

**Lecture 10:****The Reconstruction of Afghanistan:  
From War to a Dependent Democracy?**

Topics: -

- 1. Lessons Unlearned from Afghanistan's Civil and Proxy Wars (1978-2001)*
- 2. The Failures of the Taliban Regime*
- 3. A New Round of Direct International Intervention: Military and Civil Power*
- 4. Reconstruction Prospects 2002-2007*
- 5. Bibliography and Resources*

**1. Lessons Unlearned from Afghanistan Civil and Proxy Wars (1978-2001)**

To understand what is happening today within Central Asia, it is necessary to have an understanding of the troubled history of Afghanistan, and to assess the **regional influence of instability in Afghanistan** (for more historical detail, see Kaker 1995; Banuazizi & Weiner 1986; Ghaus 1988; Weinbaum 1994). The '**geostrategic location**' between the West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia has forced Afghanistan to **be involved in key international and regional contests of power**. Afghanistan can be either viewed historically as part of South Asia, or part of an emerging 'Greater Central Asia', but really is a kind of linking-hinge between the two areas (Nojumi 2002, p1). The civil wars in Afghanistan (1978-2001) represent the **fragmentation of a state system into zones of control by different warring factions** only partly based on ethnic and religious divisions (see Roy 1991, p7; Riphenburg 2005). Recent **international intervention, efforts at reconstruction and ongoing offensives by the Taliban** (2001-2007) mean that many of the negative legacies of proxy wars, civil wars, and authoritarian regimes have yet to be solved (see below). October 2004 presidential elections were held successfully, and continued interest by the international community indicate moderate progress in this war-torn state. In spite of large commitments of funds, much of this funding has yet to be deployed 'on the ground', while NATO, American, European and other troops have need further reinforcement from late 2006. At the same time, parliamentary had to be delayed until September 2005, indicating ongoing security concerns that have rocked parts of the country through 2005-2007 (Reuters 2005a; see below).

Afghanistan was also the focus of **regional power plays** by Pakistan, which sought to strengthen her hand against India by creating a zone of Sunni Islamic influence and 'strategic depth' through the region (Meyer 2003, p133; Roy 1991, p4), Saudi Arabia and to a lesser extent Iran, both under the former Shah and more recently in an effort to lessen U.S. influence on the region. More significantly, the former superpower rivalry of the USSR and the US had helped prolong and intensify the conflict, without due regard for the impact on the region once both sides withdrew their direct support. The sustained turmoil in Afghanistan can be viewed as the **failure to build a modern**

**nation-state while suffering a dangerous buffer role.** Afghanistan was a buffer between Russian and British interests in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a trend enshrined in the spheres of interest set up in the 1905 Anglo-Russian treaty, affecting the fate of Afghanistan, Tibet and Iran, and by the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919, which ended with recognition of the country's sovereignty but left it between spheres of interest (Rubin 2006, p177; Rubin 2007, p63). For Afghan leaders such as Amir Abdur Rahman Afghanistan was like a goat staked out between two hungry lions, and he had to accept the Durand Line as the border of the country with what would become modern Pakistan and the thin Wakhand corridor as a buffer that would lead on to give Afghanistan a border with China (Meyer 2003, pp122-123). This also left many ethnic Pushtun tribal areas in Pakistan's north-west provinces. This buffer role took on a new meaning in the Cold War, and was even sustained by a host of new power interests through the 1990s (see below). **The effort to rebuild a modernising and legitimate pattern of governance has been revived with international support through 2002-2007, but driven in large measure by external security needs.** The notion of a modern state system for Afghanistan was first envisaged by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Amir Abdur Rahman (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont 2000, p419), and for a time Afghanistan began to modernise, joining the League of Nations, and seeking to modernise while gaining recognition from both the Soviets and the US, but this foundered through the World War II and post-war period, when the country became entangled 'militarily and financially' with the Soviets, while the US and then China came to support Pakistan (Meyer 2003, pp124-125). However, this nation-building project foundered in the late 20th century under the impact of decades of civil war, and then the theocratic view of the state held by the Taliban. It is only from 2002 that Afghanistan has a **chance to build a more balanced state recognised within the international community.**

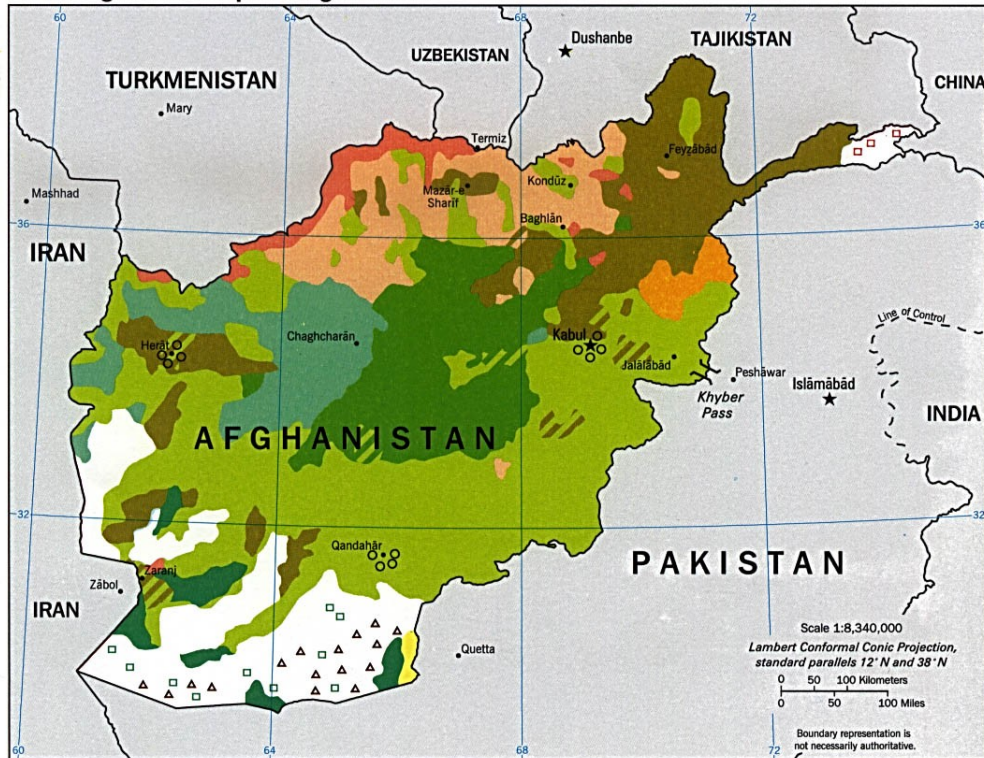
The traditional Afghan state had been dominated by the Durrani clan-network of the **Pushtun** (Afghan, also transliterated as Pushton) ethnic group, at first based around a traditional kingship, and then modified by constitutional restraints, especially from 1964 onwards (Nojumi 2002, p31). However, **in 1973 Mohammed Daud seized power in an almost bloodless coup, deposed King Zahir (his cousin),** and declared a republic, but he soon alienated 'left-wing factions' who mobilised against him (Meyer 2003, p125; *BBC* 2003). Daud for a time encouraged more aid and trade from the Soviet Union, but **through 1976-1977 tried to chart a more independent foreign policy path,** and for a time **gradually improving relations with West and Pakistan** (Nojumi 2002, p39; Meyer 2003, p126).



*Afghanistan Map (Courtesy PCL Map Library)*

Daud in turn was **overthrown and killed by the Communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (the PDPA)**, on 27 April 1978, when an armoured brigade captured the palace in Kabul. Thereafter there was strong infighting between two political factions within the PDPA, the *Khalq* (based mainly on Pushtun clan-network and rural groups) and *Parcham* (more based on urban groups and Tajiks), with the leadership of Noor Mohammed Taraki soon being replaced by that of Hafizullah Amin, a man viewed with suspicion by the Russians (Nojumi 2002, p25, p31, p65). In fact, the Soviet were probably surprised by these events, and were fed different interpretations by the KGB (state security) and GRU (military intelligence), leading to confused reactions in Moscow (Meyer 2003, p127).

### Ethnolinguistic Groups in Afghanistan



Iranian	Turkic	Other
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #006400; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Baloch	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FF0000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Kirghiz	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Brahui
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Aimak	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFA500; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Turkmen	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Nuristani
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Hazara	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFDAB9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Uzbek	<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Sparsely populated or uninhabited
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #9ACD32; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Pashtun <i>Durrani, Ghilzai</i>		
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Qizilbash		
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; background-color: #8B4513; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Tajik		

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### *Afghanistan's Ethnic Groups: One Complicating Factor in National Life* (courtesy PCL Map Library)

The Soviet-backed communist government in turn was almost overthrown by **massive rural insurgencies throughout 1979**, beginning in March in Herat, based on resentment against the policies of the PDPA, failures in land reform, and repressive security measures, including execution and torture of opponents (Nojumi 2002, p52, p56). It was at this stage that, influenced by the **Brezhnev doctrine** and KGB interpretations of Islamic threat (Meyer 203, p130) of intervening to support 'friendly socialist states', **the Soviets invaded** with a force large enough, they thought, **to stabilise what would become a new client government, under the pretext of an invitation from the Afghanistan government** (in fact the Soviet supported leader, Babrak Kamal, would need three days to get to Kabul from a post in Prague (Meyer 2003, p131).

**The invasion occurred on 27 December 1979 and shocked Western opinion.** This force came to total some 110,000 men (mainly the Soviet fortieth army), though able to hold sectors of control, was not enough to search out and destroy the Mujahedin



(generally referring to 'strugglers', more loosely as Islamic warrior) opposition forces, and in any case was not well trained in counter-insurgency operations. It also had to fight against forces using guerilla tactics, often in mountainous terrain, and soon found that the morale of its own troops was very low (see Nawroz & Grau 1996). It was strong enough, however, to **support the continued existence of the PDPA government** under the leadership of Babrak Karmal, followed by a new Soviet backed leadership Najibullah from 1986. During the late 1980s **Najibullah tried to build up a multi-ethnic state based on national republican lines**, and from 1991 even sought through a national amnesty to draw Mujahedin opposition forces into a reconciliation process (Nojumi 2002, pp75-76). He failed to achieve this. The result was a long, destructive **civil war**, with the pro-Islamic and anti-Soviet forces gradually increasing their successes, largely due to massive supplies of weapons from Pakistan and the US, which for a time touted Islamist opposition forces as 'freedom fighters' (Meyer 2003, p115). The other aim, in the words of presidential adviser Brzezinski, was to **give the Soviets their 'own Vietnam'** (Meyer 2003, p132). Much of this material was routed via the ISI, Inter-Services Intelligence, of Pakistan with the support of CIA, who bought many weapons for the insurgents from China and outdated Soviet material from Egypt (for reasons of plausible deniability, see Lohbeck 1993; Roy 1991). These weapon system came to include shoulder-fired Stinger Missiles, with at least 250 launchers and some 1,000 missiles being routed into the conflict (Meyer 2003; the effort to buy these back later still left around 20-40% at large, Meyer 2003, p136). Meanwhile, the civil war, when not paid for by external aid (including the US, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan), was largely funded through **opium crops**, with Afghanistan coming to supply 75%-80% of the global market (Meyer 2003, p115, p134).

**The war in Afghanistan became very significant to the Soviets and Russia for the following reasons: -**

- \* The USSR did have some **economic interests** in Afghanistan, particularly importing gas, as well as being the main provider of machinery and military equipment. Other potential areas of development included copper and uranium. Indeed, it is possible that the structure of trade between the Soviet and Afghanistan was such that Soviet military efforts were at first effectively funded by cheap resource access, e.g. paying much less than normal world rates for gas (a controversial view, but argued for by Noorzay 1987). This factor, however, should not be overestimated.
- \* It represented a **major test for Soviet armed forces**, which had not been engaged in such a hot, protracted war since WWII.
- \* The Soviets became alarmed that **Afghanistan might tilt toward the West**, based on its reception of western-oriented aid, as well as somewhat improved relations with Pakistan and Iran (Meyer 2003, p119).
- \* Control, direct or indirect, of Afghanistan gave them a major **geo-strategic gain**, strengthening the Soviet role in relation to a friendly India, and gaining **leverage in relation Pakistan, Iran and China** (which opposed the Soviet intervention).
- \* Afghanistan contains **sizeable ethnic groups which are dominant in nearby Soviet republics** (Tajiks, Turkmen, and Uzbeks). Two of these groups, Tajiks and Uzbeks, formed major components of factions within the conflict. There was the prospect, then, that **instability in Afghanistan might influence local areas of the USSR**, which did later eventuate in relations to cross-border activities

during the civil war in Tajikistan (see lecture 4). In the late 1990s, nearby CIS states remained concerned about the influence of the Afghan conflict on nearby Tajikistan, and drug flows routes through other nearby countries including Kyrgyzstan. Through 2004-2007 major concerns remain about how well the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border will be controlled, especially as Tajik guards take over control of a section of the border from Russian border guards (*Strategic Comments* 2004, p2).

\* The war in Afghanistan took on a **distinct aspect of an Islamic Jihad**, in part supported by groups in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In the 1980s, Russia became worried that Islamic sentiments could destabilise its policies in much of Central Asia, and that the USA and its CIA might target the region as **the 'soft underbelly' of the USSR** (Meyer 2003, p118). Some mobilisation of international resistance did come from Saudi Arabia and then Pakistan, and would lay the seeds that would help the later formation of the Taliban (see below).

\* As deaths were for the first time publicly reported (14,000 Soviets, Roy 1991, p47) and casualties returned from the war, **civil groups within the Soviet Union made their opposition publicly known**. Coming at the same time as Gorbachev's reforms encouraging political openness, Soviet involvement in Afghanistan emerged as ineffective, expensive and internationally damaging.

\* The Soviet intervention **left the future Russian state with a desire to contain the threat of Afghanistan without too much direct involvement**, and through the 1990s, a possible preference for a weak rather than a strong Afghanistan (this would have to be turned around after 2001).

\* **Pakistan came to view influence in Afghanistan as its key to strategic balancing** against India and Russia: -

. . . Islamabad was aligning itself with the United States in order to balance India - which led Afghanistan, in turn, to rely on aid from Moscow to train and supply its army. Pakistan as a result, came to regard Afghanistan as part of a New Delhi-Kabul-Moscow axis that fundamentally challenged its security. With U.S. assistance, Pakistan developed a capacity for covert asymmetric jihadi warfare, which it eventually used in both Afghanistan and Kashmir (Rubin 2007, p64)

It was only after years of bloody and inconclusive conflict and in the context of Gorbachev's reforms aimed at reducing tension with the West that **Soviet forces withdrew from Afghanistan during 1988-1989**. The **final defeat of the previously Soviet-backed forces occurred in April 1992**, and was due to several Mujahedin factions, especially to the action of the Tajik commander Ahmed **Massoud** who supported the **Tajik-oriented Rabbani government** (Saikal 1994, p14. Later on Massoud, as leader of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, was assassinated in September 2001. Rabbani had originally led the JIA or Islamic Party, *Jama'iat-e-Islami*). **Other factions** included the *Hezb-e Islami* (Islamic Party or HIH) of 'renegade' Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (backed by Pakistan-channelled resources, see Roy 1991, p40; Nojumi 2002, p101), a group of **Taliban** fighters (sometimes also transliterated as 'Taleban'), originally religious students supported by Pakistan and trained in the conservative Deoband school of Islamic thought (who became the prominent anti-government forces from 1994 through 1996), and, controlling much of the northwest '**an Uzbek communist warlord**', **Abdul Rashid Dostam**, who sided with Massoud in 1992, but in 1993 moved to side with Hekmatyar (Saikal 1994, p14; for the best account of groups until 1994, see Khalilzad

1995). Other prominent leaders were **Ismail Khan** who controlled a zone in the southwest and through 2004 has been involved in rebuilding the economy of Heart but was removed as governor in September 2004 due to tensions with the central government (Nojumi 2002, p17; Sikorski 2004; *Strategic Comments* 2004, p1), and the Hazara warlord Karim Khalili, both of whom received some limited support from Iran (*Strategic Comments* 2001). However, since that time Ismail Khan has now become the Minister for Energy and Water, indicating the need of the Karzai government to retain such links. (Through early 2006 Ismail Khan has been involved in deals whereby hydro-electric power from Tajikistan is sent into Afghanistan and Iran, *Pavyand's Iran News* 2006). Aside from these 'internal' front commanders, a number of different groups in Iran and Pakistan tried to influence events (external fronts), as well as the **Rome-based group that surrounded the former king, Mohammed Zahir** (Nojumi 2002, p20). Through this period, much of Afghan society was mobilised either into left-wing factions, or into splintered Islamic groups (see Emadi 2001), leading to a relatively weak nationalist centre that did not strongly support the Rabbani government.

It was this **factional fight over power** that would make the formation of a stable government almost impossible even after the victory of the Mujahedin against the Najibullah regime in 1992. On April 26, 1992, Massoud's forces, in conjunction with those of Dostam, took control of Kabul with very little opposition (Nojumi 2002, p96). However, **an accord for power sharing among the different factions could not be sustained**, in spite of efforts to share leadership positions among Rabbani (as President) and Hekmatyar (as Prime Minister). By June 1992, fierce fighting had broken out between different armed groups, leading to a shelling of the city and **intense urban warfare in Kabul** - 3,000 were killed, 19,000 wounded, and several hundred thousand fled the city during this stage of conflict (Nojumi 2002, p114).

The former **Rabbani government**, though opposed by other factions and not widely recognised, and not in control of all territory, was relatively moderate in Afghan terms, and may have had a broader base of support than the West thought (Saikal 1994, pp14-15). It received arms and support from Iran, Russia, India and Tajikistan, and until late 1996 held the capital Kabul, and through its ally Massoud, the main airport of Bagram (Rashid 1996, p20). At the same time, it was possible that Russia had been giving some backing both to the Massoud and to the Dostam factions, perhaps seeking to gain influence with both, or in order to keep the war going in order to prevent a potentially united Afghanistan threatening its policy in the 'near abroad' (Khalilzad, 1994, p151).

Unfortunately, **competition over the control of Kabul lead to another major conflict through the mid-1990s**, with proxy interests escalating the war. **Pakistan, in particular, has been interested in the option of a strong role in Central Asia**, with the need to have strong influence on any government in Kabul in order to do this. An early UN peace initiative to bring together the contenting parties in Afghanistan to form an interim coalition government (*UN Chronicle* 1995a) was aborted in February 1995 as the balance of power once again was shifted by groups seeking to control the capital Kabul (*Strategic Comments* 1995). Severe fighting broke out around Kabul again in mid 1995, and much of the city was destroyed, with up to half its population displaced (*UN Chronicle* 1995b). Likewise, during the mid-1990s regional neighbours including Russia, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia had taken a somewhat

stronger stand in supporting particular factions within the country (Rashid 1996; Saikal 1994, p13).

From late 1996 **Taliban** forces (see below), supported unofficially by Pakistan, engaged in a major northern offensive which gave them control of Kabul. Bearing in mind the radically orthodox form of Islam supported by the Taliban, which favours compulsory use of the veil or even the more enclosing *chadari* for women and their seclusion, including no involvement in work or public education (see Goodson 2001), this shocked world opinion, and leading to international internet campaigns revealing the plight of women under the Taliban, as well as local women engaging in protest against such strictures (see Kensinger 2003; Sunder 2003; Physicians for Human Rights 1999). Since there were 30,000 to 50,000 widows in Afghanistan by this time, forbidding them to work was an extremely serious problem (Pannier 1996). Likewise, the Taliban had an unusual interpretation of Islamic law, apparently even forbidding chess as a form of gambling (Pannier 1996), as well as opposing all non-religious audio and video materials. Even Iranian religious leaders criticised this form of Islam as 'fossilised'. Strategically, the Central Asian states and Russia have also made it clear that a pro-Pakistan, orthodox Taliban would pose a **regional security threat** if it pushed north to their borders. Through 2000, the Taliban gained control of most of the country, but gained very limited international recognition (mainly from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan). It remained opposed by a **Northern Alliance of Afghan factions** that remained an intact but relatively weak fighting force until late 2001, in particular controlling valleys north of Mazar-e-Sharif that gave access to international supply routes.

*Timeline of Modern Afghan History 1919-1997 (from BBC 2003a)*

1919 - Afghanistan regains independence after third war against British forces trying to bring country under their sphere of influence.

1926 - Amanullah proclaims himself king and attempts to introduce social reforms leading to opposition from conservative forces.

1929 - Amanullah flees after civil unrest over his reforms.

1933 - Zahir Shah becomes king and Afghanistan remains a monarchy for next four decades.

1953 - General Mohammed Daud becomes prime minister. Turns to Soviet Union for economic and military assistance. Introduces a number of social reforms, such as abolition of purdah (practice of secluding women)

1963 - Mohammed Daud forced to resign as prime minister.

1964 - Constitutional monarchy introduced - but leads to political polarisation and power struggles.

1973 - Mohammed Daud seizes power in a coup and declares a republic. Tries to play off USSR against Western powers. His style alienates left-wing factions who join forces against him.

1978 - General Daud is overthrown and killed in a coup by leftist People's Democratic Party. But party's Khalq and Parcham factions fall out, leading to purging or exile of most Parcham leaders. At the same time, conservative Islamic and ethnic leaders who objected to social changes begin armed revolt in countryside.

1979 - Power struggle between leftist leaders Hafizullah Amin and Nur Mohammed Taraki in Kabul won by Amin. Revolts in countryside continue and Afghan army faces collapse. Soviet Union finally sends in troops to help remove Amin, who is executed.



1980 - Babrak Karmal, leader of the People's Democratic Party Parcham faction, is installed as ruler, backed by Soviet troops. But anti-regime resistance intensifies with various mujahedin groups fighting Soviet forces. US, Pakistan, China, Iran and Saudi Arabia supply money and arms.

1985 - Mujahedin come together in Pakistan to form alliance against Soviet forces. Half of Afghan population now estimated to be displaced by war, with many fleeing to neighbouring Iran or Pakistan. New Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev says he will withdraw troops from Afghanistan.

1986 - US begins supplying mujahedin with Stinger missiles, enabling them to shoot down Soviet helicopter gunships. Babrak Karmal replaced by Najibullah as head of Soviet-backed regime.

1988 - Afghanistan, USSR, the US and Pakistan sign peace accords and Soviet Union begins pulling out troops.

1989 - Last Soviet troops leave, but civil war continues as mujahedin push to overthrow Najibullah.

1991 - US and USSR agree to end military aid to both sides.

1992 - Resistance closes in on Kabul and Najibullah falls from power. Rival militias vie for influence.

1993 - Mujahedin factions agree on formation of a government with ethnic Tajik, Burhanuddin Rabbani, proclaimed president.

1994 - Factional contests continue and the Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerge as major challenge to the Rabbani government.

1996 - Taliban seize control of Kabul and introduce hardline version of Islam, banning women from work, and introducing Islamic punishments, which include stoning to death and amputations. Rabbani flees to join anti-Taliban northern alliance.

1997 - Taliban recognised as legitimate rulers by Pakistan & Saudi Arabia. Most other countries continue to regard Rabbani as head of state. Taliban then control about two-thirds of country.

Overall, the problem is part of a **Cold War legacy** created by the fact that the West in the 1980s only had one aim - to defeat Soviet influence, with no real concern for the lasting peace and stability of the region (Saikal 1994, p13). It allowed a selective arming of factions backed by external powers. In summary, Iran, Russia, India and Tajikistan were supporting the former Rabbani government, while Pakistan, Uzbekistan and some Arab Gulf states initially aided the Pashtun-based Taliban movement (Rashid 1996, p20). The U.S. channelled military aid via Pakistan, spending **up to three billion dollars in total** (Meyer 2003). The result was a **destructive civil war** whose effects continue today (see below).

Thereafter, the US, Europe and major East Asian nations virtually ignored the **humanitarian plight of Afghanistan** through the 1990s, giving neither substantial aid, and not using their 'good offices' to reduce regional tensions (Khalilzad 1995, 152). **Pakistan had suggested that the success of the Taliban would open a route for Central Asian trade** through Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian Ocean. The U.S. government, likewise, had been critical of human rights in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but did not seek serious intervention until the issue of Osama bin Laden and his terrorist training camps within Afghanistan began to be a major threat (see below). Taliban victories from 1998 gave them control over most of the country, but also **escalated tensions with Iran**, which in late 1998 mobilised its forces along the Afghanistan border (on Iran's views on Central Asia, see Tarock 1997). The Taliban were soon implicated in the training of terrorists, especially groups associated with the al-Qaeda network, resulting in heightened tensions with the U.S. and Britain,

dooming Taliban's hope that they might eventually be recognised as Afghanistan's legitimate government.

The Afghanistan crisis had **wide regional impact, but no effective international management during this period**. President Karimov of **Uzbekistan** said that he feared 'the spread of radical Islam into Central Asia from Afghanistan' (Saikal 1994, p14). Indeed, since the 1980s, Uzbekistan had been keen to play a role in Afghanistan, training thousands of Afghan students in Tashkent, and sending experts and advisers into Afghanistan (Roy 1991, p48, p62). Without genuine nation building for the entire 1990s, Afghanistan **remained a destabilising factor** for all of Greater Central Asia.

Even before the last round of international intervention from 2001, the **conflict in Afghanistan had been extremely expensive**: more than one million dead, some 2.5 million injured and disabled, including many children and civilian casualties caused by indiscriminate bombing and by mines, there were some **6 million refugees, and a further 2 million displaced internally**, out of a total population of then 19 million (the higher figure includes nomadic groups, *UN Chronicle* 1995b; Roy 1991). This **excessive rate of injury and dislocation** has meant that the state of Afghanistan in any pragmatic sense had been destroyed. Furthermore, the fact that **some 1 million of these refugees were in Pakistan and some 1.8 million in Iran** also made the conflict within Afghanistan one that had direct regional implications (*UN Chronicle* 1995c). In spite of progress in stabilising Tajikistan in the late 1990s, Afghanistan demonstrated the geo-political contests for power have continued to involve Central and South Asia. Nor could Afghanistan draw on a shared Islamic identity to overcome ethnic and clan divisions (Centlivres & Centlivres-Demont 2000, p425). Afghanistan remains the site of a **sustained humanitarian crisis** that was not being effectively met by the international community through 2000-2003 (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2000), though prospects for more positive change slowly emerged through 2004-2006. However, a deepened operations by the Taliban through late 2006 to early 2007 have placed this stabilisation in doubt (see further below).

From early 2002, the **international community pledged a total of 9 billion dollars to help rebuild the war-torn nation, but some estimates suggest that a serious recovery might need twice that**. Instability in Afghanistan is a regional issue, whether viewed in terms of drug and arms smuggling, or the movement of militants across borders into neighbouring countries such as Tajikistan and Pakistan, problems in relocating refugees, and continuing instability and lack of nation-building capacity for the new government in Afghanistan through 2002-2007 (see below). In the worst case scenario, **a failure to build a robust government and a viable economy would signal the failure of the international reconstruction agenda**, as distinct from military or humanitarian intervention politics (see Rubin 2006). If regional and international players, now a very **wide coalition** with UN, NATO, US, EU and Russia support **fail in this task, this would send a dangerous signal to most of Greater Central Asia and the wider Eurasia setting**.

## **2. The Failures of the Taliban Regime**

Between **1994 and early 2001, the Taliban had a series of surprising military successes** that gave it effective control of 90% of Afghanistan. The **Taliban**

**originated in southern Afghan villages in Qandahar and in the refugee camps of Pakistan, and had descended from rural inhabitants in the south of Afghanistan** (Nojumi 2002, pxi, p122). Many were trained at *madresahs* or religious schools (*talib* is an Arab word meaning 'seeker', Nojumi 2002, p119, in effect a dedicated religious student), in the strict Deobandi form of Islam, leading to their **indoctrination into notions of militancy** that would allow them to be sent to fight in Afghanistan. Many of them viewed themselves as returning to set things right in a homeland torn by civil war and by Russian and Western manipulation. The Taliban military leadership, however, also had ex-military officers from Afghanistan (Nojumi 2002, pxi), as well as strong support from Pakistan ISI. Leaders such as Mullah Mohammed Omar also controlled strong loyalties in local areas, especially around Qandahar (Nojumi 2002, p23).

We can speak of **partial successes for the regime** along a number of lines: -

\* The Taliban from 1994 quickly moved to control Qandahar, then the rich, poppy growing region of Helmand. They moved north onto Kabul through 1996, and by 1998 had pushed well into northern Afghanistan. These successes show a **combination of military capability and the political ability to sideline or bribe opposition**. They showed a clear determination to control all of the country.

\* The Taliban and their support bases in the *madresahs* did **effectively channel funding for their operations**, at first from Pakistan's ISI, but also possibly from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States (Nojumi 2002, p121).

\* For a time the Taliban were **viewed as the bringers of peace**, and an end to local conflict and banditry. This led to some local support, though non-Pushtun groups remained suspicious (see below). They also for a time began to suppress opium growing in order to gain international recognition, but it is also possible that opium was stockpiled through the 2000-2001 period (see below).

\* For a time, **Taliban victories offered the lure of an open pathway from the Indian Ocean up to Central Asia**, allowing Pakistan and the U.S. ready access to oil and gas resource in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Central Asia (Nojumi 2002, p130). This led to some early U.S. support for a UNOCAL consortium project for long pipelines from Central Asia through Afghanistan, though this was abandoned through the late 1990s (Nojumi 2002, p223). Through 2002, UNOCAL ruled out further involvement in new pipeline projects (*Oil Daily* 2002). **Once the Taliban were overthrown, new projects came to be considered**, including pipeline project linking 'Turkmenistan, to Afghanistan, to Pakistan and other markets', with initial project funding from the Asian Development Bank, and costing a total of around \$2.5 billion (Xinhua 2002a).

However, these partial successes locally and internationally were soon offset by **serious failures in national and regional governance, as well as serious human rights abuses (even in wider Islamic terms): -**

\* The Taliban emerged as an **extremely strict form of Islam** that was viewed as **unacceptable to most Muslims**. Aside from recognition from Saudi Arabia,

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), this **in effect was another kind of isolation** (see Gadoury 2001).

\* The **effort to create an Emirate based on extreme notions of a just order that would lead to a very strict approach to law and order**, with capital punishment and stoning used for a number of crimes, hence titling itself as the **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan** (UPI 2000). In the international community, this was viewed as another aspect of human rights failures in the country.

\* The **treatment of women did not reach international nor widely recognised Muslim standards**, with women expected to remain at home and not to engage in education or independent work. This attitude is made clear in the statement of the then Taliban Minister of Education concerning the role of women: "It's like having a flower, or a rose. You water it and keep it at home for yourself, to look at it and smell it. It is not supposed to be taken out of the house and smelled." (in Lindgren 2002). In effect, this seemed a perversion of Islamic doctrine (see Goodson 2001). This was a **disaster for the modernised women of the cities of Afghanistan**, and even worse for the tens of thousands of widows who had no other means of support. Although the Taliban tried to soften some of these restrictions through 2001, e.g. some moderate provisions for gender-based education, the result was an outcry in the Europe and the U.S., as well the **mobilisation of women's groups** who resisted such restrictions. Groups such as the *Feminist Majority Foundation*, *Women's Environment and Development Organization*, the *Centre for Health and Gender Equality*, and the *Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan* were soon able to **generate international awareness of these problems**, in part using negative images associated with the enforced wearing of the *chadari* (for a critical treatment of these campaigns, see Kensinger 2003). In effect, this failure on the ground mobilised international civil society networks, undercutting the Taleban's limited efforts to gain legitimacy.

\* The Taliban, in spite of bringing the end of civil war for some regions and allowing the opening of some roads, **did not build a strong economy** that could support farmers or modern urban life.

\* In spite of cumulating military victories, and pushing control of the country from 70% to almost 90% of national territory, **the Taliban were never able to fully gain control of the north**, thereby providing a northern **front for the North Alliance**, based largely on the forces of Massoud (soon called the United Front, Saikal 2002, p50). Once the international coalition was formed, this allowed large scale military support, including Russian material, to aid this north front.

\* Although the **Taliban tried to gain international respect through reducing some of the opium growing** in areas under their control, and eventually banning production, this **did not end the stockpiles of drugs** within the country, nor their export onto international markets, especially once they came under increasing diplomatic pressure through 2001. It is possible that some Taliban commanders stockpiled opium prior to the ban, which raised prices, and in the face of oncoming war (McGirk 2001). This problem intensified after the

collapse of the Taliban through 2002 (Jalali 2003, p180), perhaps due to the damaged economy and uncertainties facing the future (see below).

\* The **Taliban lacked the international credentials and mind-set to begin serious reconstruction of the country**, and could not draw in substantial aid, loans or investment (in spite of some help from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates and some efforts to receive funds from the U.S. in return for cracking down on opium growing, *Church & State* 2001; de Borchgrave 2001). On religious grounds they also made it difficult for even international aid workers to operate within the country, since they were suspicious of Christian and Western-based groups.

In sum, the Taliban had strong military victories, but in both domestic and international politics were **unable to present themselves as a truly legitimate and representative government for all of Afghanistan**.

### **3. A New Round of Direct International Intervention: Military and Civil Power**

The events leading up to U.S. led intervention in Afghanistan were based on the use of Afghanistan as the **country of refuge for Osama bin Laden**, and his setting up of **training bases** for groups that would emerge as Al-Qaeda. Repeated calls for the handing over of bin Laden were basically rejected by the Taliban regime, in spite of Pakistan's effort to act as intermediary. From 1996 the **Taliban had begun to affected by Osama's policies**. In one view: -

Pakistan introduced the Taliban to Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaeda network. The Taliban were impressed by al-Qaeda's sophisticated, militarily well-trained, and highly intelligent cadres (many with advanced degrees in medicine, physics, engineering, and other sciences).

Over time, Bin Laden and select members of al-Qaeda became top advisers to Mula Omar and the ruling Taliban, displacing their Pakistani counterparts. Consequently, the Taliban experienced a shift in ideology, embracing radical views and policies. To maintain its membership in this "unholy alliance," Islamabad recruited Pakistani students for the Taliban, swelling its ranks. (Halter 2001)

This led to a rapid hardening of policy in the Clinton and then Bush administrations. This resulted in missile strikes against the training bases within Afghanistan in 1998, and the imposition of U.S. and UN embargoes and sanctions from 1999 onwards. These factors completely closed down the possibility of wider recognition of the Taliban internationally, and also saw the end for prospects of pipeline development under that regime, as well as reducing the likelihood of any significant degree of foreign investment in economic projects. In effect **two agenda** came together to end the regime: **the war on terror, driven by US interests in dealing with a 'rogue state', and wider international concerns over human rights, the lack of legitimacy, and its potential for ending as a 'failed state'** under the Taliban regime (see Rubin 2006, pp178-179). Ironically, this would lead to a dual legitimacy issue for the reconstructed Afghanistan: it had to meet external security concerns and the internal needs of its citizens (Rubin 2006, p179).

The stage would be for a more serious intervention in late 2001. The terrorist attacks against the U.S. in September 2001 were soon linked to Osama bin Laden and his Al-



Qaeda network, which were being hosted within Afghanistan. Through 1998-2001, the **Taliban had begun to rely more strongly on foreign supply of non-Afghan soldiers in its recruitment base, and may also have begun to be more economically reliant** on cooperation with the al-Qaeda (see Rashid 2002; Nojumi 2002). On this basis, as well as shared feeling on the basis of conservative interpretations of Islam, the Taliban leadership refused to hand over Osama, claiming that no solid proof or grounds of his involvement in the terrorist attacks on the U.S. had been provided. In this context, **the U.S. rapidly moved to building an international coalition** (including support from Russia, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan), then to air strikes and a rapid deployment of international military forces, with U.S., British and small numbers of Australian forces most active in direct operations against the Taliban. EU countries and France provided supported elements (Blua 2002), as well soldiers that would help in the stabilisation of Kabul, later on including German and Turkish troops. **Strong pressure was also brought to bear on Pakistan** to allow use of its airspace and some basing of troops and humanitarian programs for refugee flows. This was reluctantly accepted by General Pervez Musharraf (leader of Pakistan), but also resulted in **strong protests from militant groups within Pakistan**, as well as exposing the government to **extra pressure from India** over the training of terrorists either within Pakistan or by the Taliban in Afghanistan, including Kashmiri militants, a factor perhaps supported by some elements in the ISI (Saikal 2002, p47, p52; Rashid 2000, p138). The US 'rewarded' Pakistan by lifting sanctions (imposed since the nuclear tests of 1998), and by promising billions in increased aid flows, but it has been suggested that Pakistan in the long-run need furthers democratic reform and a new policy on its border zones with Afghanistan (Rubin 2007, p73; Saikal 2002, p53).

The **main military campaign was over within two months**, with the Taliban unable to retain direct control of any part of the country, and the Al-Qaeda network largely dislocated within Afghanistan itself (Jalali 2003, p174), though able regroup to a limited degree in remote areas along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Once the air campaign began to seriously erode the Taliban, the **North Alliance** (based in large measure around Tajik ethnic groups, and with increasing Russian material support), moved in to 'fill the vacuum' in many cities, including an early entry into Kabul (Jalali 2003, p175), even against Western pressure not to take control of the city. Even as a military victory was achieved, the coalition was left with the **prospects of remnant Taliban forces to deal with, the ongoing operation of local warlords, and the need to stabilise the country**. What had been viewed at first as little more than an intervention and not an effort at nation-building, soon became **a multilateral effort at reconstruction so that partial stabilisation might allow an exit strategy** for large external forces (Rubin 2006; see below).

*Timeline for Afghanistan 2001-2006 (after BBC 2003a-2007a)*

- 1998 - US launches missile strikes at suspected bases of militant Osama bin Laden, accused of bombing US embassies in Africa.
- 1999 - UN imposes an air embargo and financial sanctions to force Afghanistan to hand over Osama bin Laden for trial.
- 2001 January - UN imposes further sanctions on Taleban to force them to hand over Osama bin Laden.
- 2001 March - Taleban blow up giant Buddha statues in defiance of international efforts to save them.

2001 May - Taleban order religious minorities to wear tags identifying themselves as non-Muslims, and Hindu women to veil themselves like other Afghan women.

2001 September - Eight foreign aid workers on trial in the Supreme Court for promoting Christianity. This follows months of tension between Taleban and aid agencies.

2001 - Ahmad Shah Masood, legendary guerrilla and leader of the main opposition to the Taleban, is killed, apparently by assassins posing as journalists.

2001 October - USA, Britain launch air strikes against Afghanistan after Taleban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden, held responsible for the September 11 attacks on America.

2001 November - Opposition forces seize Mazar-e Sharif and within days march into Kabul and other key cities.

2001 5 December - Afghan groups agree deal in Bonn for interim government.

2001 7 December - Taleban finally give up last stronghold of Kandahar, but Mullah Omar remains at large.

2001 22 December - Pashtun royalist Hamid Karzai is sworn in as head of a 30-member interim power-sharing government.

2002 January - First contingent of foreign 'peacekeepers' in place.

2002 April - Former king Zahir Sha returns, but says he makes no claim to the throne.

2002 May - UN Security Council extends mandate of the peacekeeping International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan until December 2002. Turkey prepares to take over command of the 5,000-strong ISAF from Britain by the end of June 2002. Allied forces continue their military campaign to find remnants of al-Qaeda and Taleban forces in the south-east.

2002 June - Loya Jerga, or grand council, elects Hamid Karzai as interim head of state. Karzai picks members of his administration which is to serve until 2004. Turkey officially takes command of the international peacekeeping force from Britain.

2002 July - Vice-President Haji Abdul Qadir is assassinated by gunmen in Kabul.

2002 July - US air raid in Uruzgan province kills 48 civilians, many of them members of a wedding party.

2002 September - Karzai narrowly escapes an assassination attempt in Kandahar, his home town.

2002 December - President Karzai and Pakistani, Turkmen leaders sign agreement paving way for construction of gas pipeline through Afghanistan, carrying Turkmen gas to Pakistan. Asian Development Bank resumes lending to Afghanistan after 23-year gap.

2003 June - Clashes between Taleban fighters and government forces in Kandahar province leave 49 people dead.

2003 August - Nato takes control of security in Kabul. It is the organisation's first operational commitment outside Europe in its history.

2004 January - Grand assembly - or Loya Jirga - adopts new constitution which provides for strong presidency.

2004 March - Afghanistan secures \$8.2bn (£4.5bn) in aid over three years.

2004 April - Fighting in northwest between regional commander and provincial governor allied to government.

2004 September - Rocket fired at helicopter carrying President Karzai misses its target; it is the most serious attempt on his life since September 2002.

2004 October/November - Presidential elections: Hamid Karzai is declared the winner, with 55% of the vote. He is sworn in, amid tight security, in December.

2005 May - Details emerge of alleged prisoner abuse by US forces at detention centres.

2005 September - First parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years.

2005 December - New parliament holds its inaugural session.

2006 January - More than 30 people are killed in a series of suicide attacks in southern Kandahar province.

2006 February - International donors meeting in London pledge more than \$10bn (£5.7bn) in reconstruction aid over five years. At least 25 people are killed in clashes between Afghan troops and suspected Taleban fighters in the southern province of Helmand

2006 May - Violent anti-US protests in Kabul, the worst since the fall of the Taleban in 2001, erupt after a US military vehicle crashes and kills several people.

2006 May-June - Scores of people are killed in battles between Taleban fighters and Afghan and coalition forces in the south during an offensive known as Operation Mountain Thrust.  
2006 July onwards - NATO troops take over the leadership of military operations in the south. Fierce fighting ensues as the forces try to extend government control in areas where Taleban influence is strong.  
2006 October - NATO assumes responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan, taking command in the east of the country from a US-led coalition force.  
2007 March - Pakistan says it has arrested Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, the third most senior member of the Taleban's leadership council.

#### 4. Reconstruction Prospects 2002-2007

The outlines of the current government of Afghanistan were shaped through international conferences that sought a widening of political representations beyond that of the Northern Alliance, based largely on Tajik groups, with Uzbek and Hazara support (*Strategic Comments* 2001). As military intervention occurred, there was a rapid **convening of a UN, US and German organised conference at Bonn**, with four main opposition groups represented in bargaining process designed to avoid too much overt power being given to northern groups, but in effect recognising their key role in opposing the Taliban (Jalali 2003, pp175-176). Taliban groups were not at the conference, nor part of the ongoing peace-making process, meaning that they would need to be destroyed or the disarmed remnant cooped in the normal political process (see Rubin 2006, p180). After hard bargaining, an agreement was signed on December 5, 2001, establishing a six-month framework for the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) under Chairman Hamid Karzai, with this becoming a **Transitional Authority of Afghanistan (ATA)** after an emergency meeting of the Loya Jirga, a traditional meeting of local leaders (Jalali 2003, p176). Initially, the 30 strong Cabinet was shared out among different groups, with the Northern Alliance controlling 17 of these, then the Rome group with around 8 seats, with smaller numbers given to a Cyprus Group (backed by Iran), and a Pakistan-backed Peshawar Group (*Strategic Comments* 2001). Control of Kabul by the Interim government would be supported by the initial deployment 4,500 troops as an **International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)**, as well as by a small UN Mission designed to support planning and reconstruction in the country.

Key steps in the legitimation of the administration included the holding of an first emergency **Loya Jirga in June 2002**, with large numbers of elders, clan leaders, and locally selected leaders attending. This system was **based on the traditional open meetings for free debate** within local Afghan communities, a system which at the national level had been a fundamental institution since 1747. Combined with a strong role for local elders, this system had always **moderated the central power of the state** by ensuring that there was an organic connection with a network of local leaders and their communities or *Qaum* networks (Nojumi 2002, p68, p90; Saikal 2002, p52). Although the Loya Jirga at times has been dominated by Pushtun groups (Nojumi 2002, p29), it was the only institution would could give a local mandate to the Interrum Administration. The Loya Jirga voted on a number of candidates, but the former king, Zahir Shah, did not stand for office, perhaps due to pressure from US which feared that he might split the vote, fears of infighting within his family, and recognition that he might be viewed as a modernist by more conservative Islamist groups (Jalali 2003, p178; Saikal 2002, p48, p50). In the end, Zahir Shah would continue to support the representation process, and **receive the honorary title of**

**'Baba', or father of the country**, from the Harmid Karzai government. The meeting was not perfect, in that local war lords and external groups were able to manipulate support groups, but it did consider a number of leadership candidates in secret ballot (Jalali 2003, p177). Of 1,600 delegates, 1,295 voted for Karzai, with the second strongest vote going to a woman, Massouda Jalal (Saikal 2002, p48).

One of the **issues of concern was the future funding of the reconstruction of Afghanistan**. There was concern that the division of roles of intervention might work with the US basically running the war, and then the EU, Japan and international agencies picking up the costs of development and reconstruction. In actuality, **a wide network of donors and agencies have been mobilised** for future development, with Japan, the United States, the European Union and Saudi Arabia being the major national players. However, local and regional insecurity could undermine these efforts (see *Eurasia Insight* 2002; Ahmad 2002). Moreover, the **UN decided to take an approach called the 'light footprint'**, relying strongly on Afghan staff and building capacity in the Afghan government, with an ongoing political role for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, extended another year from March 2006 (Chesterman 2002; IRIN 2006b). However, it **emerged by 2005-2007 that much of the functions of the state were still being run and funded by international agencies**, with only limited budgetary and administrative capacity residing in the Afghan government, even through early 2006 (see Rubin 2006). Likewise, the UN has had to **move to accept more robust patterns of peace building**, including security provision and economic reconstruction (Rubin 2006, p175).

On this basis, **President Harmid Karzai headed a government that from 2003 included deputies (vice-presidents) from diverse ethnic backgrounds** such as Mohammad Fahim, Karim Khalili, Hedayat Amin Arsala, and Nematollah Shahrani (Saikal 2002, p49; *BBC* 2003b). The Foreign Minister was Abdullah Abdullah, Interior Minister was Ali Ahmad Jalali, the Defence Minister was Mohammad Qaseem Fahim and the Education Minister was Yunus Qanuni, with Anwar-ul Haq Ahadi becoming Finance (and Aid) Minister. This group has been important to the Karzai administration since the Bonn conference (Chesterman 2002, p40). Although **the government was diversified as a whole**, it is possible to suggest there was still a slight leaning towards northern groups and Tajiks, with special emphasis on control of key military and intelligence areas by non-Pushtun groups, though the ministry of the interior did in the end go to a Pushtun (Jalali 2003, p175; Chesterman 2002, p51). This caused some resentment, but in fact Karzai has made an **effective compromise** out of the political challenges that faced him, both in terms of the policies of those who gained military victories in Kabul, and the local political pressures that were expressed in the Loya Jirga in mid-2002. **Karzai is himself aligned with Pushtuns in the external 'Rome' group**, a leader of the Popolzai tribe, well-educated and relatively modernised, but has sought to keep an ethnically diverse group of deputy leaders in his administration (*Strategic Comments* 2001). Hence, he did not have the support of a single parliamentary party, but dresses in a mix of ethnic styles designed to suggest that he is **above tribal politics**. This is a strength, but also suggests he may in part be a **compromise leader viewed as able to moderate internal and external interests**.

The Karzai government in effect **relied on the political good will of the international community and local military leaders**: -

Efforts to strengthen the national government, build effective security forces, and stimulate economic development have failed to stem the tide of insecurity. In particular, programs to rebuild a national army and police force have been slow and ineffective. As of March 2003 only, 1,700 troops had graduated from the U.S.-supported army training program and the bulk of the country's 50,000 police officers remain untrained and loyal to regional warlords rather than the central government. Unable to enforce its writ outside the capital, the ATA [Transitional Authority of Afghanistan] has had to rely on the good will of warlords and the strength of coalition military forces to maintain a semblance of legitimacy and control. Unfortunately, personal ambition rather than goodwill has driven the actions of the warlords and the military strategy adopted by coalition forces has been motivated more by short-term military expediency in the ongoing war on terror than the long-term interests of Afghan security and stability. (Sedra 2003)

Through **2003-2007, in spite of steps towards and internationally credible government with strong international backing, key problems remain for the Afghanistan government.** There was been a very slow transfer of real power from the old warlords, and in large measure aid has been relatively slow to arrive into the country, leaving many Afghans in real poverty, dependent on old clan networks, or else willing to continue cultivating opium. In spite of the real need for up to \$18 billion in aid, **non-military aid had been slow to arrive**, e.g. some '\$300 million to \$400 million this year in non-military spending in Afghanistan, up from \$271 million last year' for the 'reconstruction of 1,200 primary schools, 600 health clinics, hundreds of wells, and three major irrigation systems, as well as to democracy-building projects and roads' (*Washington Report on Middle Eastern Affairs* 2003). There have also been **controversies in the way aid is monitored and spent**: once given to sub-agencies the aid is viewed as spend, leading to some lack of follow up and detail tracking of aid outcomes, problems not fully dealt with by the Afghan Donor Assistance Database (DAD), which mainly tracks outflows (Rubin 2006, p182). Through 2005, major programs were sometimes tracked separately, e.g. through the World Bank's Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), or the Law and Order Trust Fund (LOFTA) providing for army and policing reform (Rubin 2006, p183; see further below). This has lead to some **charges of corruption in relation to NGO's operating in the country, and tensions between aid donors and Afghan authorities through 2005** (Rubin 2006, p182).

**Likewise, elements of armed opposition have been active in the south of the country through 2003-2007**, and have been able to mobilise attacks on stabilisation troops, U.S. soldiers, police and local supporters of the government. Through March 2004 an ongoing 'search and destroy' strategy (Operation Mountain Storm) tried to destabilise the remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda forces in the south and east of the country (Synovitz 2004). Likewise, both Pakistanian, U.S. and elite coalition forces have been mobilised to try fight al-Qaeda elements along **the Pakistan-Afghanistan border**, possibly hoping to track down Ayman al-Zawahiri, a top strategist for the organisation. Faction-fighting has also continued, with rivalry among different government officials, e.g. between Ismail Khan and Zahir Nayebzada (Reuters 2004a). Meanwhile, **the effort to build an independent and nationally loyal army, the Afghan National Army (ANA) has been extremely slow**, with only 7,000 of 70,000 proposed soldiers having been mobilised through early 2004 (for background problems, see Jalali 2002). Although some progress has been in this area through 2005-2007, the **Afghan Army and Police still rely on foreign aid for most of their**



**budgets:** the full cost of supporting security could be as high as 16% of GDP unless foreign aid is continued or the government can quintuple its independent budgetary resources - still leading to a high defence budget for a developing country of around 4% of GDP (Rubin 2006). On this basis, the government of Afghanistan has neither been able to guarantee security, nor to hasten economic development. In spite of the **framing of a new Afghan Constitution on January 4, 2004, and successful elections** through 2004-2005, the country remained beset by **security and sustainability problems** (see further below).

**Current challenges** facing Afghanistan include: -

- Afghanistan was once a **predominantly rural country**, with 20% living in cities and 80% in the countryside (Nojumi 2002, p1). However, long-term warfare, mobilisation of rural male populations, and a large refugee exodus has **undermined the traditions of village life and rural production**, as well as destroying local infrastructure including rural roads, bridges and irrigation networks. With the return of refugees, especially from Iran, there is a need to rebuilt a widely based agricultural system with suitable infrastructure and input over the next several years.
- In general terms there is a need to 'revitalize **agriculture** and the rural economy', improve **energy provision** and electrical power supply, and attract **new investment** (e.g. in the mineral sector) beyond direct aid (see Rubin 2007, p67, p77).
- In this context, there have been claims that due to poverty (through 2003 GDP per capita stood at the low level of \$164 per capita, and \$237 in 2005, DFAT 2004; DFAT 2005), poor infrastructure, recent harsh winters, and lack of other markets, that some farmers have returned to poppy cultivation, leading to **the return of Afghanistan into the opiates export market** through 2002 (Jalali 2003, p180). In general, **opium growers can early about ten times that of cotton or wheat cultivators**, and earned around \$2.3 billion in total for those involved (*Strategic Comments* 2004, p1; Meyer 2003, p135). The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has suggest that there was a rise of 6% in poppy cultivation from 2002 to 2003, with 3,600 metric tonnes grown in 2003 (*Strategic Comments* 2004, p1). In the long run, this will need to be stopped if President Karzai wants the ongoing support of foreign governments and IGOs, as well as to remain positive relations with nearby states. It will take time before the effectiveness of the **five year National Drugs Control Strategy** can be assessed (Saddique 2004b). Ongoing opiate production and exports remains a major regional security concern: -

Patterns of drug production in, and trafficking from, Afghanistan have the potential to alter national and regional political dynamics, influence the form and texture of security provision, affect the capacity of terrorists and organised crime groups to function across Eurasia, and impact on drug prices, consumption levels and law-enforcement efforts in Western Europe. (*Strategic Comments* 2004, p1)

Likewise, drug funds form part of an invisible economy that is not taxed by government and **forms criminal or local patronage** networks that may

undermine normal politics (Rubin 2006, p181). On this basis, countries such as the **UK and US have been keen to see a serious decline in drug exports out of the country**, the former willing to pay or compensate farmers to destroy such crops, while the US favours forceful eradication of crops and factories (*Strategic Comments* 2004, pp1-2). Through to 2005 President Karzai was **reluctant to use aerial spraying** to destroying opium crops (Rubin 2006, p184), for fear of further destabilising the credibility of the central government. These factors led to a large harvest of opium in 2006, and expectation that there will be an even larger harvest in 2007, with the poor economic situation, local corruption and Taliban protection of some fields leading to a **failed eradication strategy**. It is likely that one of the main **funding sources for the Taliban** are these drug flows, though this has been denied by local Taliban members (IWPR 2007). At the least, government efforts to destroy or displace poppy growing has made the Taliban more popular (IWPR 2007).

- Afghanistan has a tradition of the *Ghazi* or victor, but this really means someone who has the intelligence, ability and bravery to lead a community to achieving its goals (Nojumi 2002, p22). Through the period of resistance to invasion and civil war this has helped mobilise support for warlords and commanders. It will be important to see if **political and peace-time leaders can take over these charismatic relations with local communities**. The **warlord syndrome will need to be gradually replaced by a more national and democratic approach to political power**.
- Due to the past Soviet control of Afghanistan, then fierce civil wars, followed by the limited legitimacy of the Taliban, there is now a need to resurrect some sense of **core national identity or citizen-based participation** that goes beyond local loyalties to warlords, clan-based groups or ethnic divisions. Bearing in mind the country's eight main ethnic groups (Pushtuns with almost 40% of the population, Tajiks, comprising around 25-30%, Hazaras, forming about 10-15%, Aimaqs, Turkmen, Uzbeks with around 6-13%, Kirghiz, and Baluchis), plus smaller sub-groups, with two main languages (Dari and Pushto) and up to 40 minority languages and dialects (Emadi 2002; Nojumi 2002, p1, pp63-65), this is a crucial task. It must be remembered that the beginning of the modern state of Afghanistan was through the election of Ahmad Khan as king at a meeting of tribal leaders at a jirga, or council, in 1747 (Nojumi 2002, p2), thereby transcending local loyalties. **Nationalism was thereafter reinforced by external threats**, e.g. against the British or Soviets (Nojumi 2002, p2). After the victory of the Northern Alliance, aside from local clashes, there were concerns that Pushtun groups in the north were being targeted, leading to 100,000 Pushtuns heading into southern areas (Jalali 2003, p180). Through 2004-2007, a crude form of ethnic balance has been sustained, as well as **support for democratic processes, but the central government remains relatively weak**.
- On this basis, the government will need to **avoid political destabilisation**, either by remnants of the Taliban, or by disgruntled opposition groups, whose methods have included **political assassinations and attacks on government and overseas officials**. Through February 2002, the Civil Aviation Minister, Abdur Rahman was murdered, while in July 2002, a

Pushtun Vice President (Haji Abdul Qadir), was assassinated, partly undermining Karzai's efforts at ethnic balancing (Saikal 2002, p51). President Karzai himself was the subject of a failed assassination attempt in September 2002 and again in late 2004 (Jalali 2003, pp179-180; BBC 2005). In March 2004, Civil Aviation Minister Mirwais Sadiq, son of Herat governor Ismail Khan, was killed in faction fighting along with 100 other people in Herat in a battle involving hundred of soldiers thought to be loyal to the local commander Zaher Naib Zada (*Reuters* 2004a). **Daily conflict continues in the south and south-east** through late 2005 and early 2006 at the level of raids, bombings, suicide attacks and counter-insurgency operations, e.g. Ghazni and Kandahar provinces. **Attacks on soldiers, Afghanistan's police, and civilians continued on an almost weekly basis through early 2007**, with ongoing civilian casualties eroding support for NATO troops (Koelbl 2007). Some 4,000 people were killed in Afghanistan in 2006, with some 1,000 of these being civilians (Koelbl 2007). Al Qaeda has also made targeted threats through 2006-2007 to Germany, Austria and Spain to try to induce them to withdraw their troops from Afghanistan, while the Taliban has also been involved in kidnapping and killing of foreign nationals, e.g. the kidnapping of the Italian journalist Daniele Mastrogiancomo in March 2007 (*Expatica* 2007; ABC 2007a).

- The **return of Central Asian and traditional Afghan styles of Islam**, focused in part on traditional Sufi beliefs (Nojumi 2002, p4) and the moderate legal interpretation of the Hanifah school, (in conflict with those of the Deobandi school), has begun a partial **revival of less authoritarian styles of religious thought in Afghanistan**. This has included the return of northern Sufi styles, as well as a more open social life. This type of religious belief may be more compatible with a democratic, modernising state that allows a strong role for women and that will also be opened to strong Western influence.
- The **role of women has already begun to improve** in Afghanistan, but the issue of the wider role of women in the rebuilding of Afghanistan will need careful attention, including **full access to education, financial roles, employment and security** for widows, and definition of civil rights within an Islamic community (Borst 2004). Constitutional reform has opened up a wider political space for women, but much will need to be done to allow rural women to make use of these opportunities: -

That political role looked set to expand after the Constitutional Loya Jirga, which concluded in early January, granted women a substantial role in the country's proposed parliament. Under the constitution, approximately 25 percent of the 250 seats in the lower chamber of parliament are reserved for women. Women also must account for 50 percent of the president's appointees to the upper house of parliament, the House of Elders. The president, provincial and district councils appoint all members of this chamber. . . .

Yet for many ordinary Afghan women, such rights mean little for everyday life. . . . Afghanistan has one of the world's lowest female literacy levels and one of its highest maternal mortality rates. Forced marriages are common and poverty and domestic violence widespread. Adequate health care is often either non-existent, or denied to women at hospitals with male

doctors. An Afghan woman's average life expectancy is about 46 years, which is less than the average Afghan man's. (Saddique 2004a)

Furthermore, the constitution states that **laws should be in accord with Islamic principles**, thereby leaving open challenges to laws through the courts (Saddique 2004a).

- Whether **the government can build effective police and military forces**. Through 2002, Karzai had repeatedly called for an extension of the ISAF into other cities, a view supported by the local UN administration. This move, however, was resisted, largely by the U.S., which saw this as a long-term engagement that **might be viewed locally as a kind of occupation** (Rubin 2007; p57; Chesterman 2002, p38). Instead, the U.S. and Russia have swung behind the training of a **new Afghan National Army (ANA)**, which would need to be a non-ethnic body directed by civilian authority (Jalali 2003, p178; Jalali 2002). Initially, training and deployment has been slow, and there is a fear that ethnically-oriented military commanders could still end up commanding its military units. The Karzai government aims at an army of 70,000 troops, but March 2004 only some 7,000 had been trained. By 2007 some **30,000 troops had been trained, making this a relative success** (Rubin 2007, p68). The Security Sector Reform process (SSR), including the formation of the Afghan National Police (ANP) has only begun to achieve its goals (Rubin 2006, p179). Essentially, Afghanistan is still reliant on NATO and US forces for security, thereby reducing its legitimacy among conservative groups. Future funding of the Afghan army also remains problematic, leading to the prospect of the long-presence of foreign forces (see above). Likewise, it has been noted that many of the 60,000 demobilised militia have moved into roles in the police and private security, while others have joined crime networks (Rubin 2007, p68). From 2005 it has been suggested that **further reform is needed in the Ministry of the Interior, the police, and judiciary, which remains under-trained and under-funded** (Rubin 2007, p74).
- Although the hot strategic battles against the Taliban seemed over by 2005, with the last major clashes being the battle of Tora Bora (December 2001) and the Shahi Kot Valley battle (March 2002), the **presence of coalition troops** remained necessary through 2003-2007, with a total of 32,000 troops engaged in security provision and 8,000 in counter-terrorist roles (Rubin 2007, p65; Gall 2003; *Economist* 2005). Australia in March has signalled that it might send more troops to the country, while New Zealand has confirmed that its 120 troops will remain till September 2008 (Radio New Zealand News 2007). There is the danger that the long-term presence of such troops will begin to **seem like a foreign occupation** (Jalali 2003, p182). Accidental civilian deaths (such as the 48 civilians killed in a wedding party in Dehrawod District during June 2002), bombing, and intrusive searches can also influence Afghans against international cooperation. As of late 2002, the U.S. had moved to idea of building 8-10 new bases to support regional security and as an aid nation building (Jalali 2003, p183), but this may be a controversial policy in the long run. However, **insecurity continued**, with ongoing attacks against foreign soldiers, government officials, and insecurity and aid and development workers. A sustained assault was made on German soldiers, while through late 2003 insurgent attacks continued in the south and

east of the country, probably motivated by remnant Taliban and Al Qaeda elements (Gall 2003, p3). **Between late 2003 and early 2005 some 1,100 people were killed** as a consequence of 'Taliban-linked violence' (Synovitz 2005). These attacks have made it very difficult for the strategy of using groups of soldiers as provincial reconstruction teams to provide emergency relief, while in December 2003 it was decided that these teams (of 50-70) would be increased to 12 units by March 2004, with a stronger emphasis on providing local security, and building up local police and Afghan security forces (Gall 2003, p3). The **insurgent strategy** has also changed, with a **greater use of suicide bombers** (perhaps borrowed from Palestinian and Iraqi operations) through 2005-2006 (BBC 2007a; Rubin 2007, p60).

- Through early 2005 U.S. Commanders such as Major General Eric Olson suggested that the Taliban, though still operational in parts of southern and south-eastern Afghanistan, had their support base disrupted, and the Afghanistan government then offered an amnesty for 'rank-and-file Taliban fighters', but this may not be true in the long term (Synovitz 2005). **Ongoing violence in the south-east through 2005-2006** (see above) suggests that strong pockets of **organised resistance still exist and are running a local destabilisation program** that if unchecked could aim at a wider political agenda for disrupting the Afghanistan government nationally. **By 2007** it seemed clear that a **major Taliban counter-offensive was underway**, with the counterinsurgents having de facto control of parts of the south and southeast (with parallel courts run by Taliban officials in some areas), hoping to secure control of a districts west of Kandahar and 'hoping to take that key city and precipitate a crisis in Kabul' (Rubin 2007, p57, p60). By early 2007 Taliban leaders such as Mullah Dadullah claimed that 6,000 fighters, including numerous suicide bombers, were ready for a new offensive (Koelbl 2007). It is also claimed that they pay much better than the small sums provided to local police or administrators (Koelbl 2007). Barnett Rubin suggests that part of the problem is that many people in Afghanistan feel that in reality their problems have low priority with the U.S., thereby giving hope and credibility to the insurgents, even though many remember their 'cruelty' when they ruled (Rubin 2007, p58, p61). NATO has sought to undermine these trends through launching intensive operations by 6,500 troops in Helmand Province in south-west Afghanistan, a rich poppy growing area where Taliban influence has been rebuilt over the last few months (Koelbl 2007).
- **Tensions over border control with Pakistan** remain a major problem, with a sense that Pakistan has neither the will nor the means to close down the border to insurgents. On this basis, it has also been suggested that Washington has had to 'appease' Pakistan in return for its support for its operations against Al-Qaeda and in closing down nuclear proliferation from A. Q. Khan network (Rubin 2007, p58, p70). This has led to insufficient pressure to control militant groups in the northern provinces. Though the government of Pakistan has given some aid to the U.S., it has also been suggested by circumstantial intelligence reports that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) is once again supporting leaders of the Taliban, focused on Quetta in western Pakistan (Rubin 2007, p59, p70). On this basis **the Taliban have rebuild some of their transnational strengths: -**



The Taliban, meanwhile, have drawn on fugitives from Afghanistan, newly minted recruits from undisrupted training camps and militant madrasahs, and tribesmen alienated by civilian casualties and government and coalition abuse to reconstitute their command structure, recruitment and funding networks, and logistical bases in Pakistan. (Rubin 2007, p58)

- Though the transfer to NATO command of security in urban and northern parts of the country has been a good sign, more security commitments may be needed in future. **NATO's plans for gradual stabilisation of the country** have been outlined by one spokesman, Hikmet Cetin: -

I must reiterate that Afghanistan is NATO's top priority. Now that the command of ISAF has been taken over by NATO, we are in the phase of operational planning for expansion beyond Kabul. On the other hand, one has to remember that NATO's presence in Afghanistan is not limited to Kabul and environs only. The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) established in [the northeastern province of] Kunduz is also covered by NATO under a member country's [Germany's] lead. Whatever the media reports may argue, NATO is now overseeing prospects to expand across the country in a phased approach. Planning and consensus among the member countries is essential for successful implementation. I expect that important decisions will be taken in the months ahead, particularly during the NATO Istanbul Summit in late June. NATO will do whatever it can to boost security in Afghanistan. (in Saddique 2004b)

**NATO** had some 8,400 troops in the country and through early 2005, rising to around **9,000** through late 2005 (*Economist* 2005). It was agreed that more soldiers from Italy, Spain and Lithuania would augment this force, while by 2006 it was hoped that these forces would be integrated with US forces across the country (Ames 2005). Due to ongoing violence in the south, there has been **some change of strategy as to how NATO troops will function** in some provinces through 2005-2006: -

The advance will be co-ordinated by the alliance's expeditionary command headquarters, British-run Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), which is due in Kabul next April [2006], for a nine-month stay running ISAF. Part of its job will be to take over three small coalition garrisons dedicated to reconstruction--known as Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)--in three southern provinces: 200 Canadians are already in Kandahar, a similar number of British will go to Helmand, and a combination of Dutch and Australians to Uruzgan. . . .

In southern Afghanistan, home to the xenophobic Pushtuns, stiffer provisions are needed. Each PRT there will be protected by a battlegroup of around 1,000 NATO soldiers, also reporting to the ARRC. The British PRT in Lashkargar, for example, will be supported by a beefed-up British battalion, probably of the Royal Anglian regiment, that also will train Afghan troops. In addition, the ARRC will command a mobile reserve of 1,000 British troops, mostly paratroops, based in Kandahar. They will be supported by an American aviation battalion, of the coalition, and 12 NATO Apache attack helicopters, six Dutch and six British. (*Economist* 2005)

- In the long run, the **government will need to disband and disarm the main militia units supporting different warlords**. Through 2002 minor clashes occurred between different units, but nominal control was still held in Kabul. Clashes between different armed groups occurred in the provinces of Paktia and Khost, while in the north tensions between the forces loyal to General Rashid Dostum and Tajik forces took place, especially in areas south

of Mazar-e Sharif. In the west, for forces of Ismail Khan have clashed with local Pushtuns (Jalali 2003, p179). President Karzai has passed **laws banning political leaders from military roles** (Jalali 2003, p179). However, figures such as the Uzbek general Dostum, Ismail Khan, and Gul Aqa, the governor of Kandahar, retained strong local loyalties (Saikal 2002, p49) that were only partially displaced through 2004-2007. In sum, there has been some progress in the DDR program (**demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration program**), but only a proportion number of independently held arms have been turned in through 2005-2007 (Rubin 2006, p179). Under several initiatives including the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) program, backed by the UN through 205-2006, some 35,000 light arms and 11,004 heavy arms have been handed over (IRIN 2006c), but light arms still flood sections of the country.

- **Other forms of insecurity** will also need to be dealt with, including the ongoing presence of **landmines**, remnants of cluster bombs from the 2001 conflict (up to 8 million mines and pieces of unexploded ordinance still litter the country through 2002, see McNulty 2002), a largely destroyed health care system, lack of most basic services, lack of regular employment, and threats of droughts and harsh winters. The government lacks the resources to deal with quickly with these issues (Ahmad 2002; Rubin 2006), though relief efforts began to improve through 2003-2005. In the case of land-mines, some 800 kilometres of land has been severely affected, with 15 organisations involved in removing the mines, with hopes that by 2012 most of the mines will be removed. However, this relies on **continuing international aid**, including \$200 million to continue clearance operations through 2007 (Esfandiari 2005). Afghanistan (along with Tajikistan and Turkmenistan) has signed onto the **Ottawa Convention against anti-personnel mines**, setting an important regional example, since China, India, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Iran have not joined the ban (Estandiari 2005).
- The **need to effectively secure promised aid** in order to engage in infrastructure and nation-building projects. Although \$4.5 billion had been firmly committed by international donors for the first five year period, only a small proportion has actually been delivered during the first two years, with most going to the UN and NGOs, and some \$90 million direct to the Afghan government (Jalali 2003, p181). A total bill of **10-15 billion at least over the next decade will be needed to make the country an operational, modern state** (Jalali 2003, p181). An international donor conference held in January 2002 began well, while the World Bank, the UN and Asian Development Bank have made assessments of future development needs, with further conference in 2005 and early 2006, aimed at launching the Afghanistan Compact, which updated the Bonn Agreement and coordinates 'consultation between the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community, and represents a framework for co-operation for the next five years' (see further the London Conference 2006). However, aside from **some education and food security programs, plus some limited road construction work**, and payment of government salaries for a time by the UNDP (Rubin 2006, p182), **most major projects have yet been completed**. Some work has been on a road from Herat to the Iranian border, while from November 2002, work began on a highway connecting

Kabul, Kandahar and Herat (Jalali 2003, pp181-182). Even supplying secure and clean water to Kabul has required a major effort through 2002, especially in the light of droughts that had dried up local wells (*Eurasia Insight* 2002b). By late 2003 a total of \$2 billion in aid had been approved by the U.S. (Gall 2003), but much of this was military aid. Through 2003, aid agencies criticised the lack of on-the-ground security as a major developmental problem, with some 15 aid workers being killed through the year, and some 20% of the country still 'off limits' for security reasons (Gall 2003). The **ambitious plans of the London Conference, including strong anti-narcotics measures, and many project end-lines through 2010** (London Conference 2006), therefore need to be critically assessed in the light of efforts to increase secure donor funding. Alongside some debt forgiveness, e.g. of \$108 million from the US, the **new 2006 Conference secured pledges of \$14 billion in aid over the next 5 years**, 80% new pledges plus left overs from outstanding commitments), indicating a serious effort to sustain reconstruction (ABC 2006a)

- **Development and forward planning will need to be carefully coordinated to avoid a patchwork of different projects.** Ashraf Ghani, as part of the Karzai administration, through 2002 took control of the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA), and has taken a strong stance in insisting that Afghanistan **does not become a 'beggar state'** over-reliant on foreign aid, and has insisted that all projects fit in with a national development plan (Chesterman 2002, p41). There is also a need to moderate the **impact of highly paid visiting experts and NGO groups**, a factor which can cause inflation, resentment over wages, high rental markets (Chesterman 2002, p43), and in the worst case a kind of ongoing '**NGO-tourism**' that has limited benefits for the host country (this has been a major issue for Bangladesh, for example). In spite of improved co-ordination through 2003-2007, international programs generally pay more than government ones, leading to a drain of experts across into international relief agencies (see Rubin 2006). Likewise, the **dependency and lack-of-state-capacity problem remains very real**: through 2004-2005 of the total of \$4.9 billion of public expenditure, only \$1.4 billion was run through the government budget (Rubin 2006, p179).
- Through 2003, Afghanistan had **1.8 million exiles and refugees return to the country, plus the return of 400,000 internally displaced persons to local areas** (Jalali 2003, p181). This is a massive repatriation, and has brought talents and skills into the country. However, practical care of these returnees, plus the way they fit into more conservative communities and a largely destroyed economy, will need careful moderation over the next few years (see Moszynski 2002). Over the last three decades, **at least one third of the total population had been displaced.**
- **No effective system of taxation, nor strong program for foreign investment**, has yet been established, though a new currency (the Afghani) has been launched and a consultative group and law reform has paved the way for future inflows, with some \$1.3 billion of investment registered (mainly in the construction industries) through 2004-2006 most of this was not fully dispersed (BBC 2003b; [www.af](http://www.af) 2006; IRIN 2006a). **Aside from aid,**

the government remains dependent on **customs dues**, but road transport projects have yet to fully open up the country, and local warlords still absorb much of this revenue, returning only a small amount to Kabul (Jalali 2003, pp181-182; Saikal 2002, p52).

- Through 2004-2005, as expected under the Bonn agreement, it has been a difficult and slow process to provide **free, stable, open and multiparty elections** in Afghanistan. This also entailed the drawing up a constitution (completed in early 2004), created a Central Bank, and finalise supreme court structures (*Strategic Comments* 2001). Even with EU and other total aid of up for 30 million euros for this project, it was a **huge task for hold fair elections**: -

Putting the necessary personnel, material and security in place will be an enormous challenge and substantial support from the international community will be necessary for its success. The planned registration of voters will be managed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), as requested by Interim President Hamid Karzai. In these extremely difficult circumstances, in particular in the security sphere, the project aims to ensure the registration of over 10 million citizens who have the right vote. It also aims to acquaint citizens with the basic principles of democratic elections. Ensuring the participation of women will be one of the major issues at stake in this plan. This will, moreover, be supported by Afghan Interim Electoral Commission and will enable it to play an active role in voter registration, as well as the electoral process in general. (*European Report 2004a*).

In fact **some three-quarters of voters did turn out for the December 2005 parliamentary elections**, while in general terms President Karzai seems to have retained fairly strong approval ratings of over 80%. (*National Review* 2005). There may be some way to go before the political process stabilises but it is good sign **that different interests are now being channelled in part through this process**: -

The recent parliamentary elections, held on a non-party basis, led to the emergence of a politically fragmented legislature. The positive aspect is that this provides the opportunity for members of different political, ethnic, and regional interest groups to wage their political fight peacefully in the parliament house rather than on battlefields. However, the absence of organized political blocs makes the new parliament a wild card with a potential to either strengthen or weaken the political process in Afghanistan. Lawmakers' support of national programs will add legitimacy to the process, while their emphasis on parochial and populist themes could impede government decisions on reform and put President Karzai at odds with the diverging interests of Afghanistan's international partners. Much depends on the nature of emerging political caucuses and the effectiveness of mechanisms set to enhance understanding and cooperation between the executive and legislative branches. (Jalali 2006)

- The **environment of Afghanistan has been severely damaged** by war and neglect, leading the transitional government of Afghanistan to request aid from the European Commission (initially \$5 million) in support of UNEP plan to assess and then manage the environment, eventually creating protected areas and improved environmental education (Dooley 2004).

- In spite of a more open political system, the country has **yet to reach any serious degree of reconciliation between different factions**, a fact recognized by the Karzai government in March 2007 when the parliament passed a 'Charter on National Reconciliation' which might provide immunities for ex-Taliban in order to aid their demobilisation, though the same amnesty could also be used to protect other warlords for their past abuses (*PakTribune* 2007).

It would seem true, then, that **winning the peace in Afghanistan** has indeed been much harder, and slower, than expected. In this context, Afghanistan has not yet been fully stabilised and **remains reliant on a loosely organised pattern of international aid that makes it a dependent democracy** that need to further foster in internal economic and social resources. In one critical assessment: 'Electing officials to preside over a non-functional pseudo-state that can provide neither security nor services does not constitute democracy' (Rubin 2006, p184). This is **not yet a successful case of international intervention**. The costs of reconstruction, both in terms of political will and financial contributions, have not yet been provided and distributed, and are only being effectively coordinated through the 2004-2007 period. On this basis, there will be serious lessons from these events for other interventions, both military and humanitarian, including the **need for the global system to place 'multilateral state-building' at the heart of the global security agenda** (Rubin 2006, p185; Sedra 2003; Stockton 2002; Biddle 2003), lessons that may not yet have been taken to heart by the international community. A successful, recovering state on the hinge of Central and South Asia could act as a stabilising factor for the entire region. It **might also provide another example of a fragile but real accommodation between Islamic societies and democratic aspirations**. Alternatively, a failed democracy and further conflict with transnational spillover-effects into the greater Central Asia and South Asia would signal another round of costly Eurasian instability.

## 5. Bibliography and Resources

### Resources

Updated news about Afghanistan will be found on a searchable web archive, the *Afghan News Network*, located at <http://www.myafghan.com/>

The *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan* has a useful webpage, with government reports and donor information, located at <http://www.af/>

General cultural and historical information can be found at *Afghanistan Online*, located at <http://www.afghan-web.com/>

A useful file of short reports on Afghanistan will be found on the *Eurasianet.org* website, located at

<http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/afghanistan/articles/index.shtml>

The *UN Office on Drugs and Crime* (UNODC) provides a range of useful information and publications via their webpage at <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/index.html>

The *Institute for War and Peace Reporting* has useful regional and Afghanistan reports which can be found via [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net)

A regional file of research by *Foreign Policy in Focus* (FPIF), including papers on Afghanistan, Iraq and the 'War on Terror', will be found at <http://www.foreignpolicy-infocus.org/indices/regions/asia.html>

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