the fourth question, which forms the main part of this survey, leads on to the concluding discussion of the actual and possible future effects of the war on international security, including on the United States, the United Nations and NATO. Some policy choices are briefly summarized. They involve a difficult underlying issue: whether to go with the grain of Afghan society, with all the compromises that would be involved; or to continue with a modernising and centralising project which is alien to Afghan traditions, and important aspects of which are increasingly in trouble?

3. I am President-elect of the British Academy and Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for International Studies in Oxford University's Department of Politics and International Relations. I am also an Emeritus Fellow of Balliol College, Oxford. I was the Montague Burton Professor of International Relations at Oxford University from 1986 to the end of 2007. I have written extensively about international security, war, and international law and organization.

4. This paper is a product of research conducted under the auspices of the Oxford University Leverhulme Programme on the Changing Character of War. It is based on a presentation at the US Naval War College International Law Department experts' workshop on "The War in Afghanistan", 25–27 June 2008, and a version will appear in due course in Michael N Schmitt (ed), *The War in Afghanistan: A Legal Analysis* (Newport, Rhode Island: US Naval War College International Law Studies vol 85). A shortened version of this paper is "Doctrine and Reality in Afghanistan", *Survival*, London, vol 51, no 1, February to March 2009. I am grateful to Alex Alderson, Jeremy Allouche, Rob Johnson, John Nagl, Hew Strachan, Astri Suhrke and Susan Woodward for their comments on earlier drafts of this paper. The usual disclaimer, that all responsibility for error is mine and mine alone, applies with particular force in this case.

## A. LESSONS FROM AFGHAN WARS UP TO 1989

*The 19th Century and after*

5. Many modern wars, including that in Afghanistan, fit quite well the general description of colonial conflicts offered by Major C E Callwell of the Royal Artillery in 1899 in his justly famous manual *Small Wars*. Callwell himself had served during the closing stages of the Second Anglo-Afghan War, when he marched through the Khyber Pass to join the Kabul field force.<sup>16</sup> It was on the basis of experience that he wrote two decades later:

Small wars are a heritage of extended empire, a certain epilogue to encroachments into lands beyond the confines of existing civilization, and this has been so from early ages to the present time. Conquerors of old penetrating into the unknown encountered races with strange and unconventional military methods and trod them down, seizing their territory; revolts and insurrections followed, disputes and quarrels with tribes on the borders of the districts overcome supervened, out of the original campaign of conquest sprang further wars, and all were vexatious, desultory, and harassing. And the history of those small wars repeats itself in the small wars of to-day.<sup>17</sup>

6. In the 19th century the British army was involved in two major campaigns in Afghanistan, in 1839–42 and 1878–80. The first, fought ostensibly to assist a weak ruler and to provide a friendly buffer state on India's north-west border, was a hubristic enterprise that was marked by disaster—the wiping out of a reduced garrison as it struggled back to the Khyber Pass.<sup>18</sup> The second war, which was fought to counter-balance Russian influence in Afghanistan, provided evidence that apparent success in Afghanistan can be quickly followed by uprisings and setbacks. The British, having defeated the Afghan state, had no political solution except to appoint a suitable “warlord” as head of state. What did Callwell have to say specifically about the type of war that had been encountered in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the late nineteenth century? His words are as pertinent today as when they were penned over a century ago:

With the capture of the capital any approach to organized resistance, under the direct control of the head of the State, will almost always cease; but it does not by any means follow that the conflict is at an end. . . . [T]he French experiences in Algeria, and the British experiences in Afghanistan, show that these irregular, protracted, indefinite operations offer often far greater difficulties to the regular armies than the attainment of their original military objective.<sup>19</sup>

7. The wars in Afghanistan in the 19th century have been the foundation for a view of the country and its peoples—especially the latter—as unusually resistant to any kind of foreign influence or control, actual or perceived. David Loyn, the veteran BBC reporter on Afghanistan who has charted these previous conflicts, argues that mistakes are being repeated today because of a neglect of the study of history. He charges that the US and Britain have failed to understand the extent of resistance in Afghanistan to anything that looks like foreign control. It follows, states Loyn, that it is necessary for outsiders to accept a very limited role, and to negotiate with the Taliban.<sup>20</sup> This is one important perspective on wars in Afghanistan. However, it should not be taken to imply that there is uniform hostility to all foreign influence.

8. Twentieth-century Afghan history was characterized not only by wars against foreigners, such as the Third Anglo-Afghan War of May 1919, but also by civil wars, assassinations and coups, as in the conflict of 1928–31 and the seizures of power by Daud Khan in 1953 and 1973. Throughout the twentieth century, there was a continuous interplay between the development of constitutional government and the continuation of political violence. The role of the Pashtun peoples in Afghanistan was one of many bones of contention. The political culture of Afghanistan was characterized by state weakness and general instability.

*The Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979–89*

9. The war in 1979–89 between the Soviet-backed government of Afghanistan and its mujahidin adversaries had major effects on international politics. In particular, the war had a vast impact in the Soviet Union. It accentuated the Soviet Union's sense of imperial overstretch; contributed to a decline of faith in the use of force to maintain the empire; and accentuated doubts about a central purpose of Soviet foreign policy—the maintenance of a network of dependent, demanding and hardly popular socialist regimes in an assortment of countries around the world. It formed part of the background to the role of civil resistance movements in central and eastern Europe pursuing their struggles by non-violent means to a successful outcome in 1989. In short, the Afghan war contributed to the collapse of the Soviet empire. This very fact is not only proof of the fateful consequences that may flow from war in Afghanistan, but is also one driver of the present war. Osama Bin Laden has made no secret of his belief that, having helped to destroy the Soviet Union, he aims to do the same for the US. One down, one to go! This was not the only case of post-Cold War

<sup>16</sup> T R Moreman, “Callwell, Sir Charles Edward (1859–1928)”, in H C G Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> Maj C E Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (first published 1896), rev edn (London: HMSO, 1899), p 5.

<sup>18</sup> For an account of the retreat from Kabul in January 1842 see Saul David, *Victoria's Wars: The Rise of Empire* (London: Viking, 2006), pp 55–67.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p 16.

<sup>20</sup> David Loyn, *Butcher & Bolt: Two Hundred Years of Foreign Engagement in Afghanistan* (London: Hutchinson, 2008).

hubris—there were also many variants of this condition elsewhere, including in the British and American governments—but it was a notably severe one. Bin Laden’s interpretation of events led him to 9/11 and engulfed Afghanistan in continuing war.

10. There were other ways in which the Soviet-Afghan War led to subsequent wars. The channelling of much international aid to mujahidin groups through Pakistan reinforced the fateful link between events in Pakistan and those in Afghanistan. The power of non-state groups and regional military chiefs, and their tendency to rely on threats and uses of force not controlled by any state, became more deeply engrained than before in both Afghanistan and the frontier areas of Pakistan. The religious element in Afghan politics—which was particularly prominent in the struggle against Soviet influence, and was encouraged by the outside powers that provided much-needed finance and weapons for the mujahidin—did not disappear with the departure of Soviet forces in 1989. Indeed, within a few years religious warriors trained in the hard school of combat against Soviet forces in Afghanistan were to turn up in a wide range of other locations, including in the former Yugoslavia.

11. These legacies of the war against Soviet control remain most important in Afghanistan itself. The problem of non-state violence, regional rivalries, and the religious element in politics are not new to Afghanistan, but they were reinforced. Long-held suspicions towards certain types of foreign presence remained prominent.

#### B. THE WARS IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE 1989

12. The current multi-faceted and complex situation in Afghanistan is best understood as the continuation of a protracted war over the country’s future which began many years before 2001. Understanding its character is important not only for developing military and political policy in the country, but also for understanding its likely impact on international security generally. There are fundamental differences of understanding about its nature.

13. Whether viewed as a war or a stabilization mission, there is a tendency to present the situation as a conflict between an essentially progressive cause represented by the Karzai government in Kabul on the one side, and two reactionary Islamist forces on the other: the Taliban and al-Qaeda. This view may be too simple in its views both of the Afghan government and of its opponents. Most strikingly, it tends to overstate the effectiveness of the Afghan government. It also understates the importance of ethnic/linguistic divisions within Afghanistan, where the largest ethnic group, the Pashtuns, constitute over 40% of the population. Elements of Afghan and Pashtun nationalism play a significant part in the resistance to the Afghan government and its foreign backers. A review of the 20 years’ crisis in Afghanistan since the Soviet withdrawal, and of the place of Pakistan in that crisis, is necessary for an understanding of the nature of this war.

#### *The crisis since 1989*

14. Following the withdrawal of the last Soviet forces from Afghanistan in January 1989, an internal crisis and civil war erupted. Indeed, the civil war can be traced back further, and can be said to have begun in about 1978.<sup>21</sup> It has never really ended. Throughout the two decades since 1989 there have been continuing regional rivalries, involvement of outside powers in support of particular factions, and ongoing conflict between modernizers and Islamists. There have been two moments when the conflict was viewed by some as having ended—after the Taliban victory in September 1996 and after the Northern Alliance victory in December 2001.<sup>22</sup> However, on both occasions the conflict continued in new forms.

15. This first phase of Afghanistan’s long-running war following the departure of Soviet forces was only partially concluded on 26 September 1996 when Kabul fell to the Taliban, which established a theocratic style of government throughout the areas under their control and in 1997 renamed the country “Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan”. Then and thereafter the Northern Alliance continued to control an area of northern Afghanistan and to challenge Taliban rule.

16. From 7 October 2001 onwards, following the al-Qaeda attacks in the US of 11 September, direct US and coalition military intervention in Afghanistan changed the character of this continuing war. Of course it did not transform the situation completely: resistant to change as ever, rival warlords sought to maintain their fiefdoms against intervention unless it could offer more by extending the chance of collaboration. However, there was now an undeniably international war inside Afghanistan. There was not much doubt that this was, for a few months, an international war in the sense of a war between sovereign states—the US-led coalition v the Taliban government of Afghanistan. In November to December 2001 the US-led intervention, and the military campaign of the Northern Alliance, toppled the Taliban regime, which had been supported by al-Qaeda. This military action was widely though not universally viewed as a justifiable response to the Taliban for having allowed Afghan territory to be used for preparing attacks on the US, and additionally had the effect of freeing Afghanistan from an unpopular regime. Initially there was much popular support in Kabul and elsewhere for the incoming forces of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), but this situation was to change.

<sup>21</sup> Rob Johnson, *A Region in Turmoil: South Asian Conflicts since 1947* (London: Reaktion, 2005), p 166.

<sup>22</sup> The Northern Alliance, more correctly called the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan, is a loose association of regional groups founded in 1996 to fight against Taliban control of Afghanistan.

17. The international war of October to December 2001 had been superimposed on two other more enduring conflicts: the non-international armed conflict of the Taliban v Northern Alliance, and the US-led struggle against al-Qaeda terrorists. Both of these “other conflicts” continued. The war against al-Qaeda and related terrorists, who were now based in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, carried on without interruption. In addition, there was growing resistance in southern Afghanistan to the new regime. This insurgency began relatively slowly, so that its seriousness was not recognized for some time.

18. How should this resistance be characterized? It is commonly labelled as the Taliban insurgency—a description which may conceal the possibilities that the sources of support for the insurgency have been more numerous than the label “Taliban” suggests, or that the ideology of the Taliban may have evolved. The insurgent movement has drawn on elements of both Afghan and Pashtun nationalism; it has operated alongside traditional forms of social organization and systems of justice; its recruiting has been facilitated by Afghanistan’s high levels of unemployment and by the fact that it is able to pay its soldiers; and its willingness to support poppy cultivation not only increases its acceptance in certain provinces but also exposes the incoherence of the policies of the various NATO countries on this issue.<sup>23</sup> None of this is to suggest that all those forces labelled Taliban should be seen simply as heroic patriots or as Pashtun traditionalists. Ahmed Rashid has written:

The United States and NATO have failed to understand that the Taliban belong to neither Afghanistan or Pakistan, but are a lumpen population, the product of refugee camps, militarised madrassas, and the lack of opportunities in the borderland of Pakistan and Afghanistan. They have neither been true citizens of either country nor experienced traditional Pashtun tribal society. The longer the war goes on, the more deeply rooted and widespread the Taliban and their transnational milieu will become.<sup>24</sup>

19. Into this ongoing conflict a new element was added from 2005 onwards: the involvement in combat activities of contingents of the NATO-led ISAF. The original authorization of ISAF in 2001 had been “to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment”.<sup>25</sup> Initially in January 2002 the UK took the lead in organizing ISAF, followed at six-monthly intervals by other “lead states” until NATO as such took over in August 2003. ISAF’s remit gradually extended across Afghanistan, and in some provinces came to involve direct combat.<sup>26</sup> By 2006 ISAF comprised troops from 32 countries. Those deployed in the southern provinces of Afghanistan became increasingly geared to a counterinsurgency campaign. This campaign had not been part of ISAF’s original role: the transition to it, involving a gradual stretching of the initial mandate, resulted in some unavoidably uneven burden-sharing between NATO member states. Thus NATO had put itself in the unenviable position of staking its impressive reputation on the outcome of a distant and little-understood war in a country well known to be a graveyard for foreign military adventures.

20. The outsiders—military and civilian—involved in Afghanistan since 2001 have generally had short-term tours of duty. This has serious consequences. Few of them have learned the relevant languages, and there is remarkably limited institutional memory, especially as regards knowledge of local communities and political traditions.

21. One special feature of the ongoing war in Afghanistan that distinguishes it from certain other post-Cold War US involvements has been that the US-led forces had at the start significant allies within the country: originally the Northern Alliance, then the Government of Afghanistan. This made the Afghan involvement different from some of the other conflicts in which the US has been involved, including Iraq in the first years of the US-led presence and Somalia over a much longer period, in neither of which were there strong local forces in place with which to work.

22. However, this apparently favourable situation had inherent limitations and was vulnerable to change. Even after its capture of Kabul in December 2001, the Northern Alliance, which at the best of times was an unstable coalition, never controlled all of Afghanistan. The Afghan authorities conspicuously lacked the bureaucratic back-up that provides the essential underpinning of most governments around the world. The Pashtuns generally resented the Northern Alliance’s US-assisted victory; and when, around 2003–04, the Pashtuns came back strongly in the government (thanks to the new constitution and law on political parties), Afghan opinion critical of the US found a voice. Indeed, the boot was now on the other foot, with minorities complaining of Pashtun nationalism and structural exclusion. In short, the social foundations of the foreign presence in Afghanistan proved to be weaker than they had first seemed in 2001–02.

<sup>23</sup> On the Taliban’s history of supporting opium production, which became the mainstay of their war economy in the late 1990s, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: The Story of the Afghan Warlords* (London: Pan Books, 2001), pp 117–24.

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: How the War against Islamic Extremism is Being Lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), p 401.

<sup>25</sup> SC Res. 1386 of 20 December 2001, operative paragraph 1. Five months later SC 1413 of 23 May 2002 addressed ISAF’s entitlement to use force more explicitly, authorizing “the Member States participating in the International Security Assistance Force to take all necessary measures to fulfil the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force”.

<sup>26</sup> SC Res. 1510 of 13 October 2003 expanded ISAF’s sphere of operations to other parts of Afghanistan. By the end of 2006, now operating under NATO, it had responsibilities in virtually all Afghanistan.

23. In legal terms, there has been a tendency to focus attention on the question of whether particular aspects and phases of the ongoing war in Afghanistan should be characterised as “international”, “non-international” or something else. The main problem with debates on this topic is that the passion for pigeon-holing risks obstructing understanding of a complex reality. Actually the wars in Afghanistan have been all of these things. If one were forced to apply a single label to all their aspects, it would probably be “internationalized civil war”—an under-explored but important category of wars. Yet whichever of these terms is adopted has only limited relevance to, or effect on, policy-making. Although technically it is true that more rules apply to international war than to non-international armed conflict, in this case most of the powers involved in the war do at some level recognize the need for restraint in the conduct of the war—a matter discussed further below.

#### *The Pakistan factor*

24. Afghanistan’s neighbours—including China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan—all have legitimate interests in the country and its long-running conflicts. Many other states, including India and Russia, also have legitimate interests in whether Afghanistan can manage to stay together, make progress in development, and attract refugees back. Of all the relationships with other states, that with Pakistan is the most complex, and has contributed most to Afghanistan’s ongoing divisions.

25. All borders are artificial constructs created in peoples’ minds. Thus in itself it is hardly a remarkable statement to say that the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan—the Durand Line imposed by the British on a reluctant Afghan government in 1893—is artificial. What is significant about this border is that Pashtuns on either side of the line view it as artificial. This does not mean that they are committed to a definite idea of a new state of “Pashtunistan”, separate from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Rather it means that conflicts on either side of the line immediately acquire a cross-border and therefore an international dimension. What creates an issue, both for governments and peoples, is its chronic porousness, the existence of linked conflicts on both sides of it, the strength of the bonds of common identity and experience that link Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the inherent weakness of both of these states. It is too simple to say that the frontier areas of both states are ungovernable: they have their own systems of authority, which leave little room for control by the state.

26. Pakistan’s Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), which run along the border with Afghanistan, remain almost completely outside the control of the Pakistan government, and have provided fertile ground for the exercise of dominance by the Taliban and al-Qaeda. They are a legacy of empire. The British had also practised containment, occasional chastisement and periodic negotiation; and resistance meant that a final occupation was simply too expensive to justify in imperial terms. One remarkable feature of this situation is that successive Pakistan governments have had no counter-insurgency policy in these areas. Occasional sweeps and demonstrations of firepower are in no way a substitute for a serious policy aimed at gaining a degree of consent from the population or the power-brokers. The US has not used the power that ought to come with its generous support for Pakistan to persuade it to adopt a strategy in these areas. The FATA constitutes a haven for terrorists that is in some respects comparable to the one that existed in Afghanistan before 2001.

27. Overlapping with all this, and compounding the problem of relations between the two countries, is the fact that opinion in Pakistan generally on matters relating to the use of force has never favoured the US vision of the “war on terror”. A BBC World Service Poll in 23 countries, published in September 2008, when asking respondents to indicate their feelings regarding al-Qaeda, found high levels of support for it in Pakistan. This was combined with a mere 17% of Pakistanis stating that they had negative views of al-Qaeda—the lowest proportion of respondents in any of the countries polled.<sup>27</sup> However, this may reflect more a desire to take an anti-US position than an acceptance of terrorist bombings. Indeed, in four weeks in Autumn 2008 an anti-terror petition in Pakistan—“This is Not Us”—attracted almost 63 million signatures in what is possibly the biggest such lobby effort anywhere in the world.<sup>28</sup>

28. The Pakistan connection has deeply affected events in Afghanistan in all the wars there since the Soviet intervention in 1979. Throughout, Pakistan’s Interservices Intelligence (ISI) has had a major, and not always controlled, role. In the 1980s Pakistan, with massive Western support, provided crucial assistance for the anti-Soviet rebels in Afghanistan. Then from 1994 onwards there was extensive Pakistani official support for the Taliban movement in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

29. In the ongoing war in Afghanistan a number of consequences in the security field have flowed from the Pakistan connection. The first is that, since Pashtuns on either side of the border are more likely than most others to view the Western military presence in Afghanistan as illegitimate, there is inevitably a trans-border hinterland for the insurgency. Second, since Pashtuns play a large part in the Pakistan Army, and in the Frontier Corps which comes under the Ministry of Interior, there are built-in difficulties in Pakistan government attempts to impose the capital’s rule by force on the various Pashtun-inhabited

<sup>27</sup> “Al-Qaeda not Weakening—BBC Poll”, survey conducted 8 July to 12 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7638566.stm>.

<sup>28</sup> Saleed Shah, “Pakistanis United to Fight Extremism”, *The Guardian*, London, 10 October 2008, p 25.

<sup>29</sup> Rashid, *Taliban*, esp at pp 26–9, 45, 90–4 and 137–8.

areas.<sup>30</sup> As a consequence of these two factors, the insurgency in southern Afghanistan is likely for the foreseeable future to have safe base areas inside Pakistan. In sum, like so many border regions in the world, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border presents excellent opportunities for the organisation and continuation of insurgency.

30. This creates the third consequence of the Pakistan connection: the strong pressure on US military leaders to take the war unilaterally into the territory of Pakistan. US policy towards Pakistan notoriously lacks strategic coherence.<sup>31</sup> The fact that the US considers the Pakistani authorities unreliable, with certain elements willing to pass on intelligence to the US's enemies, means that the US military role on the territory of Pakistan cannot be based on close military cooperation. As a result, US military action in Pakistan is bound to be perceived as an infringement of Pakistan's sovereignty. The US killings of Pakistani soldiers in several such incidents, and the strong reactions to this in Pakistan, confirmed the chaotic and inflammatory character of the situation.<sup>32</sup> George Bush's presidential order of July 2008, authorizing US strikes in Pakistan without seeking the approval of the Pakistan government, while an understandable reaction to a troubling situation on the border, risks further destabilizing a country that is a crucial if deeply flawed ally.<sup>33</sup>

### C. THE MANY ROLES OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN AFGHANISTAN SINCE 1979

31. The United Nations has a long history of involvement in the conflicts in Afghanistan—and such a continuing commitment there that failure would impact on the UN's already tarnished reputation. There have been three main phases of UN involvement: during the Soviet War 1979–89, in the largely civil war of 1990–2001, and in the war since 2001 that continues today.

#### *UN roles during the Soviet War in Afghanistan, 1979–89*

32. During the Soviet war (1979–89) the main action was not in the Security Council: there the Soviet Union could veto any direct UN involvement in the conflict, so Council referred the matter to the General Assembly under the UN's "Uniting for Peace" procedure.<sup>34</sup> From then on the conflict was mainly handled in the General Assembly and in the office of the Secretary-General. In January 1980 the General Assembly called for "the immediate, unconditional and total withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan".<sup>35</sup> Subsequently, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, the UN initiated a "good offices" function to assist negotiations involving the Afghan and Soviet governments on the one hand, and Pakistan on the other. This led eventually to the April 1988 Geneva Accords on Afghanistan, which were a crucial landmark in the ending of the Cold War.<sup>36</sup> Later in 1988 the UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) was established.<sup>37</sup> This was the first UN peacekeeping mission since the establishment of UNIFIL in Lebanon in March 1978—evidence of the key part played by Afghan events in the post-Cold War re-emergence of the UN.

33. At the same time, the process of ending the Soviet involvement posed a classic dilemma for the UN. The internal conflict presented the delicate question of the extent to which the UN, as an organization of governments, could be seen to negotiate with rebel forces that were battling it out throughout the country. As Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar put it in 1988, it would be "against our philosophy to be in touch with the enemies of governments".<sup>38</sup> Yet that is exactly what the UN started to do in the following year, in the attempt to facilitate a comprehensive political settlement and to set up a broad-based government. In presenting the UN with this dilemma, the war in Afghanistan was truly characteristic of the post-Cold War era. The UN's limited success in persuading the parties to a largely internal conflict to agree a peace settlement would also be a harbinger of things to come.

<sup>30</sup> On the extent of Pakistani help to the Taliban, see Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos*; and Seth Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan* (California: RAND Corporation, June 2008), available at [http://www.rand.org/hot\\_topics/afghanistan.html](http://www.rand.org/hot_topics/afghanistan.html).

<sup>31</sup> For an indictment predicated on the assumption that a serious policy could be devised see US Government Accountability Office, *Combating Terrorism: The United States Lacks Comprehensive Plan to Destroy the Terrorist Threat and Close the Safe Haven in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas* (Washington DC: GAO, April 2008), available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08622.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> For a report on US killings of Pakistani forces in an incident on 10 June 2008, and on a visit to an area of Pakistan held by Taliban warlords, see Dexter Filkins, "Right at the Edge", *New York Times Magazine*, 7 September 2008.

<sup>33</sup> Eric Schmitt and Mark Mazzetti, "Bush Said to Give Orders Allowing Raids in Pakistan", *New York Times*, 10 September 2008.

<sup>34</sup> SC Res. 462 of 9 January 1980.

<sup>35</sup> GA Res. ES-6/2 of 14 January 1980.

<sup>36</sup> On the "good offices" negotiations over Afghanistan, see Thomas M. Franck and Georg Nolte, "The Good Offices Function of the UN Secretary-General", in Adam Roberts and Benedict Kingsbury (eds), *United Nations, Divided World: The UN's Roles in International Relations*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), at pp 149–51 and 180.

<sup>37</sup> UNGOMAP was mandated to support implementation of the 1988 Geneva Accords on Afghanistan. The Secretary-General's proposal to dispatch military personnel in UNGOMAP was confirmed in SC Res. 622 of 31 October 1988 and GA Res. 43/20 of 3 November 1988.

<sup>38</sup> UN Press Release SG/SM/4127, 27 April 1988, p 6, cited by Franck and Nolte at p 150.

*UN roles in the continuing civil war, 1990–2001*

34. The continuing civil war following the Soviet departure presented a difficult challenge for the UN. By March 1990 UNGOMAP, having completed its key mission of observing the Soviet withdrawal, was wound up. Yet there was a chaotic situation on which the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had remarkably little capacity to influence events. The General Assembly established the UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSMAs) in 1993, in the distant hope of facilitating national rapprochement and reconstruction.<sup>39</sup> The post of Special Representative to Afghanistan, who headed the mission, was held successively by two of the ablest and most experienced UN trouble-shooters, Lakhdar Brahimi and Francesc Vendrell. However, they could achieve little in UNSMA's lifetime, which ended in 2001–02.

35. At the same time the Security Council gradually became more active over Afghanistan. One month after the Taliban came to power in September 1996 the Council passed a resolution which staked out a number of critically important positions. As well as stating its unsurprising conviction that “the United Nations, as a universally recognized and impartial intermediary, must continue to play the central role in international efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Afghan conflict”, it called for an immediate end to all hostilities, denounced the discrimination against girls and women, and called for an end to the practices that had made the country a fertile ground for drug-trafficking and terrorism.<sup>40</sup> Then in August 1998, following an upsurge in the fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance, the Security Council passed a further resolution, again setting out some useful principles. It noted that there was “a serious and growing threat to regional and international peace and security, as well as extensive human suffering, further destruction, refugee flow and other forcible displacement of large numbers of people”; it expressed concern at “the increasing ethnic nature of the conflict”; it deplored the fact that, despite numerous UN pleas, there was continuing foreign interference; condemned the attacks on UN personnel in the Taliban-held areas; condemned the Taliban's capture of the Iranian Consulate-General in Mazar-e-Sharif; reaffirmed that “all parties to the conflict are bound to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law”; and demanded the Afghan factions “to refrain from harbouring and training terrorists and their organizations and to halt illegal drug activities”.<sup>41</sup> In October 1999, it imposed sanctions on the Taliban regime in Afghanistan:<sup>42</sup> arguably this decision undermined whatever was left of the UN's good offices mission. The Council may have been ineffective in the 1990s civil war in Afghanistan, but it was certainly not asleep. Some of the positions that it had staked out would be important for the future, in that they provided a basis for subsequent tough action against the Taliban, and for serious efforts to rebuild the Afghan state.

*UN roles in the war since September 2001*

36. The attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001 were a clear indication of the connection between Afghanistan and international security. In 1996 and 1998 the Council had warned of the terrorist danger in Afghanistan. Now it was to have a more prominent role, giving implicit authorization to the US-led use of force, and becoming deeply involved in the subsequent reconstruction of Afghanistan.

37. The most significant acts of the Council after 9/11 took the form of two resolutions which had profound implications for the management of international security issues. The first, Resolution 1368 passed the day after the attacks, by recognizing “the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the Charter” implicitly accepted the proposition that it could be lawful for a state to take action against another state if the latter failed to stop terrorist attacks being launched from its territory. The same resolution called on all states to bring the perpetrators to justice, and to co-operate to prevent and suppress terrorist acts.<sup>43</sup>

38. In this resolution the Council accepted that a right of self-defence could apply to a state when it was attacked by a non-state entity. To those who believe that action against terrorists should be confined to police methods, this was controversial. However, the resolution was passed in the specific and hopefully unique circumstances of 9/11, when the Taliban regime was refusing to take any action against the terrorists in their midst. The resolution does not mean that there is or should be general Council approval of responding to terrorist attacks by cross-border military actions, or that such action should generally be viewed as lawful. The history of such responses is dismal, as evidenced for example by the Hapsburg attempt to wipe out the terrorist “hornets' nest” in Serbia in 1914, and the various Israeli counter-terrorist operations in Lebanon in the past 30 years. The effectiveness of the military campaign in Afghanistan in late 2001 is an exception to the proposition that it is unwise to attack states from which terror originates. While that remains strong, it is bound to face severe challenges if state-sponsored or state-tolerated terrorism continues to be a major feature of international politics.

<sup>39</sup> UNSMA was established by GA Res. 48/208 of 21 December 1993. It was replaced by UNAMA after the December 2001 Bonn Agreement.

<sup>40</sup> SC Res. 1076 of 22 October 1996.

<sup>41</sup> SC Res. 1193 of 28 August 1998.

<sup>42</sup> SC Res. 1267 of 15 October 1999. In the ongoing war against the Taliban insurgency, this resolution has sometimes been seen as a possible obstacle to negotiations with the Taliban.

<sup>43</sup> SC Res. 1368 of 12 September 2001.

39. The second key resolution passed by the Council in September 2001, Resolution 1373, recognized “the need for States to complement international cooperation by taking additional measures to prevent and suppress, in their territories through all lawful means, the financing and preparation of any acts of terrorism”. It then indicated the remarkable extent of such measures, and the key role of the Council in overseeing them. It used strong language—the Council “decides that all states shall” take action, rather than merely calling on them to do so.<sup>44</sup> The General Assembly—often wary of any increase in the Security Council’s powers—was duly nervous but did not go against the Council’s approach.<sup>45</sup> It remains possible that in the long run the greatest effect of Afghanistan on international security will be that it compelled the Council to take on a more intrusive role in relation to states than had ever previously been contemplated.

40. Yet the actual role of the Council in the events following the 9/11 attack was limited. True, its resolutions and other actions were important for the international legitimacy of the US-led military action in Afghanistan and for the attempts to build up a post-Taliban system of government there.<sup>46</sup> However, there was no way in which the Council could have been centrally involved in mustering and commanding the military coalition that resulted in the closing of the al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and the removal of the Taliban from power in Kabul. The most striking feature of the Council’s role in the hostilities of late 2001 is its limited character.

41. Following the installation of the Karzai government in Kabul on 22 December 2001, the two main tasks facing the new government and its outside backers were perceived to be reconstruction, and the provision of security. The UN was widely seen—even by the US administration—as being pivotal in tackling these tasks. The key statement of this period, which did much to define the role not just of the UN but of the international community generally, was made by Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan. In discussing the planned UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), he famously said:

It will be an integrated mission that will operate with a “light footprint”, keeping the international United Nations presence to the minimum required, while our Afghan colleagues are given as much of a role as possible.<sup>47</sup>

42. This immediately raises the question of whether a light footprint is indeed possible in a country with such a limited, and distrusted, a state structure as that of Afghanistan. The concept was inevitably buffeted by events and modified to the point where some did not recognise it. Within a year or two, a reviving insurgency, and major military operations on Afghan territory by the US and NATO, created the dual risks that the footprint would be perceived as heavy, and that UNAMA would be seen as powerless to implement important parts of its mandate. It was not the only part of the UN system that faced the problem of appearing to be partial, or powerless, or both. As Gilles Dorronsoro has pointed out in a critical survey of the UN Security Council’s roles in Afghanistan up to the end of 2006, “the direct involvement by Permanent Members of the Security Council in a counter-insurgency war has resulted in the Council being silent on specific violations of international humanitarian law”.<sup>48</sup>

43. In the years since 2002 in which it has operated in Afghanistan, UNAMA has sought to assist political and economic transition and the rule of law. The report of its activities up to March 2008 presented a sobering picture:

. . . the political transition continues to face serious challenges. The Taliban and related armed groups and the drug economy represent fundamental threats to still-fragile political, economic and social institutions. Despite tactical successes by national and international military forces, the anti-Government elements are far from defeated. Thirty-six out of 376 districts, including most districts in the east, south-east and south, remain largely inaccessible to Afghan officials and aid workers. . . . Meanwhile, poor governance and limited development efforts, particularly at the provincial and district levels, continue to result in political alienation that both directly and indirectly sustains anti-government elements.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>44</sup> SC Res. 1373 of 28 September 2001.

<sup>45</sup> See the General Assembly’s notably strong commitments in respect of combating terrorism contained in the World Summit Outcome document, GA Res. 60/1 of 16 September 2005, paras. 81–91.

<sup>46</sup> On these matters relating to the role of the Security Council in Afghanistan since the late 1990s I agree with Michael Reisman’s conclusions in his address on “The Influence of the Conflict in Afghanistan on International Law” on the first day of the US Naval War College workshop, 25 June 2008.

<sup>47</sup> UN Security Council, 4469th meeting, 6 February 2002, UN doc. S/PV.4469, p 6.

<sup>48</sup> Gilles Dorronsoro, “The Security Council and the Afghan Conflict”, in Vaughan Lowe, Adam Roberts, Jennifer Welsh and Dominik Zaum (eds), *The United Nations Security Council and War: The Evolution of Thought and Practice since 1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p 464.

<sup>49</sup> “The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General”, UN doc. S/2008/159 of 6 March 2008, para 2. See also the Secretary-General’s report of September 2008, cited below, text at note 85.

## D. FITTING MILITARY DOCTRINE AND PRACTICE TO AFGHAN REALITIES

44. The limitations of military doctrines and practice are often exposed, not by arguments, but by events. Thus it was mainly events in Iraq and Afghanistan that exposed the inadequacies of the so-called “revolution in military affairs”—an idea that was popular in the US from the mid-1990s until at least 2003.<sup>50</sup> Afghanistan was always likely to be a difficult theatre of operations for outside military forces. Seeing this (and perhaps also because he did not want an ongoing distraction from the future invasion of Iraq, for which he was already lobbying) Paul Wolfowitz said in November 2001:

In fact, one of the lessons of Afghanistan’s history, which we’ve tried to apply in this campaign, is if you’re a foreigner, try not to go in. If you go in, don’t stay too long, because they don’t tend to like any foreigners who stay too long.<sup>51</sup>

45. Many problems have been encountered in implementing and adapting military doctrine and practice in face of Afghan realities. Three issues considered here are the role of air power, the complexities of operating in an alliance framework, and the appropriateness or otherwise of counterinsurgency (COIN) doctrine. The first two are touched on here briefly: more attention is paid to the third.

*Air power in Afghanistan*

46. Ever since October 2001 air power (which mainly means US air power) has played an important part in military operations in Afghanistan. The apparent success of the use of air power in October–December 2001 was deceptive: a major factor in the Taliban’s defeat was the advance of ground forces—those of the Northern Alliance. Since then, the role of air power in the Afghan conflict has been a subject of contestation, principally between the Army and Marines on the one hand, and the USAF on the other. A key issue has been whether air power is a major instrument in its own right, or is mainly useful in supporting ground forces. Self-evidently, the US and NATO ground forces in Afghanistan, widely dispersed and few in number, frequently need air power in support of their ground operations. Indeed, tactical air support has been vital to any success they have had, and has often saved the small numbers of ISAF forces from being overwhelmed. In military terms, a “light footprint” on the ground inevitably means a heavy air presence.

47. Those planning coalition military operations in Afghanistan have shown awareness of the dangers of reliance on air power—especially of the adverse consequences of killing civilians. On occasion they have even claimed to have set an aim of no civilian casualties.<sup>52</sup> While this aim actually goes further than the strict requirements of existing law applicable in an international armed conflict, in practice it has not been achieved. Part of the difficulty is that the very definition of civilian is problematic in a war such as that in Afghanistan. In addition, many other factors have prevented realization of the aim of no civilian casualties: shortage of ground forces, different approaches of individual commanders, poor intelligence, the heat of battle, weapons malfunction, the co-location of military targets and civilians, and the frayed relationship between ground and air forces operating in Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup> A Human Rights Watch report in September 2008 summarized the situation thus:

In the past three years, the armed conflict in Afghanistan has intensified, with daily fighting between the Taliban and other anti-government insurgents against Afghan government forces and its international military supporters. The US, which operates in Afghanistan through its counter-insurgency forces in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) and as part of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), has increasingly relied on airpower in counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism operations. The combination of light ground forces and overwhelming airpower has become the dominant doctrine of war for the US in Afghanistan. The result has been large numbers of civilian casualties, controversy over the continued use of airpower in Afghanistan, and intense criticism of US and NATO forces by Afghan political leaders and the general public.

As a result of OEF and ISAF airstrikes in 2006, 116 Afghan civilians were killed in 13 bombings. In 2007, Afghan civilian deaths were nearly three times higher: 321 Afghan civilians were killed in 22 bombings, while hundreds more were injured. In 2007, more Afghan civilians were killed by airstrikes than by US and NATO ground fire. In the first seven months of 2008, the latest period for which data is available, at least 119 Afghan civilians were killed in 12 airstrikes.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup> On the revolution in military affairs and related doctrines, and how their weaknesses became evident, see Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, Adelphi Paper 379 (Abingdon: Routledge for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 2006).

<sup>51</sup> Paul Wolfowitz, US Deputy Secretary of Defense, on CBS TV, “Face the Nation”, 18 November 2001, US Department of Defense Transcript, available at the State Department website, <http://usinfo.org/wf-archive/2001/011119/epf110.htm>.

<sup>52</sup> Information from a conference at Allied Rapid Reaction Corps headquarters, Rheindahlen, 27 June 2007.

<sup>53</sup> US Army officers have been particularly vocal in expressing their concerns about the performance of the US Air Force regarding such matters as bombing missions gone wrong and insufficient priority to the provision of surveillance aircraft. Thom Shanker, “At Odds with Air Force, Army Adds its own Aviation Unit”, *New York Times*, 22 June 2008.

<sup>54</sup> Human Rights Watch, “*Troops in Contact*”: *Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan* (New York: Human Rights Watch, September 2008), p 2, available at <http://hrw.org/reports/2008/afghanistan0908/index.htm>.

48. That last figure needed to be increased when it was revealed in October 2008 33 civilians had been killed in a single US airstrike on 22 August. Such incidents do serious damage to the coalition cause. Largely as a result of the long history of such incidents, there has been a strong anti-coalition reaction. Already in 2006 the Afghan parliament had demonstrated its concern about coalition military actions, and such expressions of concern have subsequently become more frequent. Meanwhile, President Hamid Karzai, whose authority has been diminishing, has made a number of criticisms of the coalition forces, calling for an end to civilian casualties, and even stating that he wanted US forces to stop arresting suspected Taliban members and their supporters.<sup>55</sup>

#### *The NATO Framework*

49. From 2001 onwards the US has operated in Afghanistan with coalition partners and, especially since August 2003, with the formal involvement of NATO. Indeed, in Afghanistan NATO is involved in ground combat operations for the first time in its history, far from its normal area of responsibility and against a threat very different from the one it had been created to face. The NATO involvement in Afghanistan is widely, but perhaps not wisely, viewed as “a test of the alliance’s political will and military capabilities”.<sup>56</sup> It is an exceptionally hard test. Indeed, the implication that the future of the alliance hangs on this test is reminiscent of earlier views that US credibility was on the line in Vietnam.

50. NATO’s involvement in Afghanistan is in sharp contrast to its conduct during the Cold War. In that period it repeatedly and studiously avoided involvement in colonial conflicts—the French wars in Indochina and Algeria, the Portuguese Wars in Africa, the British in Malaya, the Dutch in Indonesia and so on. Its individual members were involved in these, but the alliance was not. NATO also avoided involvement in post-colonial conflicts or—as in Cyprus, limited itself to an essentially diplomatic role. Now in Afghanistan, which has all the hallmark features of post-colonial states undergoing conflict—especially the lack of legitimacy of the constitutional system, government and frontiers—NATO became engaged, all with little public debate.

51. The NATO role in Afghanistan began in a problematic way, and so it has continued. On 12 September 2001, the day after the 9/11 attacks, the NATO Council stated: “If it is determined that this attack was directed from abroad against the United States, it shall be regarded as an action covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, which states that an armed attack against one or more of the Allies in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all”.<sup>57</sup> When the US gave this offer the brush-off, preferring to have a “coalition à la carte” in which there would be no institutional challenge to its leadership, there was disappointment and irritation in Europe. The war in Afghanistan in October to December 2001, while it was effectively conducted under US leadership, was also one chapter in the story of the declining size of US-led wartime coalitions.

52. However, NATO rapidly came back into the picture, not least because the US came to recognize the need for long-term assistance in managing societies that had been freed from oppressive regimes by US uses of force. NATO has been directly involved in Afghanistan at least since 9 August 2003, when it took formal control of the International Security Assistance Force, which had originally been established under UK leadership in January 2002. It was in the autumn of 2003 that an upsurge of violence began that was part of a deteriorating security situation.<sup>58</sup> Since 2006 ISAF has undertaken an expanded range of responsibilities in Afghanistan, involving combat as well as peacekeeping, in an expanded area which includes provinces in which conflict is ongoing.

53. ISAF’s notably broad UN Security Council mandate involves it in a wide range of activities, including military and police training. Many of its activities are carried out through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)—civilian-military units of varying sizes designed to extend the authority of the central government, provide security, and undertake infrastructure projects. There are 26 PRTs in 26 of the country’s 34 provinces. Operating under different lead states, with 12 of the 26 led by the US, the resources and tasks of the PRTs have varied greatly.

54. Not surprisingly, there have been controversies about numerous aspects of the overall ISAF mission. Four key problems concern the coherence or otherwise of the different members of ISAF; the problematic command and control arrangements; differences over detainee treatment; and the difficulty of raising forces.

55. The lack of coherence of the approaches taken by different foreign forces in ISAF and their governments at home is evident. Different contributing states have different visions of ISAF’s role. The most obvious difference is that the US, UK and Canada tend to see it, albeit with some variations within each of these countries, as encompassing a counterinsurgency operation, while Germany and some others see it more through the lens of a stabilization mission. These positions are not polar opposites, and each may have validity in different provinces of Afghanistan, but the clash of perspective on this issue does not assist

<sup>55</sup> President Hamid Karzai, interview published in *New York Times*, 26 April 2008.

<sup>56</sup> See Paul Gallis and Vincent Morelli, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Atlantic Alliance* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, July 2008), p 1.

<sup>57</sup> Statement adopted at a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, Brussels, 12 September 2001, available at <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> For a particularly well informed account of the evolution of the roles of the US and NATO since 2001, see Astri Suhrke, “A Contradictory Mission? NATO from Stabilization to Combat in Afghanistan”, *International Peacekeeping*, vol 15, no 2 (April 2008), pp 214–36, available at <http://www.cmi.no>.

cooperation of forces in difficult operations. Daniel Marston has gone so far as to conclude: “As of 2007, the main problem impeding coalition forces’ successful application of counterinsurgency was decentralization of responsibility”.<sup>59</sup>

56. The complexity of the command and control arrangements in Afghanistan is greater than that in past counter-insurgency campaigns. Debates about this have inevitably reflected the US desire that more contingents in ISAF should become directly involved in combat operations, and the concern of some contributors that this should not happen. Although ISAF is now under a US commander, and the continuous rotation of senior posts is ceasing, the arrangements for coordinating the work of these three distinct forces continue to pose problems.<sup>60</sup>

57. The important, and scandal-ridden, matter of treatment of detainees is another issue on which there are differences of approach. Anxious not to be associated with shocking US statements and practices in this matter, and insufficiently staffed and equipped to hold on to the prisoners they capture, other NATO members have drawn up separate agreements with the Afghan authorities, embodying a variety of different approaches to how they should be treated once in Afghan hands. There are serious concerns that some detainees handed over to the Afghan authorities on this basis have been maltreated.<sup>61</sup>

58. The provision of forces in the numbers required for ISAF has been a highly contentious matter within NATO states. The coalition of forces acting in support of the Afghan government consists of three basic elements. The first is the Afghan National Army which has a modest manpower level of about 57,000—a fact which has led to US accusations that the Afghan government has been slow in building up its army. The second is ISAF, which now comprises some 51,350 troops from forty NATO and non-NATO countries. Much the largest contingents are those of the US, with 19,950 troops, and the UK, with 8,745. The third basic element is the force of well over 10,000 troops (almost all of them American) who are part of the US Operation Enduring Freedom, which focuses particularly on the counter-terrorist mission in Afghanistan.<sup>62</sup> Granted the scale of the problems in Afghanistan, all these numbers are widely seen as low, yet in many NATO member states there is a reluctance to increase the commitment. Opinion polls in five NATO member states with a high level of involvement in Afghanistan show the public to be highly sceptical about it.<sup>63</sup> An increase in such numbers risks running into opposition in many NATO states, and also further antagonizing Afghan opinion. If counterinsurgency theory is a guide, a massive increase in such numbers would seem to be called for. So how reliable a guide is the writing on counterinsurgency?

#### *Counterinsurgency doctrines and practice*

59. Contrary to myth, counterinsurgency campaigns can sometimes be effective. Doctrines and practices of counterinsurgency—the best of which draw on a wide and varied range of practice—have a long history.<sup>64</sup> The revival of counterinsurgency doctrine in the past few years has been driven primarily by events in Iraq, but also, if to a lesser degree, by the development of the insurgency in Afghanistan. This revival of COIN is hardly surprising. The response of adversaries to the extraordinary pattern of US dominance on the battlefield was always going to be one of unconventional warfare, including the methods of the guerrilla and the terrorist; and in turn the natural US counter-response was to revive the most obviously appropriate available body of military doctrine.

60. The key document of the US revival of COIN doctrine is the US Army Field Manual 3–24.<sup>65</sup> It is very much an Army and Marine Corps manual: the USAF refused to collaborate in the exercise. Improbably for a military-doctrinal document, it has been in demand in the US. It has been heavily accessed and downloaded on the web, and is also available as a published book from a major university press.<sup>66</sup> Although it has some flaws, explored further below, it is a significant contribution to COIN literature.

<sup>59</sup> Marston, “Lessons in 21st Century Counterinsurgency: Afghanistan 2001–07”, in Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (eds), *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Osprey, 2008), p 240.

<sup>60</sup> See eg US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates’s expression of concern about dual command and control in “Gates: Afghanistan command restructuring worthy of consideration”, remarks at Texarkana, Texas, 2 May 2008, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=49769>.

<sup>61</sup> See Adam Roberts, “Torture and Incompetence in the ‘War on Terror’”, *Survival*, London, vol 49, no 1, Spring 2007, pp 199–212; and the Amnesty report *Afghanistan—Detainees Transferred to Torture: ISAF Complicity?* (London: Amnesty International, November 2007), pp 20–30.

<sup>62</sup> Information on ISAF troop numbers and areas of operation from various documents, including ISAF Fact Sheet current as of 1 December 2008, on <http://www.nato.int/> (last visited 11 January 2009).

<sup>63</sup> See eg Gallis and Morelli, *NATO in Afghanistan*, p 13.

<sup>64</sup> For an excellent overview, from the late 19th century to the ongoing war in Afghanistan, see Marston and Malkasian (eds), *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Osprey, 2008). Marston’s chapter is notably critical of the failure of the US and its allies to train and equip soldiers for counterinsurgency. (p 220).

<sup>65</sup> *Counterinsurgency, US Army Field Manual 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5*, (Washington, DC: Department of the Army et al, 15 December 2006). This publication has a short foreword by Lt Gen David H Petraeus (who played a key part in its preparation) and Lt Gen James F Amos. Henceforth, *US Army Field Manual 3-24*. Available at <http://www.fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> The manual as issued by a publishing firm is *The US Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual: US Army Field Manual no 3-24 and Marine Corps Warfighting Publication no 3-33.5* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 472 pp. This edition has a new foreword by Lt Col John A Nagl, and a new Introduction by Sarah Sewall.

61. By contrast, the UK has not produced any major new manual. This is partly because, much more than their US counterparts, the British had extant doctrine.<sup>67</sup> It is also because there was some opposition to COIN doctrine on the grounds that it would result in the same hammer being used on every problem. As a result there has not yet been a UK equivalent of FM 3–24. The Ministry of Defence’s short (23 pages) Joint Discussion Note of January 2006, on *The Comprehensive Approach*, is a more general survey intended to be relevant to a wide range of operations: the word “counterinsurgency” does not appear in it.<sup>68</sup> It was followed in 2007 by a paper on *Countering Irregular Activity*.<sup>69</sup> This document, which has not gone into general public circulation and has not been greeted with enthusiasm in the Army, “seeks to instruct military personnel about counter-insurgency as a whole and about associated threats, and emphasizes the need for military activity to be part of a comprehensive approach involving all instruments of power”.<sup>70</sup> This summary, by Sir John Kiszely, until 2008 Director of the Defence Academy of the UK, is immediately followed by a down-to-earth reminder that “every insurgency is *sui generis*, making generalizations problematic”.<sup>71</sup> This important point has been emphasized by military professionals on both sides of the Atlantic.

62. The “comprehensive approach”, central to both the US and UK doctrines, essentially means the application of all aspects of the power of the state within the territory of which the insurgency is being fought. The apparent assumption that there is a state with real power is the key weakness of the approach, especially as it applies to Afghanistan. Before exploring this in more detail, it may be useful to glance at the problematic nature of assumptions about the political realm in the counterinsurgency doctrines inherited from past eras.

63. The US manual revives and updates doctrines that were developed in the Cold War years in response to anti-colonial insurrections (some of them involving leadership by local communist parties). It relies especially heavily on two sources from that era.<sup>72</sup> The first is David Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare*—one of the better writings of the French thinkers on *guerre révolutionnaire*.<sup>73</sup> The second is Sir Robert Thompson’s *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.<sup>74</sup> Both works had placed emphasis on protecting populations as distinct from killing adversaries—a crucial distinction which implies a need for high force levels.

64. According to the Introduction, FM 3-24 aspires to “help prepare Army and Marine Corps leaders to conduct COIN operations anywhere in the world”.<sup>75</sup> This might seem to imply a universalist approach, but the authors emphasise that each insurgency is different. The foreword by Generals Petraeus and Amos is emphatic on this point: “You cannot fight former Saddamists and Islamic extremists the same way you would have fought the Viet Cong, Moros, or Tupamaros; the application of principles and fundamentals to deal with each varies considerably”.<sup>76</sup> FM 3-24 is also emphatic on the importance of constantly learning and adapting in response to the intricate environment of COIN operations—a point which strongly reflects British experience.<sup>77</sup>

65. Past exponents of COIN doctrine have generally placed heavy emphasis on achieving force ratios of about 20 to 25 counterinsurgents for every 1000 residents in an area of operations. Noting this, the manual states: “Twenty counterinsurgents per 1,000 residents is often considered the minimum troop density required for effective COIN operations; however as with any fixed ratio, such calculations remain very dependent upon the situation”.<sup>78</sup> This emphasis on force ratios is controversial. In any case, in Afghanistan there appears little chance of achieving such numbers. If the entire country with its 31 million inhabitants

<sup>67</sup> UK Army Field Manual, vol 1, *The Fundamentals*, Part 10, *Counter Insurgency Operations (Strategic and Operational Guidelines)*, last revised in July 2001. The approach it laid out and its principles are still regarded as being valid. Its biggest problem was the context in which it was set. It makes no mention of coalition operations, or the problems of operating in other people’s countries, the religious and cultural dimensions, and the effects of information proliferation and information operations. The task of updating it started in late 2005. It is still in development.

<sup>68</sup> UK Joint Doctrine & Concepts Centre, *The Comprehensive Approach*, Joint Discussion Note 4/05 (Shrivenham, Wiltshire: JDCC, January 2006), available at <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/MicroSite/DCDC/OurPublications/JDNP/>.

<sup>69</sup> UK Ministry of Defence Joint Doctrine Note 2/07, *Countering Irregular Activity Within a Comprehensive Approach* (UK Ministry of Defence, March 2007).

<sup>70</sup> John Kiszely, *Post-modern Challenges for Modern Warriors*, Shrivenham Papers No 5 (Shrivenham: Defence Academy of the UK, 2007), pp 13–14.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, p 14.

<sup>72</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, Acknowledgements, p viii. Three sources, all cited at length in the text, are listed at this point. (The third, not discussed here, was an article in the *New Yorker* in January 2005.) See also the Annotated Bibliography at the end, which cites a wider range of sources. It omits key critical writings on the subject, most notably Peter Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria: The Analysis of a Political and Military Doctrine* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964). The omission of this title reflected a view that it is hard to get Americans to take on board French doctrines on COIN.

<sup>73</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964). Galula died in 1968. His work was belatedly published in France as *Contre-Insurrection: Théorie et pratique* (Paris, Economica, 2008).

<sup>74</sup> Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: Experiences from Malaya and Vietnam* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1966).

<sup>75</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, Introduction, p ix.

<sup>76</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, Foreword. The Moros, perhaps the least known of the insurgents cited, have been involved in an armed insurrection in the Philippines.

<sup>77</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, p 5–31.

<sup>78</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, p 1–13.

were to be viewed as the area of operations, a staggering 775,000 counterinsurgents would be needed. Even if the area of operations is defined narrowly, and even allowing for the fact that not all have to be NATO troops, the prospects of getting close to the force ratio indicated must be low.

66. A flaw in some, but not all, past counterinsurgency doctrine has been a lack of sensitivity to context and, in some cases, an ahistorical character. Some specialists in counterinsurgency have seen their subject more as a struggle of light versus darkness than as a recurrent theme of history or an outgrowth of the problems of a society. Examples of such an ahistorical approach to the subject can be found in the French group of theorists writing in the 1950s and early 1960s about *guerre révolutionnaire*. Some of these theorists denied the complexities—especially the mixture of material, moral and ideological factors—that are keys to understanding why and how guerrilla and terrorist movements come into existence. Colonel Lacheroy, a leading figure in this group and head of the French Army's *Service d'Action Psychologique*, famously stated: "In the beginning there is nothing".<sup>79</sup> Terrorism was seen as having been introduced deliberately into a peaceful society by an omnipresent outside force—namely international communism. It is a demonological vision of a cosmic struggle in which the actual history of particular countries and ways of thinking has little or no place.

67. A related fault in some counterinsurgency writing was the tendency to distil general rules of counterinsurgency from particular struggles and then seek to apply them in radically different circumstances. The campaign in Malaya in the 1950s, because it was successful in ending a communist-led insurgency, was often upheld as a model, and is described favourably in the US *Field Manual*.<sup>80</sup> Certain lessons drawn partly from Malaya were subsequently applied by the British in Borneo and Oman with some effect. However, successes such as that in Malaya can be great deceivers. Attempts were made to apply the lessons of Malaya in South Vietnam in the 1960s.<sup>81</sup> These largely failed. The main reason for failure in South Vietnam was that conditions in Vietnam were utterly different from those in Malaya. In Malaya the insurgency had mainly involved the ethnic Chinese minority, and had never managed to present itself convincingly as representing the totality of the inhabitants of Malaya. The insurgency was weakened by the facts that the Chinese minority was distinguishable from other segments of society; Malaya had no common frontier with a communist state, so infiltration was difficult; and the British granting of independence to Malaya undermined the anti-colonial credentials of the insurgents. In South Vietnam, by contrast, the communist insurgents had strong nationalist credentials, having fought for independence rather than merely having power handed to them by a departing colonial power.<sup>82</sup> At the heart of the US tragedy in Vietnam was a failure to recognise the unique circumstance of the case—that in Vietnam, more than any other country in South-East Asia, communism and nationalism were inextricably intertwined.

68. One lesson that could have been drawn from the Malayan case is that it is sometimes necessary to withdraw to win. FM 3-24 places much emphasis on the fact that the US withdrew from Vietnam in 1973 only to see Saigon fall to North Vietnamese forces in 1975.<sup>83</sup> It does not note a contrary case: it was the UK promise to withdraw completely—a promise that was followed by the Federation of Malaya's independence in 1957—that contributed to the defeat of the insurgency in Malaya.<sup>84</sup> The value of such promises needs to be taken into account in contemporary COIN efforts and indeed COIN theory. This is especially so, as the idea that the US intended to stay indefinitely in Iraq and Afghanistan, and to build networks of bases there, had a corrosive effect in both countries and more generally. The decision of the Iraqi cabinet on 16 November 2008 that all US forces will withdraw from Iraq by 2011 is evidence that a guarantee of withdrawal is seen as a necessary condition (and not simply a natural consequence) of ending an acute phase of insurgency.

69. One weakness in the US manual, likely to be remedied in any future revisions, is the lack of serious coverage of systems of justice—especially those employed by the insurgents themselves. The references to judicial systems in FM 3-24 are brief and anodyne, almost entirely ignoring the challenge posed by insurgents in this area.<sup>85</sup> Insurgencies commonly use their own judicial procedures to reinforce their claims to be able to preserve an existing social order or create a better one. The Taliban have always placed emphasis on provision of a system of Islamic justice.<sup>86</sup> In the current conflict, taking advantage of the fact that the governmental legal system is weak and corrupt, they have done this effectively in parts of Afghanistan.

70. This leads to a more general criticism. In addressing the problem of undermining and weakening insurgencies, both traditional COIN theory, and its revived versions in the 21st century, place emphasis on the role of state institutions: political structures, the administrative bureaucracy, the police, the courts and the armed forces. The institutions are often taken for granted, and assumed to be strong. Indeed, the current

<sup>79</sup> Col Charles Lacheroy, "La Guerre Révolutionnaire", talk on 2 July 1957 reprinted in *La Défense Nationale*, Paris, 1958, p 322; cited in Paret, *French Revolutionary Warfare from Indochina to Algeria* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1964), p 15. Paret comments that "nothing", in this case, means "the secure existence of the *status quo*".

<sup>80</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, pp 6–21 and 6–22.

<sup>81</sup> See esp Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*, pp 17–20.

<sup>82</sup> The geographical, sociological, political and ethnic differences between Malaya and South Vietnam were evident to knowledgeable observers even while the Vietnam War was still ongoing. See Bernard B Fall, *The Two Viet-Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1963), pp 339–40 and 372–6.

<sup>83</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, pp 1–8 and 2–13.

<sup>84</sup> See eg obituary of Sir Donald MacGillivray, the last British High Commissioner for Malaya, *The Times*, London, 28 December 1966.

<sup>85</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, pp 5–15, 3–25, 6–21 and 8–16.

<sup>86</sup> Rashid, *Taliban*, pp 102–3.

British COIN doctrine stemmed from a project started in 1995 to capture the lessons and doctrine from Northern Ireland. A common criticism of much COIN practice is that it was enthusiastically pursued by over-powerful and thuggish states, especially in Latin America.<sup>87</sup>

71. Today, COIN theories risk being out of joint with the realities of assisting the so-called “failed states” and “transitional administrations” of the 21st century. These problems are not new—one of the problems that undermined US COIN efforts in Vietnam was the artificiality and weakness of the coup-prone state of South Vietnam. Yet the central fact must be faced that in the two test-beds of the new COIN doctrines of recent years, Iraq and Afghanistan, state institutions have been notoriously weak—in Iraq temporarily, and in Afghanistan chronically. Indeed, in post-colonial states generally, where insurgencies are by no means uncommon, indigenous state systems tend to be fragile and/or contested. The role of the state in people’s lives, and in their consciousness, may be thoroughly peripheral or even negative.<sup>88</sup> So when the US manual speaks of “a comprehensive strategy employing all instruments of national power” and stresses that all efforts focus on “supporting the local populace and HN [Host Nation] government”,<sup>89</sup> it is necessary to remind ourselves that support for government is not exactly a natural default position for inhabitants of countries with such tragic histories as Iraq and Afghanistan. On the other hand, General Petraeus worked on the manual after completing two tours of duty in Iraq, with an eye to applying it there, and then did so to some effect when he was Commander of the Multinational Force—Iraq. In 2008 the Iraqi government is looking stronger than in the first years after the invasion. The fact that a government is weak in face of insurgency does not mean that it is necessarily fated to remain so.

72. Of the many critiques of the US revival of COIN doctrine, one of the most searching is an American Political Science Association review symposium published in June 2008.<sup>90</sup> Stephen Biddle of the US Council on Foreign Relations queried the manual’s fundamental assumption when he stated that

it is far from clear that the manual’s central prescription of drying up an insurgent’s support base by persuading an uncommitted population to side with the government makes much sense in an identity war where the government’s ethnic or sectarian identification means that it will be seen as an existential threat to the security of rival internal groups, and where there may be little or no supracommunal, national identity to counterpose to the subnational identities over which the war is waged by the time the United States becomes involved.<sup>91</sup>

73. Biddle also pointed out that the US manual has little to say about the comparative merits of waging COIN with large conventional forces as against small commando detachments, on the relative utility of air power in COIN, and on the willingness of democracies to support COIN over a long period. Further, the manual does not fit particularly well the realities of Iraq, where the insurgencies are far more regional and localised in character, and more fickle in their loyalties, than were many of the communist and anti-colonial insurgencies of earlier eras. As Biddle points out, the negotiation of local ceasefires between insurgents and US commanders has been of key importance in Iraq.<sup>92</sup> Such webs of local ceasefires, valuable despite their fragility, do not come from counterinsurgency doctrine. These criticisms are another way of saying what General Petraeus knows: that all doctrine is interim, and some parts are more interim than others.

74. The need to adapt doctrine, so evident in Iraq, applies even more strongly to Afghanistan, a subject about which the US manual says remarkably little.<sup>93</sup> The key issue is whether the revival of counterinsurgency doctrine really offers a useful guide in a situation where there are some distinct elements in the insurgencies, where negotiation with some of the insurgents may have a role, and where the state does not command the same loyalty or obedience that more local forces may enjoy.

75. After a difficult year in 2008, the US and Afghan governments began to place increased emphasis on local social structures. The US Ambassador to Afghanistan said at the end of the year that there was agreement to move forward with two programmes: first, the community outreach programme, “designed to create community shuras” (local councils); and second, the community guard program, which is “meant to strengthen local communities and local tribes in their ability to protect what they consider to be their traditional homes”.<sup>94</sup> While neither programme was well defined, the move in this direction was evidence of willingness to rely on a less state-based approach than hitherto.

<sup>87</sup> See eg George Monbiot’s ebullient attack on how US counterinsurgency training was implicated in the work of death squads in Latin America over many decades, “Backyard Terrorism”, *The Guardian*, London, 30 October 2001, p 17.

<sup>88</sup> For a useful account of this general problem (though it does not address the case of Afghanistan), see Joel S Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>89</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, p 2-1.

<sup>90</sup> Review Symposium, “The New U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual as Political Science and Political Praxis”, in American Political Science Association, *Perspectives on Politics*, vol 6, no 2 (June 2008), pp 347-8 and 350. The four contributions to this symposium are by Stephen Biddle (347-50), Stathis N Kalyvas (351-3), Wendy Brown (354-7), and Douglas A Ollivant (357-60). The symposium is available at <http://www.apsanet.org/imgtest/POPJune08CounterInsurgency2.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, p 348. See also the excellent contribution of Stathis N. Kalyvas, who argues (p 352) that by adopting the people’s war model, the authors of the manual assume that the population interacts either with the government or the insurgents. This leads them to conclude, incorrectly, that if the insurgents are removed from the equation the people will move closer to the government.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, pp 347-8 and 350.

<sup>93</sup> *US Army Field Manual 3-24*, pp 1-9 and 7-6. These brief references to Afghanistan do not describe the elements that make the Afghan conflict unique.

<sup>94</sup> US Ambassador William B Wood, Media Roundtable, Kabul, 30 December 2008, [http://kabul.usembassy.gov/amb\\_speech\\_3012.html](http://kabul.usembassy.gov/amb_speech_3012.html).

*Judging progress in the war in Afghanistan*

76. Judging progress in counterinsurgency wars is by nature a contentious task, and involves difficult questions about the appropriate methodologies. Sometimes unorthodox methods of analysis yield the most valuable answers. The war in French Indochina from 1946 to 1954 provided a classic case. When a French doctoral student, Bernard Fall (1926–67), went to Vietnam in 1953, the French authorities claimed that the war was going well, and showed maps and statistics indicating that they controlled a large proportion of the territory. But he soon realised that French claims about the amount of territory they controlled were exaggerated—or at least lacked real meaning as far as the conduct of government was concerned. He reached this conclusion both by visiting Vietminh-held areas, and by inspecting tax records in supposedly government-held areas: these latter showed a dramatic collapse in the payment of taxes, and thus indicated a lack of actual government control.<sup>95</sup> In Afghanistan, the long-standing lack of a tax collection system continues today. As Astri Suhrke has shown, taxation constitutes a uniquely small proportion—in 2005 it was only 8%—of all estimated income in the national budget.<sup>96</sup>

77. By one key measure serious progress may appear to be being made in the Afghan war. The numbers of refugee returns to Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime at the end of 2001 are one possible indicator of a degree of progress. According to UNHCR, which played a key part in the process, between 1 January 2002 and 31 December 2007 a total of 4,997,455 refugees returned to Afghanistan, as follows:

2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
1,957,958	645,864	879,780	752,084	387,917	373,852

78. This is the largest refugee return in the world in a generation. It is striking that even in 2006 and 2007—years of considerable conflict in parts of Afghanistan, the returns continued, if at a reduced rate. In the whole period 2002–07, the overwhelming majority of refugees have been in two countries: Iran, from which 1.6 million returned, and Pakistan, from which 3.3 million returned.<sup>97</sup> Impressive as the figures of this return are, four major qualifications have to be made:

- First, they have to be understood against the backdrop of the sheer numbers of Afghan refugees: at the end of 2007 Afghanistan was still the leading country of origin of refugees world-wide, with 3.1 million remaining outside the country. Thus in 2008, even after these returns, Afghan refugees constitute 27% of the entire global refugee population.
- Secondly, not all returns were fully voluntary. Within the countries of asylum there have been heavy pressures on these refugees to return, including the closing of some camps.
- Thirdly, the experience of many returning refugees has included lack of employment opportunities in Afghanistan, and in some cases involvement in property disputes. There has been mismanagement and corruption in the Afghan Ministry of Refugees and Returnees. Some returnees live in dire conditions in makeshift settlements. All this has created much disappointment, bitterness, and anti-government feelings.
- Fourthly, displacement continues. In the past two years unknown numbers of returnees have left the country again. Also the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) within Afghanistan has increased, especially due to the fighting in the south of the country, and now stands at about 235,000. Some returnees have seamlessly become IDPs.<sup>98</sup>

79. Other developments confirm this sobering picture. The Afghan army remains relatively small, and highly dependent on outside support. As for the insurgent forces, they appear to have no shortage of recruits. Large numbers of fighters are able to cross into Afghanistan, mainly from Pakistan; and the Taliban can also employ many locals, especially in seasons when other work is in short supply. The fact that the estimated unemployment rate is 40% means that insurgents continue to have opportunities for recruitment. In Kabul and other cities, terrorist attacks, once rare, have become common. Serious observers have reported an atmosphere of disappointment and bitterness in Afghanistan in 2008.<sup>99</sup>

80. The UN Secretary-General's report of September 2008 summarizes the situation thus:

<sup>95</sup> Based on conversations I had with Bernard Fall and material in his book *Street Without Joy: Indochina at War, 1946–54* (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Stackpole, 1961). He alludes to these issues in Fall, *Viet-Nam Witness 1953–1966* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1966), p 9. See also his widow's remarkable preface in Fall, *Last Reflections on a War* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967), pp 9–10.

<sup>96</sup> Astri Suhrke, "Reconstruction as Modernisation: The 'Post-Conflict' Project in Afghanistan", *Third World Quarterly*, vol 28, no 7 (2007), p 1301, available at <http://www.cmi.no>.

<sup>97</sup> Information from three UNHCR sources: *2006 UNHCR Statistical Yearbook* (Geneva: UNHCR, December 2007), p 36; *2007 Global Trends: Refugees, Asylum-seekers, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Stateless Persons* (Geneva: UNHCR, June 2008), pp 8 and 9; and the UNHCR Statistical Online Population Database at [www.unhcr.org/statistics/populationdatabase](http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/populationdatabase).

<sup>98</sup> Adam B Ellick, "Afghan Refugees Return Home, but Find Only a Life of Desperation", *New York Times*, 2 December 2008. Figure for IDPs from *Economic and Social Rights Report in Afghanistan—III* (Kabul: Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, December 2008), p 49, available at [http://www.aihrc.org.af/index\\_eng.htm](http://www.aihrc.org.af/index_eng.htm). See also Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, <http://www.internal-displacement.org> (last visited 11 January 2009).

<sup>99</sup> Eg Peter Beaumont, "Afghanistan: Fear, disillusion and despair: notes from a divided land as peace slips away", *The Observer*, London, 8 June 2008, pp 34–5.

The overall situation in Afghanistan has become more challenging since my previous report. Despite the enhanced capabilities of both the Afghan National Army and the international forces, the security situation has deteriorated markedly. The influence of the insurgency has expanded beyond traditionally volatile areas and has increased in provinces neighbouring Kabul. Incidents stemming from crossborder activities from Pakistan have increased significantly in terms of numbers and sophistication. The insurgency's dependence on asymmetric tactics has also led to a sharp rise in the number of civilian casualties. Civilians are also being killed as a result of military operations carried out by Afghan and international security forces, in particular in situations in which insurgents conceal themselves in populated areas. Another worrying development is the fact that attacks on aid-related targets and non-governmental organizations have become more frequent and more deadly.<sup>100</sup>

81. The Secretary-General's Report states bluntly that the number of security incidents rose to 983 in August 2008, the highest since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and "represents a 44% increase compared with the same month in 2007". It also states: "While the main focus of the insurgency remains the southern and eastern parts of the country, where it has historically been strong, insurgent influence has intensified in areas that were previously relatively calm, including in the provinces closest to Kabul".<sup>101</sup> Overall the report is far from negative. It reports some successes in the campaign against poppy cultivation, and it strongly endorses the Afghanistan National Development Strategy, adopted at the Paris Conference in Support of Afghanistan, held on 12 June 2008. However, as an account of the state of progress in the war against the Taliban, it confirms the picture which has also been depicted by other sources. The latter include the sober report General David McKiernan, the top US Commander in Afghanistan, who, at the same time as seeking specific troop increases, has rejected simple notions, and indeed the terminology, of a military "surge";<sup>102</sup> and the US National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan, a draft version of which was leaked in October 2008, and which stated that the situation there was in a "downward spiral".<sup>103</sup> One grim statistic of the downward spiral is the casualty rate of IFOR and Operation Enduring Freedom forces in Afghanistan. Fatalities have increased each year from 57 in 2003 to 296 in 2008.<sup>104</sup>

82. As so often in counterinsurgency wars, the most useful assessments may be those of independent witnesses who, just as Bernard Fall did in French Indochina, have deep knowledge of a society and a healthy open-mindedness about the contribution that outside forces can make to security. Rory Stewart, who walked across Afghanistan in 2002, and later retired from the UK diplomatic service to run a charitable foundation in Kabul, is perhaps Fall's nearest equivalent today. He has argued that "we need less investment—but a greater focus on what we know how to do". He is specifically critical of increases in forces: "A troop increase is likely to inflame Afghan nationalism because Afghans are more anti-foreign than we acknowledge and the support for our presence in the insurgency areas is declining. The Taliban, which was a largely discredited and backward movement, gains support by portraying itself as fighting for Islam and Afghanistan against a foreign military occupation".<sup>105</sup>

## E. CONCLUSIONS

83. Four kinds of conclusions follow. First, about the implications of Afghanistan for the UN; second, on the role of NATO; third, on international security generally; and finally, on the debate about policy choices that is emerging from the difficult experience of attempting to transform Afghanistan. These conclusions are based on the presumption that the present campaign in Afghanistan is unlikely to result in a clear victory for the Kabul government and its outside partners, because the sources of division within and around Afghanistan are just too deep, and the tendency to react against the presence of foreign forces too ingrained. The war could yet be lost, or, perhaps more likely, it could produce a stalemate or a long war of attrition with no clear outcome. The dissolution of Afghanistan into regional fiefdoms—already an accustomed part of life—could continue and even accelerate.

84. To some it may appear remarkable that Afghanistan has not reverted more completely to type as a society that rejects outside intrusion. Part of the explanation may be that this is not the only natural "default position" for Afghans: there have also been countless episodes in which Afghan leaders have sought, and profited from, alliances with outsiders. A second factor is the "light footprint" advocated by Brahimi: for all the limitations of this approach, and the many departures from it since it was enunciated in 2002 with specific reference to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), no one has convincingly suggested a better one. A third factor is that—notwithstanding the disastrous killings of civilians as a result of using air power—there has been a degree of restraint in the use of armed force: this has been important

<sup>100</sup> "The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General", UN doc. S/2008/617 of 23 September 2008, para 2.

<sup>101</sup> UN doc S/2008/617 of 23 September 2008, paras 16 and 18.

<sup>102</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, "Commander in Afghanistan Wants More Troops", *Washington Post*, 2 October 2008, p A19. McKiernan described Afghanistan as "a far more complex environment than I ever found in Iraq".

<sup>103</sup> See eg the report dated 9 October 2008 of the draft National Intelligence Estimate on Afghanistan at: <http://www.nsnetwork.org/node/1017>

<sup>104</sup> Figures for casualties of coalition forces in Afghanistan from <http://icasualties.org/oef/> (last visited 11 January 2009).

<sup>105</sup> Rory Stewart, "How to Save Afghanistan", *Time*, 17 July 2008.

in at least slowing the pace of the process whereby the US and other outside forces come to be perceived as alien bodies in Afghanistan. The interesting phenomenon of application of certain parts of the law of armed conflict—namely the rules of targeting—as if this was an international war is part of this process.

#### *The UN*

85. A few conclusions on the UN's various roles in Afghanistan flow from this brief survey. First, the UN has some remarkable achievements to its credit in Afghanistan. It helped to negotiate the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan that was completed in 1989; ever since then it has remained engaged on the ground in Afghanistan; it gave a degree of authorization to the US-led effort to remove the Taliban regime in 2001; it has authorized ISAF and has provided a legitimate basis for its expanded roles throughout the country; it has been involved in the many subsequent efforts to help develop Afghanistan, not least by assisting in the various elections held there since 2001; it has assisted the largest refugee return to any country since the 1970s.

86. Second, despite these achievements, the UN's roles have been more limited than those of the US and its various partners, especially in matters relating to security. The fact that the UN's role in this crisis has been modest is not especially shocking. Neither the terms of the UN Charter nor the record of the Council justify the excessively high expectations that many have had in respect of the Council's roles. It was always a mistake to view the UN as aiming to provide a complete system of collective security even in the best of circumstances—and circumstances in and around Afghanistan are far from being favourable for international involvement.

87. Third, international legitimacy is never a substitute for local legitimacy. The Council's acceptance of regime change in Afghanistan was justified once the Taliban had refused to remove al-Qaeda, and did much to legitimise the aim of regime replacement, which could otherwise have seemed a narrowly neo-colonial US action. Yet there is a danger that such international conferrals of legitimacy can contribute to a failure to address the no less important question of securing legitimacy in the eyes of the audience that matters most: in this case, the peoples of Afghanistan and neighbouring countries.

#### *NATO*

88. The single most fateful impact of the current Afghan war on international security is the involvement of the NATO alliance in this distant, difficult and divisive conflict. It is truly remarkable that the reputation of the longest-lived military alliance in the world, comprised of states with fundamentally stable political systems, should have made itself vulnerable to the outcome of a war in the unpromising surroundings of Afghanistan. There is much nervousness about this among NATO's European members, and this may explain the reluctance of European leaders to make the kind of ringing statements that often accompany war. Knowing that the outcome of any adventure in Afghanistan is bound to be uncertain, they have wisely kept the level of rhetoric low.

89. There may be another reason for the reluctance of many leaders of European member states to make strong endorsements of their participation in the war in Afghanistan. Many of the claims that can be made in favour of the Afghan cause are also implicitly criticisms of the involvement in Iraq. From the start in 2001, the US-led involvement in Afghanistan and the subsequent involvement of ISAF have both had a strong basis of international legitimacy that was reflected in Security Council resolutions. In Afghanistan there was a real political and military force to support, in the shape of the Northern Alliance. In Afghanistan and Pakistan there were real havens for terrorists. In Afghanistan, up to five million refugees have returned since 2001. To speak about these matters too loudly might be to undermine the US position in Iraq, where the origins and course of the outside involvement have been different, and where the flow of refugees has been outwards. NATO leaders, anxious to put the recriminations of 2003 over Iraq behind them, may be nervous about highlighting the differences between Afghanistan and Iraq.

90. A major question, heavy with implications for international security, is: how are the setbacks experienced in Afghanistan to be explained, especially within NATO member states? The UN may be accustomed to failure, but NATO is not. So far, the tendency has been to blame Pakistan, the messy NATO command, the poor attention span of consecutive US governments, the unwillingness of NATO allies to contribute, the weakness of Karzai, the corruption of his government, the shortage of foreign money and troops—in other words, to blame almost everything except the nature of the project.

91. The various reasons that have been given cannot be lightly dismissed. For example, the lack of NATO unity in certain operational matters has been striking: the inability of member states to agree on a straightforward and defensible common set of standards for treating prisoners in the Afghan operations is symptomatic of deep divisions within the alliance. Political divisions have never been far from the surface, and will no doubt be projected into future explanations of what went wrong. Continental Europeans can convincingly blame the Americans and the British for having taken their eye off the ball in Afghanistan in 2002–03, foolishly thinking that the war there was virtually won and that they could afford to rush into a second adventure in Iraq. Americans can blame the Europeans for putting relatively few troops into ISAF, and being slow to back them up when the going got rough in 2006–08. A less blame-centred explanation might be that the reconstruction of Afghanistan, and the pursuit of counterinsurgency there, was always going to be an extremely difficult task; that there are limits to what outsiders should expect to achieve in the

transformation of distant societies with cultures significantly different from our own; and that it never made sense to invest such effort in counterinsurgency in Afghanistan without having even the beginnings of a strategy for the neighbouring regions of Pakistan.

#### *Impact on International Security*

92. The problem of Afghanistan—including the complex interplay of international actors who have pursued their interests there—has had an impressive impact on international security issues in the past generation. It contributed to the end of the Cold War and indeed of the Soviet Union itself. The Taliban regime's failure to control al-Qaeda activities launched the US into the huge and seemingly endless "War on Terror", and also resulted in the UN Security Council claiming unprecedented powers to affect activities within states. The Afghan war has embroiled NATO in a largely civil war thousands of miles from its North Atlantic heartlands.

93. For the future, the greatest impact of Afghanistan on international security may turn out to be highly paradoxical. It is obvious that Afghanistan, along with Iraq, has called into question the idea that the US, in its supposed "unipolar moment", could change even the most difficult and divided societies by its confident use of armed force. But it is not only the ideas of the neoconservatives and their camp-followers that are in trouble. In many ways the involvement of NATO in Afghanistan was textbook liberal multilateralism: approved by the UN Security Council, involving troops from forty democracies, coupled with the UN Assistance Mission, and with admirable aims to assist the development and modernization of Afghanistan. The very ideas of rebuilding the world in our image, and of major Western states having an obligation to achieve these tasks in distant lands—whether by unilateral or multilateral approaches—may come to be viewed as optimistic. Or, to put it differently, and somewhat cryptically, Afghanistan may not have quite such a drastic effect on the American *imperium* as it had on the Soviet one in the years up to 1991; but it may nevertheless come to be seen as one important stage on the path in which international order became, certainly not uni-polar, and perhaps not even multi-polar, but more based on prudent interest than on illusions that Western ideas control the world. Afghanistan, like Somalia, may contribute to greater caution before engaging in interventionist projects aimed at reconstructing divided societies.

94. Despite all the difficulties encountered in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, in the US presidential election campaign in 2008 both Barack Obama and John McCain promised to increase the US commitment to Afghanistan in 2009. There was little prospect either that the insurgency would subside or that the US would tiptoe out of the war. Furthermore, both candidates advocated continuing and even extending the practice of using US force against Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Pakistan. The war's international dimension, and its significance for international security more generally, was set to continue.

#### *The Debate on Policy Choices*

95. The Obama administration's policy planning for Afghanistan is based on the sound presumption that the Afghan problem cannot be addressed in isolation. Although many countries have a potentially important role in any settlement in Afghanistan—especially Iran, with its large numbers of Afghan refugees and its major drug problem—Pakistan is at the core of this approach. Granted the indissoluble connection between Afghanistan and Pakistan, any policy in respect of the one has to be framed in light of its effects on the other. At times it may even be necessary to prioritise as between these two countries. The simple truth is that Pakistan is a far larger, more powerful and generally more important country than Afghanistan. If the price of saving Afghanistan were to be the destabilization of Pakistan, it would not be worth paying. A principal aim of the US in the region should have been, and indeed may have been, to avoid creating a situation in which that particular price has to be paid: yet at least once before, in the Soviet-Afghan War in the 1980s, something very like it happened.

96. The main conclusion of any consideration of the Pakistan factor in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan has to be that the policy of the US and allies—to strengthen central government in both countries—has been operating in extremely difficult circumstances, has been pursued erratically, and has been largely unsuccessful. While it is not obvious what the alternatives might be—open acceptance of regional autonomy in both societies would have some merits—the general approach of backing non-Pashtuns in Pakistan and Afghanistan risks exacerbating the Pashtun problem in both countries. Three distinct causes—Pashtun, Taliban and al-Qaeda—have become dangerously conflated. It should be a first aim of Western policy to reverse this dangerous trend.

97. Because of the grim prospects of a stalemate, a war of attrition or worse in Afghanistan, and also because of the advent of new governments in Pakistan in 2008 and the US in 2009, there has been at least the beginning of consideration of alternative policies. Two stand out: each in its way addresses directly the growth of the insurgency, and each is based on a recognition that the Pakistan dimension of the problem has to be considered alongside the Afghan one. Both options take into account the central requirement of any approach—that it be geared to ensuring that neither Afghanistan nor Pakistan offer the kind of haven for organizing international terrorist actions that Afghanistan did under Taliban rule.

98. The first option centres on negotiation with Taliban and other Pashtun groups. The first question to be faced is whether, on either side of the border, there are sufficiently clear hierarchical organizational structures with which to negotiate. The second question is whether Afghan Taliban/Pashtun goals are

framed more in terms of control of the Afghan state along the completely uncompromising lines followed by the Taliban in the years up to 2001, or in more limited terms. Whatever the answers, negotiation in some form with some of the insurgent groups and factions is inevitable. Indeed, in an informal manner some is already happening. Combining fighting with talking is quite common in insurgencies, not least because of their tendency to result in stalemate. Yet it is never easy, and is likely to be particularly difficult for those on both sides who have chosen to see the war in Afghanistan as a war of good against evil. It is also likely to be difficult if, as at present, the Taliban believe they are in a position of strength. A critical question to be explored in any talks is whether, as some evidence suggests, Taliban leaders have learned enough from their disasters since seizing Kabul in 1996, and in particular from their near-death experience in 2001, to be willing to operate in a different manner in today's Afghanistan.<sup>106</sup> The continuing commitment of the Taliban in Pakistan to destroying government schools, and its opposition to education for girls, does not inspire confidence. The scope and content of any agreement are matters of huge difficulty. Some agreements concluded by the Pakistan government in the past few years are widely seen as having given Taliban leaders a licence to continue supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. This serves as a warning of the hazards of partial negotiation. Yet the pressures for negotiation are very strong, and a refusal to consider this course could have adverse effects in both countries.

99. In October 2008, after a two-week debate that was not always well attended, the Pakistan parliament passed unanimously a resolution widely interpreted as suggesting above all a shift to negotiation. Actually it was a complex package, in which the parliament united to condemn terrorism and at the same time was seen as "taking ownership" of policy to tackle it. The resolution said that regions on the Afghan border where militants flourish should be developed; and force used as a last resort. It opposed the cross-border strikes by US forces in Pakistan, but at the same time indicated a degree of support for US policy. It called for dialogue with extremist groups operating in the country, and hinted at a fundamental change in Pakistan's approach to the problem: "We need an urgent review of our national security strategy and revisiting the methodology of combating terrorism in order to restore peace and stability".<sup>107</sup> At the very least it provides one basis for the incoming US administration to recalibrate the US's largely burnt-out policies towards Pakistan.

100. The second option under discussion involves a fundamental rethinking of security strategy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. On the Afghan side of the border it would call for some increase in ISAF or other outside forces, especially to speed up the pace of expansion of the Afghan Army, and thereby to provide back-up so that certain areas from which the Taliban have been expelled can thereafter be protected. It would also call for cooperation in security matters with local forces and councils, with all the hazards involved. One informed and persuasive critique of the approach to counter-insurgency used in Afghanistan since 2003 suggests that its emphasis on extending the reach of central government is precisely the wrong strategy: its authors, specialists in the region, argue instead for a rural security presence that has been largely lacking.<sup>108</sup> A security strategy based on local forces and councils would also call for expansion of aid and development programmes, especially in urgent matters such as food aid in areas threatened by famine; and for a serious effort to address the widespread corruption which makes a continuous mockery of Western attempts to bring reform and progress to Afghanistan. On the Pakistan side it would involve a protracted effort to develop a long-term policy—hitherto non-existent—for establishing some kind of government influence in the FATA, and for a joined-up policy for addressing the Taliban and al-Qaeda presence. On both sides of the border it would necessitate reining in the use of air power to reduce its inflammation of local opinion.

101. For reasons indicated in this survey, it is highly improbable that either of these options on its own could provide a substantial amelioration of a tangled and tragic situation. However, a combination of the two policies—both negotiating, and rethinking the security strategy—might just achieve some results. Such a dual approach has been supported in 2009 by John Nagl, one of the architects of the new US counterinsurgency doctrine. Advocating the adaptation of this doctrine in the special circumstances of Afghanistan, he has stated: "At the time, the doctrine the manual laid out was enormously controversial, both inside and outside the Pentagon. It remains so today. Its key tenets are simple, but radical: Focus on protecting civilians over killing the enemy. Assume greater risk. Use minimum, not maximum force". His advocacy of these principles is accompanied by emphasis on the importance of dealing with local forces as well as national governments both in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.<sup>109</sup>

102. An approach along such lines would need to include other elements as well, including a strong and credible commitment to leave as soon as a modicum of stability is achieved. Such a combination would need to be pursued in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. It could only work if a new US administration rejected the worst aspects of previous policies, and pursued the matter with more consistent attention than in the past. It would be likely to result in some unsatisfactory compromises, and might build on, rather than

<sup>106</sup> For evidence that Taliban fighters in Afghanistan have learned from the mistakes of the period of Taliban rule up to 2001 see Ghaith Abdul-Ahad's report from a Taliban-held area, "When I Started I Had Six Fighters. Now I Have 500", *The Guardian*, London, 15 December 2008, pp 1, 4 and 5.

<sup>107</sup> Robert Birsel, "Pakistan Parliament Seen United against Militancy", Reuters report from Islamabad, 23 October 2008, <http://lite.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/ISL355611.htm>.

<sup>108</sup> Thomas H Johnson and M Chris Mason, "All Counterinsurgency is Local", *The Atlantic*, Washington DC, October 2008, pp 16–17, available at <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200810/afghan>.

<sup>109</sup> John A Nagl and Nathaniel C Fick, "Counterinsurgency Field Manual: Afghanistan Edition", *Foreign Policy Magazine*, January/February 2009, available at <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/index.php>.

fundamentally change, the pattern of local loyalty and regional warlordism that is so rooted in Afghanistan. Yet if the war in Afghanistan is not to have even more fateful consequences for international order than those seen in the past three decades, it may be the direction in which events have to move.

23 January 2009

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**Submission by Sajjan M. Gohel, Asia-Pacific Foundation**

**THE AFGHANISTAN—PAKISTAN BORDER AREAS: CHALLENGES, THREATS AND SCENARIOS**

**SUMMARY**

- The Pakistan-Afghanistan border region constitutes a significant threat to Western national security interests.
- Undermining Afghan President Karzai's efforts to build a truly national government is the resurgent Taliban, backed by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, which together are mounting an increasingly virulent insurgency.
- Afghanistan's woes began with outside interference and though the Taliban was dislodged from power in 2001, they were never defeated or dismantled but in fact have proliferated, and this is being fuelled by those who wish to see pro-Taliban and al-Qa'ida elements re-asserting themselves.
- The Durand Line divides the homelands of the Pashtun tribes nearly equally between Afghanistan and Pakistan, effectively cutting the Pashtun nation in half. This largely imaginary boundary has been viewed since its inception with contempt and resentment by Pashtuns on both sides of the line.
- The stabilisation of Afghanistan, to a very large extent, depends on the nature of that country's relations with Pakistan. There is an urgent need to resolve the longstanding border dispute and the Pashtunistan issue in order to improve the prospects of counter-terrorism cooperation between the two countries.
- Forging alliances with Islamist parties and their allies created what has subsequently proven to be an enduring military-mullah nexus in Pakistan's politics which impacts upon Afghanistan.
- The security challenge is not a social problem, or a religious problem, or a generic "tribal" problem. It is a unique cultural problem.
- Pakistan had gambled for strategic depth in Afghanistan, but had conceded reverse strategic depth to the Taliban in Pakistan and as a result is facing a growing diverse array of threats in recent years to its legitimacy and authority.
- The Taliban are proving to be increasingly irrepressible. They seem to be adapting, faster than expected to the challenges confronting them. In terms of propaganda, psyops and operational reach they are proving to be a force to reckon with.
- In addition to the Taliban, the Afghan-Pakistan border area has proven particularly vital to other insurgent forces that represent an existential threat to the Karzai regime, a growing threat to the Pakistani government, and an enormous challenge to regional stability.
- The Federally Administered Tribal Areas have provided a sanctuary for a growing insurgent network that has struck Afghanistan with a vengeance. It provides base for command and control, fundraising, recruiting, training, and launching and recovery of military operations and terrorist attacks.
- There is an urgent need to stop the recruitment and radicalisation process by reforming the madrasas in Pakistan that are most susceptible to the Taliban rhetoric and doctrine.
- Any compromise or negotiation with the Taliban in its current form would not be feasible and will completely undermine the building and strengthening of civil institutions in Afghanistan which will result in rival power centres being created.
- The terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan that benefits the Taliban will at the same time continue to act as a recruiting ground for young Britons that are being drawn and attracted by the ideology and doctrines that al-Qa'ida and its affiliates articulate.
- It is, pertinent that the West further strengthens the position of Kabul, and keeps the military pressure on anti-government groups.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. During the last 36 years Afghanistan has been in perpetual conflict, involving the 1973 communist coup; Soviet invasion; Mujahideen counter-insurgency; Soviet defeat and withdrawal; civil war; repressive Taliban takeover; al-Qa'ida terrorism; the military operation by the US-led coalition following the September 11 attacks and more recently the escalating insurgency by a re-energised Taliban.

2. Afghanistan, after decades of fighting, has also witnessed watershed democratic elections and important infrastructure rebuilding. While much work still remains to be accomplished, significant progress has been made in improving human rights, political and economic reform, and strengthening of civil institutions.

3. However, a number of extremely disturbing countervailing trends are evident. The actual influence and control of the democratically elected government of President Hamid Karzai extends only weakly beyond the outskirts of Kabul; ethno-linguistic fragmentation is on the rise; an increasingly sophisticated insurgency threatens stability; large areas of the country are still ruled by warlords and drug lords and, possibly the most damning for the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan, is that it is fast approaching narco-state status with its opium crop representing a substantial portion of the country's licit GDP. Estimates illustrate that Afghanistan has become practically the exclusive supplier of the world's deadliest drug. Approximately 93% of the world's opium is produced in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup>

4. Indeed, Karzai's government is encountering extreme difficulty in extending control and mandate outside Kabul, into the country's southern regions. Undermining Karzai's efforts to build a truly national government is the resurgent Taliban, backed by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates, which together are mounting an increasingly virulent insurgency, especially in the east and south, near the Afghanistan-Pakistan border.

5. It is difficult to ascertain the damage inflicted upon the Afghan socio-political structure by decades of continuous warfare, which not only destroyed the pre-war elites, but also left massive numbers dead, wounded, or displaced.<sup>2</sup> This extended turmoil and hardship set the stage for the rise and entrenchment of Afghanistan as a centre of conflict. At the same time, pre-existing ethnic stratifications and cleavages have further polarized the country, isolate it internationally, and also to insulate its people from most efforts at centralized government.

6. Afghanistan's diverse present boundaries were created to serve as a buffer between British and Russian Empires as Afghanistan confronted modernity through its forced integration into a Euro-centric state.<sup>3</sup> These were not drawn along ethnic, linguistic, or religious lines. The externally imposed "state" comprised of a complicated mix of people mostly living in small, kin-based communities outside of the limited urban areas. Some of these groups are ethnically and linguistically distinct, but are not necessarily different in terms of culture. Afghanistan's governments have been unable to create a sense of genuine national unity in times other than during crisis.<sup>4</sup>

7. Afghan society is deeply divided along linguistic, sectarian, tribal, and racial lines. The social system is based on communal priorities and emphasizes the importance of local over central authority. Islamic identity, however, does often take precedence over even local sentiment, as demonstrated by the jihad-inspired solidarity against the Soviet invasion.

8. The traditional ethnic hierarchy begins with the Pashtuns at the summit; Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmens comprise the middle layers of society; and the Shiite Hazaras have the lowest status. However, the Hazaras are the only major ethnic group whose traditional territory does not overlap with international borders. Afghanistan has a long-standing tradition, facilitated by trans-national ethnic ties, of the movement of people through informal border crossings into Pakistan. These ties have operated in much the same way for centuries, back to when the region was a trading hub in the heyday of the Silk Road.

9. Afghanistan's Pashtuns would like a strong Pashtun-run central state; Tajiks focus on power sharing in the central state, and Uzbeks and Hazaras desire recognition of their identities and mechanisms of local government. Historically, the more populous Pashtun tribes of the south have ruled Afghanistan, yet unlike other ethnic groups, the Pashtuns emphasize tribal structures and codes at expense of the state. Not until the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan did other ethnic groups truly establish themselves as a political and military force. In the past, fighting for control of the state had occurred primarily among Pashtuns.

#### THE PASHTUN DIMENSION

10. Among its immediate neighbours, Afghanistan has had tense and strained relations with Pakistan. Much of the history that has shaped the two countries' border area can be traced to colonial fears of the British in India and of Russian encroachment throughout Central Asia, coined as the "Great Game" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

11. The legacy of this era can be seen in the two countries' border demarcation. The 1879 Treaty of Gandamak, signed in the midst of the Second British-Afghan War, led to the establishment in 1893 of the Durand Line as an arbitrary boundary between Afghanistan and colonial British India. The Durand line, was drawn by a team of British surveyors, led by Sir Mortimer Durand. This border, which remains in place today, split both Pashtunistan and Baluchistan, traditionally occupied by the Pashtun and Baluch peoples, between Afghan rule and British colonial rule.<sup>5</sup>

12. To a great extent, the line followed the contours of convenient geographical features, as well as the existing limits of British authority, rather than tribal borders. It divided the homelands of the Pashtun tribes nearly equally between Afghanistan and Pakistan, effectively cutting the Pashtun nation in half. This largely imaginary boundary has been viewed since its inception with contempt and resentment by Pashtuns on both sides of the line. As a practical matter the border is unenforceable. In some places the position of the line is

disputed; in others it is inaccessible to all but trained mountain climbers. The majority of the Pashtun tribes and clans that control the frontier zones of eastern and southern Afghanistan along the Durand line have never accepted the legitimacy of what they believe to be an arbitrary and capricious boundary.

13. The division has led to decades of tension along the border, which accelerated with the partition of British India in 1947. No Afghan government has ever recognised the legitimacy of the border. An Afghanistan unwilling to relinquish its irredentist demands thus becomes a security issue for Pakistan and is used to justify interventionist strategies, among them efforts to neutralise and subvert Pashtun nationalist sentiment. These policies, so consequential for Afghanistan, have also had a deep impact on Pakistan.

14. On Pakistan's side of the border, the territory in question is the Northwest Frontier Province, divided into six tribal agencies, those of Khyber, Mohmand, Kurram, North and South Waziristan, and Malakand. Local tribal groups were given control of these agencies when the area was divided during the partition. The area remains largely autonomous, and al-Qa'ida and Taliban remnants are able to operate there with relative freedom.

15. Ironically, the unique underlying factors that create this threat are little understood by most policymakers in the West. The continuing instability lies in the fact that the international effort has failed to address longstanding disagreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan—the Durand Line border dispute and the Pushtunistan issue—which in turn impairs the two countries' cooperative capacity in the anti-Taliban campaign.

16. Indeed, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan bear the scars of 60 years of unresolved issues over territory and national identity. Conflicting political alliances and ideologies, especially those once associated with the Cold War, have also helped define the relationship. In recent years, the two countries have been cited for their intersecting roles in the struggle against trans-national terrorism and their necessary joint contribution for bringing about regional stability and economic growth. Far less appreciated or understood are the domestic consequences of their bilateral policies.

17. From Pakistan's founding, the country has sought means to counter the demands of virtually every Afghan regime for an independent state for Pakistan's Pashtun ethnic population. The new state was to be carved geographically from Pakistan's northwest and to be known as Pashtunistan.

18. Afghanistan's promotion of Pashtunistan has brought retaliation from Pakistan. During the 1950s, Pakistan prevented its alliance partner, the United States, from giving military assistance to the Kabul Government, thus leading the Afghan leadership to turn to the Soviet Union for equipment and training. By periodically impeding the transit of goods from the port of Karachi to landlocked Afghanistan, Pakistan seriously impaired the Afghan economy. The promotion of a Pashtunistan policy resulting in border tensions hastened the departure of Afghanistan's Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud in 1963.<sup>6</sup> In 1975, Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto lent covert support to an insurrection in Afghanistan by Pashtun militants. Islamabad also gave refuge to several insurgent leaders, who, in just a few years, would command Pakistan-based mujahideen groups opposing the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and indigenous communists.<sup>7</sup>

19. Pakistan's decision, following the Soviet invasion in 1979, to assist Islamic resistance forces, undertaken with massive support from the United States, Saudi Arabia and others, had far-reaching effects on Pakistan's politics and strategic planning. It gave new life to the military rule of General Zia ul-Haq who, by the late 1970s, faced a serious domestic challenge to his legitimacy following his overthrow and subsequent execution of Bhutto. The jihad against the Soviets and Afghan communists and the international support it received impeded any restoration of democratic rule and sustained the Zia regime until the time of his death in 1988.

20. An Afghan resistance sponsored by the regime of Zia and his allies, designed to discourage Soviet offensive ambitions in the region, and wear down the Soviet army also provided Pakistan with an opportunity to blunt Afghan nationalism. Secular and leftist parties, some of which had championed the idea of a Pashtun state, were deliberately excluded from participation in a mujahideen alliance fashioned by Pakistan's powerful intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). By also giving radical Islamist parties effective control over Pakistan's large refugee camps, Islamabad hoped to stifle secular Pashtun nationalism which rallied around the former King, Zahir Shah, who had been living in exile since the communist coup in 1973.

21. Forging alliances with Islamist parties and their radical allies created what has subsequently proven to be an enduring military-mullah nexus in Pakistan's politics. Zia's introduction of conservative religious policies in the country gave a strong boost to this religious—military alliance. In return for state support, the religious parties served as open or covert electoral partners, and their affiliated groups were used as a surrogate force against enemies of the military regime domestically, and in India and Afghanistan. Zia's Afghan policy has been responsible for boosting radical political Islam expanded an intelligence apparatus that shored up radical groups to help the government monitor and, when necessary, stifle its political opposition.

22. A long-sought and perhaps outmoded goal for Pakistan has been to see Afghanistan as an asset in providing strategic depth in the event of a wide conflict with India. By ensuring a safe haven for its forces, Pakistan would presumably enhance its survivability and deterrent power. Another goal has been to foster friendly if not subservient regimes in Kabul. This has taken form in ways varying from cultivating leaders to supporting insurgencies.

23. In pursuing these goals Pakistan's policies are often viewed by Afghans as overbearing and over-reaching. Having sheltered millions of Afghan refugees during the Soviet occupation of the 1980s and civil war of the 1990s, governments in Pakistan took for granted that the Afghans would feel deep gratitude. Pakistan, therefore, repeatedly misjudged their relationship and has engaged in short-sighted policies toward Afghanistan. Perhaps the most serious has been a deliberate effort to exploit Afghanistan's ethnic mosaic for strategic purposes through cross-border *clientalism*. To ensure the dependence of a Pashtun-dominated Afghan leadership on Pakistan, Islamabad stands accused of promoting adversarial relations between Pashtuns and other ethnic groups.

24. The international community has no long-term security problems or challenges with the Baluchis, the Chitralis, the Tajiks, the Nuristanis, or any of the myriad tribal groups along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, except for elements within the Pashtun clans. Therefore the security challenge is not a social problem, or a religious problem, or a generic "tribal" problem. It is a unique cultural problem. Alone among the many peoples and cultures of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, it is the Pashtun people who have proven both susceptible to religious extremist movements and resistant to the imposition of external governance. This is very much the legacy of Zia ul-Haq.

25. The stabilisation of Afghanistan, to a very large extent, depends on the nature of that country's relations with Pakistan. There is an urgent need to resolve the longstanding border dispute and the Pashtunistan issue in order to improve the prospects of counter-terrorism cooperation between the two countries. An amicable resolution of the Durand Line dispute and the Pashtunistan issue will go a long way to help the campaign against terrorism inasmuch as it would allay Pakistani fears that a strong Afghanistan would revitalise past claims on the Pashtun regions of Pakistan.

26. The primary issue of concern today is the Taliban but to understand them it is important to look at how they appeared on the scene and evolved.

#### THE TALIBAN: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

27. Following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, Afghanistan deteriorated into a brutal civil war between rival mujahideen groups, many of which had spent much of their energy fighting each other even during the height of the anti-Soviet jihad. This civil war claimed thousands of lives and decimated the country's infrastructure. The civil war intensified after the mujahideen took control of Kabul in April 1992. Shortly afterwards, violent fighting erupted in the streets of the capital between rival ethnic factions, this conflict spread to neighbouring towns and villages. The ensuing civil war eventually wreaked as much if not more damage and destruction on the country than the Soviet occupation. In Kandahar, fighting between Islamists and traditionalist mujahideen parties resulted in the destruction of much of the traditional power structures. In the rural areas, warlords, drug lords, and bandits ran amok in a state of anarchy created by the unravelling of the traditional tribal leadership system.

28. During this conflict for power between the mujahideen factions and warlords, Saudi Arabia invested heavily in the region, most notably funding madrasas (religious seminaries) in Pakistan that sought to spread the conservative Wahhabi religious code practiced in the Saudi kingdom.<sup>8</sup> Pakistan's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (Assembly of Islamic Clergy, or JUI) built a network of its own to extend the influence of the indigenous Deobandi School of Islamic thought. These madrasas would come to serve as an important educational alternative for the numerous displaced refugees from the anti-Soviet jihad and Afghan civil war as well as for poor families along the frontier who could not afford the secular schools. Under the oversight of Pakistan's ISI, the Taliban emerged from the madrasas and refugee camps in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA).

29. In Afghanistan, the Taliban recruited primarily from madrasas near Ghazni and Kandahar. It arrived on the Afghan scene in 1994 with little warning and vowed to install a traditional Islamic government and end the fighting among the mujahideen. It overthrew the largely Tajik mujahideen government in Kabul, capturing the capital in September 1996. The Taliban considered this regime responsible for a continuing civil war and the deterioration of security in the country, as well as discrimination against Pashtuns. Afghanistan soon became a training ground for fundamentalist activists and other radicals from the Middle East and around Asia.

30. War-weary Afghans initially welcomed the Taliban, which promoted itself under the banner of honesty and unity. They were seen mainly by the Pashtuns as the most capable of bringing peace and stability to the country. The Taliban immediately targeted warlords who were deemed responsible for much of the destruction, insecurity, and chaos that plagued Afghanistan since the outbreak of the civil war. Like in Saudi Arabia, it also instituted a religious police force, the Amr Bil Marof Wa Nai An Munkir (Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice) to violently uphold its extreme religious doctrine, which were not previously known in Afghanistan.<sup>9</sup>

31. The people's optimism soon turned to fear as the Taliban introduced a stringent interpretation of sharia law, banned women from work, and introduced punishments such as death by stoning and amputations.

32. While Tajik resistance to the Taliban in the form of the Northern Alliance held out throughout the Taliban period and retained Afghanistan's seat in the United Nations, the Taliban eventually conquered 80 percent of the country. By September 2001, it was poised to finish off the Northern Alliance. However, the September 11 attacks led to U.S. intervention on 7 October 2001, aimed at destroying al-Qa'ida as well as removing the Taliban from Afghanistan.

33. The Taliban primarily comprises of Pashtuns from the Ghilzai group with some support from the Kakar tribe of the Ghurghusht group. Taliban spiritual leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar, and most of the surviving senior leadership of the Taliban are from the Hotaki tribe of the Ghilzai. The Taliban represents an ultraconservative Islamic front with an ideology derived from the Deobandi School. The movement, however, took Deobandism to extremes the school's founders would not have recognized.

34. While the Taliban's rise challenged many traditional tribal institutions, the eventual leadership consisted almost exclusively of Ghilzai Pashtuns. The Ghilzai have historically been at odds with the smaller Durrani group of tribes, which is represented to some extent in the current Karzai Afghan government. Ghilzai Pashtuns are concentrated in the southeast in Oruzgan, Zabul, Dai Kundi and Gardez provinces and in the Katawaz region of Paktika province and extending eastwards towards the Suleiman Mountains into Pakistan. They also have communities in the centre and north of Afghanistan as a result of resettlement, both forcible and encouraged, under Durrani Empire in the early 19th century.<sup>10</sup>

35. Tribalism in Afghanistan and across the border in Pakistan can be seen as a separation of ethno-linguistic groups, giving primacy to ties of kinship and patrilineal ancestry. The tribe is a kind of amalgamation of mutual assistance and support, with members cooperating on defence and maintaining order.<sup>11</sup>

36. At the strategic level, the Taliban is currently fighting a classic "war of the flea", largely along the same lines used by the mujahideen against the Soviets, including fighting in villages to deliberately provoke air strikes and inflict collateral damage.<sup>12</sup> The death of a Taliban fighter invokes an obligation of revenge among all his male relatives, making the killing an act of insurgent multiplication, not elimination. The Soviets learned this lesson painfully as they killed nearly a million Pashtuns during their occupation of Afghanistan but inadvertently increased the number of Pashtun mujahideen by the end of the war.

37. The Taliban centre of gravity is the Pashtun heartland along the Afghan-Pakistan border and not just indoctrinated impressionable teenage boys, mid-level commanders or even Mullah Omar and no amount of killing them will terminate the insurgency. For every individual that is captured or killed, there are at least another five coming along the assembly line. It is this infrastructure which replenishes the ranks of the Taliban that needs to be addressed and systematically dismantled.

#### TRIBAL POLITICS

38. The Pakistani state has seen a growing diverse array of threats in recent years to its legitimacy and authority. These challenges have included a substantial surge in religious militancy, mounting provincial and tribal unrest and the weakening of the institutional capacity of the state to govern effectively. All three factors are present in its western border areas with Afghanistan and can be traced in large part to its Afghan policies. By encouraging and supporting extremists, like the Taliban, as a tool to retain and hold influence in Afghanistan, Pakistan introduced changes that undermined its own ability to maintain its writ within its own borders. Policies on Afghanistan that altered traditional power structures in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) have resulted in wider domestic instability. Not inconsequentially, the reputation of Pakistan's military has suffered.

39. Pakistan had gambled for strategic depth in Afghanistan, but had conceded reverse strategic depth to the Taliban in Pakistan. Even then, as long as such elements looked away from Pakistan and engaged themselves in Afghanistan, the authorities thought they were safe in Pakistan. However, that was not to be. The tribal political system was to undergo a complete overhaul when in the post-9/11 context Pakistan was forced to reverse its Afghan policy. It was then that the pro-Taliban Pakistani radicals came home to roost. Soon afterwards some of these elements asserted themselves in North and South Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Dir and Swat, and Khyber in the tribal areas and emerged as the Pakistani Taliban.

40. No politician in Islamabad appears to be ready to take upon himself the stigma of fighting the militants within Pakistan on behalf of the international community. The Pakistani state has to stop approaching the issue of tribal insurgency through the narrow prism of assuming that maintaining law and order will alone resolve the problem. It has to be acknowledged that the old system of controlling the area through obliging tribal maliks (leader of a village or tribe) patronized by the state is falling apart. The state is now up against a rigid, inflexible, fearless, and defiant group of militants who are winning the battles against the state and filling the power vacuum in the area.

41. Rather than addressing these tribal leaders separately as sheikhs of small independent emirates, Islamabad must work out a comprehensive offer to all of them and compel them to join the political mainstream. The policy, since Pakistan's independence, of buffering the tribal areas and keeping them out of the spotlight of representative politics has created a space for regressive forces which are now threatening to take even the stable areas under their control.

42. Politicians and especially military rulers for more than a quarter-century have gradually placed religion in a more central role in Pakistani politics on all levels. As a part of the support for the mujahideen, Zia ul-Haq gave the ulema a more powerful position in the Pakistani state. In the tribal areas, the support for the 1980s' Afghan jihad and the backing for the Taliban regime in the 1990s resulted in the usurpation by Islamist militants of the traditional secular tribal leadership.<sup>13</sup> The old and largely non-religious system of governance, which was in place in the FATA, was "Islamized". Previously, the malik was the local political authority. He was elected by a jirga (tribal assembly of elders) in the village, and through an Islamabad-appointed political agent received government funds and handled relations with the state. The local mullah (Muslim religious cleric) was clearly subordinate, and in most cases completely apolitical.

43. From Zia's rule onward, the state began to fund the mullahs directly, giving them financial control and independence. Over the years the mullahs took on an enhanced political role in the community and gradually became more powerful and influential than the malik. With new resources and status, the local religious figures were able to emerge as key political brokers and, very often, promoters of religious militancy.<sup>14</sup> Empowering the mullahs made these border areas more hospitable to radicalised local tribesmen. With the malik significantly undermined it became harder, if not impossible, for disillusioned locals to protest the presence of the Afghan fighters and foreign terrorists occupying their land.

44. The gradual change in the power structure from the malik to the mullah united the people under the banner of Islam, giving less prominence to national and ethnic allegiances. This susceptibility of the people of the region to religious insurgencies, and their resistance to external governmental control, have been ascribed by some observers to tribal culture, or simply a response to chronic poverty and underdevelopment. Yet all of the ethnic groups of the border region have in common the same key elements of tribal organization.<sup>15</sup>

45. The Taliban are proving to be increasingly irrepressible. They seem to be adapting and evolving faster than expected to the challenges confronting them. Although in terms of weaponry they cannot match the vastly superior Western forces, in terms of propaganda, psyops and operational reach they are proving to be a force to reckon with. In hindsight one can say that the Taliban made good use of the time made available to them by the U.S.-led intervention in Iraq in 2003. The Taliban seized the opportunity to implement important structural and operational transformations, which made them a much more formidable and effective force. While the Taliban still retain some of their fundamental characteristics, they have tactfully improvised on many other areas, especially their military tactics and approach towards media and propaganda.

46. The ambiguity over the ongoing efforts for national reconciliation in Afghanistan seems to be growing. A sense of confusion prevails due to differing ways and means of a whole range of diverse entities now involved in reconciling the anti-government groups, especially the Taliban. Talking to the Taliban is being increasingly considered as a realistic option as a way of containing the proliferating insurgency. Often "deals" and "pacts" with local Taliban commanders are projected as the only effective means of ensuring a semblance of peace and development. The idea of gradually co-opting the Taliban in the ongoing political process is being mooted as a possible solution for the Western forces. However, some naïve policy makers in the West, in their attempts to make peace overtures to the Taliban, do not seem to factor in the long-term impact, nor its immediate consequences for the Afghan polity.

47. The fighting with the Pashtun clans in the FATA during most of 2004–07 was very costly in terms of military casualties and pride for the Pakistani army. Anxious to salvage something from its failed policy, the Pervez Musharraf regime concluded a truce, the North Waziristan accord on 5 September 2006. According to the terms of the deal, the tribesmen agreed to cease attacking the army and to stop crossing the border to fight in Afghanistan. The government agreed to halt major ground and air operations, free prisoners, retreat to barracks, compensate for losses and allow tribesmen to carry small arms. The thorny issue of foreign fighters was left ambiguous. The militants promised that all non-Pakistanis would leave North Waziristan, or stay and respect the deal. But the government did not insist that they be registered.<sup>16</sup>

48. British NATO commanders were quick to strike a similar pact the following month in the Taliban-infested Musa Qala district in the southern province of Helmand. The strategy suffered a fatal blow when the pact was soon violated by the Taliban who overran the town, disarming the local police, burning government buildings and threatening officials and residents.<sup>17</sup>

49. In spite of the Musharraf regime's efforts to sell the accord as a step towards stability and peace, it was a deal very much on the militants' terms. They were handsomely "compensated" for their losses and allowed to retain their weapons stocks. Since the Musharraf deal, U.S. troops on Afghanistan's eastern border have seen a threefold increase in attacks. The tribal deal has also contributed to the Taliban's overall resurgence as ethnic Pashtun rebels are no longer fighting Pakistani troops and are using the North Waziristan border area as a command-and-control hub for launching attacks in Afghanistan. Peace continues to elude both North Waziristan and Helmand.<sup>18</sup>

50. The Taliban and al-Qa'ida militants are using the lands of the Pashtun as a launching pad for attacks to destabilize Afghanistan, as well as a training ground for terrorist attacks worldwide. In addition to the Taliban, the Afghan-Pakistan border area has proven particularly vital to other insurgent forces led by Afghan Islamist Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami (HIG) Party, the Haqqani Faction of Maulawi Jalaluddin Haqqani, the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan led by Baitullah Mahsud.<sup>19</sup> The Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Law or TNSM) led by Maulana Fazlullah, also known as Mullah Radio for the illegal radio channel he operates. These insurgent forces represent an existential threat to the Karzai regime, a growing threat to the Pakistani government, and an enormous challenge to regional stability.<sup>20</sup>

51. Since 2002 the FATA has also provided a sanctuary for a growing insurgent network that has struck Afghanistan with a vengeance. It provides an almost impregnable base for command and control, fundraising, recruiting, training, and launching and recovery of military operations and terrorist attacks. Growing outward from the FATA, extremism has spread across the Pashtun belt, and Pashtun tribal areas in both Pakistan and Afghanistan are increasingly falling under the de facto political control of the extremists. The Taliban and its associated groups have used murder, arson, intimidation, bombings, and a sophisticated information campaign to subvert traditional tribal governance structures.

52. Justice, education and social policies in North Waziristan and South Waziristan, are decided by the Pakistani Taliban, who are ideologically similar to the Afghan Taliban and also comprise of local Pashtuns. Their reach has in fact been felt across the NWFP, notably in the northern districts of Swat and Malakand. Swat was once a popular tourist destination with the Malamjabba ski resort being the only one in the whole of Pakistan. The entire Swat valley has now been devastated by the spread of radicalism. Fazlullah's TNSM has established a "parallel government" through Islamic courts to enforce Sharia law which have issued edicts banning girls from attending schools.<sup>21</sup> This has drawn an eerie parallel to the policies of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The extent of the militant Islamist influence became apparent with the assassination of the former Pakistani Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto on 27 December 2007.

53. Quetta, located in western Pakistan, is the capital of Baluchistan, the largest and poorest of Pakistan's provinces. Unlike the rest of the province, Quetta has a Pashtun majority and is also considered the sanctuary of the Taliban leadership. Afghan President Hamid Karzai claims Taliban leader Mullah Omar is living there. Quetta is also home to the Command and Staff College, one of the premier schools of the Pakistani military and the headquarters of the Frontier Corps of Baluchistan.<sup>22</sup>

54. What may seem like a paradox, the co-existence of extremists and radicals with the Pakistani military in the same place, is emblematic of the challenge that exists in Pakistan which then rebounds and impacts on Afghanistan. This is perhaps best explained by the Shaldara madrasa in the Pashtunabad district of Quetta which has been accused of acting as an incubator for recruiting and radicalising young easily susceptible men who end up joining the ranks of the Taliban as suicide bombers in Afghanistan.

55. There is an urgent need to stop the recruitment and radicalisation process by reforming the madrasas that are most susceptible to the Taliban rhetoric and doctrine. Madrasas have a long history in Pakistan and they serve socially important purposes. Therefore it is reasonable for a government to seek to modernise and adapt rather than totally abolish them.

56. International assistance should focus heavily on rebuilding an education system that has been allowed to decay for three decades and should be closely tied to proof that it represents a genuine commitment to promote moderate, modern education and on the condition the government identifies and closes madrasas affiliated with banned extremist groups like the Taliban. It is also essential for all madrasas to disclose their sources of income and declare dissociation from any militant activity or group. Funding for reform projects should be suspended if the government fails to do so. International financial institutions providing, or intending to provide, financial assistance for madrasas reform should also make their grants conditional on the above criteria.

#### THE BRITISH CONNECTION

57. The Pakistan-Afghanistan border region constitutes a significant threat to Western national security interests. On 14 December, 2008, British Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, revealed that three-quarters of the most serious terrorist plots being investigated by U.K. authorities have links to Pakistan.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, terrorist related events over the last few years in the UK have seen increasing international interest in the connections between radicals in the UK and their counterparts in the Pakistani tribal areas that border Afghanistan. Attention has focused on how such groups and individuals could link up and cooperate to carry out attacks in the UK.

58. On 30 April 2007, the longest ever al-Qa'ida linked terrorism trial in the UK, known as the Ammonium Nitrate/Crevice Plot, concluded with guilty verdicts for five of the seven defendants. The convicted men had purchased and stored half a ton (600 kg) of ammonium nitrate fertiliser for the purposes of constructing bombs to launch attacks on diverse targets such as shopping centres, nightclubs, electricity companies, football stadiums, the utilities network, and the British Parliament.<sup>24</sup>

59. The defendants, all of Pakistani origin except one who was of Algerian extraction, were young British men, born or brought up in the UK but had established links to al-Qa'ida in the tribal areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border where some went for terrorist training. The plot became the first major one aimed at the UK, post-September 11.

60. Omar Khyam, the ring leader of the Ammonium Nitrate cell, portrayed an all too common yet disturbing trend of individual, born and brought up in the UK, but becoming radicalised, travelling abroad and willing to turn against their own society. During his court trial Khyam illustrated his ideological journey from secular British schoolboy to global terrorist.<sup>25</sup>

61. In 2001, Khyam attended a training camp in the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) near Afghanistan before crossing the border to meet Taliban members. In 2003, he travelled to Malakand, in Pakistan's NWFP, together with some of his cell. They had established contact with a warlord in Malakand, NWFP. It was there that some of the Crevice cell trained and honed their skills in putting together an explosive device. Khyam and his co-conspirator Salahuddin Amin also received training in explosives in Kohat, NWFP.<sup>26</sup>

62. On 8 August 2008, one of the biggest ever terrorist trials in the UK, known as the Liquid Bomb/Operation Overt Plot, concluded where three men were convicted of conspiring to commit mass murder but the jury failed to reach a verdict on the allegation they were plotting to bring down trans-Atlantic flights by using liquid explosives.<sup>27</sup>

63. By majority verdicts, the jury convicted the three men of conspiracy to commit murder. They were the cell's ringleader, Abdulla Ahmed Ali, the bomb-maker Assad Sarwar, and Tanvir Hussain. They had also pleaded guilty to conspiracy to cause explosions and conspiracy to commit public nuisance. The three admitted plotting to detonate a small device at Heathrow's Terminal 3 because it was used by several US airlines. They had earlier aborted plans to explode a home-made bomb at the Houses of Parliament due to the tight security at Westminster.<sup>28</sup>

64. Ali travelled frequently to Pakistan, staying for long periods between 2003 to 2006. It is believed his travels led to South Waziristan. His co-conspirators, Assad Sarwar and Tanvir Hussain also travelled to Pakistan. Ali claimed many of his trips were as a volunteer for an Islamic medical charity. However, in reality he was attending training camps and meeting senior figures in terrorist groups.<sup>29</sup>

65. It is pertinent to look at the places where these British individuals have been recruited and trained. Kohat, Malakand and South Waziristan are the same places that the Taliban and their affiliates are operating. There is a clear nexus that exists which in addition to being a base of operations for the Taliban is also a recruiting ground for Britons. This has obvious security concerns and challenges.

66. Though the tribal areas represent a significant security concern, other major terrorist plots in Britain have emanated from areas of Pakistan that extend beyond the Afghan-Pakistan border like the 7 July 2005 suicide attacks and the follow up failed plot (21/7) two weeks later.

67. Pakistan has fallen victim not to terrorism directed against it by external forces, but rather to the corrosive effects of extremist groups, many with a trans-national ideological orientation, that have flourished within its own borders. Therefore, the remedy for the security dilemma must and can only lie primarily within Pakistan itself.

68. The terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan that benefits the Taliban will at the same time continue to act as a recruiting ground for young Britons that are being drawn and attracted by the ideology and doctrines that al-Qa'ida and its affiliates articulate.

## CONCLUSION

69. Afghanistan's woes began with outside interference and though the Taliban was dislodged from power in 2001, they were never defeated or dismantled but in fact have proliferated, and this is being fuelled by those who wish to see pro-Taliban and al-Qa'ida elements re-asserting themselves. The key point to understand is that the Taliban is no longer a political movement or even a militia. They have now become a terrorist group adopting the tactics and strategies of the insurgency in Iraq, killing with stealth and unflinching in their agenda. The ill-conceived perception that there is a "moderate Taliban" is completely misguided. Perhaps the only difference between the "moderate Taliban" and "fundamentalist Taliban" is that the "moderate Taliban" may use smaller weapons and bombs and their militant tactics may not be so well thought out.

70. The key questions here are whether, or to what extent, the Taliban are interested in negotiating with Kabul and the West? To what extent are Kabul and the West in a position to lay down terms and conditions for negotiations? If the Taliban are a decentralized entity, then which Taliban faction or affiliate should Kabul be talking to? On what terms and conditions would the Taliban be willing to share power with the Karzai government? What would be its impact on the country's constitution, state structures, and foreign policy? Is Kabul willing to integrate Taliban guerrillas into the armed forces? How would it impact on the position of minority ethnic groups? These are some of the issues of far-reaching consequence which are not being thought of, especially as Kabul, in the given circumstances, cannot speak from a position of strength.

71. Any compromise with the Taliban in its current form would not be feasible and will completely undermine the building and strengthening of civil institutions in Afghanistan which will result in rival power centres being created. It is, therefore, pertinent that the West further strengthens the position of Kabul, and keeps the military pressure on anti-government groups. It is also imperative to the struggle against the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and their affiliates that the West and its regional partners stay together and help Afghanistan build strong state institutions. Any stopgap measure or short-term approach to contain the Taliban insurgency would act adversely on people's perception about the seven-year-old political process. A weak Kabul and a divided Western coalition certainly do not offer a perfect recipe for engineering divisions within the Taliban or for winning the cooperation of the Afghan people. It will perpetuate Taliban militancy and, worse, growing Talibanization on the Pakistan-Afghan frontier and beyond.

72. The symptoms are evident in Afghanistan but the disease is located in Pakistan. Indeed, the root lies in the inability of the Pakistani state to decipher the problem correctly. The situation can no longer be easily reversed and the Pakistani state has to move beyond the colonial policy of segregating the tribal areas and leaving the people to the mercy of the redundant tribal maliks, Islamists or the warlords. Islamabad tends to fight the symptom while the disease is left undiagnosed and untreated. Pakistan has to now ready itself for a long-term effort to integrate these areas and mainstream its population through political consensus. Parts of Pakistan too are in the process of Talibanisation which is gathering momentum and the influence of radicals is fast spreading beyond the tribal areas, where groups calling themselves Pakistani Taliban are operating.

73. Pakistan's Afghan policies over the past 30 years, whether pursued for domestic, political, or strategic reasons have come at the expense of the country's own political stability and social cohesion. These policies carry heavy responsibility for intensifying Pakistan's ethnic fissures, weakening it economically, fuelling religious radicalism, and bringing about an attenuation of the state's legitimate authority. They have affected the balance of political power within Pakistan, most of all by reinforcing military ascendancy. While Pakistan's policies toward Afghanistan have attracted foreign resources, this assistance has regularly been a source of domestic controversy and dissent.

74. In formulating its Afghan policies, Pakistan's leaders seem often to ignore the long-term and wider implications of their decisions both at home and abroad. Preoccupied with tactical policy goals such as achieving foreign military aid and gaining strategic depth, Islamabad has nevertheless turned a blind eye to domestic radicalisation and the impact this is having on its ability to govern within its own borders. It has acted too often out of convenience rather than conviction in choosing its allies, with the government's credibility among its own people a frequent casualty. Pakistan has also failed to recognise the inherent contradictions of its two-track policy, between reserving a Pashtun card in the event of a failing Afghanistan and normalising its economic and political relations for the benefit of both countries.

75. In Pakistan, the permissive conditions enabling the Taliban must be confronted, not with rhetoric and empty promises, but with action and not vacillating, half-hearted measures, but strong and consistent Pakistani military action wherever required and at whatever cost. Because Pashtuns never negotiate from a position of strength, any negotiations and "peace deals" are simply seen as a sign of weakness by the radicals. The United Kingdom, European Union and United States need to press the Pakistan government to take action against pro-Taliban elements in Quetta, FATA and NWFP and publish monthly NATO figures of cross-border incursions into Afghanistan to encourage Islamabad to do more on its side of the border. It is notable that President Barack Obama's administration has said that Pakistan will be held "accountable for security in the border region with Afghanistan".<sup>30</sup>

76. Western support for the previous Musharraf regime has been a total failure, whose legacy is being painfully felt with the substantial increase of violence in South Asia over the last few years. Western governments undermine their own interests by invoking the "Islamist threat" to justify support of military regimes. This approach has contributed to the perception in the Muslim world in general, and in Pakistan in particular, that democracy is something to be applied selectively. Supporting and empowering the democratic infrastructure and civil institutions in Pakistan should be a priority. Contrary to popular perceptions, a civilian government is better placed than a military regime to tackle the rise in extremism in their own country which is also seeping into its eastern and western neighbours.

77. In equal measure, without a major change in counter-insurgency strategy and a major increase in manpower, equipment and especially reconstruction funding to Kabul, the West may fail to achieve their objectives in Afghanistan.

78. Despite extreme poverty, a landmine-littered landscape, endemic corruption, a weak central government, a virulent insurgency, a damaged economy, booming opium production, and a host of other daunting concerns, Afghanistan nevertheless remains geo-strategically vital. The West cannot repeat its post-Soviet abandonment of the country, or naively assume that some stillborn peace deal can be achieved with the Taliban, because the results of that will continue to have negative consequences for the region. By

abandoning Afghanistan once, the West allowed the country to become a refuge for terrorist groups to recruit, train, and wage war globally. The effect on Afghanistan, the region, and the rest of the world was dramatic and terrifying. This time, if the West leave, or lose, the results will be even worse.

22 January 2009

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### Submission by The Redress Trust

#### SUMMARY OF SUBMISSIONS

- UK Armed Forces in Afghanistan can detain and arrest persons; such persons are transferred to the Afghanistan authorities within 96 hours, or released, on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UK and Afghanistan which purports to protect the human rights of the persons so transferred against torture and ill-treatment.
- Serious human rights violations, including torture and ill-treatment, are widespread in Afghanistan prisons and detention centres; the UK must abide by the absolute prohibition against refoulement and not transfer persons in its custody where there are substantive grounds for believing the person faces a real risk of torture.
- The MOU is not an acceptable mechanism to use in fulfillment of the UK’s non-refoulement obligation; the UK should refrain from transferring detainees; it should also take more steps to assist the Afghan authorities to bring about an environment where there is in reality no longer a real risk of torture.

#### INTRODUCTION

1. This submission is put forward in response to the Foreign Affairs Committee’s (FAC) call for evidence in respect of its new inquiry into foreign policy aspects of the UK’s relations with Afghanistan.

2. The Redress Trust (REDRESS) is an international non-governmental organisation with a mandate to assist survivors of torture to access adequate and effective remedies and reparation for their suffering. Since its establishment in December 1992, it has accumulated a wide expertise on the rights of victims of torture both within the United Kingdom and internationally.<sup>110</sup>

3. The submission relates to the UK’s contribution to tackling problems relating to human rights within Afghanistan, and deals with the practice and policy of the UK in transferring detainees to the Afghan authorities in the context of the realities of the Afghanistan detention, prison and legal system.

4. UK forces in Afghanistan form part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) whose latest UN Security Council mandate was extended on 22 September 2008.<sup>111</sup> Based on a 2003 North Atlantic Council’s decision, NATO has “strategic command, control and coordination” of the ISAF.<sup>112</sup> The original 2001 UN Security Council Resolution authorising the role of ISAF in Afghanistan stressed that “all Afghan forces must adhere strictly to their obligations under human rights law and . . . under international humanitarian law”.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> See generally [www.redress.org](http://www.redress.org)

<sup>111</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1833 (2008). The mandate applies for a year from 13 October 2008, and includes “. . . the need for further progress in security sector reform, including further strengthening of the Afghan National Army and in particular of the Afghan National Police...[and] justice sector reform... [and] in this context the importance of further progress in the reconstruction and reform of the prison sector in Afghanistan, in order to improve the respect for the rule of law and human rights therein”.

<sup>112</sup> ISAF website accessed 18 January 2009 at <http://www.nato.int/ISAF/structure/comstruc/index.html>

<sup>113</sup> UN Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001), 20 December 2001.

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 UK POLICY ON DETENTION AND TRANSFER OF DETAINEES

5. The UK Government states that: “Afghanistan’s law of Prisons and Detention Centres provides for the respect of human rights and outlines minimum standards for detention. The prison authorities are also bound by Afghanistan’s international obligations, most notably the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights [ICCPR] and the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman And Degrading treatment or Punishment [UNCAT]. Nevertheless conditions in prisons are basic. We are working closely with the authorities to improve facilities to meet UN minimum standards. We are also training prison guards in humane treatment and proper registration of those being held”.<sup>114</sup>

6. ISAF troops can arrest and detain persons, where necessary, for force protection, self-defence, and to fulfil the ISAF mission as set out in UN Security Council resolutions; ISAF puts a limit of 96 hours on detention by ISAF troops, within which time detainees should either be released or transferred to the Afghan authorities.<sup>115</sup>

7. On 30 September 2006<sup>116</sup> the UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Afghanistan concerning the transfer by the UK Armed Forces to Afghan authorities of persons detained in Afghanistan; the UK is “confident that the human rights of detainees handed over by UK forces are not breached and they have access to sufficient food and clean water”.<sup>117</sup>

8. The MOU states that detainees will be transferred to Afghanistan authorities at the earliest opportunity where suitable facilities exist and where such facilities are not in existence the detainee will be released or transferred to an ISAF approved facility;<sup>118</sup> the target of 96 hours derives from NATO policy.<sup>119</sup>

9. The MOU also states that all detainees will be treated by the UK Armed Forces in accordance with applicable provisions of international human rights law.<sup>120</sup> The MOU states further that the responsibility for the treatment of detainees so transferred, including the prohibition against torture and ill-treatment and protection against torture, is the responsibility of the Afghan authorities in accordance with its international human rights obligations;<sup>121</sup> the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and UK personnel (including Embassy representatives and members of the UK’s Armed Forces) will have full access to such transferees while they are in custody; the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and relevant UN human rights institutions will be allowed to visit them;<sup>122</sup> the UK will notify the ICRC and the AIHRC within 24 hours of transfers;<sup>123</sup> the UK will be notified prior to the initiation of any criminal proceedings and prior to any release, as well any allegations of improper treatment;<sup>124</sup> no transferee will be subject to the death penalty.<sup>125</sup>

## UK OBLIGATIONS AGAINST REFOULEMENT

10. The UNCAT sets out that “No State Party shall expel, return (“refouler”) or extradite a person to another state where there are substantial grounds for believing that he would be in danger of being subjected to torture”.<sup>126</sup> The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has held that the principle of non-refoulement is an inherent and indivisible part of the absolute prohibition of torture as without it any other approach would be “contrary to the spirit and intention of [Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights which prohibits torture]”.<sup>127</sup>

11. The absolute prohibition imposes a negative duty on states to refrain from torturing and also a range of positive obligations including the obligation to “prevent such acts by not bringing persons under the control of other states if there are substantial grounds for believing that they would be in danger of being

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<sup>114</sup> FCO Human Rights Annual Report 2007, p 125.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> The MOU is Appendix 3 to the FAC’s Second Report of 2006–2007 *Visit to Guantanamo Bay* pp 61–64, available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmaff/44/44.pdf> Although purportedly signed on 23 April 2005 the MOU was actually signed on 30 September 2006, as pointed out by the FAC in footnote 78 of its Report; this was stated by the Secretary of State for Defence on 8 January 2007 at Hansard, House of Commons Debates 8 January 2007, col 77W [not 8 January 2006 as appears in the FAC footnote].

<sup>117</sup> FCO Human Rights Annual Report 2007, p 125.

<sup>118</sup> MOU, para 3.1.

<sup>119</sup> “In terms of NATO’s detention policy . . . NATO forces can detain captured individuals for up to 96 hours with the possibility of a small extension, but that would be really only in the most extreme circumstances and would have to go up the chain of command. So in principal 96 hours at which point they’re handed over to the Afghan authorities. And that is what has been done, almost without exception . . . as far as I’m aware”—NATO spokesperson, Weekly Press Briefing 4 October 2006, accessed 18 January 2009 at <http://www.nato.int/docu/speech/2006/s061004b.htm>

<sup>120</sup> MOU, para 3.1.

<sup>121</sup> MOU, para 3.2, which also states Afghan authorities will ensure any detainee so transferred will not be transferred to the authority of another state, including detention in another country, without prior written UK agreement.

<sup>122</sup> MOU, para 4.1; para 4.2 provides that UK Embassy and military personnel will also have full access to question transferees.

<sup>123</sup> MOU, para 5.1, which states “. . . normally within 24 hours, and if not, as soon as possible after . . .”

<sup>124</sup> MOU, para 5.2.

<sup>125</sup> MOU, para 6.1.

<sup>126</sup> Article 3 (1).

<sup>127</sup> *Soering v United Kingdom*, Application No 14038/88 (ECtHR 1989) at para 88.

subjected to torture”.<sup>128</sup> The requirement in the UNCAT’s Article 2(1) to take “effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture” must equally encompass the absolute principle of non-refoulement<sup>129</sup> otherwise it would mean that the absolute principle of non-refoulement may not be “practical” and “effective”.<sup>130</sup>

12. The FCO guidance note on MOUs states that “an MOU records international “commitments”, but in a form and with wording which expresses an intention that is not to be legally binding”.<sup>131</sup> Their use has become contentious since states, including the UK, began trying to use them to mitigate risks of torture and other ill-treatment that would otherwise prevent the transfer of people, especially terrorist suspects.

13. In the leading ECtHR case of *Chahal v United Kingdom*<sup>132</sup> the UK attempted to deport Mr Chahal to India, arguing that the risk of torture or ill-treatment should be balanced against the risk he posed to UK national security, but the ECtHR disagreed.<sup>133</sup> The UK also sought to rely on the Indian Government’s assurance to mitigate against the risk facing Mr Chahal, but the ECtHR held: “. . . the Court is not persuaded that the . . . assurances would provide Mr Chahal with an adequate guarantee of safety”.<sup>134</sup>

14. The UK has argued that article 3 of the UNCAT is not applicable to detainees transferred from UK detention in Afghanistan to the Afghani authorities since these suspects are subject to the jurisdiction of that country—transfer was not a question of extradition, expulsion or deportation and thus article 3 is not applicable;<sup>135</sup> however, taking into account the purpose of the absolute prohibition against refoulement, the term “another State” should in fact be interpreted as referring to any transfer of a person from one State jurisdiction to another “otherwise . . . the UK could easily circumvent [its] obligations by transferring suspected terrorists or other individuals first to their own detention facilities in . . . Afghanistan and then handing them over to the domestic authorities without having to assess any risk of torture”.<sup>136</sup>

15. In relation to the UK therefore the Committee against Torture has recommended that it “should apply articles 2 and 3, as appropriate, to transfers of a detainee within [its] custody to the custody whether de facto or de jure of another State”.<sup>137</sup>

16. Instance of torture of detainees transferred by the Canadians are dealt with in paragraphs 26–27 below; in these regards the Canadian Federal Court of Appeals recently ruled that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms does not apply to Afghan detainees in the custody of Canadian ISAF units and could not be used to prevent their transfer;<sup>138</sup> that case is being appealed to the Canadian Supreme Court.<sup>139</sup> However, the UK House of Lords confirmed in 2007<sup>140</sup> that the reach of both the Human Rights Act 1998 and the European Convention on Human Rights extends to persons in UK custody in Iraq.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>128</sup> See General Assembly, “Interim Report of the Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights on the Question of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, UN General Assembly, 55th Session, Item 116(a) of the provisional agenda, Human Rights Questions: Implementation of Human Rights Instruments”, U.N. Doc A/55/290. (2000) at 27. The Committee against Torture (CAT) has previously found that the principle of non-refoulement not only reflects a treaty obligation of states parties to the UNCAT but also constitutes a jus cogens norm: “non-refoulement must be recognized as a peremptory norm under international law, and not merely as a principle enshrined in Article 3”—Committee Against Torture, “Summary Record of the 624th Meeting”, U.N. Doc CAT/C/SR.624, (2004) at paras 51–52. See also *Alzery v Sweden*, U.N. Doc CCPR/C/88/D/1416/2005 (10 November 2006) at para 11.8.

<sup>129</sup> See CAT “General Comment No 2: Implementation of Article 2 by States Parties”, U.N. Doc CAT/C/GC/2/CRG.1/Rev.4 (23 November 2007) at para 19; see also Manfred Nowak and Elizabeth McArthur, *The United Nations Convention Against Torture: A Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p 113 (characterising Article 2(1) as an “umbrella clause” encompassing Article 3).

<sup>130</sup> As required by the Committee against Torture; see for example “Initial Report of Peru” U.N. Doc CAT/C/SR.193 at para 44 (9 Nov 1994); “Initial Report of Morocco” U.N. Doc CAT/C/SR. 203 (16 November 1994) at para 51.

<sup>131</sup> Treaties and MOUs: Guidance on Practice and Procedure, FCO, 2004, p 1, available at: [www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf8/fco\\_pdf\\_treatymous](http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf8/fco_pdf_treatymous).

<sup>132</sup> No 22414/93 ECtHR, 1996.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, para 37 and 80; the ECtHR said: “The prohibition provided by Article 3 against ill-treatment is equally absolute in expulsion cases. Thus, whenever substantial grounds have been shown for believing that an individual would face a real risk of being subjected to treatment contrary to Article 3 if removed to another State, the responsibility of the Contracting State to safeguard him or her against such treatment is engaged in the event of expulsion. In these circumstances, the activities of the individual in question, however undesirable or dangerous, cannot be a material consideration”.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, para 105. Further, in the recent decision of *Saadi v Italy* 37201/06, 28 February 2008 the ECtHR rejected arguments that the threshold for deciding on real risk should be the higher standard of “more probable than not” rather than “substantial grounds for believing” (at paras 137–139 and 140). Another even more recent decision of the ECtHR has also confirmed the absolute nature of a state’s responsibility not to refoul a person facing a real risk of torture, irrespective of the “character” of the person: “. . . [W]henver substantial grounds have been shown for believing that an individual would face a real risk of being subjected to treatment contrary to Article 3 if removed to another State, the responsibility of the Contracting State to safeguard him or her against such treatment is engaged in the event of expulsion or extradition. In these circumstances, the activities of the individual in question, however undesirable or dangerous, cannot be a material consideration”—*Ismoilov v Russia*, 2947/06, 24 April 2008.

<sup>135</sup> CAT/C/SR.627, para 25. The argument was also made in relation to the UK in Iraq.

<sup>136</sup> Manfred Nowak and Elizabeth McArthur, *The United Nations Convention Against Torture: A Commentary* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p 199.

<sup>137</sup> CAT/C/CR/33/3, para 5(e).

<sup>138</sup> *Amnesty International Canada v Defence Staff for the Canadian Forces* (2008 FCA 401) A-149-08, December 17, 2008, available at <http://decisions.fca-caf.gc.ca/en/2008/2008fca401/2008fca401.html>

<sup>139</sup> See BC Civil Liberties Association press release “A setback for human rights protection”, 18 December 2008, available at [http://www.bccla.org/pressreleases/08afghan\\_prisoner.pdf](http://www.bccla.org/pressreleases/08afghan_prisoner.pdf)

<sup>140</sup> *Al Skeini and others v Secretary of State for Defence* [2007] UKHL 26.

<sup>141</sup> <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200607/ldjudgmt/jd070613/skeini-1.pdf>

<sup>141</sup> Leading to The Baha Mousa Public Inquiry, available at <http://www.bahamousainquiry.org/>

17. A very recent decision in the Court of Appeal<sup>142</sup> concerned the transfer of two persons held by the UK in Iraq to the Iraqi authorities for trial for war crimes. The Court declined to halt the transfer. The particular factual and legal issues are and were case-specific to Iraq and the detailed history of the men's detention, involving *inter alia* the changing status of UK forces in that country, their mandate which was due to expire at the end of 2008, the basis on which the UK had custody, death penalty considerations, jurisdictional matters, conflict between international law norms, and other aspects. The question of refolement to *torture* was only touched on in relation to whether the imposition of the death penalty was compatible with norms of customary international law, with the court concluding that it was in "no position whatever to arrive at any overall conclusion" on this aspect.<sup>143</sup>

18. Furthermore, after the Court of Appeal's decision in the above case the ECtHR granted a request from the UK lawyers concerned that "[the men] should not be transferred or removed from the custody of the United Kingdom until further notice";<sup>144</sup> however, although the UK Government received notification of this from the ECtHR the men were subsequently transferred to the Iraqi authorities.

19. It is submitted that the above case does not alter the UK's non-refoulement obligations in Afghanistan and does not constitute judicial endorsement of the MOU as a mechanism for fulfilment of these obligations.

#### TORTURE IN AFGHANISTAN

20. Torture, ill-treatment and the abuse of human rights generally in Afghanistan is a serious and widely recognised problem, as confirmed by the US Department of State's latest report which states that "the country's human rights record remained poor . . . Human rights problems continued, including extrajudicial killings; torture; poor prison conditions; official impunity; prolonged pretrial detention . . . [T]here were instances in which members of the security forces acted independently of government authority".<sup>145</sup>

21. Instances of torture and killings have not been effectively investigated; such abuses involve government officials, local prison authorities, police chiefs, and tribal leaders; security forces continue to use excessive force, including beating and torturing civilians, and the use of torture of detainees by local authorities in Herat, Helmand and Badakhshan have been reported; torture and abuse includes pulling out fingernails and toenails, burning with hot oil, beatings, sexual humiliation, and sodomy.<sup>146</sup>

22. In 2008 the UN Secretary-General released a report noting that cases of torture of detainees held by the Afghan authorities continue to be reported and that the absence of effective oversight of the National Directorate for Security (NDS) is of particular concern.<sup>147</sup>

23. The former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that "on the issue of detention, including the transfer of detainees by international forces to their Afghan counterparts, I have shared my concerns regarding the treatment of detainees with the Government, ISAF and representatives of contributing states. Transfers to the National Security Directorate (NDS) are particularly problematic, given that it is not a regular criminal law enforcement body and operates on the basis of a secret decree".<sup>148</sup>

24. There has also been a report by a former SAS soldier about hundreds of Iraqis and Afghans captured by British and American special forces rendered to prisons where they faced torture; in February 2008 Ben Griffin said that individuals detained by SAS troops in a joint UK-US special forces taskforce had ended up in interrogation centres in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as Guantánamo Bay; he had not witnessed torture himself but added: "I have no doubt in my mind that non-combatants I personally detained were handed over to the Americans and subsequently tortured"; he was served with a High Court order preventing him making further disclosures.<sup>149</sup>

25. The AIHRC has noted "the lack of commitment demonstrated by the Government towards the promotion, protection and monitoring of human rights".<sup>150</sup> There has been a report that "on at least one occasion the NDS hid a detainee who had been handed over by NATO from the ICRC".<sup>151</sup>

<sup>142</sup> *Al-Saadoon & Anor, R (on the application of) v Secretary of State for Defence* [2009] EWCA Civ 7  
<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWCA/Civ/2009/7.html>

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid*, para 70.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from the ECtHR dated 30 December 2008 to Public Interest Lawyers.

<sup>145</sup> Afghanistan: Country Reports on Human Rights Practices—2007, released 11 March 2008, available at  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2007/100611.htm>

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*. See also torture of Afghan journalist in *Daily Telegraph* 19 May 2008 "Afghan journalist in torture claim".

<sup>147</sup> UN General Assembly, 62nd Session, agenda item 19, "The Situation in Afghanistan", A/62/722 –S/2008/159 at  
[http://www.unama-afg.org/docs/\\_UN-Docs/\\_repts-SG/2008/08march06-SG-report-SC-situation-in-afghanistan.pdf](http://www.unama-afg.org/docs/_UN-Docs/_repts-SG/2008/08march06-SG-report-SC-situation-in-afghanistan.pdf)

<sup>148</sup> Press release by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "High Commissioner for Human Rights Concludes Visit to Afghanistan", 20 November 2007, available at

<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/nsf/0/8FA97A1314FB08B5C1257399005990A3?opendocument>

<sup>149</sup> "Court gags ex-SAS man who made torture claims", Richard Norton-Taylor, *The Guardian*, Friday 29 February 2008.

<sup>150</sup> AIHRC Annual Report 1 January to 31 December 2007, p 61, available at

[http://www.aihrc.org.af/Annau\\_Rep\\_2007.pdf](http://www.aihrc.org.af/Annau_Rep_2007.pdf)

<sup>151</sup> Human Rights Watch, Letter to NATO Secretary-General, 27 November 2006, available at

<http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2006/11/27/afghanistan-letter-nato-secretary-general-regarding-summit-latvia> HRW urged "a common policy that requires NATO members to be involved at all stages of the detention process. NATO should ensure that the ICRC, United Nations, and Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission have access to all detention centers where NATO detainees are held to monitor prison conditions and investigate allegations of prisoner abuse. Finally, NATO and the Afghan Government should publicize the names of detainees and the date and location of their arrest as well the name of the detainee's father, birthplace, and current village or town"—*Ibid*.

26. Detainees transferred to the Afghan authorities by other ISAF states, such as Canada, have reportedly been tortured. Allegations include whipping with electric cables, electric shocks, suspensions, beatings, exposure to excessive cold, sleep deprivation and other abuse.<sup>152</sup> The AIHRC is said to have confirmed these events.<sup>153</sup>

27. Amnesty International (AI) has also reported that six transferees previously held by Canadians were tortured by the NDS.<sup>154</sup> Canadian officials have received first-hand reports of torture and it is believed that the number of transfers is far higher than has been admitted and does not include immediate in-field transfers in the course of military operations.<sup>155</sup>

#### THE MOU: CONCERNS RELATING TO DETAINEES' TRANSFER

28. Given the UK's clear obligations against non-refoulement on the one hand and the prevalence of torture in Afghanistan on the other, its use of and reliance on the 2006 MOU to absolve it of responsibility for detainees transferred is of serious concern.

29. There is no substantial difference in principle between this MOU and other MOUs or Diplomatic Assurances or Deportations With Assurances (DWAs) which the UK has sought to use to deport persons (in particular terror suspects) from UK territory to another state where there is a real risk of torture. The criticisms which NGOs<sup>156</sup> have consistently made in relation to such mechanisms and their use to circumvent the UK's non-refoulement obligations apply mutatis mutandis to the 2006 MOU. Eminent UN and European human rights experts and bodies too have voiced serious concerns and reservations regarding the use of these mechanisms.<sup>157</sup>

30. Further, this strong body of opinion against these mechanisms being used because of their incompatibility with the non-refoulement principle has developed within the context of the putative deportation of individual persons in, for instance, the UK, with the authorities seeking on a case by case basis to argue before the courts that the deportation in question was lawful; in respect of the 2006 MOU there is not even such a case by case approach—all detainees are either released or transferred, no individual assessment is made, and there is no independent scrutiny—and a fortiori this MOU is even more unsuitable as a means to fulfilling the UK's international law obligations.

31. MOUs generally (and related mechanisms as mentioned in paragraph 26 above) as well as the 2006 MOU in particular do not and cannot provide an effective safeguard against torture and other ill-treatment, and other serious human rights violations. Relying on them/it to facilitate the transfer of people where there are substantial grounds for believing that they would face a real risk of torture is fundamentally inconsistent with the principle and obligation of non-refoulement in international human rights law.

32. Human rights violations in Afghanistan, including torture and ill-treatment, are well-established to be systematic, endemic, persistent and widespread. To transfer detainees flies in the face of EU policy stated by the Council of Europe last year: "In order to strengthen EU credibility and convincing power, coherence needs to be assured between external action against torture in third countries and the EU's own performance . . . [by] ensuring full respect for human rights when adopting measures to fight terrorism, including the upholding of the principle of non-refoulement".<sup>158</sup>

33. The MOU is not acceptable as a way for the UK to abide by its obligations:

- selective post-transfer monitoring of individuals is not a proper and acceptable alternative to non-refoulement, and is no substitute for broad and effective institutional reforms and protective mechanisms;
- even the best monitoring mechanisms can be ineffective in preventing acts of torture, because torture is almost always practiced secretly; system-wide monitoring entails large number of detainees visited in private conditions to ensure the authorities can't identify who has provided what information;

<sup>152</sup> Graeme Smith, "From Canadian custody into cruel hands", *Globe and Mail*, 23 April 2007; Graeme Smith, "Personal Account: A story of torture", *Globe and Mail*, 24 April 2007.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>154</sup> Amnesty International, "Afghanistan: Detainees transferred to torture: ISAF complicity", AI Index: ASA 11/011/2007 at p 23 footnote 64.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> See, for example, REDRESS, "Non-refoulement under Threat", May 2006, at <http://www.redress.org/publications/Non-refoulementUnderThreat.pdf>; Amnesty International, "Memorandums of Understanding and NGO Monitoring: a challenge to fundamental human rights", January 2006, at <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/POL30/002/2006/en>; Human Rights Watch World Report 2008, "Mind the Gap: Diplomatic Assurances and the Erosion of the Global Ban on Torture," March 2008, at <http://hrw.org/wr2k8/diplomatic/index.htm>

<sup>157</sup> These critical experts include: the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture; the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and Counter-Terrorism; the European Commission; the EU's Network of Independent Experts on Fundamental Rights; the European Parliament; the Council of Europe's European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>158</sup> Council of the EU, 18 April 2008, 8407/1/08 Implementation of the EU guidelines on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment—stock taking and new implementation measures, p 13 available at [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/hr/news129.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/hr/news129.pdf)

- post-transfer visits to an individual puts them in an impossible position—they must either stay silent or report the abuse; if they choose the latter they become clearly identifiable, thus exposing themselves to further abuse;
- neither state is likely to acknowledge torture has occurred after transfer, as this would be an admission that core international law obligations have been breached and that the MOU has failed; both states share an interest in creating the impression that the MOU is meaningful rather than establishing factually that it actually is;
- the absence of any enforcement or remedial mechanism where abuse has taken place after transfer underscores its ineffectiveness; they have no legal effect and the persons they aim to protect have no effective recourse if their rights are breached, including a lack of the right to reparation;
- legitimising and institutionalising the use of such an MOU where torture is widespread sends an unfortunate signal to other states with poor human rights records that such mechanisms are internationally acceptable;
- the provision for UK personnel (embassy and/or military) to have access is of little practical significance as there is no reason to expect such persons will have expertise in torture issues; further, the ICRC and UN institutions will not exercise their ‘right’ of access unless it is unrestricted and applicable to all detention centres and all detainees for the reasons already referred to above;
- there is no practical mechanism, nor could there be, for what happens if the Afghan authorities refuse to co-operate with the representative, and if there is a breach there is little that can effectively be done about it; and
- this MOU (and others, however designated) does not and cannot deal with the fundamental problem that resorting to diplomacy to ensure compliance with the absolute prohibition against torture is not acceptable; in order for torture and other ill-treatment to be prevented, effective legislative, judicial, and administrative safeguards must be in place on a state-wide basis, which is manifestly not the position in Afghanistan.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### 34. The UK should:

- accept full responsibility under international humanitarian law and international human rights law for all persons it detains in Afghanistan;
- stop transferring detainees in its custody and any future detainees on the basis of the MOU or any other similar basis;
- retain and continue such custody until Afghanistan has properly and effectively implemented mechanisms and safeguards in its detention and prison systems for the prohibition and prevention of torture and ill-treatment;
- in regard to all those already transferred by it since the UK entered Afghanistan (both before or since the MOU was signed and whether or not they were transferred in terms of it), properly investigate what has happened to all such persons; where allegations of torture or ill-treatment arise these should be properly investigated;
- make full reparation to any person abused post-transfer;
- take full, comprehensive and effective steps to assist the Afghan authorities in building the rule of law, internationally acceptable prison and detention systems and a torture-free society; and
- take a lead in working with and within UN, EU, NATO and ISAF institutions to ensure the strengthening of and compliance with its non-refoulement principles and obligations.

23 January 2009

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#### **Submission by the BBC World Service and Global News in Afghanistan**

##### SUMMARY

- BBC World Service views Afghanistan as a key market due to its geopolitical significance and the large audience BBC WS has built up over a number of years. It has a strong brand presence throughout the country.
- The BBC has been broadcasting a dedicated schedule of programming for Afghanistan, featuring all the key languages of the country, since 2003. BBC World Service is available 24 hours a day in Afghanistan—on short wave, medium wave and FM.
- Performance data show the BBC remains in a very strong position, with awareness almost universal, trust ratings exceptionally high and the weekly radio reach standing at 59%, despite both local media and international competition growing considerably.

- A central plank of the BBC's recent strategy has been to increase its FM presence in the country. This expansion—with 19 FM relays now in operation and four more on the way—has occurred as other international broadcasters have also moved to secure their position in the evolving media environment.
- Since August 2008 the BBC Afghanistan service has been broadcasting a daily 30 minute regionally-focussed programme directly targeted at the predominantly Pashtun population in Southern Afghanistan, funded by the Stabilisation Aid Fund.
- Short wave and medium wave are still important means of distribution, particularly in reaching rural areas.
- Online penetration and usage in Afghanistan is low.
- BBC World Service launched a Persian television service in January 2009, which is accessible in Afghanistan.
- The media market in Afghanistan was severely restricted under the Taleban, but since 2001, there has been considerable growth, with many radio and tv stations now operating under a wide range of ownerships.
- However, media laws prohibit material that is deemed to run counter to Islamic law.
- BBC newsgathering has recently doubled the size of its bureau in Kabul—it is the only UK broadcaster with a permanent presence in Afghanistan.
- The security situation continues to pose problems for correspondents and reporters.
- BBC World Service and BBC World News have covered developments in Afghanistan extensively through a range of programming.
- The BBC World Service Trust's *Afghan Education Project* (AEP) is the largest media-for-development organisation in Afghanistan. More than 14 million people listen to its flagship radio programme *New Home New Life* and almost half the potential audience have listened to its programme *Afghan Woman's Hour* since its launch in 2005.
- BBC Monitoring has recently strengthened its monitoring coverage of Afghanistan—BBCM's stakeholders and customers have described the Afghan service as an “essential” tool.
- The BBC's Global News Division, comprising BBC World Service, BBC World News, the BBC World Service Trust and BBC Monitoring, will continue to monitor and develop its Afghanistan services, aiming to reach audiences throughout the country.

#### BBC WORLD SERVICE IN AFGHANISTAN

Afghanistan is important to BBC World Service for two principal reasons. The country has major geopolitical significance, particularly since the growing re-emergence of the Taleban; and its people have for many years turned to the BBC for reliable news as war, poverty and political turmoil ensured that domestic media did not meet their needs.

BBC Afghanistan is the service most people turn to for news and it is the most trusted source of news on TV or radio. People respect the BBC for being relevant, unbiased and educational.

In recent months the BBC has doubled the size of its main newsgathering bureau in Kabul, adding a reporter, a producer and a camera crew to be based there alongside the correspondent. This, together with its network of freelance reporters, will enable the BBC to track the wider Afghan story ahead of the Presidential elections in 2009.

Recent research into BBC World Service's offer to Afghanistan commissioned by the BBC Trust, the BBC's governing body, found that there was “*a clear need for news and current affairs content that reflects the realities and complexities of all areas of Afghan life and (our research) demonstrated that BBC Afghanistan is performing very well at delivering it*”.

#### MEDIA MARKET OVERVIEW

Since the fall of the Taleban administration in 2001, there has been considerable growth in the number of media outlets in Afghanistan—in particular amongst private TV stations. There are scores of radio stations, dozens of TV stations and some 100 active press titles, operating under a wide range of ownerships—from the government, provincial political-military powers and private owners to foreign and NGO sponsors. An Australian-Afghan media group, Moby Capital Partners, operates some of the leading stations, including *Tolo TV* and *Arman FM*.

Much of the output on private TV stations consists of imported Indian music shows and serials, and programmes modelled on Western formats. The main private TV and radio networks command large audiences. The channels are very popular in urban centres, especially among the under 30s.

However, media laws prohibit material that is deemed to run counter to Islamic law and some private stations have drawn the ire of conservative religious elements. Press freedom group *Reporters Without Borders* says media regulatory bodies are “under the government's thumb”.

Relays of foreign radio stations or stations funded from overseas are on the air in Kabul, including the BBC, Radio France Internationale, Deutsche Welle and US-funded broadcasts from Radio Free Afghanistan, which uses the name *Azadi Radio*, and the Voice of America, which brands its Dari and Pashto broadcasts as *Radio Ashna* (“Friend”). BBC World Service is also available on FM and medium wave (AM) in other parts of Afghanistan.

Newspaper readership has seen a significant leap, from almost nil under Taleban rule. Internet access is scarce and computer literacy and ownership rates are minuscule.

Afghanistan’s media were seriously restricted under Taleban rule. *Radio Afghanistan*, the state broadcaster, was renamed *Radio Voice of Shariah* and reflected the Islamic fundamentalist values of the Taleban. TV was seen as a source of moral corruption and was banned.  
(supplied by BBC Monitoring)

#### BBC PRESENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

The BBC is the only UK broadcaster to have a permanent presence in Afghanistan and it has the biggest presence of any international broadcaster.

In addition to the main bureau in Kabul, BBC World Service has an office in Mazar-E Sharif.

The BBC’s increased presence in Afghanistan—including the staff in Kabul and reporters around the provinces—is regularly being used, extensively and effectively, to bring the service closer to the local audience. However, the security situation continues to pose problems for travellers.

BBC output is available across a number of media platforms, as follows:

#### RADIO

- The BBC broadcasts programming on SW, MW and FM specially tailored for Afghanistan, in Dari (Afghan Persian), Pashto and Uzbek.
- The FM schedule runs 24 hours a day in Afghanistan, featuring three-hour blocks of programming in the key languages of Afghanistan, plus some English, at breakfast, lunchtime and evening every day.
- The backbone of the schedule is domestic and international news with a strong emphasis on discussion and interactive debate on civil society and democratic politics. During the programme cycle, the blocks are repeated and supplemented by local and international music programming.
- From March 2009 the Afghanistan Service will begin broadcasting five minute bulletins in Dari and Pashto hourly for 18 hours a day.
- The schedule also includes education, arts and science programmes, the popular drama serial *New Home New Life* as well as special programmes for women and children provided by the World Service Trust (see WS Trust section). English programming is played out overnight.
- There are currently 19 BBC FM relays broadcasting a 24 hour mix of Dari, Pashto, Uzbek, Farsi and English programming: Kabul (x2), Mazar-e-Sharif, Jalalabad, Bamian, Konduz, Faizabad, Pol-e Khomri, Herat, Gardez, Jabal us-Seraj, Sheberghan, Maimana, Taloqan, Khost, Ghazni, Kandahar, Kunar and Helmand. A further FM is currently under construction in Farah as well as Tarin Kowt, Qalat and Sharan (the last three directly funded by the Stabilisation Aid Fund/GCPP—as described below).
- In Kabul a 24-hour English relay is maintained, BBC 101.6FM.
- In addition to the direct BBC broadcasts, rebroadcasting partnerships have been established with two stations serving the Samangan and Sari Pul areas.
- On average, three short wave frequencies serve the key broadcast times to Afghanistan. Medium wave comes via transmitters in Oman (1413 kHz) and Tajikistan (1251 kHz)

#### STABILISATION AID FUND PROJECT FOR AFGHANISTAN

The Stabilisation Aid Fund (formerly Global Conflict Prevention Pool), channelled through the FCO, is directly funding a World Service project to broaden existing reach and increase impact of BBC programming in southern Afghanistan and tribal border areas of Pakistan. The project will run until the end of March 2011 and consists of two distinct work streams:

*Bespoke programming:* A daily 30 minute regionally-focussed programme *Stasu Narray*, or *Your World*, directly targeted at the predominantly Pashtun population in Southern Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan (FATA) launched in August 2008. The programme is available on SW and 11 BBC FM frequencies in Afghanistan.

*FM expansion:* provision of 3 BBC 24 hour FMs in the urban areas of Tarin Kowt, Qalat and Sharan, currently under construction. Increasing FM coverage in these three provinces will give an important distribution outlet for the new programme in its target area.

## INTERNET

Sites are maintained in Pashto and Dari, in addition to BBC news websites in English, but internet availability and connectivity remain low.

## TELEVISION

BBC World Service launched a Persian television service to Iran on 14 January 2009 which also reaches Afghanistan. The operating cost of £15 million a year is funded by the UK government, via the FCO, and is now part of World Service's Grant-in-Aid. The launch of the channel will have no adverse effect on the budgets of other language services.

As well as news and analysis, BBC Persian TV broadcasts a wide range of original factual programmes including a weekly youth programme, as well as strands on music, arts and culture, science and technology and sport. A documentary showcase will highlight the very best of Iranian, Afghan and Tajik documentary making.

The channel will be freely available to anyone with a satellite dish in the region, via Hotbird and Telstar satellites. It will also be streamed live online on [bbcpersian.com](http://bbcpersian.com).

Commercially-funded BBC World News in English is also freely available, although it is likely to remain a niche service as English is not widespread.

## EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS

The core of the BBC's service to Afghanistan remains accurate, impartial news that combines a sharp focus on domestic developments with strong coverage of the region and the world.

Recent highlights have included:

- Sustained coverage of the security situation in southern Afghanistan and the resurgence of the Taliban has been distinguished by the quality of analysis and the BBC's access to important local sources.
- There has been a steady flow of news-making interviews with major figures including President Karzai, who spoke for half an hour about the main challenges in the final year of his term of office.
- Programmes based on political discussion and interactivity, such as *Question Time* and *Talking Point*, have been ground-breaking for Afghanistan and are now an established feature of the service. Their impact is frequently strengthened by the appearance of high-profile guests.
- The service is making an increasingly valuable contribution when the wider BBC mounts special programming focused on Afghanistan.

Recent BBC World Service English output on Afghanistan has included:

- *Assignment* programmes—Alastair Leithead followed US and British troops in south-east Afghanistan and Helmand province to find out why the Americans believe they can win hearts and minds among the local tribes who control much of the country; George Arney in Kabul investigated whether the billions of dollars of aid money is reaching the people who need it; Jill McGivering travelled to Helmand to find out whether the battle against the insurgency undermines development efforts funded by the international community; Kate Clark investigated the level of corruption in Afghanistan, who is arming the Taliban and Afghanistan's war crimes for three separate *Assignment* programmes.
- *The Interview* guests have included Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, formerly President George Bush's special envoy in Afghanistan, now the US Ambassador to the United Nations, and Amrullah Saleh, the Head of Afghanistan's intelligence agency.
- *BBC World Service* news ran an Afghan Focus week in June 2008 looking at the situation in Afghanistan through specially commissioned features, audio diaries and interviews. BBC correspondents reported from around the country on a variety of themes including the war, military and security; people, development and infrastructure; the future, leaders and connections.
- In *9/11 The New Frontier* WS News took a close look, seven years on from the 9/11 attacks, at the new frontier in the battle between government forces and armed Islamic militants—the remote mountain region straddling the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with correspondents in Islamabad, Kabul and border town, Jalalabad.
- There were also documentaries on *Policing The Poppyfields*, which looked at government attempts to take on the drug barons behind the world's largest source of heroin, and the history of the West's relationship with Afghanistan over the 30 years from the Russian invasion in 1979–80—*Hard Lessons from Afghanistan* presented by Alan Johnston.
- Coming up in 2009 *The Insiders Debates* with Lyse Doucet (24–25 January) will look at the role of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan and why the Taliban has been growing in strength since it was toppled in 2001 with input from former commanders of the ISAF force.

Recent BBC World News programmes and coverage of Afghanistan has included:

- A day of live broadcasting around Sept 11th with Lyse Doucet reporting from Kabul and Owen Bennett-Jones in Islamabad.
- George Alagiah reported as an embed from Helmand, Lashkar Gar—which ran extensively on the channel.
- A special report from Kate Clark undercover in Khandahar which ran on the news and as a half hour programme as well.
- A *Panorama* programme in November in which Alastair Leithead looked at the successes and failures in the war against the Taleban, and questioned what the end game would be.
- *HARDtalk* interviewed the UN Envoy to Afghanistan, Kai Eide in December 2008.
- In November 2008 *World Uncovered: Three Bloody Summers* Alastair Leithead assessed the situation in Afghanistan as his three-year posting following British troops in the country came to an end.
- *Inside Al Qaeda—A Spy's Story* in February 2008 included a segment on the spy's time in a training camp in Afghanistan.
- The documentary strand *Our World* featured *Frontline Afghanistan* in April 2008 and attracted many complimentary comments from the Viewer Panel including “*The BBC does this sort of programme better than anyone and this is no exception*”.
- *Cooking in The Danger Zone: Afghanistan* broadcast in May 2008 also attracted much interest from the Viewer Panel including comments such as: “*A highly original angle on conditions in Afghanistan. Refreshing and entertaining*” and “*It helped me see another side of Afghanistan, not just bombs and terrorists*”.

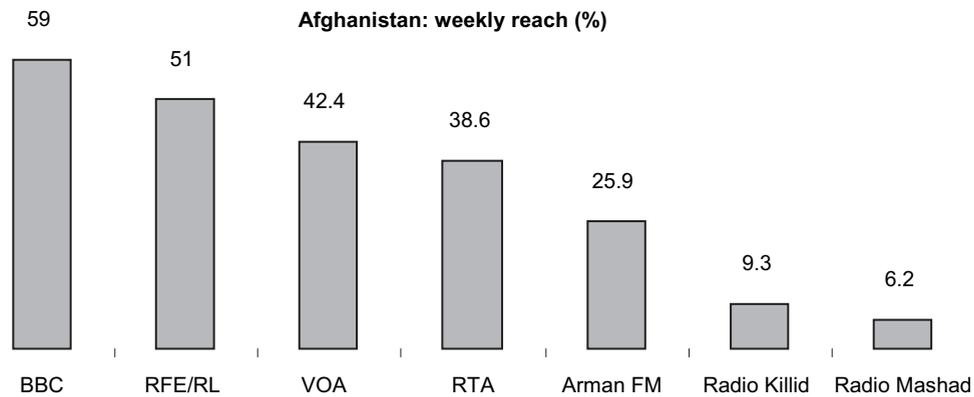
#### AUDIENCES AND BBC IMPACT IN AFGHANISTAN

##### *The competitive landscape*

- The Afghanistan media scene has been developing quickly in recent years and competition has been growing across television and radio since the collapse of the Taleban in 2001. Although BBC remains the largest radio station, local competitors are catching up.
- Among international competitors, the USA (which currently has a co-ordinated offer from VOA/Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty/Radio Azadi) is targeting Afghanistan as a critical priority for major new investment and expansion. Seeking to influence Persian-speaking and Pashto-speaking audiences in the context of the Iraq conflict and the “war on terror”, it is committing significant resources to the region.
- Afghanistan remains predominantly a radio market, with television still fairly niche across rural areas. The cost of sets and the unreliable electricity supply mean that in rural areas just 23% of adults live in a household with a television. Less than a fifth of people have access to cable/satellite in urban areas, and less than a tenth in rural areas. However, research shows a clear interest and desire to receive both news and entertainment from television, and the BBC will increasingly face competition from domestic and international television providers in the future.

##### *Radio audiences*

- The BBC has a large audience in Afghanistan, reaching about 10 million listeners (59% of the adult population) weekly in any language. 42% of the population listen to the BBC in Persian/Dari and 29% in Pashto.
- About a quarter of BBC listeners (26%) first started listening to the BBC between one and two years ago.
- Short wave delivers the most listeners nationally—52% of BBC listeners, medium wave delivers 47% and FM 38% (with some overlap). However, this varies geographically—in Kabul, for instance, over 80% of the BBC audience listen via FM.
- The BBC has a very strong brand in Afghanistan—85% of adults are aware of BBC radio and 73% have listened to it.
- Of the stations measured, including domestic stations, the BBC is the most listened to.



### Television

BBC Persian television launched on Wednesday 14 January—therefore Afghanistan audience figures were not available at the time of writing.

BBC World News in English is available in a growing number of urban homes and other outlets, although use of English is not widespread. Official figures are not currently available.

### Online

Internet usage in Afghanistan is low—the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) estimated that there were 580,000 internet users by the end of 2007 which would be a penetration of just over 2%.

Figures for December 2008 indicate that there were about 38,000 unique users to the BBC site as a whole in Afghanistan.

### BBC World Service Trust

The BBC World Service Trust forms part of the BBC's Global News Division, and is a charity established by the World Service to use communications to reduce poverty in developing countries. Projects aim to develop the capacity of local and national media in the developing world, help build civil societies, develop health education campaigns reaching millions of people and produce programmes to raise awareness of human rights.

The Trust's *Afghan Education Project* (AEP) is the largest media-for-development organisation in Afghanistan. Its programmes are broadcast in Dari and Pashto on the BBC, and re-broadcast on local FMs and the state-run *Radio Television Afghanistan* (RTA). Donors include the UK government's Afghan Drugs Inter-Departmental Unit (ADIDU) and the Stabilisation Aid Fund (SAF). Storylines have included, among other things, consequences of poppy cultivation and drug trafficking, alternative crops and alternative livelihood, and conflict resolution.

Recent research indicates that more than 14 million people listen to AEP's flagship radio programme, *New Home New Life*, nearly 15 years after its launch. AEP has also developed a new urban radio drama for Afghan youth with funding from SAF. The drama was piloted and tested and audiences feedback has been incorporated in it. The piloted episodes will be reviewed jointly by the BBC World Service Trust and the Persian/Pashto Services of the World Service later in January 2009.

*Afghan Woman's Hour* provides topical programming for women in rural Afghanistan. Almost half the potential audience have listened to the programme since its launch in 2005. FCO/GOF funding for the programme has been extended until March 2009.

The BBC World Service Trust, with funding from the European Commission, is planning to launch another 15-minutes educational feature on gender issues. While *Afghan Women's Hour* will continue to create a platform for discussion and cover topical current affair issues, the new programme is aiming to tackle gender issues from an educational perspective.

Since January 2007, the Trust has been involved in a programme to help change RTA from "state broadcaster" to "public service broadcaster". The initial EU funding for the project ended on 31 March 2008, and the Commission has allocated further financial support for the reform of the organisation. However, the release of the funding has been delayed because of the uncertainty surrounding the country's new media law.

### *BBC Monitoring*

BBC Monitoring, also part of the Global News Division, monitors the world's media and supplies political and economic news, information and comment to its customers.

BBC Monitoring's Afghan coverage has evolved in the past two years, from a large but loosely connected coverage area, into a cohesive and robust operation with a network of 41 independent contractors (ICs—freelancers) working in 10 cities in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This strong presence in the country has been the corner stone of the success of the BBCM's Afghan coverage. The Afghan operation is one of BBCM's top priority areas, alongside Iran and Russia. It is the main source of information on Afghan open source for BBCM's stakeholders and customers, who have described the service as an “essential” tool.

The Afghan operation is customer-driven and dynamic. It has expanded in the past year to include coverage from Khost, Fariab and Helmand. Output has been strengthened by setting up a team of editors in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. This has added four hours to BBCM's daily coverage, which now runs from 0200 to 1900 GMT.

Most, if not all, of the sources are monitored in Afghanistan. With a team of 21 ICs (seven media monitors and 14 support staff), BBC Monitoring's Kabul office is the operational hub, with offices in Herat and Mazar and ICs in Kandahar, Helmand, Fariab, Khost, Peshawar and Quetta.

Afghan ICs process on average 40 reports a day—from Dari and Pashto—from Afghan broadcast, press and agency sources. The key themes they look out for are reports on security, terrorism, drugs, NATO, domestic politics and the UK-US military. Two strong teams of editors in Caversham and Tashkent publish the material to stakeholders and customers.

The UK-based editors also produce five roundups a day on topics such as security, drugs and the media. While translated text remains the core product, BBCM has been increasingly moving towards thematic, topical and analytic pieces in line with customers' changing priorities.

As described earlier, Afghanistan has a lively media scene with dozens of TV and radio stations and hundreds of publications offering a wide range of opinions. BBCM routinely monitor and review new broadcast and print sources to determine if they merit inclusion in its coverage. Great care and effort goes into surveying the sources before including them in regular coverage, as one of the key tasks is to ensure a balanced representation of the whole range of thoughts and views expressed in the Afghan media. True to BBCM's mission of following closely the political and media developments in the country, in the last year it added the monitoring of the main Taliban website (*Voice of Jihad*), as well as anti-coalition and Islamist publications, to its coverage.

### LOOKING AHEAD

The deterioration of security in some parts of the country in recent months has brought new pressure to bear on the international reconstruction efforts that have been going on since the Taliban government was overthrown in 2001. In these circumstances, the need of Afghans for unbiased, trustworthy sources of information is as acute as ever.

The BBC reaches large audiences across the whole of Afghanistan, and its aim is to maintain and build on its success there. At the moment, BBC impact in Afghanistan is primarily through radio, but it is hoped that the launch of BBC Persian television will attract new audiences to the BBC. With no real infrastructures in place for internet at present, BBC online is making slow progress. BBC World News impact is likely to be focused on the large cities like Kabul until satellite TV grows nationally, but low English comprehension (less than 10% understand any) will limit its reach.

The central challenge for the BBC is to maintain its relevance in the face of the growing choice and changing audience expectations. No longer solely a surrogate national broadcaster providing a “lifeline” service, it must maintain and build on its high ratings for trust, combining the best journalistic coverage of the region and the world with the most effective and attractive means of delivery and presentation. It must ensure that it reaches the aspirant audiences in the cities—including Afghanistan's decision-makers—while continuing to serve the deprived rural areas that the new stations seem likely to bypass. This is particularly important in the run-up to the Presidential elections, and the BBC has responded to this by expanding its newsgathering resources in Kabul.

Afghanistan will remain a key market for BBC World Service. It will expand its FM network and maintain its short wave and medium wave offer for the immediate future, within its funding limitations.

Afghanistan is also a key country for the development work carried out by the World Service Trust and it will be working to expand its already hugely successful educational programming activities and will be actively engaging with the Afghan government and the donor community on the development of radio and television Afghanistan into a model public service broadcaster.

BBC Monitoring's Afghan operation will remain one of its top priority areas in line with customer demand.

Quote taken from BBC Trust Afghanistan Media Survey report:

*“BBC radio broadcasts impartial news and programmes, even from the past years when war existed in Afghanistan and has never lost its trustworthiness”.*

(Hammeda, a 40 year old illiterate housewife from rural Herat)

23 January 2009

### **Submission by Daniel Korski, Senior Policy Fellow, European Council on Foreign Relations**

#### INTRODUCTION

After eight years of war and the biggest NATO operation in history, Afghanistan remains in the throes of insurgency and President Hamid Karzai’s government is perilously weak. There is little prospect of a swift victory; even the most optimistic assessments point to the necessity of a long-term international presence. In Helmand, the military and the civilian efforts have improved since the original UK deployment in 2006. Despite matters remaining fragile, Afghanistan is not yet lost. Working with the Afghan authorities, European governments can help turn the tide. Britain has a special role in bridging U.S demands and European capabilities.

To help the U.S the British government first needs to ask its European allies to do what is feasible, not to echo unrealistic demands that European governments will not, cannot, and probably should not fulfill. This will require a much greater UK understanding of what European allies are already doing—and knowledge of what they are able to offer. It will also require a change in tone. Though no Cabinet ministers publicly chastise their European allies for their (lack of) commitment, as U.S Defence Secretary Robert Gates did in the run-up to NATO’s Bucharest Summit, the tone and attitude of senior British officials is, at times, unhelpful.

It may also require a much longer-term investment in helping European governments build the necessary capabilities. That may sound like too long-term a prospect, but many European governments do not have the capacity to increase even their civilian contribution (to compensate for any lacking military commitment). British policy therefore needs to take in initiatives to build capacity in European administrations eg to recruit, train and deploy police officers and civilians. Offering to convert part of the UK Defence Academy into a training facility for all Europeans civilians deploying to Kabul may be an option.

Another key issue is to look at ways to ensure that the European troops who form Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, or OMLTs (known as “omelets”), which are used to stand-up the Afghan forces, are provided the best pre-deployment training possible. To this end, the British government should lobby for a standing NATO Military Advisory Force, which can improve European capabilities to train and support the Afghan security forces.

Finally, there is no avoiding the diplomatic linkages between various policy issues. If the British government wants European allies to do more in areas they consider important, then it may have to give in other areas. Nobody may want to admit the linkages outright, but they are a feature of international politics. A key linkage would be helping to develop, and support, a more European approach to Pakistan.

#### THE BRITISH EFFORT IN HELMAND

Before dealing with the broader European effort, it is important to zoom in on the British strategy, particularly in Helmand province. The British government is one of the largest donors and has been a key ally of the U.S in developing and supporting the broad-based, post-2001 state-building project. But it is in Helmand province the British government has, since spring 2006, invested most resources and political capital. In April 2006, the British government sent a brigade into Helmand province. Initially, the deployment was hailed as an important improvement on the small US-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the main city of Helmand province, Lashkar Gah, which only had a limited capacity and a few hundred soldiers.

But as has been widely documented, despite a joined-up, inter-departmental planning process, once British forces were deployed, splits emerged between the military and the FCO and DfID (as well as between civilian departments). Instead of building stability in Lashkar Gah and slowly expand outwards, the British forces—led by 16 commando brigade—deviated from this and established the so-called platoon houses in district centres throughout the province. This stretched British resources, and allowed large insurgent forces to surround and isolate the British outposts. At the same time, the strategy did not take into account the time it took for the FCO and DfID to staff up the UK Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) let alone before all government departments, including the MoD, realised the nature of the fight. The town of Musa Qala fell to the Taliban, and NATO forces came close to losing Operation Medusa, a Canadian-led offensive in September 2006 in neighbouring Kandahar province.

Gradually, however, matters have improved. In October 2006, 3 CDO Bde deployed two battlegroups and all the required supporting arms. In December 2007, 4,000 British, Afghan, and American forces cleared Musa Qala town of Taliban forces thanks in part to the defection of Mullah Abdul Salam, a veteran of the anti-Soviet resistance. Among other things, the PRT was upgraded to include a “two-star level” senior

civilian representative placed above the “one-star level” military commander of Task Force Helmand. All operations now needed to have a specific long-term objective in support of the civilian and political development goals.

But matters remain fragile and the Taliban remain strong throughout the province. Much rests on Abdul Salam, who was appointed district commissioner of Musa Qala and the newly appointed governor. NATO and Afghan troops repulsed a Taliban attack in Lashkar Gah in October last year, and many analysts believe the town will fall (even if just for a few days) at some point in 2009. It will certainly be difficult to hold presidential elections in large parts of the province.

The problems of integrating economic reconstruction with military operations have decreased with every update of the so-called Helmand Road Map, the main UK plan. More civilians are now working in the PRT and civil-military structures have improved. Moreover, a new governor has been appointed and more of the economic assistance is now targeted against the insurgency. Yet the security situation is such that it is difficult for civilians to move around the province and many of the non-security projects have become less relevant. As counter-insurgency expert Peter Dahl Truelsen writes: “The local population is still waiting to see which is the stronger and more determined party—the insurgents or the counterinsurgents”.<sup>159</sup> In the meantime, corruption and opium production are flourishing; local militias are still armed; and the legitimacy of the central and local administration is low.

#### THE EUROPEAN EFFORT, SO FAR

The European effort in Afghanistan has been multi-faceted, covering development aid, military contributions and political reporting, with the EU represented in Kabul by a Special Representative, the EU Commission delegation, the EUPOL mission, and Embassies of member states. Short-term EU missions have also observed the Afghan parliamentary and presidential elections.

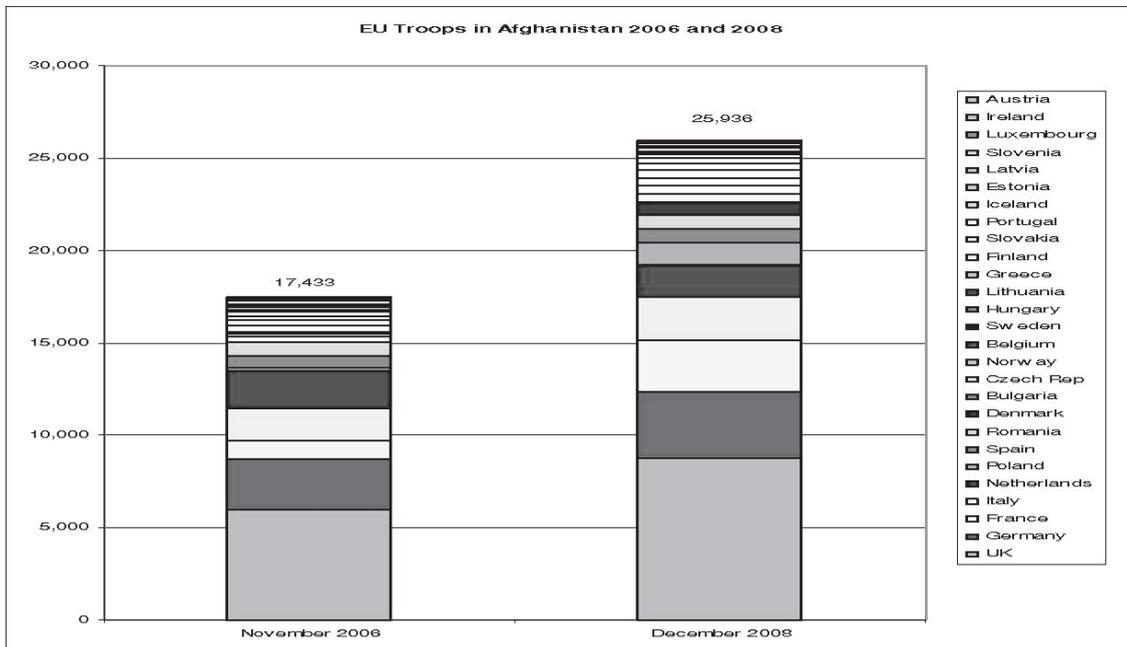
The EU Commission and member states together have contributed a third of Afghanistan’s total reconstruction assistance. Of the total pledged at the Tokyo conference, €1 billion was pledged by the European Commission over five years—averaging some €200 million per year. In 2002, the EC exceeded its Tokyo pledge, providing €280 million to help Afghanistan meet its reconstruction and humanitarian needs. In the years since 2002, the EC continued to commit funding of about €200 million per year and is on track for realising its original €1 billion pledge by the end of 2006. The EC—which has been present in Afghanistan since the mid 1980s, with an office in Peshawar, in western Pakistan—has made available a package of development aid worth €610 million for the period 2007–10. It focuses on three key priority areas: reform of the justice sector; rural development including alternatives to poppy production; and health.

However, the European offer is uneven and lacks the coordination and prioritisation needed to combine the different strands into a coherent whole. The EU and European nations have in fact added to the problem of a lack of international coherence by pursuing policies independently of each other, most damagingly in the overlapping areas of policing, justice and counter-narcotics.

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<sup>159</sup> Peter Dahl Truelsen, “Counterinsurgency and a Comprehensive Approach: Helmand Province, Afghanistan”, *Small Wars Journal*.

The European military contribution, both to the UN-mandated and NATO-commanded International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the US-led Coalition Forces, has been varied. European troops now account for more than half of ISAF's total deployment. And many EU governments have bulked-up their contribution to ISAF in the past years, with the last six months seeing a steep increase in contributions.



European states are also in command of 11 Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) across the country. But while the UK, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Denmark and Estonia have been willing to commit war-fighting forces deployed to the South and East of Afghanistan, Germany remains constrained by the more limited reconstruction mandate afforded its troops by the Bundestag, and Spain's 700 troops can only perform limited tasks. Finland, Greece, Portugal, Romania, Ireland and Luxembourg have seen their troop contribution to ISAF drop. And few countries have deployed a large part of their forces.

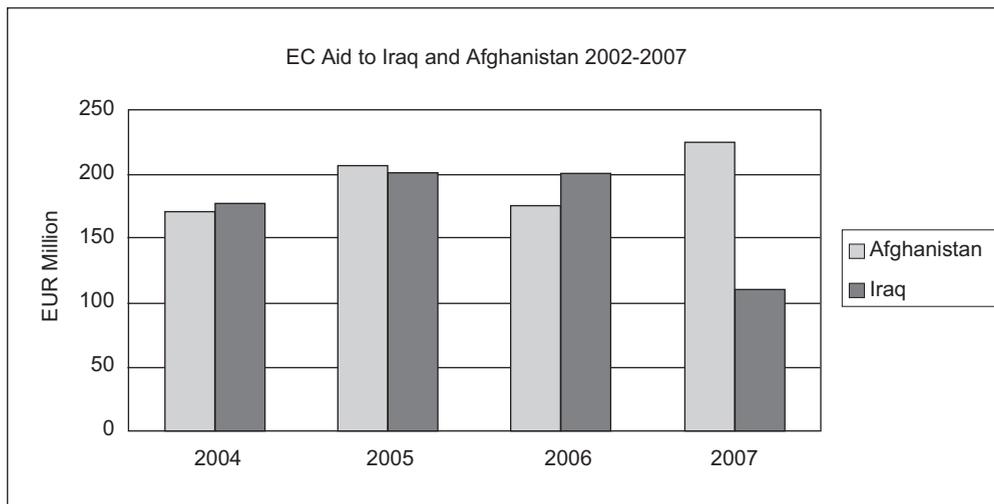
The Afghan mission is also increasingly unpopular among the European public. When ten French soldiers were killed outside Kabul last summer, it shocked France and led to the first real debate about the country's involvement in Afghanistan—and loud calls for a quick withdrawal. The same kinds of sentiments are now prevalent in Germany, but also in Britain, Sweden, Denmark, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain. Opinion polls from all these countries show greater numbers of people in favour of a pull-out, and a clear downward trend over the last couple of years. In 2007, 42% of Britons, 49% Germans and 51% of Frenchman wanted NATO to withdraw from Afghanistan. Today, the figures are 68, 55 and 62% respectively.

The EU's police mission is seen as the EU's weakest mission. It did not have a lot to work with as even General Hans-Christoph Ammon, head of Germany's special forces, admitted when he called his own country's efforts to train the Afghan police "a miserable failure".<sup>160</sup> Upon taking over, EUPOL's new head, Klai Vittrup, called the assignment "his toughest job yet". Two years after EUPOL's establishment, it has struggled to attract staff, deploy into the provinces or make any discernable difference to policing standards. No less than fourteen calls for contributions have gone on deaf ears. Many European governments—though keen to emphasize the need for non-military instruments—have not deployed any staff into the UN mission or EUPOL. Malta, Ireland, Belgium, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Portugal, Greece, Latvia, Austria have no staff in EUPOL. Others, like France, Estonia and Sweden have only one person seconded to the mission.

Though EC's aid to Afghanistan is sizeable, year-by-year since 2004 it is practically the same as EC aid to Iraq, a country that has plenty of resources, and where U.S expenditure is 3.8 times higher than in Afghanistan, totalling \$653.1 billion over six fiscal years.<sup>161</sup>

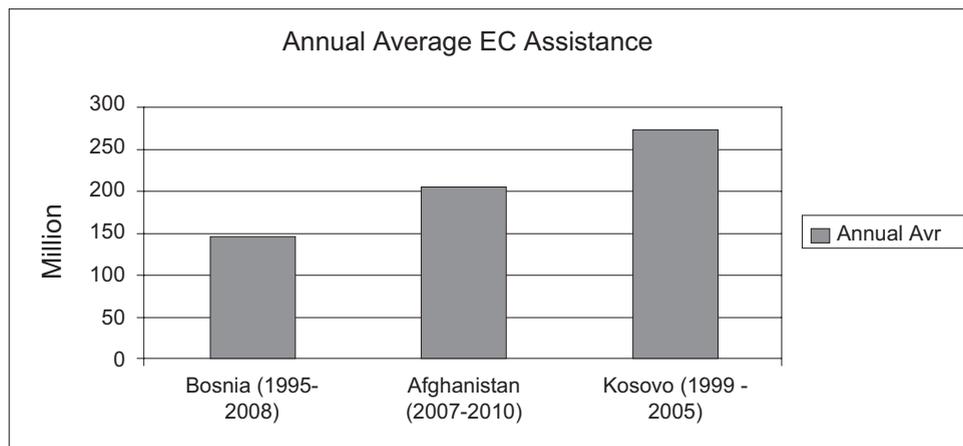
<sup>160</sup> "German general breaks silence on Afghanistan", Judy Dempsey, IHT, November 30, 2008.

<sup>161</sup> Amy Belasco, *The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11* Congressional Research Service, RL33110, Updated July 14, 2008, pp 16 and 19.



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Reports often compare the amount of funding spent by the international community as a whole in Afghanistan since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban to that spent in previous post-conflict missions, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and East Timor. But looking at EC expenditure alone tells a similar tale of underinvestment. Though Afghanistan is poorer and more populous than both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, on average all three countries received almost the same in external post-conflict EC assistance.



**WHAT TO DO**

European governments can do a lot more. Instead of lamenting the uneven burden-sharing practice megaphone diplomacy or ask European allies for things they will never deliver—like German troops in Helmand—the British government should develop a keen idea of what to ask for.

*Improving PRTs*

First, the need is to take the PRT model and work out how European countries can help expand its scale, especially in the south and east. In Kabul, the PRT Executive Steering Committee should be bulked-up, with the EU committing to provide pre-trained staff for its management. This should include a pool of civilian experts—numbering at least 100—to be deployed into all PRTs for short and long-term assignments as well as the necessary policy support (eg database of funding, data about government programmes, and “best practice” material).

The EU should tailor and run pre-deployment for all civilians to be deployed into PRTs—and, over time, for all Europeans, including NGOs, who are about to be deployed to the theatre. The EU should set-up an evaluation process, which can feed lessons into all PRTs on an on-going basis. The European Commission must be partners in the effort, to ensure the full integration of the development dimension, and the full use of available budgets. Close consultation with NATO, UNAMA and the U.S is essential.

<sup>162</sup> The figures were taken from: European Commission State of Play 30 June 2008: Major Milestones towards reconstruction and Peace Building in Afghanistan: ([http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/state\\_of\\_play\\_afghanistan\\_june\\_2008\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/asia/documents/state_of_play_afghanistan_june_2008_en.pdf)); European Commission State of Play 31 July 2008, republic of Iraq: [http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/gulf-region/documents/state\\_of\\_play\\_2008\\_07\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/gulf-region/documents/state_of_play_2008_07_en.pdf).

### *Securing Kabul*

Second, the EU should offer to take a special role in the reconstruction of Kabul. There has been a sharp deterioration of security in Kabul and the belt of towns surrounding it. The Taliban know that instability in the capital has an outsized psychological impact on the resolve of the country and the international community. The Taliban may not be about to over-run Kabul, but they are trying to create panic, and show that the government cannot control the land it sits on.

With the Afghan government having taken over responsibility for Kabul's security the city's further development will be a major test for President Karzai and NATO. Renewed support for Kabul's reconstruction is needed; the EU has experience in city reconstruction from its administration in Mostar, Bosnia. It should offer the Afghan government a cross-disciplinary team, led by an experienced European city administrator, to help adjust existing political, military and reconstruction plans for Kabul.

With a two-year mandate, a Kabul C-PRT—Capital Reconstruction Team—would ensure that civilian development goes hand-in-hand with the security transition to the ANA from ISAF. If the method works in Kabul, it could even serve as a model for Afghanistan's other large cities like Kandahar or Jalalabad. Urgent work will be required to reach a timeframe on roles, size, locations and contributors. The Council Secretariat of the European Union—led by its civilian planning unit, the CPCC—should be tasked to form a working group with the European Commission and those member States who have significant experience of PRTs and military operations to date. Once the working group is established it should come up with recommendations on “C-RTs” and on how the EU could enhance the management of all the PRTs.

### *Enhance security*

Nothing can be achieved in Afghanistan unless the security situation improves. However, guaranteeing security cannot be an international task. The U.S and Europe are unlikely to deploy sufficient troops to achieve the doctrinally recommended 20:1,000 security force density ratio necessary for counter-insurgency operations. In the southern provinces alone this would require over 280,000 personnel, which is much more than the U.S and Europe could supply, even if the U.S draws down in Iraq. Therefore, the key is, to build operationally efficient Afghan forces.

The ability to build efficient Afghan forces will depend on improving the effectiveness of the NATO troops, particularly those in ISAF Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams, or OMLTs, whose role is to train and mentor their Afghan counterparts. The OMLTs suffer from a number of problems. The Afghan army is fielding units faster than NATO can supply OMLTs to train them. Few NATO countries have the manpower to supply more than one or two OMLTs. Fewer troops still arrive with the training required to make a success of a six-month tour. As it takes an average OMLT four to six months before they become effective, little time is left to leverage the skills learnt and the relationships created given that the military rotations are usually six months.

To deal with these problems, European countries should offer up to 2000-person Military Advisory Force under NATO auspices. The force could consist of multinational forces committed, on a rotating basis, to a six months' period of joint training prior to the start of an operational stand-by period. Joint training would continue through-out the stand-by period. This would ensure that NATO has a highly flexible, standing OMLT-style capability and it will maximize the experiences of the trainers deployed to ISAF. In the first instance, soldiers who have served in OMLTs will be identified, offered train-the-trainers courses and committed to an alliance-wide database. They can then serve as a virtual force and be brought in to help tailor and deliver courses, act as support for those deployed as well as make up the force most experienced staff.

To ensure the necessary standards of readiness, the summit should declare an intention to create a purpose-built Military Advisory Centre to gather training. The centre—which could be built on an existing training facility—would teach prospective advisors the tricks of the advising trade and language skills to be effective in-country.

In addition, a European Police Capital Investment Fund should also be established, which would give the EUPOL head of mission access to funds for technical improvements either directly or through the Afghan budget, or the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOTFA). Resources should come from the European governments and the European Commission. Plans should also be put in place for a twenty-year support programme to the Kabul Police Academy and its regional equivalents in Mazar-e Sharif, twining the institution with a number of European academies, like CENTREX, so that a regular rotation of trainers and teachers can be assured. Finally, plans ought to be drawn-up for the EU to take over the funding and management of the U.S police programmes in the event that European governments withdraw soldiers from ISAF.

*Politics*

European governments should help the Afghan authorities to reach a sustainable political settlement, which can provide the various levels of the Afghan government with the necessary legitimacy to draw people away from the Taliban insurgency. The Taliban have not publicly participated in talks and haven't shown any signs they are serious about negotiating, but the availability of talks as a political solution should be considered as means to obtaining a modicum of stability.

The looseness of the Taliban organization makes the insurgency vulnerable to division through a combination of pressure and inducements. To exploit this division positively, it requires a combination of military pressure and hope for a better life within Afghanistan. In this, the EU has advantages that the U.S will never have; several Taliban commanders have pronounced themselves willing to see the EU play a role as an intermediary.

At the lowest levels, the Afghan Government's reconciliation program (PTS) is able to appeal to non-ideological insurgents—such as farm-boys and foot-soldiers—who are tired of the fight and ready to return to a more peaceful daily life. But the programme has not been well-funded, well-led or imbued with the necessary support. The EU Special Representative should take the lead, on behalf of European governments, to develop a comprehensive plan to assist the re-launch of the PST process. Support must include a realistic appraisal, monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that resources go to bona fide insurgents and that they are enabled to live peacefully.

A step above the farm-boys and foot-soldiers targeted by the PTS process are governor-led efforts designed, through social outreach and the delivery of services and development opportunities, to raise the Government credibility among tribes and communities who have tolerated or supported the Taliban.

At the top level is an on-off effort initiated by President Karzai and supported by the Saudi government to reconcile with the most senior members of the Taliban leadership. In this, the EU should offer President Karzai help with the development of an unofficial dialogue process, to engage the insurgents and those influencing them. The process itself could be undertaken through a third-party or a mediator, such as Kofi Anan, Maarti Ahtisaari or Lakhdar Brahimi. Though it would not amount to formal negotiations, such a dialogue could be used to identify parts of the insurgency prepared to move to a suspension of violence; and identify a possible basis for cooperation and movement into the political arena.

## REGIONAL INITIATIVES

The Afghan-Pakistan border area remains among the greatest challenges to a stable, integrated region. The Canadians are working through the Group-of-Eight on an ambitious border strategy, which includes security, development, economic and other measures. The U.S and other donors are assisting Afghanistan and Pakistan to expand and regularize border crossing which will improve security, cut down on smuggling and increase tax revenues. European governments should offer to take on the non-military aspects of the Canadian-sponsored plan for the Afghan-Pakistan border region.

Then the EU needs to facilitate a broader set of regional confidence building measures. To undertake the high-level diplomacy, the EU should appoint a full-time EU Envoy who can work with a U.S counterpart, much like Cyrus Vance and David Owen collaborated in the Former Yugoslavia in the early 1990s. The EU should also consider ways to create an institutionalized "hot line" between New Delhi, Islamabad and Kabul to help them share information on threats and activities. This "hot line" will provide the region's leaders with a focal point where they could call to get accurate information or relay their security concerns.

## CONCLUSION

Europe cannot alter the coalition strategy alone, but neither can Britain. Coordinated European response to a new U.S administration's request for more support is far better than the "each-one-for-himself" policy, which is usually practiced. Working together, European governments can act as a powerful advocate for a better and more coordinated international approach. The U.S rightly argues that more troops are needed to dominate the terrain, and lambasts European allies for their failure to step up their effort. European countries are right to criticise the current U.S military strategy and to fear that an increase in troop numbers might only lead to greater civilian casualties, alienating the local population. Both will have to change their approach. Yet European governments can do a lot more than they are currently doing—and it is incumbent upon the British government to find creative ways to maximize European allies' existing capabilities and to help them do more.

26 January 2009

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**Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from Andrew Tyrie MP**

ORAL EVIDENCE SESSION ON IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN ON 28 OCTOBER 2008

I am writing further to your Committee's announcement of an oral evidence session with the Secretaries of State for Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, about the Government's policy on Iraq and Afghanistan.

In a letter to the Defence Committee on 15 May 2008 I set out a number of questions which deserve an answer. I hope that this hearing might be an opportunity for you to ask them. They are:

- in which countries, and in which detention facilities, have people captured by British Forces during the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan and transferred into the custody of US, Afghan, or Iraqi authorities, subsequently been held;
- have sufficient follow-up efforts been made to check that individuals transferred into the custody of US, Afghan, or Iraqi authorities were not mistreated in breach of the UK's legal obligations on this issue; and
- are the arrangements currently in place to ensure the proper treatment of people transferred into the custody of US, Afghan, or Iraqi authorities, adequate?

In addition, at least two questions arise from Ben Griffin's specific allegations of inadequate treatment of detainees captured by UK Forces. They are:

- has there ever been a formal or informal policy that UK Forces operating within the joint task force referred to by Mr Griffin, would detain or capture individuals but not arrest them. If so, what is the purpose of that policy; and
- have the allegations made by Mr Griffin,<sup>163</sup> a former member of UKSF, been properly investigated?

I attach my letter to the Defence Committee of 15 May 2008,<sup>164</sup> and a note setting out the background to these later questions.

I have also written to the Chairman of the Defence Committee, Rt Hon James Arbuthnot MP, on this issue. I am placing this letter in the public domain.

27 October 2008

**Annex**

NOTE TO THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE ON DETAINEE TRANSFERS BY UK FORCES

I am concerned that the arrangements in place to ensure the proper treatment of detainees captured by UK Forces, and subsequently handed over to US, Iraqi, or Afghan forces, may be inadequate.

On 29 September 2008 I published a Legal Opinion on this issue, prepared by Michael Fordham QC and Tom Hickman, barristers at Blackstone Chambers specialising in human rights law. The Opinion makes clear that assurances provided by another state, that an individual handed over by UK forces would not be mistreated, would not absolve the UK government of the obligation to examine whether the assurances provide a sufficient guarantee that the individual will be protected against the risk of ill-treatment. Importantly, the Legal Opinion highlights "specific concerns about the legality of the UK having accepted such assurances" from the US. I have attached the Legal Opinion.

Your Committee addressed this issue in its Human Rights Report 2007, and concluded that: "the UK can no longer rely on US assurances that it does not use torture, and we recommend that the Government does not rely on such assurances in the future".<sup>165</sup> This conclusion also has important implications for the handing over of detainees to US forces in Iraq and Afghanistan.

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<sup>163</sup> Statement of Mr Ben Griffin, 25 February 2008,

[http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=533](http://www.stopwar.org.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=533).

<sup>164</sup> Not published.

<sup>165</sup> Foreign Affairs Committee, Ninth Report of Session 2007–08, *Human Rights Annual Report 2007*, HC 533, para 53

**Letter to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
from the Chairman of the Committee**

DETAINEES IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

As you will recall, on 29 October the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees jointly took oral evidence from you and from John Hutton on the subject of "Iraq and Afghanistan".

One issue which arose in the questioning was that of the treatment of individuals detained by British forces (at Questions 22-25 in the transcript). In a letter copied to me, John Hutton subsequently wrote to James Arbuthnot expanding on some of the answers given.

He stated that:

I [. . .] want to take this opportunity to confirm our legal position with regard to detainees. The UK does not have legal obligations towards the treatment of individuals we have detained once they have been transferred to the custody of another state, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan or through the normal judicial extradition process.

The Foreign Affairs Committee would be grateful to know if the above statement represents the view of the FCO's legal advisers.

I am copying this letter to James Arbuthnot.

2 December 2008

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**Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Secretary of State for Foreign and  
Commonwealth Affairs, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

In your letter of 2 December, you asked whether a statement by Defence Secretary John Hutton in his letter to the Chairman of the House of Commons Defence Committee, dated 17 November, represents the view of the FCO's legal advisers. John Hutton had written to the Committee with this information in order to follow up on evidence on Iraq and Afghanistan, taken on 28 October. In the passage cited in your letter, John Hutton confirmed that:

"The UK does not have legal obligations towards the treatment of individuals we have detained once they have been transferred to the custody of another state, whether in Iraq or Afghanistan or through the normal judicial extradition process".

I can confirm that the FCO shares the same view as the Ministry of Defence on this issue, namely that the UK does not have legal obligations towards the treatment of individuals we have detained in Afghanistan and Iraq once they have been transferred to Afghan or Iraqi custody. The Foreign Affairs Committee will appreciate that HMG takes meticulous care that any transfer takes place in accordance with the strategic framework of Memoranda of Understanding and other assurances, so that we can be abundantly certain that it is consistent with any applicable international human rights obligations of the United Kingdom.

Both the Iraq and Afghanistan arrangements ensure that detainees transferred by the UK are treated in accordance with those States' respective international human rights obligations including prohibiting torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. We no longer hold any detainees in Iraq. In the case of Afghanistan they also commit the Afghan Government to allow access to transferred detainees by the ICRC and UK and other officials and not to transfer to another state without the prior written agreement of the UK. In Afghanistan, the Royal Military Police conduct routine visits to transferred detainees and the UK Government has committed several millions of pounds to train Afghan prison officers, including in human rights, and build secure and humane prison and detention facilities for the Afghan Government.

Consistent with the statement by John Hutton about which you have asked, we consider that ongoing monitoring of and access to individuals, transferred in the above circumstances and who remain in Iraqi or Afghan detention, does not reflect a continuing legal obligation on the part of the United Kingdom in respect of such individuals. It is nonetheless a vital part of the continuing diplomatic engagement to ensure the effective operation and implementation of the aforementioned strategic framework. This framework is amplified by the work we and coalition partners carry out with the Iraqi and Afghan authorities in the justice and rule of law fields.

24 January 2009

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**Submission by Professor Shaun Gregory, Pakistan Security Research Unit,  
University of Bradford**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- (i) The UK, US and NATO are losing the war in Afghanistan. The Afghan Taliban are in control or dominant in about 70% of the country and in most of the key political areas of Afghanistan. They are strongest in those regions which are contiguous with Pakistan;
- (ii) Part of the explanation for this is that Pakistan<sup>166</sup> is antipathetic to Karzai's government and to any administration in Afghanistan which is indulgent of Indian influence. Pakistan thus wants the end of Karzai, a pro-Pakistani Pashtun government in Afghanistan, and wants the UK/US/NATO out of Afghanistan;
- (iii) For this reason—and others—Pakistan has been hosting the Afghan Taliban since they were displaced from Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11 and it is from Pakistan's northern Balochistan and FATA that the Afghan Taliban have planned and conducted their comeback in Afghanistan. Pakistan's role in this comeback lies somewhere between passive tolerance of the Afghan Taliban to open and active support;
- (iv) Many have argued that it is only renegade or former Pakistan intelligence [ISI] officers who are supporting the Afghan Taliban, but in truth the ISI are a disciplined force tightly controlled for the most part by the Pakistan military;
- (v) Thus the UK/US/NATO find themselves in the invidious position of being reliant on an "ally" which does not share their interests and whom they cannot trust. Although they have considerable leverage over Pakistan due to the reliance of the Pakistan military/ISI on US military aid and the country on non-military aid, Pakistan also has considerable leverage over the West;
- (vi) This leverage includes NATO/US/UK reliance on Pakistan for overland logistics [about 80% of materiel and 40% of fuel] and for intelligence and overflights;
- (vii) It also includes reliance on the Pakistan army and ISI for intelligence in the war on terrorism and the battle against tribal militants, al-Qaeda and the TTP/TNSM etc in the FATA/NWFP; and reliance on the Pakistan Army to keep Pakistan's nuclear weapons and nuclear-related technology out of the hands of terrorists;
- (viii) In addition Pakistan hints at "coercive" options which would make life even more difficult for the UK/US/NATO;
- (ix) US/UK/NATO efforts to do anything about this situation and push or incentivize Pakistan to more co-operative actions and positions is subject to very powerful obstacles;
- (x) Despite these obstacles there are ways forward for the US/UK/NATO with respect to Pakistan. These include taking steps to reduce Pakistan's logistics leverage [such as NATO is already doing in looking for alternative routes through central Asia], looking at the modalities of logistics through Pakistan, reaching out to India for help and co-operation in many related areas, shifting the balance of aid to Pakistan from the military to the non-military, and ensuring that military aid to Pakistan is subject to conditionality, transparency and accountability;
- (xi) In sum we can no longer afford a "business as usual" relationship with the Pakistan military. Not at least while Pakistan itself is in crisis, while NATO falters in Afghanistan, while the number of NATO casualties in Afghanistan rises, while the number of terrorist plots with links to Pakistan continues to rise, or while the risks of a nuclear terrorist attack with its origins in Pakistan remains.

Some of my arguments and brief outlines of the evidence for all these assertions is laid out in the following pages:

2. *Policy Themes*

I wanted to start by setting out a number of the constants in Pakistan's defence and security thinking because these give us insight into why Pakistan behaves as it does and the degree to which the interests of Pakistan and the West—by which I mean primarily the US, UK and NATO are at odds in many areas. Five issues I think are fundamental:

- (1) that faced with a conflictual and powerful India to its east, Pakistan's security demands a friendly Afghanistan to its west both to provide it with "strategic space" and to ensure that Pakistan is not trapped between two adversaries;
- (2) that having been through the trauma of the break up of east and west Pakistan in 1971 with defeat by India and the creation of Bangladesh, Pakistan has become obsessed about further threats to the integrity of what remains of the original Pakistan;
- (3) that since the Zia ul-Haq years [1977–88], Pakistan has been undergoing a process of Islamization which has moved Pakistan away from the pluralist secular vision of its founding fathers towards

<sup>166</sup> Throughout this paper when I use the term Pakistan I am referring to the military-political elite which runs the country, unless otherwise stated.

- an Islamized polity in which *Sharia* asserts an ever stronger role, and in which the centre of gravity in Pakistan's politics—and within the Pakistan military and intelligence services—has become ever more Islamic;
- (4) that subject to isolation and sanctions through the 1990s following the Soviet-Afghan war, Pakistan created and/or supported numerous extremist and terrorist organisations as instruments of state policy, both in relation to its international security objectives within the region and across the Islamic world as far afield as Algeria; and for internal purposes, particularly in relation to Kashmir, opposition to domestic secular pluralist political forces, and to perceived Shia threats to Pakistan's Sunni majority;
  - (5) that Pakistan's Army needs to be understood as the country's most powerful and cohesive institution and that its direct engagement in politics since the 1950s means we should not understand the Pakistan army in the kind of terms with which we would think of NATO armed forces. For the Pakistan Army's supporters it is the one institution which has held the country together in the face of instability and a corrupt political class. To its detractors the Pakistan Army has stifled the evolution of democracy in Pakistan and locked the country into a paranoid security paradigm which only serves to fuel insecurity and underwrite the continued national dominance of the Army.

### 3. *Pakistan's Support for the Taliban*

In order to begin to understand what is going on in the FATA and NWFP today we have to understand that Pakistan and Afghanistan are intimately interlinked and in some respects need to be understood as two halves of the same walnut. One way into the issues is by thinking about Pakistan's relations with the Afghan Taliban. As is well known Pakistan supported and empowered the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan between about 1992 and 1996 as a means of imposing some order and stability on the chaos of post-Soviet warlord-dominated Afghanistan, and was one of only three states to give diplomatic recognition to the Taliban government. Pakistan did this because the Taliban are a Pashtun group and Pakistan has always sought to assert its control of Afghanistan—and thus to prevent Afghanistan falling under Indian influence—through the Pashtuns who constitute about 50% of the Afghan population and are dominant in Afghanistan's most important political regions. There are about 50 million Pashtuns in total, roughly 20 million in Afghanistan and 28 million in Pakistan.

Following 9/11 Pakistan was put under intense pressure and offered lavish rewards by the US to turn against the Taliban and although Pakistan had little choice but to comply with this, the crucial point is that the underlying fundamentals of Pakistani security policy did not change. The Karzai government which emerged in Afghanistan is antipathetic to Pakistan and is indulgent of Indian influence—for example the Indian “consulates” springing up across Afghanistan—much to Pakistan's alarm. Pakistan thus wants an end to the Karzai government and it also wants the US and NATO out of the Afghan theatre, because NATO props up Karzai, is permissive of Indian influence, and because the ongoing war with the Taliban is destabilizing Pakistan. The Taliban remain Pakistan's best instrument for achieving all three objectives because they are able to sustain—arguably with some Pakistani support or at least Pakistani tolerance—a grinding insurgency which Pakistan expects to force eventually both a political accommodation with the Taliban in Afghanistan and a Western deal with the Taliban to find a face-saving exit from Afghanistan.

### 4. *Taliban in Balochistan*

Thus Pakistan has provided a safe haven for the Afghan Taliban since 9/11, not least in Pakistan's South Western province of Balochistan. The added bonus of having the Taliban in Balochistan—where throughout much of the Musharraf years they were hosted by the Islamist MMA which, with Musharraf's support, dominated the Balochistan provincial assembly—is that the Taliban and MMA have played an important role in suppressing Balochi nationalism which, as one senior Pakistani military figure remarked, threatens Pakistan's territorial integrity in a way that the Taliban at the time did not.

This explains why the Taliban were—and still are—free to operate from Balochistan, in particular from around Quetta, despite the presence of huge numbers of Pakistan military in the province and much to the anger of NATO and UK commanders, particularly after the deployments to Southern Afghanistan in 2005 which found themselves taking casualties from the Taliban who then simply retreated to safety across the Pakistan border. Recent claims by Pakistan to have moved against the Taliban shura in Balochistan do not appear to have been substantiated.

### 5. *Taliban in the FATA/NWFP*

The picture of the Taliban in Pakistan's northern NWFP and FATA is similar but even more complex. These areas have always been beyond the direct control of Pakistan but have been managed successfully through the exploitation of tribal power structures, which Pakistan understands well. In the aftermath of 9/11 the Taliban has also been tolerated in the NWFP and has been *de facto* permitted—through a series of “peace deals” with Pakistan—to attack Afghan and NATO forces across the border provided they did not threaten Pakistan itself. The situation has been further complicated by the emergence of Mehsud's Pakistan

Taliban, the TTP, and groups like Fazlullah's TNSM, both of whose agenda is not Afghanistan, but the overthrow—or rather the complete Islamisation—of the Pakistani state. I'll say more about these groups in a moment.

#### 6. *Kashmir—FATA NWFP*

It's worth also just adding that Pakistan's ISI transited some of the Afghan Jihadi fighters from Afghanistan at the end of the 1980s into Kashmir to try to wrest Kashmir from India. To do this it set up a network of terrorist training camps in Pakistani Administered Kashmir and either created or empowered groups like Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed for that struggle. Some of these groups—who were trained by the Pakistan army for guerrilla insurgency—have also made their way into Pakistan's tribal areas in the last few years where they have brought these skills to the tribal militants. Lashkar-e-Toiba of course is the organisation which carried out the attacks on the Indian parliament in December 2001, and is strongly suspected of having been behind the November 2008 commando-style attacks in Mumbai.

#### 7. *Pakistan and al-Qaeda*

Pakistan, and in particular Pakistan's lead intelligence agency—the ISI—has had a close relationship with Osama Bin Laden—and thus with al-Qaeda—since the Soviet Afghan war. At the end of that war in 1989 and 1990 the ISI tried to use Bin Laden for its jihad in Kashmir. The ISI also tried to co-opt Bin Laden for an attempt to remove Benazir Bhutto who was Prime Minister for the first time between 1988 and 1990, and this was the ground of Benazir's claim that ISI veterans—still influential in Pakistan—were complicit in the first attempt on her life in Karachi in October 2007, just a few months before she was so tragically assassinated.

It was the ISI which introduced Bin Laden to the Taliban in 1996 when he returned to Afghanistan, thereby gifting al-Qaeda a secure base from which to emerge as a genuinely global threat, and it was the ISI which tipped off Bin Laden about a series of attempts on his life in the late 1990s by the US in retaliation for al-Qaeda attacks in East Africa.

In case anyone is interested I can make available a paper I wrote in *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* in Washington in December 2007, which provides much greater detail about the ISI-al-Qaeda relationship. The long and complex relationship between the ISI and al-Qaeda must I think inform any analysis of Pakistan's response to al-Qaeda post 9/11.

#### 8. *Pakistan's Army Operations in the FATA/NWFP*

The situation in the FATA/NWFP today is thus deeply complex and spiralling out of control. The Pakistan Army—post Musharraf—has stepped up military action in Bajaur province and neighbouring Mohmand province in particular and the new COAS Kiyani is trumpeting this as a “new realism” in the Army and as evidence of a willingness to tackle the militants, but there are reasons to doubt this.

The militants the Pakistan Army are fighting in the FATA and NWFP appear to be mainly Baitullah Meshud's *Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan* [TTP], and Maulana Fazlullah's *Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammedi* [TNSM]. These groups comprise almost entirely Pakistani nationals, many radicalised by the Western presence in Afghanistan, by Pakistan's “support” for the West, and by US airstrike in the FATA. The Pakistan Army also appears to be taking on some elements of al-Qaeda and some foreign groups—notably Uzbecks and some Arabs/Turks/Chinese Uighurs—which also pose a direct threat to the security of Pakistan itself, in a way the Afghan Taliban do not.

#### 9. *Afghan Taliban in the FATA/NWFP*

The Pakistan Army however is still not moving against Mullah Omar's Afghan Taliban, nor is it moving against its erstwhile proxies in the Afghan-War and its aftermath—the Jallaludin Haqqani and Gulbuddin Hekmayar militant armies. Nor, despite the Mumbai attacks, is it moving against those elements of Kashmiri separatists such as the LeT which have relocated to the FATA, though under intense US, British and Indian pressure it has made arrests of many *Jamaat-u-Dawah* [JUD] members, the JuD being widely viewed as an LeT front. The reason for this is that these groups will offer Pakistan the future influence it wants in Afghanistan [and in Kashmir] and Pakistan will thus put up with Western pressure to do more about these groups because it believes that the US and NATO cannot win in Afghanistan and that a deal with the Taliban is inevitable.

Thus it is that stories continue to emerge about the apparently free movement of the Taliban across the Afghan-Pakistan border, about the Afghan Taliban moving unchallenged—or with Pakistan Army permission—through Pakistani checkpoints, and about arms caches and training being provided to the Afghan Taliban by Pakistan, all of which Pakistan of course strongly rebuts and dismisses as US or Afghan propaganda.

The suicide attack on the Indian embassy in Kabul on 7 July 2008 which killed more than 40 and injured more than 200 has been unequivocally linked to the ISI-backed Sirajuddin Haqqani's network, another clear illustration of Pakistan's on-going—if clandestine—support for the Afghan Taliban and its opposition to growing Indian influence.

The same might be said for the pressure which is being exerted on NATO's logistic supply lines through Pakistan, which until recently Pakistan did little to protect. More cynical minds might indeed suggest that Pakistan's interests are served by constraining these supplies, both to weaken NATO and the US in Afghanistan and to remind the US in particular that Pakistan presently has its thumb on NATO's jugular, a useful riposte when Pakistan itself is pressured by the US.

#### 10. *US Direct Action in the FATA*

At the same time the US has run out of patience with the Pakistan Army and ISI in relation to Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda safe havens in the FATA and has stepped up air-strikes and even conducted some ground incursions, most notably on 25 September 2008, when US and Pakistani forces traded gunfire. The US and NATO might however wonder why the Pakistan army and ISI are apparently powerless to do anything about the cross-border movement of the Taliban yet have managed to have troops in place and willing to fire on every US cross-border ground incursion to date.

Pakistan has responded very negatively to these developments—for example shutting off NATO logistics flows through Pakistan in retaliation for US ground incursions—but it is difficult to see that the US has much option. From a military perspective the imperative to act in the FATA in the face of Pakistani obfuscation seems overwhelming.

However, as the US and NATO are well aware, the negative impact of these incursions and strikes are enormous and, *inter alia*, are fuelling anti-US and anti-western antipathy in Pakistan, strengthening anti-western sentiments within the Pakistan Army and ISI, and risking a general tribal uprising which would complicate issues in the FATA even further. It is a measure of the perilous state of the war with the Taliban in Afghanistan that the US clearly feels these risks are outweighed by the need to take direct action in the FATA.

#### 11. *The Surge*

As you'll be well aware, the incoming Obama administration has signalled its intention to support a troop surge in Afghanistan, following the strategy that has proven successful in Iraq over the past 18 months, and that General Petraeus has been moved to the Afghan theatre for that purpose. The success or failure of this surge is very much going to depend on Pakistan and on what happens in the FATA and NWFP. Pakistan will not wish to see the surge succeed for the reasons I have outlined but it will come under intense pressure from the Obama administration who is unlikely to be as patient or as indulgent with the Pakistan military as the Bush administration has been. I expect the Pakistan Army reaction to the surge to be to very sharp and they are likely to use every means at their disposal—above all support for the Afghan Taliban—to defeat it.

This means that the US and NATO has to maximise its leverage over Pakistan, but before this concludes by thinking through precisely what that means it is helpful to put two others issues on the table—Pakistan's nuclear weapons and its role in the War on Terror—because these are likely to condition the degree to which Pakistan can be pressured over the next few years.

#### 12. *Nuclear Proliferation and Terrorism*

The first issue is the links between Pakistan's relations with al-Qaeda, Pakistan's use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy, and what has been termed a "porous" nuclear weapons context in Pakistan. Many analysts believe that if there is a nuclear 9/11 carried out in the West, it will have its origins in Pakistan. I think there are at least two sets of issues here: one is that unscrupulous technocrats—such as AQ Khan—from within Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme could provide assistance to terrorists enabling them to cross the nuclear threshold. In this connection we already have the well documented case of two recently retired Pakistani nuclear weapons scientists—Sultan Mahmood and Chaudiri Majeed, who met Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan in August 2001. Pakistan has tried to dismiss this event as of marginal importance and Mahmood and Majeed as minor figures, but in fact these were senior and privately radical figures who, although not weapons designers themselves, were certainly knowledgeable about networks of nuclear contacts within Pakistan and beyond, and as the AQ Khan story had illustrated, it is these networks which are of pivotal importance in terms of nuclear transfer.

The second set of issues arise around the possibility of direct collusion between terrorists, and Islamists within the Pakistan military and intelligence services who have access to nuclear weapons and/or nuclear components. Having myself worked with Pakistan's SPD on precisely these nuclear safety and security personnel issues I take the view that these are serious concerns. Indeed I have published an analysis of these issues and you can access a shortened version of this paper about Pakistan's command and control arrangements which includes discussion of these nuclear terrorism risks, on the PSRU website a link to which you've been given.

The point is that the Pakistan Army is seen as pivotal by the US to the safe custody of its nuclear weapons and to the prevention of nuclear weapons technology reaching terrorist hands. Pakistan thus has leverage in this domain.

### 13. *The ISI and the WoT I*

The second set of issues pertain to the hunt for al-Qaeda and the War on Terrorism. Two sets of tensions—those between Pakistan’s need to be responsive to the US in particular and the need to be responsive to the generally anti-western sentiment at all levels in Pakistan, and those between differing Western and Pakistan interests in the region—have led to what may be called the “double narrative” of Pakistan’s role in the WoT. The first of these—the story Pakistan wants the West to hear—is that Pakistan is an indispensable ally in the WoT. Certainly in the early years after 9/11 Pakistan did provide a great deal of support for the WoT, assisting the West in hunting down many al-Qaeda members, arresting or killing many senior figures such as Al-Libbi, Ghailiani, Farooqi, Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and so forth, and closing down many indigenous terrorist organisations. As we have mentioned Pakistan has also taken heavy casualties in the tribal areas battling tribal militants.

### 14. *The ISI and the WoT II*

The second narrative, however, is that Pakistan has released many terrorist suspects, allowed many indigenous terrorist organisations to reform, some under different names, has redeployed some of these groups to its northern areas and even to Bangladesh to escape international attention, continues to use terrorists as instruments of state policy, and that Bin Laden and al-Zawahiri are still at large and—according to US Undersecretary of State John Negroponte—that al-Qaeda has reconstituted itself in Pakistan as the hub of its global operations.

In recent months Pakistani intelligence has provided more information about al-Qaeda and other foreign terrorists in the FATA/NWFP and there have been some notable successes, particularly the deaths of Abu Zubair al-Misri, Azam al-Saudi, Midhat Mursi al-Sayid Umar and Mustafa Abu-al-Yazid. But this has come only under intense US pressure and does not detract from the general duplicity of Pakistan, and the ISI in particular, in the War on Terror.

### 15. *Criticisms of the ISI*

In preparing a paper on the ISI—which is available if you want to have it—I spoke to security personnel on both sides of the Atlantic and a pretty consistent critique of the ISI’s role emerged, in particular that:

- the ISI tends to act on US and/or UK intelligence but not to be proactive in bringing its own intelligence to the West, and that there are huge gaps in the intelligence the ISI does provide to the West which Western agencies believe they are able to fill should they wish;
- the ISI is unhelpful in relation to specific investigations—most notably of London’s 7/7 and 21/7 attacks—where the trail has gone cold, particularly where those investigated about against Pakistani sensitivities such as ISI-constructed terrorist training camps;
- the ISI has restricted or denied the US/UK access to many alleged terrorists as well as to many of its own operatives and assets [key individuals here include Omar Saeed Sheik implicated in the murder of Daniel Pearl; Dawood Ibrahim, Pakistan’s no 1 gangster/fixer with known connections to the ISI and al-Qaeda; Rashid Rauf allegedly involved in the summer 2006 Heathrow bomb plots who miraculously “escaped” Pakistani custody before he was killed in a US airstrike]; and
- the ISI manipulates intelligence for its own internal and geopolitical reasons, and misdirects US and UK intelligence services [eg targets in the tribal areas].

The real point here of course—in relation to the War in Afghanistan and to the War on Terror—is not whether Pakistan and its ISI are for us or against us, but rather whether the benefits the US and NATO derive from the support of the Pakistan military and ISI are worth the costs and present and future risks. I take the view that the answer to that question has changed markedly for the negative over the past few years and that we can no longer afford a “business as usual” relationship with the Pakistan military. Not at least while Pakistan itself is in crisis, while NATO falters in Afghanistan, while the number of NATO casualties in Afghanistan rises, while the number of terrorist plots with links to Pakistan continues to rise, or while the risks of a nuclear terrorist attack with its origins in Pakistan remains.

### 16. *Policy Constraints*

I am under no illusions however about the difficulties of pressing Pakistan to adjust its policy. Any western initiatives to force Pakistan to revise policy must face up to at least five substantial obstacles:

- (1) that despite the nominal transition to “democracy” in Pakistan post February 2008, the Pakistan military remains in control of defence policy, foreign policy, nuclear policy, internal security, and will defend their expanded interests in the Pakistan economy which mushroomed under Musharraf. In the context of the WoT, and in the context of vast direct US aid to the Pakistan military this leaves the divided elected government a pretty small portfolio of issues to squabble about;

- (2) that Pakistan has proven extremely resistant to external sanctions and pressure. Indeed the lessons of the decade or so of the Pressler sanctions through the 1990s, and the post-test sanctions in 1998, is that Pakistan will not budge an inch in the face of such pressure and that the solutions it seeks to circumvent those pressures have had, if anything, even more negative consequences for the West;
- (3) that we should never lose sight of Pakistan's capacity for "coercive options", by which I mean its capacity to deny the West what support it presently offers and/or to step up support for the Taliban, for terrorists, for proliferation, and so on. I have myself heard several senior Pakistani diplomats and military figures make precisely this threat, albeit veiled in polite language;
- (4) that the narrow focus of the Bush administration—and Cheney's office in particular—over the past seven years on Musharraf and the Pakistan Army has greatly limited the policy options and denied the West a broader front of engagement with Pakistan. Over Musharraf's term democracy has declined in Pakistan and Islamic extremism and terrorism have flourished. It will not be easy to find that broader front or to reverse the consequences of Bush's policy myopia;
- (5) that direct US military intervention in Pakistan is a hugely risky policy option with the potential to inflame the situation, undermine what western support still exists in Pakistan, trigger precisely the coercive options Pakistan has warned of, and perhaps even threaten the existence of Pakistan itself. I am reminded of Zbigniew Brezinski's recent entreaty that the US could soon find itself at war in Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and, in his words, if it were "that would spell the end of US hegemony".

*February 2009*

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#### **Submission by Sean Langan**

I would like to focus on what I believe to be the key role of Pakistan. Most of my evidence will be anecdotal, but I imagine my personal experience of dealing with the Taliban over the years is quite unique, and I was able to gain a further insight during my recent hostage experience.

But just briefly, I would like to be able to recount some of my meetings over the years with both Pakistani militant groups in Kashmir, and the Taliban in Afghanistan, because on almost every occasion—I was made aware of the not-so-hidden hand of Pakistan. I was briefly abducted by Hizbul-Mujahadeen militants in Indian-occupied Kashmir in 1998 while filming. A few were Pakistani, and the others Afghans, Arabs and Tajiks. But they admitted they had crossed the border and had been trained in Pakistan-run camps in Afghanistan. After six months in Kashmir, working closely with the political opponents of India, it became clear just how involved the ISI were in the insurgency, and how it spanned groups in both Pakistan and Afghanistan.

During the Taliban regime, I even visited a Pakistan militant camp in Jalalabad, near the infamous Al Qaeda Darunta Camp. I also dropped in on the ISI station chief in Kabul, who boasted just how much they were in command. In fact, the overlap between the Taliban, the ISI, and Pakistani militants and Al Qaeda, seemed quite open. I even saw Pakistani soldiers drive up to the frontlines north of Kabul, and Pakistan Airforce pilots pose at Kandahar airport. The irony is, I noticed a similar, but far more hidden, level of involvement when I returned to Afghanistan in 2005 to make a film about the burgeoning Taliban insurgency.

My guides in Eastern Afghanistan were Afghans, but had served with Lashka-Taiba in Kashmir, and said they were still on the payroll of the ISI. The Taliban admitted they had bases and safe-havens in Pakistan, and I was even told they received logistical support. And on my most recent trip, I became all too aware of just how much of a safe-haven the tribal areas of Pakistan have become. I was surrounded by Taliban training camps, who test-fired their weapons on a daily basis, and I was told Arab mujahadeen openly patrol the roads. And before being released after three months in captivity, I was brought to a Taliban safe-house in Peshawar, just minutes away from the Pakistan military HQ. Which is why I agree with the American general who said NATO operations in Afghanistan are like "mowing the lawn". The seeds of the insurgency are sown in Pakistan, and that is where the focus needs to be.

It's still not clear how a few more thousand British troops in Helmand will either stem the flow of Taliban recruits from over the border in Pakistan (although closing some of the Saudi-funded madrassas in Pakistan might help). Or even make much difference to what the foreign secretary has called a "strategic stalemate." Without removing the insurgent's "strategic depth," and dismantling their network of training camps in the safe-havens in Pakistan, it will just mean more "mowing the lawn". Although I would say this—I do believe there is something that would make a difference. Much has been said of finding an equivalent to the "sunnawakening" strategy in Iraq, which did so much to defeat Al Qaeda in Iraq. Some commentators have suggested General Patreus should repeat his success by arming Afghan tribal elements in Afghanistan, and turning them against the Taliban. But the realities on the ground are completely different than in Iraq.

To my mind, if I was asked, the equivalent would be to convince the ISI that their future, and that of Pakistan, lies with closer links to India and the West. If they could be made to turn, rather like the Sunni insurgents in Iraq, it would have an immediate and massive impact on the insurgency in Afghanistan. They

could roll-up entire networks of Taliban, close down their camps, cut-off their logistical supplies and some of their funding. And more importantly, as far as British national security is concerned, they could also locate and help shut-down a large number of individuals and militant networks involved in planning attacks in Britain. Not least because they helped create them. But for that to happen, it would take an enormous diplomatic and political effort on the part of Britain and its allies to change Pakistan's long-held strategy of using terror groups as their proxy forces. And again, it's not clear what efforts are being taken to achieve those aims, and to re-build democracy in Pakistan. The cost, while high, may be far cheaper and more effective than an on-going war in Afghanistan.

Secondly, I have also witnessed British and American forces in combat both in Iraq and in Afghanistan, and met some of those involved in formulating policy. And I sometimes felt as though I was witnessing some kind of Alice in Wonderland fantasy. The War on Terror often seemed to be framed in terms that stretched the realms of incredulity. Iran was held up as a supreme enemy, but Pakistan, who had sold nuclear weapons technology to Iran, North Korea and Libya, and who had created the Taliban and still now supporting them, as well as groups linked to Al Qaeda like Lashka-taiba (who were responsible for the recent attacks in Mumbai)...were until last year held up as America's great ally in the War on Terror. President Musharaf was even rewarded with \$10 billion in military aid, while it was increasingly clear his regime was supporting those killing British and American soldiers in Afghanistan. . . . but I presume this is now well known by most MP's, so perhaps I'm in danger of repeating old news.

But I would like to point out, that over the last few years, I have been able to make a career out of revealing the fact that the situations in countries like Iraq and Afghanistan, are not quite how they appear to be when presented to Parliament by this government. So in 2003, while there was barely any debate about it in Parliament, I was able to witness the growing insurgency in Iraq for myself. And in 2006, when the then defense secretary announced that British forces were being despatched to Helmand on peace-keeping operations, and added he hoped they would achieve their aims without firing a single shot—I immediately got on a plane and headed out there because it was clear to me that the Taliban insurgency was about to explode. (In fact, the Taliban had already informed me of their intentions, and capability, when I met up with them in Afghanistan in 2005. It was clear, even back then, that the British forces would find themselves in a war-fighting scenario, and were hopelessly ill-equipped for the task.)

What surprises me, is why it was less clear to those in Parliament. There does seem to have been a lack of scrutiny, and timely accountability in Parliament on matters of foreign policy. More questions should have been asked before the initial deployment in Helmand. And to my mind, it's hard to see how parliamentary over-sight has improved, despite all the recent failures. Given the strategic threat Pakistan now poses to British national security, perhaps the question of how well does Parliament scrutinize UK foreign policy needs to be raised. Far better to do so now, rather than wait until after the next terrorist atrocity in Britain is traced back to Pakistan.

[. . .]

I would like to add that I support Pakistan's efforts in its struggle against extremist elements within its own country, and hope my comments would be taken as constructive criticism by the government of Pakistan.

23 February 2009

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**Email to the Committee Specialist from Professor Shaun Gregory, Pakistan Security Research Unit, University of Bradford**

My answer to the final question of the day—what can be done about the role of Pakistan?—was not entered into the record because we ran out of time. Several members, including the chair, asked if I could send my thoughts on this. This is what follows:

We should not fool ourselves that there are any simple levers that can be pulled to make Pakistan play a more constructive role in tackling the Taliban and other militants and terrorists on its side of the border, without which the situation in Afghanistan cannot be stabilised. However there are some clear areas which ought to be the focus of detailed policy attention in co-operation with the United States and—where relevant—our other partners and potential partners in the region:

- (1) We must shift the focus of our energies from the military in Pakistan to the civilian leadership and expand our partners in Pakistan to include all those who can take Pakistan forward: business, civil society, political parties, NGOs etc. This must include some Islamist parties who eschew violence.
- (2) We should shift the focus from military aid to Pakistan to civilian aid and to development and economic, social and political progress.
- (3) We should ensure that any and all military aid to Pakistan [which must continue, albeit at a lower level] is accountable and subject to conditionality.
- (4) We should reduce our dependence on Pakistan [in terms of logistics, intel, overflights and so forth] in order to enhance our leverage over the Pakistan Army/ISI.

- (5) We should explore containment strategies for the FATA which end the airstrikes, retask the Pakistan military, apply downward pressure on arms trafficking and movement in and out of the FATA, apply downward pressure on the extremist message [disseminated through mosques, radio and madrassas], and seek least-worst accommodations with tribal groups.
- (6) We need to understand that Pakistan has legitimate interests and concerns in Afghanistan and in the region more broadly and that these concerns need to be listened to and addressed, otherwise the paranoia of the Pakistan Army/ISI will continue to be fed.
- (7) Finally we need a regional process—with Pakistan and Afghanistan jointly at the centre—to provide a political framework for progress. The combination of Obama, Clinton, Holbrooke and Petraeus, probably gives us our best shot at such a process for a generation.

25 February 2009

### **Submission from British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group**

#### BACKGROUND

##### BAAG

1. The British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group is a network of 25 NGOs that work in Afghanistan providing humanitarian relief and supporting reconstruction and development. In existence since 1987, BAAG has established a strong network of NGOs and civil society organisations in the UK and Europe. It hosts and supports the European Network for NGOs in Afghanistan—a group of 15 NGOs from the mainland Europe. BAAG also works closely with the Afghanistan based Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) which represents over 90 international and Afghan NGOs, and the Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC).

Many of the BAAG members have been active in the country for well over two decades. BAAG's strength lies in the collective knowledge of these agencies which have a long standing relationship with Afghan communities in most parts of the country.

#### OVERVIEW

2. Afghanistan is undoubtedly facing a serious crisis. Insecurity is at its worst since 2001. Whilst the south and east have seen a major escalation of fighting, more security incidents are also reported from previously stable areas. Civilian travel on all major highways has become fraught with risks of attacks by the anti-government forces and criminal groups. There is an unprecedented level of criminal kidnapping. It has once again become extremely dangerous to live, travel and do business in the country.

3. Afghans' faith in the government and in the international community has not been lower since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.<sup>167</sup> Unemployment is high with almost no prospects in sight. Many of the millions, including girls, who went back to school after 2001 and graduated in 2008, have no chance to further their education or find jobs. There is a widespread anger among Afghans over civilian casualties caused by excessive use of force and air strikes, and the conduct of some troops. Endemic corruption within the police force and government officials at large has had a crippling effect on business, social life and travel leading to growing concerns that many Afghans now perceive the armed opposition groups as “the lesser of the many evils” and therefore may actually decide to support those rather than the government.

4. Consecutive droughts and harsh winters have left millions in need of humanitarian assistance. The humanitarian situation has been exacerbated by insecurity leading to poor access to those most in need, the untimely return of thousands of refugees from the neighbouring countries and high food prices. As a result “many Afghans are facing some of the worst conditions they have experienced in 20 years”.<sup>168</sup>

It has become increasingly difficult to deliver aid to those in need. As aid agencies have had to restrict their travel due to insecurity, thousands of communities across the south and east, but also in other areas, have limited access to assistance. In 2008 Afghanistan was the most dangerous place for aid workers. 38 aid workers were killed in 2008 and 130 were kidnapped. This would appear to be in part as a result of a lack of distinction between the military and civilian aid worker, as the international military continues to provide humanitarian and development assistance even in areas where civilian agencies, including departments of the Afghan government are present.

5. Against this background members of the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group welcome the opportunity to raise their concerns with the Foreign Affairs Committee. We believe that, although some important opportunities may have been lost, a renewed commitment to work, in a compact with the Afghan people, towards a clear and coherent strategy and vision could turn the situation around. As a group of

<sup>167</sup> BBC/ABC opinion poll at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/05\\_02\\_09afghan\\_poll\\_2009.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/05_02_09afghan_poll_2009.pdf)

<sup>168</sup> Oxfam Memo to the US President see at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2009-01-31/obama-new-strategy-must-avert-humanitarian-crisis-afghanistan>

agencies that have worked with the Afghan communities for over 25 years and have witnessed the prolonged conflict Afghans have experienced, we make the following observations and recommendations. We would be happy to discuss these issues in greater detail with the UK Parliamentarians and HMG.

6. Taking this opportunity we would also like to commend the British Government for its continued commitment to Afghanistan. The United Kingdom has made an important contribution to security and development assistance since the fall of the Taliban and in many respects its policies are often regarded as among the most effective in terms of good practice and taking a long term view of the country's needs. However, we believe, that given the scale of the international interventions, particularly the number of actors involved, good policy and practice on the part of the UK alone are unlikely to bring about the much needed change for which we all, but particularly the Afghan population, long. We also believe that certain parts of UK policy should be revised in order to enhance the focus on meeting the immediate security and humanitarian challenges as well as creating the conditions for sustainable development.

*Address effectively the root causes of insecurity and instability: poverty, poor governance and lack of rule of law*

7. The causes of insecurity are complex. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world.<sup>169</sup> The three decades of conflict have left the country practically in ruins: economic infrastructure in key development sectors, such as agriculture, has seen extensive damage and much of the small industrial base that the country had developed has been almost totally demolished. As a result, unemployment is high with many Afghans seeking income through labour migration or from the drugs market. It would also appear that for some Afghans joining the anti-government insurgency or organised criminal gangs provides the only means of survival.

8. There is evidently a crisis of governance in many parts of the country. The police and judiciary, where they exist, are widely regarded as inept and corrupt. Reports of “shadow government” are widespread and Afghans are thrown back on using traditional ways to solve grievances or even to resort to the insurgents to seek justice and redress for them. The capacity of the provincial government departments responsible for key services remains worryingly low. As a consequence the government, whether central or provincial, is seen as incompetent—an image that has seriously undermined its legitimacy and credibility. The problem has been exacerbated by a heavy involvement of the international military through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in governance, reconstruction and development. In the eyes of many Afghans the PRT commanders, who are often in charge of more resources than the provincial governors, have more power and influence and are therefore perceived as a parallel, if not the actual, government.<sup>170</sup>

9. Former militia commanders retain influential positions within and outside the government of Afghanistan. The US and some other military forces would appear to have made significant use of those commanders in their operations, including for force protection purposes, rendering the DDR and DIAG programmes less effective. Former militia commanders in many areas are perceived by local Afghans to have the same amount or more weapons in their possession than four years ago. Many Afghans emphasise the direct link between the presence of arms in society, as well as a lack of reintegration of ex-combatants, and continued insecurity in their areas.<sup>171</sup>

10. The setting up of tribal militia groups under the Afghanistan Public Protection Force (APPF) appears to be another attempt to find a quick fix to a security challenge that requires a coherent and nation wide strategy. Afghans have had a bitter experience of armed militias and are rightly concerned about inter-ethnic and inter-communal tensions that have almost always followed initiatives aimed at “making communities responsible for their security”.<sup>172</sup> Programmes, such as the APPF, with weak state control and accountability are prone to serious abuse of power and may in the long run be counter-productive. There is a real danger that communities involved in APPF would face significant additional security risk resulting from their association with the pro-government forces. The Taliban have reportedly already warned communities against taking part in the APPF.<sup>173</sup> Similar initiatives in the past have led to a widespread proliferation of weapons. Instead of strengthening the state they have undermined it and in the case of the post-Soviet regime it led to its demise. It therefore comes as no surprise that even the authorities in the Wardak province where APPF is going through a pilot phase doubt its wisdom. It also appears that the programme is yet to establish benchmarks for how its success would be measured. However, even if the pilot programme in Wardak is judged by those piloting it to have produced satisfactory results in that province, the complex and diverse nature of Afghanistan's political, tribal and social structures means that what works in one province may not work in another. We believe that resources spent on APPF should be directed to reform and strengthen the Afghan security forces, particularly the police.

<sup>169</sup> Forty thousand people die every year in Afghanistan from hunger and poverty, UN Security Council (Dec 2008), “Report of the Security Council mission to Afghanistan”, 21–28 November 2008. S/2008/782

<sup>170</sup> Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds—Exploring Afghan perceptions of civil-military relations in <http://www.baag.org.uk/publications/reports.htm> (2008) and Service Delivery and Governance at the Sub-National Level in Afghanistan <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/Publications/448813-1185293547967/4024814-1185293572457/report.pdf>, (2007)

<sup>171</sup> Fight Poverty to End Insecurity—Afghan perceptions of insecurity, Human Rights Research and Advocacy Consortium (HRRAC)—<http://www.afghanadvocacy.org.af>

<sup>172</sup> For more information see BAAG paper on Community Defence Volunteer Units (CDVU) in [www.baag.org.uk](http://www.baag.org.uk)

<sup>173</sup> [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7902093.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7902093.stm)

11. Seeing improved governance in an essentially “counter-insurgency” light runs the risk of a highly militaristic approach to many of the issues that would be better addressed by using civilian methods and capacities. A serious lack of clarity surrounds the current strategies of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance, particularly that of the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) in their relationship with counter-insurgency, the APPF and the existing community based structures developed to involve communities in the development process. Furthermore, concerns have been raised that the selection processes within the ASOP programme for Social Outreach Councils may merely exacerbate problems linked to political patronage and thereby increase tension at a local level.

12. It is self-evident that insecurity in Afghanistan cannot be addressed by military means alone. Creating a framework for security and stability through developing effective state institutions and a vibrant civil-society with active participation of women is equally important. Although important steps have been taken to resolve the “crisis of capacity”, the process of reform and capacity development would appear to have been painfully slow and is rarely subject to evaluation. Many departments lack the capacity and resources to deliver services. As a result the government is seen as weak and incompetent—an image further aggravated by perceptions of widespread and endemic corruption within the police force and judiciary—the very institutions that are meant to enforce the rule of law and order.<sup>174</sup>

13. Afghanistan arguably may have always had a weak central state, but it has also been one of the poorest countries in the world. It was poverty as much as the failure of the central state resulting from decades of conflict that turned the country into an ungoverned space in which factions with competing interests and armies have been fighting for power and money. As a result there have been fundamental changes in the way power is distributed. The concept of “working with tribes at the local level” with the so called “grain of the Afghan traditions”<sup>175</sup> is therefore largely misunderstood, short-sighted and misses the point on several levels.

14. Throughout the conflict rural Afghanistan has seen an abundance of chiefs, commanders, warlords, etc. whose power has gone unchecked by a centralised authority. They have been rulers unto themselves; have built and broken alliances at will and have profited from foreign support to wars and trade in weapons and drugs, and therefore have a vested interest in the continuation of conflict. Many of them are known to have committed serious crimes and human rights violations. These individuals have almost entirely replaced the traditional tribal leaders as local power-holders. With ambiguous allegiances they “mostly see their power [and survival] in the failure of a centralised state control”<sup>176</sup> and are therefore an unlikely ally in stabilising Afghanistan.

15. There are currently 40 countries involved in the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force and OEF with as many as 10 contributing large numbers of troops. Some would appear to have sought to engage with local power-holders in an attempt to pacify their provinces or probably to ensure the protection of their troops. These moves may have tactical advantages. However, given the highly fragmented local power system making local “deals” runs the risk of causing a chaos of the scale that Afghanistan experienced in the years following the Soviet withdrawal. It will entrench localised fiefdoms further reversing the progress made to date, and deny the country of its chance to build an effective state which can provide security and the rule of law.

16. The British government’s policy of strengthening state institutions has produced noticeable outcomes. Some of the central or provincial departments that were hardly functional in 2001 are making slow, but gradual progress, performing some of their functions, albeit with less efficiency than one would expect given the length of time that has passed and the amount of resources that have been spent.

17. Yet, for various reasons the central government has not been able to extend its authority over the provinces. Although this has never been considered an easy task, the international community has sought localised solutions to fill the governance void at the province level often undermining the central government in the process.

18. A number of studies reveal that the present government system is over-centralised with central line ministries controlling planning, allocation and management of resources. The provincial departments of those ministries have little autonomy and their relationship with the provincial governors’ offices is unclear. As a result governance at the sub-national level remains very weak: rule of law is evidently poor and departments are either absent or extremely ineffective.

*“. . . like the rest of the Afghan state, the entire SN (sub-national) structure is afflicted by the sorts of problems which are characteristic of the Low Income Countries Under Stress: severe human resource weaknesses, an absence of properly functioning operational systems, shortages of equipment, and sparse supporting infrastructure necessary to get things functioning properly. Afghanistan is particularly badly affected by these and reform and strengthening of the SN system will be no less affected by them than any other significant institutional reform in the society”.*<sup>177</sup>

<sup>174</sup> For more on Afghan perceptions of corruption see a report of the same title in [http://iwaweb.org/index\\_en.html](http://iwaweb.org/index_en.html)

<sup>175</sup> David Miliband, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090205/debtext/90205-0014.htm>

<sup>176</sup> Norah Niland, “Justice Postponed—the marginalisation of human rights in Afghanistan”, in Nation Building Unravelling (Kumarian Press, Inc, 2004) 61–82

<sup>177</sup> <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/SOUTHASIAEXT/Resources/Publications/448813-1185293547967/4024814-1185293572457/report.pdf>, 2007

19. The impact of the work that has so far been undertaken to reform the civil service sector overall remains broadly inconclusive. Many government employees, particularly in the provinces, would appear to have very vague or poorly conceived job descriptions and therefore barely understand their roles. Without defined terms of reference, clear job descriptions and an understanding of the skills required for the job and the skills gaps in those recruited, providing training and support, that is real and measurable, is greatly hindered. Interviews found this to be a major problem at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock in the north and south. Furthermore, existing efforts to build government capacity are too often disjointed and tend to focus overly on the macro-level, which is of course a necessary component of a more integrated strategy. What has been missing to date is a more level-appropriate attention to the actual existing skills and capacities of the rest of the government apparatus, particularly the very interface that is presented to and affects the majority of Afghans.

20. The current debate on corruption remains largely rhetorical and lacks a proper contextual analysis. The problem is neither new to the present-day Afghanistan nor unique to countries where states are ineffective. Underlying entrenched corruption is a vicious circle of insecurity, underdevelopment and state ineffectiveness. Afghanistan is at the bottom of the scale on the World Bank index because it has one of the weakest states in the world and for as long as the public administration, law enforcement and public accountability agencies remain unreformed, underdeveloped and therefore ineffective, the problem is likely to continue. The Afghan government's anti-corruption strategy, as a comprehensive framework for addressing the issue, rightly identifies it as a cross cutting issue needing attention across governance, rule of law and human rights sectors.

21. At a political level the need for dialogue and reconciliation should not be overlooked. It would appear that the major troop contributing countries that are fighting the anti-government forces in the south and east have made attempts to negotiate with elements from those forces. The outcomes of those negotiations are either unclear or perceived as questionable and counter-productive. A major weakness of these initiatives is a lack of a common strategy and of Afghan perspectives. The role that Afghan civil society could play in these processes should be recognised and promoted and resourced.

22. There is a need to integrate what is sometimes known as "bottom-up" approaches to building peace in Afghanistan. Experience from Afghanistan and elsewhere has shown that local disputes have the tendency to flare up into violence and lead to wider conflict. Disputes over water, land and family constitute a major source of tension. Regional and ethnic divisions, until settled through effective conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms, have the potential to become a major source of political instability or widespread conflict. Some Afghan NGOs and civil society groups with support from international NGOs have done useful work in this regard. Their capacity needs to be further strengthened.

23. The key to gaining Afghans' support for and their confidence in the state-building exercise is in improving their perception of how their needs, including for security and personal safety, are being met and their rights protected. Girls' return to school and women's ability to work outside their homes were widely welcomed, as was the return of the freedoms and choices Afghans in general had enjoyed before the Taliban emerged. However, serious failings on the part of the Afghan government and the international community diminished the confidence of the population. As noted earlier many commanders whom the majority of Afghans despised and the Taliban had removed from power were brought back and "accorded legitimacy". This has led to widespread public resentment and suspicion. Equally important in damaging perceptions has been the issue of civilian casualties caused by the international military forces and the culturally insensitive conduct of some troops. According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), airstrikes were responsible for 25% of all civilian casualties in 2008. According to Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission "large airstrikes resulting in tens of civilian casualties were a national focal point of anger toward PGF [pro-government forces]. While night-time house searches resulted in fewer deaths, night raids frequently involved abusive behaviour and violent breaking and entry at night, which stoke almost as much anger toward PGF as the more lethal airstrikes. In areas where night raids are prevalent, they were a significant cause of fear, intimidation, and resentment toward PGF".<sup>178</sup>

24. Despite some progress in the communication sector, such as roads and mobile phones, and lately energy, infrastructure remains extremely weak. Revenue collection is abysmally low; in 2007 the total income generated by the central government through taxes amounted to just over 600 million US Dollars.<sup>179</sup> As a result the government continues to depend on foreign assistance to provide basic services, such as health, education and policing. With an estimated 80% of Afghans depending on agriculture for their livelihoods the sector is key to food security and economic recovery.<sup>180</sup> Yet since 2002 only 5% and in 2007 just 1% of the USAID budget was spent in the sector.<sup>181</sup>

<sup>178</sup> From Hope to Fear—an Afghan perspective on operations of pro-government forces in Afghanistan, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, December 2008, [http://www.aihrc.org.af/2008\\_Dec/PDF\\_Pro\\_G/Eng\\_Pro\\_G.pdf](http://www.aihrc.org.af/2008_Dec/PDF_Pro_G/Eng_Pro_G.pdf)

<sup>179</sup> <http://www.afghan-web.com/economy/revenue.html>

<sup>180</sup> [http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia\\_near\\_east/countries/afghanistan/agriculture.html](http://www.usaid.gov/locations/asia_near_east/countries/afghanistan/agriculture.html)

<sup>181</sup> Oxfam Memo to the US President see at <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2009-01-31/obama-new-strategy-must-avert-humanitarian-crisis-afghanistan>

25. Afghanistan has a major shortage of qualified personnel in almost every sector and this is stifling development. “If the availability of future qualified extension agents and management personnel does not match the demand of a modernized agricultural system, all other strategic plans will be in vain”.<sup>182</sup> Yet, there is a continuing lack of investment in secondary and tertiary education. The international community claims it is committed to Afghanistan for the long haul; and therefore it should focus its funding in projects that build the human capital that is sorely lacking. Long term strategy means investing heavily in the young people in Afghanistan making sure that by the time they reach the age of 25 they will be well equipped to lead the continued development of their country. Failing to do that now means to condemn Afghanistan to dependency on foreign funds and external leadership for the future.

26. Major troop contributing countries have concentrated their reconstruction and development funds and efforts in the provinces where their troops are primarily stationed, apparently to promote their national profile and priorities. This has resulted in large amounts of development funds being spent in the most insecure provinces of the east and south often with dubious outcomes. In contrast the more stable provinces with “poorer” PRTs have received significantly less resources despite significant needs and being more conducive to development. Many see this discrepancy as a disincentive for security and equally worryingly that donors are only concerned about their own immediate political objectives. There is a clear need for the UK government and other donors to review the current policy to ensure that humanitarian and development aid is delivered on the basis of need and not purely in response to political/stabilisation objectives.

27. Politicians and military officers from NATO countries place significant emphasis on “winning hearts and minds” in Afghanistan through aid and reconstruction. Commentators routinely equate government “presence” with infrastructure projects and services. To cite Senator Biden, “*How do you spell ‘hope’ in Dari or in Pashtu? A-s-p-h-a-l-t. Asphalt. That’s how you spell hope, in my humble opinion*”.<sup>183</sup> Research shows that a “development brings stability and security” thesis is simplistic. Following a long history of aid and military intervention, including during the Soviet occupation, Afghans are familiar with and suspicious of “hearts and minds” strategies.

28. As involvement by the military in development can place beneficiaries, projects and project implementers at risk and given doubts about the cost effectiveness and sustainability of military “quick impact” projects, it is imperative that military assets are used in areas where they have a comparative advantage in terms of expertise and knowledge, for example in developing the capacity of the Afghan security and law enforcement agencies. The role of PRTs should therefore be redefined accordingly. Their resources should be devoted to build up the capacity of the security and law enforcement agencies by providing adequate and sustained training and mentoring, material and logistics support.

29. It is important that the commitments that were made in the Paris Conference and through the Afghanistan Compact to improve aid effectiveness are honoured. NGOs have written extensively on this issue and in spite of some improvements particularly after the appointment of Kai Eide as the UN SRSG, serious problems continue to persist in aid coordination, focus and prioritisation. BAAG’s written submission to the International Development Select Committee (2007) provides a useful analysis of those issues and suggestions for ways forward.

30. Chronic underdevelopment aggravated by decades of conflict, years of drought, harsh winters and high food prices have left millions in need of humanitarian assistance with the country remaining vulnerable to a humanitarian crisis. About eight million people are considered high-risk food insecure.<sup>184</sup> The government of Afghanistan and the United Nations have duly acknowledged the problem by launching two humanitarian appeals in the last six months. As of January 09 only 50% of the appeal launched in July had been funded.<sup>185</sup> Whilst we acknowledge the British government’s contribution, we believe they should use their position and influence with other major donors to raise support for those appeals.

31. The humanitarian community has widely welcomed the decision of the United Nations to establish a separate Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Afghanistan. We believe that OCHA’s role in monitoring and coordinating humanitarian assistance is crucial and should be supported and expanded.

32. Due to insecurity humanitarian agencies find it increasingly difficult to reach large parts of the country to provide assistance. Aid workers are facing more risks and challenges now than they have been throughout the conflict. Not only were 38 aid workers killed in 2008 but the threats of abduction and intimidation are a constant source of fear. Sadly, community acceptance and protection as the fundamental and most effective strategy that aid agencies have relied upon during the Afghan conflict appear to be diminishing, largely due to their perceived association with the military and donor-country strategic political objectives. For

<sup>182</sup> The MAIL Implementation and Investment Plan for Programme Seven: Develop Institutional and Human Capacity for Sustained Growth—Page 3

<sup>183</sup> [http://www.cfr.org/publication/15600/conversation\\_with\\_senator\\_joseph\\_r\\_biden\\_jr\\_rush\\_transcript\\_federal\\_news\\_service.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/15600/conversation_with_senator_joseph_r_biden_jr_rush_transcript_federal_news_service.html)

<sup>184</sup> <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=82718>

<sup>185</sup> [http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha\\_R3\\_A827\\_\\_0903051156.xls](http://ocha.unog.ch/fts/reports/daily/ocha_R3_A827__0903051156.xls)

example, research shows that fearing reprisals by the anti-government forces, a local community has warned an aid agency that they could no longer guarantee their safety because troops have been seen visiting the agency's office.<sup>186</sup>

33. The safety of aid workers and humanitarian access appears to have been further compromised by the continuing involvement of the military in delivering assistance. According to international guidelines for situations of hostility the use of military assets for providing assistance should only be kept as a last resort, ie where civilian alternatives do not exist. In Afghanistan those guidelines have been continually breached, raising serious questions about the donor countries' commitments to the principles enshrined under the International Humanitarian Law.

34. Many of the issues currently facing Afghanistan cannot be resolved if its neighbours, particularly Pakistan and Iran, and other key players in the region do not subscribe to and support efforts aimed at bringing security and stability to areas affected by the conflict. The spread of violence in the border region between Pakistan and Afghanistan is a cause for concern. Hundreds of thousands have left their homes and at one point thousands from Pakistan crossed the border into Afghanistan. Reports that Iran has resumed the deportation of Afghans is also deeply worrying.<sup>187</sup> Areas affected by the movement of people from Pakistan and Iran as well as those coping with internally displaced people resulting from conflict within Afghanistan remain extremely vulnerable to humanitarian crisis.

35. The Afghanistan Compact benchmark 7.5 highlights the need for the right conditions for returning Afghans.<sup>188</sup> Specific needs that are crucial for a sustainable return strategy include housing, access to safe drinking water, education, health facilities and employment opportunities. Many Afghans who returned to rural areas in 2007 are still not being adequately supported to rebuild their lives. Continued financial support for housing is critical, as is support for livelihoods programmes for returnees if their sustainable return is to be achieved.

36. There is an obvious need for a common European policy in relation to Afghanistan—one that goes beyond being a good donor—and focuses on a more effective debate with the United States, better involvement in regional diplomacy and having a more concerted and co-ordinated influence over national political issues within Afghanistan. The United Kingdom could play a leading role in trying to promote a European consensus on Afghanistan with the aim of creating greater harmony across security, humanitarian and development sectors, as well as exerting more influence on the United States on issues such as aid effectiveness, human rights and civilian protection.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

We ask HMG:

### *Overarching Recommendation*

37. To play a leading role in trying to promote a European consensus on Afghanistan with the aim of creating greater harmony across security, humanitarian and development sectors, as well as exerting more influence on the United States on issues such as aid effectiveness, human rights and civilian protection.

### *Security and Governance*

38. To help improve security by reinforcing, and investing more in, the Afghan security forces, particularly the Afghan National Police, through adequate and sustained training, and by providing the necessary material and logistical support.

39. To oppose defence initiatives that will further strengthen the power base of local warlords, will increase the proliferation of weapons among civilians and that will divert funds away from reforming and strengthening the Afghan security forces.

40. To ensure that security or local community empowerment initiatives, such as Afghan Social Outreach Programme, do not heighten local tensions by empowering those who are recruited to carry them out to manipulate them to their own benefit or to the benefit of those within their own patronage system. In this context, HMG needs to ensure that it has a deep understanding of the dynamics and power relations within communities and conducts regular conflict mappings.

41. To encourage international donors to conduct an independent review of disarmament programmes and to demonstrate a renewed and tougher implementation of DDR and DIAG processes.

42. To step up measures aimed at improving local governance by reforming and developing the capacity of the public service departments and addressing the issue of multiple structures. Review the impact of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams on governance. In supporting programmes, such as ASOP, HMG should be aware of, and take measures to minimise, their potential for exacerbating local level political tensions.

<sup>186</sup> Afghan Hearts, Afghan Minds—Exploring Afghan perceptions of civil-military relations, <http://www.baag.org.uk/publications/reports.htm>

<sup>187</sup> [http://www.rferl.org/content/Iran\\_Said\\_To\\_Resume\\_Deportation\\_Of\\_Afghan\\_Refugees/1370585.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Iran_Said_To_Resume_Deportation_Of_Afghan_Refugees/1370585.html)

<sup>188</sup> Table III Executive Summary of Afghanistan Compact Benchmarks, JCMB annual report May 2007

43. To work with other donors and the Afghan government to take adequate measures toward the implementation of the anti-corruption strategy and to recognise that civil society and parliament have a crucial role to play in this respect and that their monitoring and accountability roles need further strengthening.

*Capacity Development and Civil Society*

44. To acknowledge that the pace of capacity building within local government is not sufficient at present to match the range of challenges faced. In this context we call on HMG to give particular attention to NGO capacity to provide basic services and livelihoods support for populations outside of the government programmes as well as to play a part in developing the capacity of government staff.

45. To encourage bottom-up approaches to peace-building in Afghanistan through the provision of support to civil society organisations engaged with local communities to strengthen conflict resolution and prevention mechanisms.

46. To invest in promoting the role of civil society organisations in both holding the government to account, especially in the area of human rights, and in building government capacity and to give greater attention to the sustainable development of national and local civil society.

*Aid Effectiveness and Humanitarian Assistance*

47. To continue to advocate strongly for improved donor coordination to ensure an integrated approach to support national development priorities.

48. To allocate aid according to levels of humanitarian need and the potential for sustainable development; ensuring a more geographically balanced, inclusive and broad-based approach and not one driven by strategic political and military objectives.

49. To encourage a comprehensive review, across all troop contributing countries, of the impact of the military led and implemented assistance projects.

50. To acknowledge the valuable role of the British Non-Governmental Organisations in continuing to deliver humanitarian, reconstruction and development assistance and the risks they are taking in doing so. To encourage a serious discussion within Whitehall about funding for NGOs and support for them to put in place effective measures to minimise risks to their staff.

51. To continue to contribute to, and encourage funding for, the humanitarian appeals and support the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to deliver on their mandate to improve humanitarian coordination and access.

52. To monitor the impact of the escalation of the conflict in the border region between Afghanistan and Pakistan to ensure that those who have become displaced have access to assistance.

*Human Rights*

53. To promote a renewed commitment among donor and troop-contributing countries and the Government of Afghanistan to the implementation of international instruments regarding the protection and promotion of human rights. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325 we recommend that the Afghan Government reaffirms its commitment to putting an end to impunity and to prosecute those responsible for crimes against humanity; war crimes, including those relating to sexual violence against women and girls; and to exclude such crimes from amnesty provisions.

54. Jointly with other troop-contributing countries to continue to look into ways in which the danger to civilians as a result of air strikes and other military operations are minimised and that those operations are conducted with utmost respect for the rights enshrined under the International Humanitarian law and Afghan customs. Similar measures should be taken to protect civilians who become caught in the conflict on the Pakistan side of the border.

5 March 2009

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**Submission from Peter Marsden**

**US POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN UNDER THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION**

A key element in President Obama's policy on Afghanistan is what is widely referred to as a troop surge—yet there are many who regard an increase in the number of US troops in Afghanistan as highly problematic. So what is the thinking behind this? Is it simply that the surge in US troops in Iraq was apparently successful (although this can be questioned) and may, therefore, work in Afghanistan? Or is it based on a view that the Bush administration was diverted by Iraq and that the war in Afghanistan should have been given greater resources from the beginning.

While both of these considerations are likely to have influenced the policy of the incoming US administration, there are other important factors. Not least of these is the fact that the situation in Pakistan is becoming increasingly precarious. Structures such as the Pakistan-based Taliban and Tehrik Nifaz-e-Shari'a Mohammed are thus challenging the liberal consensus of Pakistan's ruling elite and establishing geographical power bases of their own within which a much more conservative vision of Islamic society is being applied.

This shift in power dynamics within Pakistan is, arguably, a product of the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan of October 2001. Not only did this result in an insurgency which was able to operate from Pakistan but it also led to pressure being applied, on President Musharraf, to send Pakistani troops into the tribal areas in order to both inhibit the operations of the insurgents and search for key individuals thought to be linked to Al-Qaida. This military intrusion into a region of Pakistan which had, historically, enjoyed fierce independence of any central authority immediately aroused the anger of the Pushtun tribes and created a situation in which they were willing to support a new Taliban movement under local leadership. Thus, while there was one Taliban movement which was seeking to undermine what was seen as a US-led military occupation of Afghanistan, there was another which was actively confronting the willingness of the Pakistan Government to cooperate with the US.

The US Government therefore has good reason to fear a de-stabilisation of both Afghanistan and Pakistan in the face of insurgencies in the two countries. It will also be concerned at the possibility of increased Pakistan-based terrorism in India, exemplified in the attacks in Mumbai of November 2008. These led to increased tension between India and Pakistan and, from the US point of view, a worrying diversion of Pakistani troops from the border with Afghanistan to the Indian border.

These concerns inevitably give rise to a view that the situation in Afghanistan cannot be divorced from that of the wider region and that a comprehensive approach to the complexities of the region, including those relating to Iran, Russia, China and the Central Asian Republics needs to be adopted. This would take on board the active involvement of Pakistan, India and Iran in Afghanistan in support of their respective strategic interests.

Within Afghanistan, the US Government is mindful of the growing strength of the Taliban since 2006 and of their expansion to the very borders of Kabul. While it is very clear, in its statements, that there is no military solution to the conflict with the Taliban, it may hope, through an increase in the number of US troops, to, at least, contain the insurgency. Thus, the decision to give initial priority, in despatching additional troops, to the provinces of Wardak and Logar, to the immediate south of Kabul, may represent an effort to protect the capital from armed incursions and, at the same time, provide greater security to the northern stretch of the Kabul to Kandahar highway. It has also stated that it seeks, through the provision of more troops, to buy time while it reviews existing approaches. A further stated objective of the increased US troop presence is to reduce the need to call in air power in stabilisation operations.

The US Government has also made it clear that it seeks to increase the capacity of both international military forces and Afghan National Army troops in order to hold territory which has been captured. It will be aware of the poor performance of the Afghan National Police, in this regard, in the light of many examples of the police abandoning captured ground under pressure from the insurgents. The extremely high death rate of police engaged in counter-insurgency operations is a clear indication that they are neither resourced nor sufficiently trained to take on such a role. Their use, for this entirely inappropriate purpose, also takes them away from their primary role of providing an effective rule of law for the population.

Careful thought will need to be given, by the US Government, to the relative priority accorded to stabilisation operations, aimed to free specific geographical areas of Taliban fighters, as opposed to the search for individuals in key leadership positions within the Taliban. It is the efforts of the US military to actively target those who are suspected of playing a leadership role which has proved to be among the most problematic. While the US has the technology to pinpoint the exact positions of suspects and to precision-bomb them, its intelligence is often flawed and innocent civilians are frequently killed in the process. The high level of civilian casualties arising from air power has become a major political issue within Afghanistan and has led President Karzai to publicly express his concerns to the US Government on many occasions. It has also greatly strengthened the support given to the insurgency. The US therefore needs to weigh up whether any success that it is having in taking out high value suspects is sufficient to justify the inevitable civilian casualties or the significant political fall-out. It is also far from clear that the successful targeting of some high profile individuals has weakened the Taliban movement.

Further public anger has been aroused over the continued resort, by US forces in particular, to forced entry into the homes of suspects. There is also widespread concern over the detention of suspects, at Bagram air base and elsewhere, under conditions which do not conform to international human rights standards. The recent decision of President Obama to support the expansion of the detention facilities at Bagram air base and to exclude detainees from the right to challenge their detention in US/courts is of serious concern, in this regard. Thus, while he has made positive changes in relation to Guantánamo Bay and with regard to the extraordinary rendition process, these changes do not extend to Bagram.

Many reports from the field also speak of public concern that the arrival of international forces, to stabilise an area, simply provokes a response from the insurgents and creates instability in place of the security, albeit of a fragile nature, which had hitherto existed. The ability of the Taliban to create a climate

of fear and to intimidate the population links with a perception that international forces will not remain for ever and a consequent conclusion that cooperation with international forces will place the individual at risk once the international forces have departed.

The hope, frequently expressed by the US, that it will be able to detach part of the Taliban support base away from the leadership through reconstruction assistance therefore has to be set against the fact that the level of outrage felt, by the population, over the actions of international forces may far outweigh any positive response to the construction of a clinic or a school, particularly if these are presented, by the Taliban, as vehicles for Western and, potentially, Christian values to be imparted. The value placed on material benefits may also be insignificant in the face of the loss of honour or dignity arising from an armed intrusion, by US forces, into the family home.

The US may also find it difficult to generate a sufficient reconstruction effect to create a significant difference to the average Afghan while so much of the country is too insecure for the aid community to operate in. It cannot be stressed enough that Afghanistan is one of the very poorest countries of the world and that the population depends heavily on labour migration for its survival. The new US administration will also need to review the previous arrangements through which much of its reconstruction assistance was channelled through major US contractors. These have fuelled a public perception that only a small proportion of the aid provided to Afghanistan has benefited those on the ground.

Efforts to build a professional police force and therefore meet the frequently-expressed need for security and an end to police corruption continue to face very considerable obstacles. Public disenchantment with the police is said to be a major factor in the provision of support to the Taliban. However, the hope expressed in the Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy that a fully professional police force would be in being by 2010 is far from being realised.

The recent initiative to support the creation of local community-based defence forces may also founder in the face of highly complex power-holding dynamics at the local level. It should be stressed, in this regard, that the tribal structures which used to ensure a degree of stability, at the local level, have been very much weakened over the thirty years of conflict, giving way to multiple commanders and other power holders. The relative order created through the traditional justice system has therefore been replaced by the rule of the gun, with the more self-interested agendas of younger men replacing the collective judgement of the elders.

The international military is thus not only failing to gain ground against the insurgency by military means but it is also losing the hearts and minds battle. The Taliban are able to benefit from the fact that Afghanistan is seen as a major cause, within the wider Islamic world, in relation to a perceived US-led Christian crusade. They are therefore able to draw volunteers from the wider Islamic world who are simultaneously fired up by developments in Afghanistan, Gaza, Iraq or Pakistan. Thus, while the recent speech by President Obama on Al-Arabiya Television, in which he stressed his wish to have a relationship of respect with the Islamic world, represented a positive overture, the continued use of drones to attack targets in Pakistan, even under the Obama administration, has provoked strong reactions from an already hostile Pakistan public.

The international military is also facing major difficulties in ensuring that both its forces and those of the Afghan National Army are adequately supplied. The insurgents have thus launched a significant number of attacks on fuel tankers entering Afghanistan from Pakistan. In addition, a major depot containing NATO military vehicles in Peshawar was torched in December 2008, resulting in very significant damage. Most recently, a bridge on the main route over the Khyber Pass was blown up. The US Government is therefore feeling increasingly uneasy about supplying its forces through Pakistan and has been actively exploring options for delivering supplies through Russia and the Central Asian Republics. This has had positive outcomes. It is not clear, however, whether the US will be able to persuade the Kyrgyz Government to reverse its recent decision to halt the use, by the US military, of the military base at Manas.

The ability of the US Government to make progress in Afghanistan may also be constrained by growing tensions with President Karzai. It is extremely unfortunate that the tone used and attitudes adopted by President Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama's envoy to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Richard Holbrooke, towards President Karzai have been perceived as insulting by the Afghan public at large. The highly publicised debate as to whether the US will back him, as opposed to other candidates, in the elections to be held in August has therefore caused him to be increasingly critical of the US as well as defiant. Further, it has led him to make public overtures to Russia. If, therefore, President Karzai is re-elected in August, his administration will be even weaker than it is now in that it will no longer have the backing of the international community but will continue to be seen as a product of the US-led military intervention.

However, any successor will have very little room for manoeuvre in a situation in which the international community and, particularly, the US Government determine outcomes to a significant degree. It will be important that the choice of the next President is not perceived, by the Afghan population, to have been decided, in advance, by the US Government. It should be stressed that, irrespective of whether the electoral process is seen as free and fair, perceptions are everything in Afghanistan. At the same time, both the Afghan population and the international community would be more likely to lend their support to a President who clearly has the necessary qualities for the role and who is not open to criticism in relation to any previous human rights abuses.

Yet the US will rely on the Afghan Government to reach the political settlement with the Taliban on which the counter-insurgency operation depends. The US has made it clear that any such negotiations should be Afghan-led and that the Afghan Government is the primary vehicle for these. If the hand of President Karzai is further weakened, the political dynamics of Afghanistan will continue to be dominated by the deals that are being struck on a daily basis by the many other actors in Afghanistan, some of whom, including those involved in the drugs trade, have a vested interest in continuing instability and the absence of an effective state. The international community may thus find it difficult to achieve a political settlement in Afghanistan and, therefore, a means through which it can establish a face-saving exit from its military involvement.

It is far from clear what form a political settlement should take. The Taliban leadership has made it clear that it is not willing to negotiate while international forces remain in Afghanistan. The Afghan Government, on its side, has stated that it will only negotiate with those members of the Taliban who are willing to accept the Afghan constitution. Formal negotiations were held last year in Riyadh under the auspices of the Saudi Government but these proved to be inconclusive. A number of Jirgas have been held drawing in tribal representatives and other power holders from both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, but the outcome of these is also uncertain. There is widespread concern that any political settlement in which conservative forces dominate would risk reversing the small gains that women have made in terms of political involvement and their greater access to health care, education and employment.

The principal hope continues to lie in the capacity of the international military to train and strengthen the Afghan National Army. If the international military increasingly withdraws to barracks and supports Afghan security forces to respond to the insurgency, under the direction of the Afghan Government, there would inevitably be a difference in approach which may prove to be more sensitive to the complexities of the situation on the ground. It is important to note, in this regard, that the Afghan Government has recently submitted a formal request to NATO that it should have greater control over international military operations. It has also sought a ban on the searches of homes by international military personnel and has insisted that only the Afghan security forces should be involved in the detention of suspects.

Thus, the US cannot stand idly by and allow both Afghanistan and Pakistan to become de-stabilised. However, its ability to make significant headway in the face of insurgencies in both countries is heavily constrained. The key question, therefore, is whether a pronounced reduction in the operations of international forces from Afghanistan in favour of those of the Afghan National Army, in combination with a cessation of US military action on Pakistani territory, would lower the political temperature in the region sufficiently for the Taliban or other radical groups to lose a significant part of the support base which their call for jihad has given them.

Such a lowering of the political temperature would inevitably create a new political space. The hope is that this might enable a more active dialogue, aimed at the achievement of a consensus, to take place between the many actors in Afghanistan and Pakistan, including those who are currently supporting the Taliban. Such a consensus would certainly build on the inherent conservatism of Afghan and Pakistan societies and on the centrality of Islam within them but it would not need to incorporate the more radical perspectives that the call for jihad has brought to the fore.

Of course, any intra-Afghan or intra-Pakistani dialogue would be very much influenced by indications, from the international military, of their willingness to link a broad-based political settlement in Afghanistan with an exit strategy. If it appears that the international military presence in Afghanistan is likely to be relatively indefinite, this would not only undermine the political process but it would also undermine the efforts of both the Afghan and Pakistani governments to assert their authority. The continuation of international military bases on Afghan soil can reasonably be expected to be a contentious issue, in this regard. Such a continuing military presence would also influence any dialogue with Iran.

While the international community weighs up the various risks that it faces, it may also want to assess the risk of taking a back seat and allowing the Afghan and Pakistani governments to make more of the running. In so doing, it will need to take on board the very limited ability of both governments to influence outcomes within a very complex political environment. Expectations of what the two governments can achieve should, therefore, be realistic. Pakistan has good reason to feel aggrieved at the very critical stance that the US Government has taken towards its considerable and, in terms of human life, costly efforts to address the use of its territory as a base for the Afghan insurgency. At the same time, the US should recognise that both governments are attuned to the society around them and can be expected to approach the situation with a greater degree of sensitivity than is possible for an outsider, however well informed. The relationship of respect referred to in President Obama's speech to Al-Arabiya television should therefore underpin his administration's dealings with their leaders. The recent invitation to the Foreign Ministers of the two countries to talks in Washington was a positive step, in this regard.

The US should also take on board the existence of a very vibrant civil society in both countries. Women's organisations, together with bodies such as the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and the various peace-building initiatives, have an important role to play.

Thus, while there will inevitably be considerable risks in respecting the ability of the two governments and societies to find appropriate ways forward, there may be value in exploring the potential costs and benefits of such an approach. In a situation in which the international community has proved able to aggravate, rather than alleviate, the ongoing crisis, it may prove to be a risk worth taking.

11 March 2009

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### Submission from “RAM” Seeger

#### THE ALI SERAJ OPTION

(9 March 2009)

(Prince Abdul Ali Seraj is standing as a candidate in the Presidential elections)

#### A NEW LEADER WITH A BETTER PLAN

The Karzai government and its support from the international community have not come up to expectations. Their attempts at reconstruction have failed on three main counts.

They are losing the war against the Taliban. Increasingly large areas of the country are outside the government’s control, while less than half the population now support the coalition forces.

They have not used aid in the best interests of the Afghan people. Aid money has been delayed, misappropriated or misspent on unsuitable projects.

They have failed to provide honest and effective governance. The government is widely perceived to be corrupt, incompetent and unable to deliver.

A new leader with a plan that addresses the needs and desires of the nation, one who can unite the tribes, and adhere to the rule of law, is urgently needed to deliver better results.

#### MORE OF THE SAME IS NOT THE ANSWER

More of the same is not the answer. It will not only fail to improve the situation, it may well make it actively worse.

Unless very carefully integrated into a revised strategy, more troops will only encourage more resistance. This will then further discourage or prevent the deployment of aid. With no visible aid, no advantage is seen in putting up with foreign troops, and the Taliban will be able to confirm the perception that the coalition forces are an anti-Islamic occupying force. Support for the coalition forces will decline even further while Taliban influence and control increases.

Leaders who are tainted by involvement or association with the present government will have great difficulty in winning the confidence of the people. Ordinary Afghans have been disappointed and disillusioned by the last seven years and want a leader now that they can identify with and trust, whose first loyalty is to the country and its peoples and who can offer new ideas and new hope.

#### THE FIRST CHALLENGE—AVOIDING JIHAD

Even with a new and better leader, there is a limited window of opportunity for resolving the Taliban conflict. At the current rate of decline, support for the coalition forces is likely to have evaporated by early 2010. We could then be faced with the prospects of a nationwide jihad. This could be similar to the wide spread popular rising faced by the Soviets and would be much more serious than the political movement, masquerading as a religious movement, that we are facing now. We should remember too, that despite killing or expelling millions and fighting the mujahedeen for ten years, the Soviets were not successful. Their army was forced to withdraw, and the Afghan ruler, they left in their place, was defeated and killed.

To stop history repeating itself, we need a new defence policy that will produce quick but long lasting results.

#### TOO MUCH TOO SOON

Notwithstanding the need for urgency if the Taliban are to be defeated, there is a great danger of trying to do too much too soon in the way of restructuring the government and the nation. Trying to force fit Afghanistan into a Western template is likely to arouse resistance and risk failure. Afghanistan’s history has plenty of examples where reforming zeal has foundered on the rocks of conservatism. The watch phrase should be evolution not revolution.

## A NEW APPROACH

In order to defeat the Taliban and improve governance, it will be necessary to develop a radically new and clearly visible approach to the country's problems. We should begin by understanding the flaws in the present approach, and acknowledge the fact, that now, just as much as in the past, the most effective way of achieving peaceful stability is not through fighting a war and supporting a weak government, but by talking and listening to the tribes and through the empowerment of the tribal leaders.

Supporting this view are the facts of Afghan history. The Afghan people have never rallied around a policy or politics. They have always rallied around a strong leader. Recent events have done nothing to change this situation, if anything they have reinforced it.

By turning to the tribes we will also be sending a clear signal of an intended change for the better—a proven approach built on a better understanding of the country and its history.

## WORKING WITH THE TRIBES—THE KEY TO THE SOLUTION

Winning tribal trust and gaining their support and cooperation, is the key to finding a solution for Afghanistan.

Presently the tribes are very suspicious of the government's actions and frustrated with its inaction. They consider the government as corrupt, inadequate and ambivalent to their needs. This leaves them open to exploitation by the Taliban, who are able to present themselves as a better alternative to the Karzai government.

Taking advantage of this gap between the government and the tribes, the Taliban have penetrated vast regions of the country. The government, however, can stop the encroachment of the Taliban only by working with the tribes, instead of against them.

Greater tribal cooperation and understanding will allow the government to appeal to the Taliban nationalists, (the Afghans), whose only real concern and cause is a free and peaceful Afghanistan without the presence of foreign troops. It will also allow the government to rid the nation of the foreign elements within the Taliban.

This golden principle of working with the tribes, whenever one can, applies to nearly all aspects of government—law and order, justice, the organisation and use of the police and military, defence strategy, reconstruction and aid. The failure to do so has been the main cause of our troubles and why the Taliban—who do understand this principle and have followed it with unscrupulous vigour—have been able to expand so effectively.

## THE NCDTA

The best resource to begin a creative engagement with the tribes is the National Coalition for Dialogue for the Tribes of Afghanistan (NCDTA). This is a grass roots trans-tribal movement (with Pushtuns and non-Pushtuns) that the tribes themselves, were motivated almost five years ago, to establish, organise, and as it expanded, support.

They did this because they were tired of the lies, corruption, lawlessness, poverty and hunger, which have been the result of nine different governments since the downfall of monarchy and the invasion of the communists.

The NCDTA aims to rekindle the pre-Soviet invasion cohesiveness and give the tribes a voice within a system that they see as contrary to their interests. It is a home grown non-political organisation unsullied by government ineptitude, and a legitimate focal point for tribal grievances.

At present it is involved in gathering in tribal members from all over Afghanistan, discussing and formulating plans for the future of Afghanistan through unification, and preparing for the forthcoming elections to bring about a much needed change. It has truly become a movement of the People, by the People and for the People. It has four pillars—Islam, Nation, Tribes and Freedom.

It has a supreme committee of 11 individuals, 17 founder members and thousands of supporters from within every tribe of Afghanistan.

After the elections, should the movement succeed in getting one of its own as the President, the offices of the NCDTA will continue to operate as an over-sight organization within each province. It could also secure improved tribal support for the government, and be the foundation for a new defence strategy.

To head the NCDTA, the tribes decided to look to a respected family with a two hundred year history, and one that did not shed their blood or steal their money. They chose the family of King Amanullah, and selected his nephew, Prince Abdul Ali Seraj, as their leader and candidate for the Presidency of Afghanistan.

#### PRINCE ALI SERAJ

Prince Ali Seraj as well as being the nephew of King Amanullah, is also the grandson of King Habibullah and a descendant of, amongst other kings of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman—the “Iron Amir” and Dost Mohammad.

His father, Sadar Abdul Gharful, was a younger brother of King Amanullah and 16 years old when he abdicated. His father then went on to work in the Ministry of Finance and the Diplomatic Service. Prince Ali’s mother was Sidika Tarzi a descendent of Ghulam Mohammad Tarzi and Rhamdel Khan of Kandahar who together with Dost Mohammad and Sultan Mohammad of Peshawar, formed the three main branches of the Mohammadzai line.

The Seraj part of Prince Ali’s name comes from the title given to King Habibullah—“Seraj ul Milat wa deen” (Light of the Nation and Religion).

Ali Seraj is 59 years old and was much involved in Afghan politics before having to flee the country with his wife and three children under a Khalq-Parcham death warrant following the coup d’etat and killing of president Daoud in 1978.

He has an American degree in economics, has lived 18 years in the USA, and 5 in Brazil, running a successful fibre optics business, before returning to Afghanistan in 2002. Since then he has been involved in mainly privately funded reconstruction projects such as schools and clinics. He also lectures regularly at the US Counter Insurgency School in Kabul.

As well as being the leader of the NCDTA and having been asked by them to run for President, he has also been asked to do this by a number of the more moderate Taliban leaders.

Because Prince Ali’s grandfather King Habibullah married 36 wives from different tribes, Ali Seraj has a blood link to most of the major tribes in Afghanistan. In addition because his paternal grandmother (one of the 36 wives) came from Badakhshan he has particularly strong ties to the northern reaches.

#### CHOICE OF PRESIDENT

The choice of the next president will be critical to the future of Afghanistan. The mistake we made in the past was to support unsuitable leaders. We cannot afford to make this mistake again.

Other declared candidates may appear to have what is needed, but if they lack a credible capacity to engage with the tribes—upon whom, better results are dependent—they will not be up to the job.

Because building trust takes time, it is preferable to find a leader who is already commanding tribal support. This would allow tribally supported defence planning to start at once and go into effect as soon as a new government had taken office. Such action would take the Taliban by surprise, be a highly visible signal that things were changing, and be just in time to avert disaster.

If a revised defence strategy is attempted before the support of the tribes has been obtained, it would almost certainly founder.

Finally, it should be noted that the Tribes support personalities not parties. So a President, that they know, trust and like, and one who has history behind him, is more certain to win their support and co-operation.

#### LAW AND ORDER—THE FOUNDATION FOR A NEW AFGHANISTAN

Without law and order there can be no effective National Government—only the expensive pretence of one. Those charged with delivering this have not managed to do so—incompetence and over haste to build new systems being the main reasons.

Afghanistan is now on the brink of anarchy and both the Afghans and their supporters deserve better than this.

#### TALIBAN LAW

One of the great successes of the Taliban has been that they have been able to portray themselves as representing Law and Order through fear and threat of death. They are able to present their politicised version of Sharia law as Islamic law. Under this religious cloak, they are able to impose themselves on the tribes and discredit the government.

Taliban Sharia is not Islamic Sharia. It is essential that the differences are made clear, and that the distorted Taliban version is labelled as such.

#### AFGHANISTAN LAW

Our current legal strategy is poorly rooted in the fabric of the non-centralised society in which it has to be implemented. It is perceived as being part of the state apparatus to control and suppress the people. As such, it is in urgent need of overhaul.

Sharia law could be combined with certain aspects of Western law and still retain its Islamic essence. This could achieve an acceptable balance between centralism and tribal autonomy, and be an effective counter to Taliban propaganda.

An example to consider: Within the tribal domain, Sharia Law could be the first port of call for all minor infractions and settled locally through the traditional systems. Where the offence is of such magnitude that the punishment for those found guilty may be severe, the case then passes into the hands of State Law, where all due process is applied. With acquittal, the case is closed. Where guilt is proven, appeals are allowed. Where appeal fails to reverse judgement, the case is returned to Sharia for further trial under that Law. On acquittal, the case is finally closed. Where guilt is supported in the second round, judgment is managed under Sharia rules. By such means, the tribes, under an Islamic banner, would feel an inclusive part of the justice system, not merely the target for its abuses.

Tribal laws too could be formulated into a recognised code of justice that embraced both tribal and national needs. The tribes themselves would be involved in the development of this, so would once again feel themselves to be part of a legal process, that also had consideration for their tribal system.

#### PUBLIC AWARENESS

Whatever laws and systems are finally agreed however, they must be enforceable, transparent and accountable.

There must also be a media campaign to promote public knowledge of the law and an individual's legal rights. This would be the first of its kind in Afghanistan and would do much to break down the perception that the purpose of laws was to suppress and control.

#### HUMAN RIGHTS

An important part of Afghanistan law should be the recognition and observation of international human rights. The government, security forces and population should be educated in the meaning and exercising of these, and taught the need to treat prisoners fairly and humanely. They should be made to appreciate that abuse is against the tenants of Islam.

#### RESTRUCTURED, RENAMED AND BETTER PAID POLICE

A better structured and more effective police force is essential as part of a new defence strategy and to maintain law and order. Currently the police are part of the problem instead of being part of the cure.

Local police have become symbolic of government failure. This is exploited by the Taliban, who are able to demonstrate their dominance with attacks on poorly resourced police posts.

As a first step in countering this, the pay for the police should be increased. At present it is well below the loyalty threshold and when withheld or further reduced by corrupt leadership, the lower echelon policeman—usually the public's first point of contact—is also forced to be corrupt in order to survive. Abuse of power then becomes endemic.

Rural police should be recruited on a provincial basis from the areas they are to police, but with the provincial chief coming from outside the region (for greater impartial authority). He should, however, have a local deputy (for greater local knowledge). City police should have a wider regional and ethnic mix and more women.

Working in tandem with the provincial police should be specially recruited and locally based tribal police, modelled on a system not dissimilar to that employed in the USA on Native American reservations. Their main task should be to support and enforce tribal law.

The force should also be renamed as the Afghan Nation Police instead of the Afghan National Police. The word Nation sits more comfortably with increased tribal autonomy and does not smack of centralism in the same way as National does.

For similar psychological reasons, the tribal police should be given new uniforms which should include the traditional shalwar of a particular colour.

Matching the new organisations and new uniforms should be revised police force protocols and procedures.

#### NEW PERCEPTION OF THE POLICE

Every effort should then be made to change the public perception of the police. Faced with a similar problem in 1952, the Malayan Police mounted Operation Service. As part of the overall Malayan Emergency counter-insurgency plan this did much to improve their image.

#### EFFICIENT, ACCOUNTABLE AND BETTER PAID JUDICIARY

Like the police, the justice system needs overhauling and cleaning up. This includes the Appeals process. The Judiciary must be better paid too, as they also, have had to resort to corruption in order to survive.

#### PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE—THE REAL FRONTLINE

Despite our superior strength, we are not winning against the Taliban. This is because force is not the prime tool—perception is. The main campaign of the Afghan conflict has to be fought in the psychological arena.

We should begin by not calling it a war. We should call it extreme civil disorder. Calling the Malayan emergency a civil emergency shaped how it was eventually managed.

Next we must counter Taliban Sharia law. This is effective as it works in Islamic disguise and is imposed on an ignorant population, led by poorly educated mullahs.

Even if it is perceived as faulted, it seems better than an anarchic free for all.

In consultation with the tribes and the use of the media, we should mount an information campaign combined with improved law and justice.

The campaign should show that Taliban rhetoric is politically motivated and is coming from a hard core Taliban cadre that is following a policy designed outside Afghanistan. We should make it clear that the expansion of the Taliban is driven by coercion not popularity, and that its harsh reality is well protected by a “bodyguard of lies”.

We can then expose and stress the Taliban tactic of at first collaborating with tribal authority but then supplanting it later on. This subsequent cracking down by the Taliban on traditional tribal authority, is a massive mistake that must be exploited. To have ignored it so far, is to have missed a great opportunity.

The Taliban must be challenged on Islam. They must be shown to have violated Islamic principles and Pushtunwali. (the Pushtun honour code). We should create debate and seed doubt.

Their pillar of presentation, that they are engaged in war against a non-Islamic occupying force, must be vigorously countered. We must stress that the only invaders are those agitators infiltrating from Pakistan, intent on destabilising and destroying Afghanistan. We should also mount a media campaign identifying suicide bombers (mostly Pakistanis and other non-Afghan nationals) and highlighting the hardship caused to the victims—mostly good Islamic members of the civilian population.

We should understand too that the Taliban system is built on individual personalities. If we can undermine these, trust will falter and their system begin to unravel.

We need good intelligence on the enemy, but we also need good information on the tribes. Tribal mapping will be important, as will knowledge of leading personalities and their historical relationships. It must be appreciated that the past is relevant and that it is kept alive by oral traditions.

Understanding this will enable us to use oral histories to reinforce traditional values of loyalty and support and right over wrong and to show up the Taliban as outsiders.

Following the Taliban example we should also make better use of TV, the radio and the internet.

The Allies must ensure that more resources are devoted to psychological operations (psyops) than hitherto, while for their part, the army must improve their collective English skills so as to work more efficiently and effectively with the coalition forces.

The importance of education must be fully realised. The first shots in the propaganda war are fired in the class room, so immediate steps should be taken to improve the pay and status of teachers.

#### RESTRUCTURED AND RENAMED ARMY

The army must reflect the society it belongs to and be self-sustaining. It should also capitalise on Afghanistan’s military traditions and special abilities. Afghanistan has never had large conventional armies. Its genius has been irregular warfare with small groups of fast moving, lightly equipped guerrilla forces. With these it has been highly successful against both the British and the Russians. This factor should influence organisation, equipment and tactics.

The army should be renamed as the Afghan Defence Force—a name which better reflects the role it should be used in. Like the Police too, it should be given new uniforms which would include the traditional shalwar. We should remember the precept, “the less we look like them, the less we are able to bond with them”.

The army should be organised into regional regiments. This will make it look less like a sponsored mercenary force, and capitalises on the fact, that its recruits are culturally programmed to prize their regions above all others, so by nature, are likely to perform better in defence of their home region than any other.

The army should be of a limited size—so that it can be more easily sustainable and be able to be better trained and better paid.

For similar reasons it should be a two tier force—one part to be used mainly for static defence and the other for more proactive duties.

Specialist units should include combat tracker teams, air mobile quick reaction forces and regional based/recruited Special Forces. The latter should be drawn from the quick reaction forces and be specially selected, trained and paid.

Emphasis in training should be on fast response and aggressive and relentless pursuit. To this end equipment should be lightweight and high quality, there should be a full range of air mobility means, there must be good and reliable ground/air communications and there must be tight supporting fire control.

Priority should be given to the training of combat medics. These will better ensure the care of battlefield casualties, but also be of great assistance in winning the hearts and minds of the local people.

There should be a well trained corps of engineers, who when not engaged in working directly for the army, can be employed on visible public works projects.

To prepare soldiers for civilian life attention should be paid to education and training in technical or engineering skills (carpentry, plumbing, electronics etc).

To further army recruiting, and as an important facet of the pysops campaign, youth cadets should be established and encouraged as part of a wider school based programme to teach self discipline, citizenship and employment skills. In certain emergencies eg disaster relief, they might be called upon by the government to give assistance.

#### MILITARY ETHOS

Because the majority of Taliban inflicted casualties are from IEDs (70% of US casualties have been sustained inside vehicles) there is a great danger of the army developing a besieged mentality. It is essential that this is broken and a hunter/killer ethos instilled instead. The building up of a rapid response capability, air mobility and tactical trust between regional units will help achieve this.

It must be remembered that not all Taliban are suicide bombers! Most want to survive. Taliban use of military force must be countered aggressively and relentlessly.

#### COUNTER INSURGENCY CAMPAIGNS WE CAN LEARN FROM

We should see what lessons we can learn from other counter-insurgency campaigns. For example:—

- The Malayan emergency—which as well as teaching the importance of the political dimension, taught the value of understanding the enemy and identifying their weak spots. It also taught the value of well trained, well led indigenous forces as most of the jungle patrolling was done by locally recruited para-military police with the mainly British military in support.
- The Taliban drive to power in 1994–96 when, much as they are doing now, they successfully used the tribal fabric to gain support.

#### LAYERS OF DEFENCE

The newly structured ADF and ANP should be used in escalating layers of defence. First point of contact should be the tribe, then the police and then the army.

Giving early warning of anti-government activity should be tribal “rangers” from the new tribal police force—but geared as listening posts more than combat units. They should be the forward scouts monitoring hostile activity.

Following up these should be the Afghan tribal police, drawn from the tribe, backed up as required by quick reaction forces from the provincial police.

Behind this should be a heliborne quick reaction force and conventional units from the regionally recruited ADF.

Finally there should be the coalition forces.

#### DRUGS

Despite spending vast amounts of money on eradicating the drug problem, production under the Karzai Administration, has soared. The export value of illegal opiates now equals half of the rest of Afghanistan’s economy, and one of the largest drug barons is perceived to be closely related to a high government official. Note that across the border in the Pakistan Swat valley, Taliban “police” impose painful punishments on drug smugglers and dealers.

Bad though the drug problem is, dealing with the Taliban is a higher priority. We should make progress against them first before splitting assets and tackling drugs. Trying to deal with both at once confuses objectives and strategy.

A defeated Taliban, empowered tribes, established law and order, loyal and effective security forces will all greatly reduce the problem and make it much easier to solve.

#### AID

The whole Aid effort currently lacks unified direction, clarity of purpose, adequate accountability or clear integration into defence needs as part of a unified defence strategy. These failings should be remedied.

Aid development should be regarded as a defence “weapon” and used accordingly. Wastage should be deemed unacceptable, as every dollar wasted is another dollar’s worth of Taliban propaganda.

A new government body should be established that would be administered in close collaboration with outside western consultants, drawn from the business world rather than aid oriented backgrounds. Their brief should be to regard Afghanistan more as a failing company than a failing country, and offer sustainable business oriented fix-it solutions rather than non-sustainable aid oriented patches.

Military personal, with the appropriate business understanding, should serve in this body to assist in improved coordination between civil and military needs in the joint campaign.

Projects that create employment should be given high priority, as these offer an immediate visible change in the lives of those who become employed. At present Aid gives priority to “capacity building” and the creation of Afghan company structures (which seldom live up to the promise of the proposals). As a result, development Aid fails to reach those who need it most.

More visible results could also be obtained by having agricultural and reconstruction projects undertaken by the Afghans themselves, and as wanted by them, with the resources, rather than funds, for the projects, being given directly to the tribes. This would not only allow them to see a real benefit from foreign assistance, but encourage them to believe that they are stakeholders in a resurgent economy.

Projects should relate to real needs and be of immediate benefit to the population eg agricultural products, roads, drainage and sewage systems etc. Ill considered ones like the \$12 million milk processing factory in Mazzar (without milk) and the \$40 million “Mazzar Foods” fiasco (on desert land without water, dubbed “Bizarre Foods” by the media) only rebound against the government and fuel Taliban expansion.

A better example of what is urgently required and would be much appreciated is the provision of electrical power to the wider population. This could use both conventional energy sources (hydro power, oil based fuel etc) and renewable sources (solar power etc). Using solar power for outlying locations would reduce the need for power lines—an attractive and traditional insurgent target, while improved power supplies in the cities would encourage industrial growth. This would be a high visibility project of immense local benefit.

Emphasis too, should be placed on projects that benefited the youth of the country.

#### A FINAL PLEA—STAY FOCUSED ON AFGHANISTAN

A final consideration and plea. While the main international focus may be beginning to shift to the greater problem of Pakistan and the other central Asian states, it would be a mistake to lose interest in Afghanistan. It would make things much easier if Afghanistan was solved first or, at the very least, put on the right path. A war on two fronts is never advisable. If a solution could be found for Afghanistan, there would likely be much within it that is useful and relevant to Pakistan.

#### CONCLUSION

To conclude, Afghanistan urgently needs a new approach to dealing with its problems. This should be developed through a better understanding of the country and its history, by talking and listening to the tribes, and the empowerment of tribal leaders. The best resource for a creative engagement with the tribes is the grass roots trans-tribal NCDTA and its leader and presidential candidate, Prince Ali Seraj.

We need to restructure the army and the police force on tribal and regional lines, and evolve a more effective and acceptable system of justice.

We must counter Taliban lies and propaganda and expose the harsh reality of what they are trying to do. We must appreciate that the main campaign of the conflict must be fought in the psychological arena and that perception is the prime tool, not force. Relying on more troops is not the answer and is more likely to be counterproductive, unless very carefully integrated into a revised strategy.

Of the above, the most important measure is the selection of a new leader with a new face and a new strategy, but who is also the right leader for the present situation. Such a leader has to have the trust of the tribes, so a man like Ali Seraj, in whom the tribes have already placed their trust, is an inspired and time saving choice for President.

The Seraj option provides what has been missing—a ready made catalyst for the right change. It will give Afghanistan a way forward that can begin immediately, and which embraces what has always been needed, a symbiotic relationship between the state and the tribes.

Afghanistan is in dire straits but with goodwill and sound planning it can still be saved. There is a narrow window of opportunity in which it can be turned around and this must be used before it is too late.

While international focus may be beginning to shift to other problem areas, it would be a short-sighted mistake to lose interest in Afghanistan.

14 April 2009

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**Submission from Majid Karzai, Second Secretary for Political Affairs, Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in London**

I am the Second Secretary for Political Affairs at the Embassy of Afghanistan in London and I have prepared the below statement to aide your inquiry “Global Security: Afghanistan”. Having worked in London for the past year and a half, I feel that I can contribute to your understanding of Afghan state-building and the counter-terrorism initiative as a whole. Although formally trained in Economics, my focus for the past four years has been international policy regarding Afghanistan and terrorism.

Content of Statement:

1. Governance and Foreign Intervention.
2. Afghan Security Apparatus and Foreign Assistance.
3. The Afghan State and its Relations with Foreign Allies.
4. Reconciliation and the Peace Process.

#### 1. GOVERNANCE AND FOREIGN INTERVENTION

The Afghan government is politically centralized with decentralized services. Meaning, Governors and district chiefs are appointed by the central government however, they in their locales have the authority to administer services without much bureaucracy. This system has many strengths if cooperated with, it provides strategic space for a national program, encourages merit based appointments, and has inclusive qualities.

In terms of strategic value, it allows the central government to combat terrorism, poverty, and corruption under strong leadership. And due to their quality of being nationally appointed, local officials set themselves apart from locality specific political problems which in turn gives them problem solving abilities, providing stability and cohesion.

Last year (2007), by Presidential decree the Independent Directorate for Local Governance-IDLG—was formed. The IDLG has a clear aim: to restore good civilian control of the provinces and to elevate the quality of administration across the country. After years of conflict some administrative roles had been adopted by security organs or military/police leadership and local governance was diluted by the realities of warfare. In order to re-establish quality civilian governance, the IDLG was established to closely follow the developments in the provinces and to aide their improvement, a province alone cannot achieve this.

The IDLG is a good point of contact for international partners wanting to assist the development of local governance.

The risk in the current situation is that the counter-terrorism foreign forces lend to a different problem which may plague the provincial administrations for some years to come. This problem is the disintegration of the civilian system and the coupling of foreign forces and local governments. Neglecting the civilian structure harms progress and endangers long-term stability. The Afghan State should be co-operated with as it is the only legitimate, and democratically chosen, protector of Afghanistan’s future.

It is noteworthy to mention that the system of governance was approved by ratification of the constitution in 2004 by the Grand Council of Afghanistan or in Pashto the “Loya Jirga” and any “de facto” policy subversive to the system is viewed as hostile and negative in regards to the state.

#### 2. AFGHAN SECURITY APPARATUS AND FOREIGN ASSISTANCE

The Afghan security apparatus is comprised by three components: Police, Army, and National Security. The Police is centrally organized by the Ministry of Interior and suffers from a lack of resources. The lack of resources is due to the meager financial situation of the state and the great security challenges that exist and this is exacerbated by the lack of support to the central authority which does not enjoy enough support from its International partners. The lack of support is both political and material and mirrors the problems faced by civilian sectors. Multiple power centres are nurtured in Afghanistan and the police is the primary party to be adversely affected.

The National Army in comparison to the other security organs is well supported however lacks the support needed for it to fully project across the country. The Army does not have deterrent capability to protect the territory of Afghanistan from outside groups and is in turn perpetually engaged in guerrilla warfare. The Army’s business should start on the borders and protect the territory. Progress would be increased military hardware to enable the Army to protect national sovereignty.

The National Security organ—National Directorate for Security—is structured to mitigate security threats that may be foreign or domestic and is organised into departments having presence across the country. Any co-operation in terms of funds, plans, and equipment should be done with consultation with officials at the center and not at the local level.

### 3. THE AFGHAN STATE AND ITS RELATIONS WITH FOREIGN ALLIES

The Afghan State rooted in history but, revived at the Bonn Conference of 2001 is a strong natural ally for Britain and the region. Relations with partner nations have been strong from the outset and the realization of stability in Afghanistan is an important endeavour in terms of morality and security. Having natural legitimacy engrained in its history, the Afghan state is the only entity in the region which can confront terrorist organizations and succeed. The key is that partner nations invest in their relationship with Afghanistan.

The initiatives of late symbolized in the Hague Conference held early this April which recognize the regional and even global aspects of the conflict in Afghanistan are very productive in regards to Afghanistan's external relations and this sort of engagement will prove to be very beneficial across the board. The Government of Afghanistan has long been advocating the address of regional dimensions in regards to challenges confronted in Afghanistan.

### 4. RECONCILIATION AND THE PEACE PROCESS

The Peace process in Afghanistan is the culmination of our national aspiration towards stability and prosperity. It is a strategic interest for our people and is a central pillar for the way forward. The efforts for reconciliation are led by our President and are given the highest attention. We appreciate the support given by the Muslim world in this initiative. It is a very important process and patience is needed. What is needed from the International Community is space for negotiation: allowing the Afghan government to sort the problems.

*15 April 2009*

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#### **Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from Rt Hon Lord Malloch-Brown, Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

GLOBAL SECURITY: AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN, FAC EVIDENCE SESSION, 14 MAY 2009

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to give evidence to the FAC on the Government's policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I felt it was a valuable session which covered a lot of ground. There were several points I undertook to follow up for you.

Sir John Stanley mentioned that you had met the British All Party Parliamentary Group during your trip to Afghanistan, and he asked that the British Embassy in Kabul make contact with them. I am pleased to let you know that our Ambassador in Kabul has already invited the Group to the Embassy to meet with him and other officials soon.

You asked for clarification about the "Shia family law". We too were very concerned by reports that a draft bill on the Personal Status of Followers of Shia Jurisprudence (the "Shia Family Law") would enter into force in Afghanistan. While we have full respect for the independence of the Afghan Government and Afghan democratic institutions, we were gravely concerned that some provisions of the draft bill as it was set out ran counter to the Afghan Constitution and Afghanistan's international human rights obligations. The Prime Minister made our concerns clear to the Afghan Government, both publicly, and privately with President Karzai. We therefore welcomed President Karzai's announcement on 27 April that the law would be changed to bring it in line with the Constitution, which guarantees equal rights for women, and the international treaties to which Afghanistan is a party.

The law is now under review by a committee established by the Afghan Ministry of Justice. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has been coordinating the response to the law and held a meeting in May with Afghan MPs, local and international non-governmental organisations, UN agencies and Embassies in which we participated. At the meeting MPs and civil society organisations updated the international community on their efforts to raise this issue with the Government, and their lobbying efforts to persuade President Karzai to ensure that the offending articles are removed. Once the review is completed, the law should go back to Parliament. The UK continues to monitor the situation very closely to ensure that the Afghan Government lives up to its commitment to review the legislation. We will intervene with the Afghan Government again should we consider it necessary.

You may also be interested to know that the UK and other international partners are assisting the Afghan Government in the drafting of a new law on the Elimination of Violence Against Women. This is a key piece of legislation which will criminalise acts of violence against women. We hope that the adoption of this law will further serve to strengthen the rights of women in Afghanistan.

Eric Illsley cited an honour killing which took place in the Kabul area. He said a father had killed his daughter because of her contact with a foreign soldier and that no action had been taken against the father. Despite our best efforts we have not been able to find out any further information about this particular incident, but if Mr Illsley could provide additional details, including the source of his information, we will of course follow up on it.

I trust that this further information will be useful for your inquiry, and look forward to the release of your report in July.

1 June 2009

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**Further memorandum from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

RESPONSE TO WRITTEN QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO ISLAMABAD VISA SECTION, UK BORDER AGENCY

1. *Details of which business areas of the visa process in Pakistan are sub-contracted and to whom*

Gerry's Fed Ex operates and manages a fully outsourced service within Pakistan on behalf of VFS Global, UK Border Agency's Commercial Partner in the Gulf and Pakistan region. All visa decision-making processes are retained within the relevant UKBA Posts, Islamabad, UK Hub and Abu Dhabi.

The services outsourced to Gerry's Fed Ex include application receipt and validation, application streaming, fee handling, biometrics recording, data entry, application delivery, status tracking, interview booking and return of documents.

2. *Details of the procedures which exist to ensure quality control over any visa-related business which is sub-contracted*

The following procedures exist to assure quality of outsourced services:

(i) *UKBA Visa Application Centre (VAC) Inspection Regime*

UKBA has implemented a new VAC inspection regime which is enacted by regional management and/or business assurance specialists. The Pakistan VACs are to be inspected annually. The key objective of the inspection is to assure the integrity of the outsourced operation. Please see Annex A (attached) for details of the inspection areas of coverage.

(ii) *Contractual Measures*

The outsourcing contract obliges suppliers to carry out the following:

- Suppliers are required to conform to ISO 27001 and carry out an external ISO 27001 audit of all VACs; this has been carried out and recommendations implemented. The recommendations from the review were reviewed and agreed by UKBA CLAS consultants.
- All security incidents arising in the VACs are recorded and reviewed as part of the weekly Post-VAC management meeting to ensure that appropriate responses have occurred.
- An escalation process for security incidents exists between regions and central security teams.

In addition to this UKBA is currently reviewing the contract to include new requirements to strengthen the integrity of the service, such as:

- mandating the search of staff on exit from VAC in medium/high risk areas;
- regular changing of combinations on doors;
- mandating the use of tamper proof envelopes for document return from Post;
- mandating staff rotation in key areas; and
- greater CCTV monitoring of staff within areas of the VAC in which documents are returned to the applicant.

3. *Information detailing whether any legal action has been taken against UK Government staff or UK contractors/partners involved in visa processing in Pakistan. Where prosecutions have taken place, it would be helpful to know the nature of the charges and outcomes of the cases.*

RALON have been involved in one case of a prosecution against a BHC member of staff.

Muhammad Mubeen Butt (Visa Assistant) was arrested on 20 February 2008 for aiding visa applicants and visa agents to obtain visas. It was alleged that an agent, Khurram Manzoor, had paid Mubeen PKR 2,600,000 (approximating at the time to £21,660) to "arrange" visas for eight visa applicants. Initially he was held on remand but bailed in July 2008 after providing a surety bond. Court hearings were held between March and May 2008 during which time he was ordered to pay money back to his "victims". He absconded from bail in July 2008 before sentencing could take place. Mubeen was dismissed from the BHC.

12 June 2009

Annex A

## AREAS OF COVERAGE OF THE INSPECTION

The inspection covers:

- elements of physical security within and surrounding the VAC including protection of biometric machinery;
- ensuring that the customer service provided by each VAC is of a timely and otherwise acceptable standard;
- CCTV and monitoring of CCTV within the VAC;
- integrity of doors and lockable units within the VACs;
- integrity of staff including restricted use of mobile phones within the VAC;
- named personnel holding keys to the VAC;
- missing documents within or in transit to or from a VAC;
- application transit to and from and stored within a VAC;
- how VAC staff make it clear to the public the limits of the service offered around visa receipt ie, receipt of application only and no involvement in the award thereof; and
- checks relating to registration of complaints and security incidents, unexpected or unexplained security kit failures, VAC guarding, staff vetting and disposal of all digital media.

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**Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the High Commissioner for Pakistan**

You would be aware that the tragic event in Mumbai has once again served to vitiate the regional environment in South Asia. The democratic government of Pakistan is determined to work towards peaceful relations with all its neighbours in the region including India. In this spirit, Pakistan was one of the first countries to condemn in the strongest possible terms the heinous crime in Mumbai. President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani have extended their condolences to the Indian leadership at the tragic loss of innocent lives.

Pakistan believes that terrorism is a problem afflicting the whole of South Asia. In our view to deal with this problem, both sides need to adopt a pragmatic and responsible approach that would prevent the recurrence of any such incident in India, Pakistan or elsewhere. Blame game and political point scoring is counter productive and unacceptable.

I have enclosed with this letter a brief summary of the steps taken by Pakistan in the wake of the Mumbai attack. I request you to bring these points to the attention of all the members of the Select Committee on Foreign Affairs.

*Wajid Shamsul Hasan*

26 January 2009

Aide Memoire

- The Government of Pakistan has condemned the Mumbai terrorist attacks in the strongest possible terms.
- Pakistan has extended an offer of cooperation to India and has made a number of proposals including joint investigations, establishment of a joint commission between the two countries as well as offered to send a high-level delegation to India.
- Pakistan has also initiated its own investigations pertaining to Mumbai attacks. These investigations are aimed at uncovering full facts pertaining to the Mumbai incident.
- Pakistan believes that terrorism is a problem afflicting the whole of South Asia. Pragmatic and responsible approach, including cooperation between the relevant investigation departments, is the imperative need of the hour to deal with the Mumbai terrorist attacks and to prevent the recurrence of any such incident in India, Pakistan or elsewhere.
- Pakistan regrets the propaganda campaign unleashed by India to malign Pakistan. Blame game and political point scoring is counter productive and unacceptable.
- In contrast, Pakistan has maintained a constructive and measured approach in dealing with India in the wake of the Mumbai attacks.

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- New Delhi should seriously consider Pakistan's proposal for joint investigations. So far, India has not accepted any of the proposals made by Pakistan including sending of a high-level delegation.
  - Pakistan upholds the internationally recognized principle of due process and has requested the Indian government to provide it with evidence which is legally tenable in a court of law.
  - India has provided an "information dossier" which experts in the Ministry of Interior in Pakistan are presently examining.
  - The Government of Pakistan has taken a number of steps to fulfil its international obligations flowing from the enlistment of Jamat-ul-Dawa by the UN Sanctions committee under UNSC 1267 on 10 December 2008.
  - Most recently, on 16 January 2009, Pakistan launched a formal inquiry into the Mumbai incident. The department leading this inquiry, the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has constituted a special investigation group comprising competent counterterrorism and investigation experts.

Pakistan has also taken other measures such as:

- Place 124 persons under close supervision as provided in schedule IV of anti terrorist Act of 1997.
  - Detain 71 persons for interrogation.
  - Place 52 activists of Jamat-ul-dawa (JuD) on exit control list.
  - Cancel arms licenses of 7 activists of JuD.
  - Instruct the State Bank of Pakistan to advise all banks to freeze accounts of JuD.
  - Subsequently, 13 bank accounts of JuD have been frozen. Notification has also been issued to ban JuD publications and 6 JuD websites.
  - These steps taken by Pakistan reflect our resolve in handling this matter with due seriousness and a high sense of responsibility.
  - The Indian contention that Pakistan is reluctant to take action or has not been cooperative is therefore not only inaccurate but also self-serving.
  - Pakistan expects its friends in the international community and particularly in the United Kingdom to use its influence on the Indian Government to consider with due seriousness Pakistan's offer of cooperation and urge the Indian leadership to resume the stalled Pakistan-India peace process as early as possible.
-