

## END-STATE AFGHANISTAN



EGMONT PAPER 29

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JO COELMONT (ED.)



March 2009



ACADEMIA PRESS

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\* \* \*

**Egmont - The Royal Institute for International Relations**

Address Naamsestraat / Rue de Namur 69, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
Phone 00-32-(0)2.223.41.14  
Fax 00-32-(0)2.223.41.16  
E-mail info@egmontinstitute.be  
Website: www.egmontinstitute.be

© Academia Press

Eekhout 2  
9000 Gent

Tel. 09/233 80 88

Fax 09/233 14 09

Info@academiapress.be

www.academiapress.be

J. Story-Scientia NV Wetenschappelijke Boekhandel

Sint-Kwintensberg 87

B-9000 Gent

Tel. 09/225 57 57

Fax 09/233 14 09

Info@story.be

www.story.be

All authors write in a personal capacity.

Lay-out: proccess.be

ISBN 978 90 382 1410 8

D/2009/4804/66

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NURI 754

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## Introduction

The international intervention in Afghanistan was a reaction to the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington of 11 September 2009. At the time, the intervention could count on broad political support and the understanding of a large share of public opinion, also because of the UN mandate. Very quickly, remarkable results were obtained: ousting the Taliban from power, closing the terrorist training camps, undermining al-Qaeda as an organization and suppressing insurgent activities in large parts of Afghan territory. After a while a security situation was achieved which allowed for reconstruction in regions which had known nothing but war for thirty years. Significant political, economic and social progress was achieved in a relatively short term.

Seven years later the optimistic discourse has lost all credibility. The security situation is constantly degrading, not just in Afghanistan, but far into Pakistan as well, while tensions are mounting in the broad region. It has become clear to everyone that now, more than ever, a new approach, a different strategy is needed – muddling through is not an option. Nor is a hasty retreat: too many parameters have changed for the negative to allow that.

Yet, defeatism, as it emerged a few years ago with regard to Iraq, is not now called for either. Paradoxically the current situation, bad though it may be, also contains the roots of a renewed and improved approach, thanks to a number of external developments. First of all the new US administration has opted for a new foreign policy, for which Afghanistan, and Pakistan and India, are clear priorities, while it also envisages a new policy vis-à-vis Iran. The situation in Iraq has seen major developments. In Afghanistan itself elections are planned later this year. The changed political and economic conditions in Pakistan lead to a change in policy towards Afghanistan and India alike. The interests of the three countries, relations between which historically have been marked by high tensions, are now converging. These developments have engendered more attention for the crisis by the EU, where the conviction is growing that “flanking measures” alone are no longer sufficient. The global economic and financial crisis has necessitated a reinforced dialogue between all global actors, including China. Thus, a new approach is not just vital – it is achievable.

There is no lack of publications about Afghanistan, addressing such issues as the fragmented efforts of the international community, the shortage of military means, the unintentional but very negative side effects of military operations, the inefficiency of the donor community and of NGOs, the relative weakness of the Karzai government, wide-spread corruption and drug trade, the lack of

involvement of Afghan local authorities and traditional and religious elites, spill-over towards Pakistan, the absence of economic perspective in the region... The question is whether this bottom-up approach, addressing the many dimensions of indeed very complicated crisis management, is sufficient to engender change in the current situation and eventually come to a successful solution.

That immediately leads to another question: what is success? Which are the strategic objectives? Is there consensus about them in the international community, in consultation with Afghanistan? What is the position of Pakistan and India? A limited number of official publications do address these more strategic-level issues. Such analysis always starts from a specific national perspective, which has its own logic and which emphasises the national contribution, while other actors are expected to fill the perceived gaps. All too often confusion is created – willingly or unwillingly – between strategic objectives and the means required to achieve them, which produces confusion at the political level and generates false hope among the local population. This probably explains why a sincere assessment of the indeed ambiguous, but at the same time ambitious objectives versus the required means is rarely if ever made.

This is not without consequences on the ground. An international community which may rejoice in the active contribution of a panoply of actors with a wide range of instruments, is unable to achieve unity of effort. The perceived capability gaps are not being filled, while the lack of efficiency and efficacy of existing means leads to a demand for “more”. In the meantime the security situation is degrading and the effect of some of the earlier efforts destroyed. Increasing political tension between the international community and the Afghan authorities is the result, while because of spill-over effects Pakistan and India are becoming involved and, finally, tensions within the international community are rising as well, even between countries that jointly participate in operations or projects.

This vicious circle must be broken. This *Egmont Paper* does not have the ambition to propose a fully-fledged strategy, nor to elaborate concrete actions, but aims to return to the core of crisis management in Afghanistan and stimulate a broad debate about a grand strategy. In a first part, it will analyze which were the strategic objectives at the start of the intervention and which steps have subsequently been taken by the international community that led to the situation we know today. In a second part, some recent ideas about key objectives and desired strategic outcomes will be assessed, to conclude finally with a number of recommendations to the international community, the UN, NATO, the EU, and their Member States, including Belgium.



Like other *Egmont Papers* in this series, this publication is the product of an informal group of experts from academic, diplomatic and military circles, including, among others, Prof. Dr. Sven Biscop, Egmont, Alex Bracke, Ir. MA, Prof. Dr. Rik Coolsaet, Ghent University, Alexander Mattelaer, VUB, Jacques Rosiers, EAAB, Prof. Dr. Tanguy Struye, UCL, Ambassador Baron (Franciskus) van Daele, and Col. Patrick Wouters. My sincere gratitude to all members of the working group for their contribution; I of course assume responsibility for the text.

Brigadier-General (R) Jo COELMONT<sup>1</sup>

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1. Brig-Gen (R) Jo Coelmont is a Senior Associate Fellow at Egmont – Royal Institute for International Relations. From 2002 to 2007 he served as Belgium’s Permanent Representative on the EU Military Committee.



# The Strategic Context

## Objectives and Means

Rarely are the real strategic motivations of a politico-military intervention clearly formulated. This is certainly the case when we are confronted with a complex political situation and hence equally complex decision-making. When furthermore numerous countries, international organizations and NGOs are involved and public opinion starts asking critical questions, it comes as no surprise that the strategic debate is blurred.

In order to bring some clarity, a distinction must be made between, on the one hand, the objectives to be achieved and, on the other hand, the means which that requires. The “end-state” of just about all peacekeeping operations currently undertaken by the UN, NATO or the EU refers to a “Safe and Secure Environment” (SASE). Starting point is that the peacekeeping force creates “military security”. Once achieved, this amounts at most to “precarious security” though, lasting only as long as the force remains present. In parallel therefore a legitimate government, with its own armed forces, police, customs and justice system must take over these tasks. Furthermore, a durable SASE can only be achieved if there is economic and social perspective. In other words, security, governance and socio-economic development are all conditions for successful crisis management, but not necessarily objectives in their own right. The fact that in many countries around the globe there is no SASE at all without an international intervention ever being considered, clearly proves that the “raison d’état” motivating military operations lies elsewhere.

In the case of Afghanistan it has been unclear from the beginning whether for the US state-building and reconstruction was a key objective in itself, or merely a condition to achieve success in its Global War on Terror.

## Dynamics within Crisis Management

Each conflict has its own dynamics, and of course the outside world evolves as well. It is only normal therefore that in long-term crisis management, like in Afghanistan, strategic objectives and especially the strategic approach evolve over time.

For the US “9/11” could not but be met with swift and forceful reaction. The first concrete actions were aimed at al-Qaeda and its training camps in Afghan-

istan. Intense but brief contacts with the Taliban government led to the conclusion that with this regime quick results against al-Qaeda were impossible.

*It should not come as a surprise that years later more nuanced strategies towards the Taliban are being developed.*

An indirect consequence of the military intervention was the upsetting of the fragile and very Machiavellian balance of power that existed on both sides of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. As a result of the fighting in Afghanistan various insurgent groups have crossed the porous Durand Line that divides the Pashtun community over these two countries. These movements have undercut the long-standing policies of both Kabul and Islamabad towards their respective Pashtun populations and have influenced the triangular relations between Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Combined with a number of internal political and economic developments, the result has been that the central government in Islamabad has been much weakened in its position vis-à-vis the “tribal areas”. De facto, a sanctuary for insurgents of all kinds has come into existence on the territory of Pakistan, which entails a threat to stability in the region as a whole.

*“To deny the Taliban and al-Qaeda the environment in which to operate” thus has a very different meaning now than it had in 2001. Pakistan is now inextricably involved in the conflict and becomes more and more central to its solution.*

Initially, the Bush administration did not favour a multilateral approach, at least to the military intervention. It was feared that making use of NATO would imply long debates about the objectives of military operations and differences about their tactical implementation, as had been the case during the Kosovo air campaign.

*The difficulties which the US and its coalition partners were subsequently met with on the ground in Afghanistan and the need for additional forces, did lead to NATO becoming increasingly involved after all, as well as a variety of countries working with NATO in Afghanistan.*

The intervention in Iraq in 2003 meant a shift of the political and military centre of attention. Afghanistan stopped being a priority in Washington just as it became clear that additional military, civilian and financial means were required. A new situation has now emerged in Iraq, rendering irrelevant the question whether initially the US in Afghanistan was seeking to establish a base for power projection in the region.

*If the positive prospects for a withdrawal of forces from Iraq are realized, that will undoubtedly again have a strategic impact on crisis management in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the whole of the region.*



## The Actions Undertaken by the International Community

The policy of the international community has undergone some remarkable evolutions, as an analysis of the major conferences of the international community and of the involvement of NATO and the EU demonstrates.

### The Bonn Agreement (5 December 2001)

In Bonn, the participants in the UN talks on Afghanistan define quite precise objectives and modalities and a strict time frame for the setting up of transit structures and the organization of elections in order to arrive at a new government and constitution. It is striking that a very centralized system is envisaged, with all decisions, including the appointment of provincial governors, to be taken in Kabul and the UN “advising” and offering its “good offices”. The Security Council is called upon to deploy an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) that will render *assistance* in order to create security in Kabul and its surroundings.

*The international community clearly opts for a two-track policy. The military dimension will be taken care of by the international community and a UN-mandated force is deployed alongside the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). As to the civilian dimension, both the definition and implementation of a strategy for reconstruction are left to the Afghan government, with an international donor conference providing the necessary finance.*

### The Tokyo Conference (21-22 January 2002)

The International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan signals that henceforth donor assistance depends on the positive cooperation of the Afghan authorities to achieve the Bonn objectives. A number of key priority areas for reconstruction are defined. It is stipulated that “the UN should continue to play a pivotal role”. The World Bank will set up a single trust fund, while the allocation of the means remains the authority of donors and the Afghan government. In order to achieve “strategic coherence and coordination” among the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA), donors and NGOs, an Implementation Group, chaired by the AIA, will meet regularly in Kabul.

*In Tokyo the international community clearly seeks a bigger influence on policy, but its impact on implementation remains very limited.*

## **The London Conference (31 January – 1 February 2006)**

As the hoped for progress on the ground does not materialize, the international community takes new steps. The London Conference, better known as the Afghanistan Compact, envisages a renewed and more global approach. Three pillars of activity are identified, with benchmarks and timelines for the next five years: security; governance, the rule of law, and human rights; and economic and social development. It is clearly stated that “the success of the Compact relies on an effective coordination and monitoring mechanism”. A “central and impartial coordination role” is accorded to the UN, be it in partnership with the Afghan government, which is pointed to the importance of “ownership of the Afghan people”, public transparency and accountability, and the fight against corruption. In return for financial support, the Afghan government is requested “to provide a prioritised and detailed Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) with indicators for monitoring results”. A Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board with representatives of the international community is established, co-chaired by a senior Afghan government official and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General. Surprisingly though the Compact explicitly states that “the Board will have a small secretariat staffed by the Afghan government and the United Nations”, with “periodic meetings” – as if it concerns a small matter for which periodic stock-taking and possibly advising changes is sufficient.

*Nonetheless the international community clearly wants a bigger grip on the implementation of the civilian dimension of crisis management. The will to create a global implementation mechanism is there, but whether this will be a powerful instrument remains unclear. The task is confided to the UN which – as often – is accorded very modest means, which are not in relation to the enormous investment of the international community in Afghanistan.*

## **The Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS – 2006)**

The I-ANDS process was launched in early 2005 and in 2006 produced a document which points out the rather sombre situation of the country. The central government is given the responsibility for elaborating solutions in all policy



areas. Essentially a very descriptive document, I-ANDS formulates numerous intentions, but remains very vague on how to achieve concrete results. 2010 is usually mentioned as deadline, a date simply copied from previous documents. The objectives in the field of security are hardly realistic. Budgetary planning is all but absent, although it is stated that “over 90% of all national development resources [are] currently provided by international cooperation partners”.<sup>2</sup> In order to enhance aid effectiveness, donors are called upon to align their programmes with I-ANDS and “to fund them within the framework of the national core budget”.<sup>3</sup>

*Thus for the Afghan government the fragmented international effort should be met with a tight central, “presidential” approach from Kabul. The achievability of the implementation, finance and timeline of this all too vague administrative approach must be severely doubted.*

## **The Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS – 2008)**

The final ANDS, covering the period 2008-2013, is a much heavier document than the interim version, but most additions are either of a theoretical or an administrative nature. Surprisingly, whereas I-ANDS started from a worrying situation, the final document sets out to list a long series of achievements since 2001. Even more than before, the central government is seen as the answer to all problems. The concrete and detailed objectives that are formulated contrast sharply with the ever degrading situation on the ground. Again it is proposed that the donor community makes its means directly available to the government, i.e. the President.

*The influence of the upcoming elections on this document is evident. No new approaches to find solutions are proposed. A well-presented, all-encompassing programme overlooks nobody in Afghanistan, but is neither affordable nor achievable. It is no surprise therefore that tensions result between the international community and the Karzai government. In order to achieve unity of effort, the Karzai government wants donors to directly contribute to the government budget. Disappointed with the limited results of the government and its lack of influence on the ground, the international community starts looking for*

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2. Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Summary Report. An Interim Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction*. Kabul, 2006, p. 62.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

*ways of becoming active on the ground itself and of de-centralizing policy, two novel options for the civilian dimension of crisis management.*

## NATO

Although on 12 September 2001 NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, in consultation with the European Allies, declared the willingness of the Alliance to invoke Article 5, NATO initially was not involved in the military operations. In October 2001, the US launched a military campaign, OEF, in conjunction with the Afghan Northern Alliance. Combining US air power with Northern Alliance-provided ground forces, this campaign led to the fall of the Taliban regime in December 2001. As a US-led counter-terrorism mission, OEF continues to operate, primarily in the Eastern provinces.

Following the first phase of this campaign and subsequent to the Bonn Agreement, ISAF was launched under UNSC 1386 of 20 December 2001, to assist in securing Kabul. The UK was mandated to lead the deployment. ISAF did not become a NATO-led operation until 11 August 2003, at the explicit request of the UN, as it became increasingly difficult for the UN to find countries willing to volunteer to lead the force. Thereafter, slowly but steadily, driven by events, ISAF's area of operation began to extend, into the Northern and Western provinces in June 2004, into the Southern and Eastern provinces in July and October 2006, so that at present it covers the whole of the country. OEF and ISAF remain separate operations, but in 2006 the missions were closely coordinated, as elements of their command structures were merged and air support for both was provided by a single US Coalition Combined Air Control Centre.

The mission and the desired end-state are clear: "ISAF is in Afghanistan to assist the government of Afghanistan in ensuring a safe and secure environment that will be conducive to establishing democratic structures, to facilitate the reconstruction of the country and to assist in expanding the influence of the central government".<sup>4</sup> The desired end-state is defined as "a self-sustaining, moderate and democratic Afghan government, in line with the relevant UNSCRs, able to exercise its authority and to operate throughout Afghanistan, without the need for ISAF to help provide security".<sup>5</sup>

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4. House of Commons Defence Committee, UK operations in Afghanistan. Thirteenth Report of Session 2006-07. London, 2007, p.12.

5. NATO, *OPLAN 10302, de-classified version*, 8 April 2004.

The contribution of NATO and its members is not limited to ISAF. Since 2003 the Alliance has a Senior Civil Representative who maintains diplomatic and political relations with the Afghan government and other key actors. NATO also has concluded an agreement about Security Sector Reform (SSR), focussing on assisting the Afghan National Army (ANA), notably through Operational Liaison and Mentor Teams (OLMTs). It also seeks to increase its support to the Afghan National Police (ANP). The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) represent the NATO nations' effort in civil-military issues; individual nations have lead responsibility for the activities within their PRTs.

In its quest for a “comprehensive approach”, NATO has elaborated a Comprehensive Strategic Political Military Plan, approved at the Bucharest Summit (2-4 April 2008). It stresses “a firm and shared commitment among the NATO countries, support for enhanced Afghan leadership and responsibility, a comprehensive approach by the international community, and increased cooperation with Afghanistan’s neighbours as part of a broader regional strategy”. Some fifteen “desired strategic outcomes” have been identified, which will be regularly assessed within the Alliance. So far the conclusions of these assessments have been sombre: “enhancement is required” for just about every objective. For adapting its own actions, NATO has the structures, means and procedures to find solutions in a relatively short term. The fundamental problems are elsewhere and require action at another level: NATO nations are requested to provide additional means (and do away with national caveats); they are also called upon to undertake specific initiatives vis-à-vis the Afghan authorities or on specific international forums. Analyzing these “desired strategic outcomes” shows that NATO never has the final responsibility for these objectives.

*NATO thus finds itself in an exceptional situation. Not being involved in the initial military operations, it now leads an important part of the crisis management effort, ISAF, which has come to cover the whole of Afghan territory. Its task is to assist in establishing a SASE, but the supporting political and civilian efforts – in se not a NATO responsibility – to move from a “precarious” to a “durable” SASE never materialized. The additional tasks which NATO assumed in terms of SSR and civil-military assistance were insufficient to turn the tide. A lack of progress by the international community and the Afghan authorities towards reconstruction and the failure to remove the ideological foundations of the insurgency all contributed to the degrading of security, which in the end had to be realized with rather limited military means. NATO’s mission thus is part and parcel of the broader efforts of the international community, in which political solutions, including for the socio-economic dimensions, are key. Even in the military dimension NATO is not the only actor on the ground and can thus not be held responsible for the international effort as a*

*whole. NATO's mission to assist in ensuring a SASE is a derivative of the global strategic objectives. But clarity at the strategic level will allow NATO nations and allies to review their contributions and to align NATO efforts within a renewed overall approach of the international community.*

## The EU and its Member States

As the European foreign, security and defence policy is marked both by integration and intergovernmentalism, both the EU and the Member States must always be referred to. In 2001 Europe immediately voiced its solidarity with the US and actively contributed to decision-making on Afghanistan in the UNSC and to organizing various conferences of the international community. But European priorities at the time lay elsewhere than in Central Asia – the central priority was the political and economic development of Europe as it emerged after the fall of the Berlin Wall, including the follow-up to the conflicts on the Balkans, relations with Russia, and the widening and deepening of the Union itself. In the military field, the EU had just created its European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP), based on the lessons drawn from Europe's military absence at the start of the conflict in former Yugoslavia. But although the EU has now launched several military operations, the means of ESDP remain limited, notably with regard to the command and control of complex operations. When operations in Afghanistan started, the Member States were not yet ready to express a strategic vision; the European Security Strategy was not adopted until 2003. The military dimension of crisis management in Afghanistan is only discussed sideways in the EU; the actual debate takes place in NATO.

In the civilian dimension, notably in the field of police and justice, the EU is facing a double challenge. On the one hand civilian ESDP is a relatively new instrument which at current can only call upon limited means. On the other hand, since 2003 the EU has launched over a dozen civilian operations, on the Balkans, in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, in Congo, Iraq and the Middle East, and was recently called upon to take over from the UN a – to EU standards – large mission in Kosovo. Holding the final responsibility for all these operations, the EU assessed the availability of means for Afghanistan only in a secondary step, hence the difficulties encountered by operation EUPOL Afghanistan. Launched in 2007 for a duration of three years, building upon an earlier German initiative, it includes police trainers and experts in the field of justice from Member States and third countries such as Canada, Norway and Croatia. Achieving the envisaged – and in view of the tasks rather modest – strength of 400 proved impossible. Eventually only about 200 were deployed, demonstrating once again the many obstacles met by civilian operations. Whereas for the

military foreign deployments are a core task, that is not the case for police and justice. Furthermore, in many countries the authority to select the necessary personnel rests not with the federal but the regional level. Each mission consists of volunteers and requires ad hoc organization of the logistic support and command & control structure. Most of those deployed for EUPOL were policy advisors which could not be expected to be able to cope with the many police training tasks to be undertaken in the field. This did not remain without consequences: the envisaged EU operation was silently taken over by a large-scale US initiative.

Where the Commission has supranational authority, various projects have been set up in Afghanistan, including in the field of development and economic support. The EU can mobilize important financial means, but does not always possess adequate staff and structures to ensure efficient implementation on the ground. Both the Commission and the Secretariat-General of the Council, and High Representative Javier Solana, are in close contact with NATO about Afghanistan.

*The EU and its Member States do show solidarity but – with a few exceptions, such as the UK – remain absent from the strategic debate. Based on their own logic and priorities an upper and lower limit is set for the contribution of military, civilian and financial means. The actual contributions differ widely between countries, but are all based on the same premise of doing “just enough” to maintain solidarity with the US. Europe’s absence in the strategic debate impedes the development of a strategic vision on the deployment of its own assets. In this context, a comprehensive approach is all but impossible.*



## The Key Objective, the Desired End-State, and the Ways to Achieve them

As the intervention of the international community enters its eighth year, we are more and more told that “it will last a long time”, at least in Western understanding, “longer than the United States’ longest war to date, the 14-year conflict (1961-1975) in Vietnam”.<sup>6</sup> That international community now has deployed in Afghanistan about “one twenty-fifth of the troops and one fiftieth of the aid per head in Bosnia”.<sup>7</sup> But even if the international community in a renewed effort finds the political strength to stay present for ten to fifteen years and does manage this time round to align means and objectives, even then after its “exit” an Afghanistan will emerge that like every society will have to found its balance on the permanent pillars of culture, religion, history and geography. Evidently the regional political and economic context will also be of prime importance. These truths are obvious to the Afghan government and the Afghan people alike, and from them emerge the contours of possible, evidently limited objectives.

The marked degradation of the security situation has indeed given rise to less ambitious objectives, feasible within the “foreseeable” future. US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has stated this clearly: “My own personal view is that our primary goal is to prevent Afghanistan from being used as a base for terrorists and extremists to attack the United States and our allies, and whatever else we need to do flows from that objective”, adding that the strategy should now be to define “more concrete goals that can be achieved realistically within three to five years in terms of re-establishing control in certain areas, providing security for the population, going after al-Qaeda, preventing the re-establishment of terrorism, better performance in terms of delivery of services to the people – some very concrete things”. Or even more clearly: “Afghanistan is the fourth- or fifth-poorest country in the world, and if we set ourselves the objective of creating some sort of Central Asian Valhalla over there, we will lose”.<sup>8</sup> In addition, he stated that there is “no purely military solution” for Afghanistan and that a redefined strategy would require allies to “provide more civilian support”. In particular, partners should assume more responsibility for building “civil society”, a task hitherto of the American forces.<sup>9</sup> In the same vein, a classified report from the Joint Chiefs of Staff to President Barack Obama dated February 2009 “reflects growing worries that the US military was taking on more than it could

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6. Richard Holbrooke, “The Next President”. In: *Foreign Affairs*, Sept-Oct 2008.

7. “Paddy Ashdown: Just the Man to Bang Heads together in Kabul”. In: *The Times*, 2 February 2009.

8. “Aides Say Obama to Concentrate on Military Efforts in Afghanistan”. In: *International Herald Tribune*, 28 January 2009.

9. “Afghanistan is Greatest Challenge”. In: *The Financial Times*, 28 January 2009.

handle in Afghanistan by pursuing the Bush administration's broad goal of nurturing a thriving democratic government", and calls instead for "a more narrowly focussed effort to root out militant strongholds along the Pakistani border and inside the neighbouring country", notably by putting more emphasis on training Pakistani forces and the ANA/ANP.<sup>10</sup>

Consequently, President Obama has charted a fundamentally different course for his foreign and security policy in general and with regard to Afghanistan in particular. Obama has stressed that "the language we use matters", but clearly more than words have changed: "The war on terror is over. [...] What's left is what matters: defeating terrorist organizations. That's not a war. It's a strategic challenge". Whereas Bush used to distinguish between terrorists and moderate Muslims, Obama, more importantly, distinguishes between those bent on the violent destruction of America and those who merely disagree with the US. The undertone is self-critical, rather than offensive, and shows a great willingness to listen. Obama has reached out to the Muslim community as a whole and to all countries in the region, including Iran.<sup>11</sup>

*All of this makes clear that we have arrived at a turning-point, at which from the US-side steps have already been taken to clearly define the key objective of the intervention in Afghanistan: to prevent Afghan territory from being used as a base for international terrorism, with an emphasis on the border region with Pakistan. This objective will determine everything else.*

Clear indications have already been provided by the US of how this less ambitious objective can best be achieved. While there is no purely military solution, the existing forces must be substantially reinforced, for the most part by additional US troops. In the civilian dimension, considered vital, additional efforts are expected from allies, notably the EU and its Member States. A number of tasks hitherto undertaken by (American) military forces need to be transferred. Civilian and military assistance to ANA, ANP and the justice system is very important, as is improving Afghan governance, with a renewed emphasis on the involvement of local government and the broader population, on the condition that this does not hamper the key objective of combating international terrorism. As the new term "AfPak" shows, the US now approaches the situation in both countries as one, while combating the insurgency in Pakistan is first of all considered a responsibility of the national government. With regard to the regional dimension a concrete plan of action involving all key actors, including Iran, is being envisaged.

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10. "Pentagon Study: US Should Pare Afghanistan Goals". In: *Associated Press*, 3 February 2009.

11. "After the War on Terror". In: *International Herald Tribune*, 29 January 2009.



*An exit strategy is thus being developed which aims at substantial progress within five years and definite results within a decade, not excluding a minimal permanent presence afterwards. “Afghanisation” is central, next to a broad regional and political approach.*

*However, on one crucial element of strategy, there is as yet no consensus. In which degree will foreign troops take part in counter-insurgency (COIN), in addition to counter-terrorism (CT) operations? The strategic choice which the international community must make depends on the answer to the essential question whether defeating the Taliban (COIN) is still a vital prerequisite for preventing Afghanistan from being used as a base for international terrorism.*

In function of the answer, two end-states are possible: (1) a complete defeat of the Taliban to allow for a stable regime that does not provide a safe haven to terrorist organizations; or (2) a situation of “sustainable stability” essentially aimed at preventing new safe havens for the so-called children or cousins of al-Qaeda.<sup>12</sup>

The first end-state implies a counter-insurgency strategy aimed at a military defeat of the Taliban. Taking into account current estimates of 20 troops per 1,000 inhabitants required for successful COIN, just for the South and the Pakistani border region this would demand a force of 274,000 troops. Tribal militias would have to be created against the Taliban and a divide and rule policy adopted, implying negotiations with certain elements of the Taliban. A regional approach integrating Pakistan and Iran seems highly unlikely in this scenario.

The second end-state requires a political process allowing for the withdrawal of foreign troops, while maintaining pressure on the remaining terrorist networks. This scenario demands even more negotiations with parts of the Taliban, leading to the question which “price” is acceptable to gain their cooperation – can one accept the introduction of their orthodox and ultra-conservative programme in parts of Afghanistan? On the other hand, this scenario could allow for a regional approach in collaboration with Pakistan and Iran.

*It is likely then that an approach holding the middle ground between these two options will be adopted. In a first phase, the momentum of the insurgency would be halted and the insurgency then reduced to an “acceptable” level by temporary reinforcements of foreign troops. Simultaneously, and probably for some time, very targeted counter-terrorism actions will be undertaken by part of*

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12. Paul Pillar, “Jihadi Terrorism: A Global Assessment of the Threat in the post-al-Qaeda Era”. In: Rik Coolsaet (ed.), *Jihadi Terrorism and the Radicalisation Challenge in Europe*. Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008, p. 9.

*the international forces (OEF). In the meantime, ANA and ANP would be equipped and trained to gradually take over more tasks, for them in the end, after a few years, to be able to deal autonomously with the insurgency. In this final phase, the tasks of the international forces are similar to those of the American troops remaining at present in Iraq.*

# A Final Observation

## Crisis Management Operations

In order to increase the chances for success of military operations, ten principles and guidelines ought to be taken into account:

1. Absolute clarity of the military objectives to be achieved (thus avoiding the creation of false hope).
2. Rules of engagement allowing the use of force whenever required to achieve the mission of the operation.
3. Unity of command.
4. Generation of sufficient forces for the objectives (which otherwise have to be adapted in function of the available forces, or deployment cancelled or postponed).
5. Guaranteeing the security of one's own forces.
6. The availability of reserves able to cope with any worst-case scenario.
7. Clear assignment of the non-military tasks to other partners present in the theatre.
8. Clarity of the desired end-state, the ultimate objective (the military objective being only a means to that end).
9. Support of public opinion at home and of the local population on the ground.
10. *Primus inter pares*: a comprehensive political strategy.

Compiling this list is of course easy; fulfilling all of these conditions in real life is another matter, as we have learned in 2001. Yet the list is useful, as a tool to analyse what went wrong and how we can do better in the future.

## To Conclude

Today crisis management can indeed be put back on the right track. First of all a revised and credible strategy must be adopted, which clearly defines the objectives, with which the means must be aligned. This strategy must be shared, i.e. it must not just be based on a passive consensus, but on the active and permanent involvement of all relevant actors as a precondition to generate substantial contributions of means. These means must not only be “more”, they must above all be “better”. There is no military solution – but neither is there a political solution without the military means. These can however only be successfully

deployed in the context of a clear political roadmap, which involves all regional actors, including Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia and China.

Finally every country that contributes with civilian and/or military means should actively participate in the strategic debate. In combination with an active policy of communication vis-à-vis public opinion, this is a precondition to have in our own capitals a serene debate about why and how to contribute in this crisis – the kind of debate that every potential deployment of a country’s military and civilian forces requires.

# Summary of Recommendations

## To the International Community

1. An inclusive dialogue towards shared strategic objectives:
  - An inclusive debate must be started, with the active involvement of all relevant actors, in order to forge a broad consensus about the desired end-state and a roadmap for crisis management in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region, including the means required to achieve a durable solution.
  - The involvement of Iran, India, China and Russia, but also of other countries from Asia and the Middle East is vital.
  - The US and the EU must take the lead in launching this debate.
2. Generation of the required means through cooperation instead of pressure:
  - The required military, civilian and financial means to achieve the shared strategy must be generated through a conference including a follow-up mechanism.
  - The US, the EU and the UN, together with the World Bank, must take the lead in organizing such a conference.
3. Getting its act together:
  - A framework must be created that allows for the guidance of all international actors involved on the ground towards a “unity of effort”, efficiency and efficacy, and a single voice when dealing with the local authorities.
  - The existing Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board must be strengthened in order to achieve true partnership with the Afghan government as well as other Afghan actors, finally to arrive at self-sufficiency.
  - Donors and NGOs must target their actions in function of the policies agreed in the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.
  - The Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General must have a strong mandate, including not only oversight of the strategic options taken, but also of actual implementation of projects.

## To the United Nations

4. Unity of effort through a strong Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General:
  - The Special Representative must be a person with great political authority.

- He/she must have a strong mandate allowing to effectively coordinate all international efforts, including as co-chair of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board.
- He/she must have adequate staff and a liaison network with all relevant actors. These staff must be recruited according to flexible procedures emphasising expertise and continuity.

## To NATO

### 5. Focus on Afghan ownership:

- A renewed strategy should allow NATO to review its own contribution to the overall international effort.
- The emphasis must be on reinforcing the efforts to create an effective Afghan National Army, capable of operating independently, and on continued support to the Afghan National Police.
- Uniformity and coherence in civil-military issues must be reinforced. Programmes in the context of Provincial Reconstruction Teams must be aimed at local needs and at their eventual transfer to local communities or international civilian actors.
- Whenever NATO is called upon by the international community to provide support in non-military areas, such as reconstruction or Security Sector Reform, appropriate funding arrangements should be developed.

## To the EU

### 6. Live up to the European Security Strategy:

- The EU must actively contribute to the strategic debate, not only about the political but about all dimensions of crisis management for Afghanistan and the region, in line with the comprehensive approach of the European Security Strategy.
- Special emphasis must be put on forging a global political agreement in a regional context and on promoting economic cooperation and trade with Asia, the Middle East and Europe.
- As in Afghanistan NATO is in charge of the military dimension of crisis management, the EU must focus on the civilian dimension, notably on support and training of the Afghan National Police and the creation of a justice system. The contribution of the EU and its Member States must be in line with their political, economic and demographic weight. The EU should assess to which extent the means offered by Member States can be supplemented by EU means.

- The EU must reinforce its capacity to plan and run complex civilian and military operations, both in Brussels and on the ground.

### **To Belgium and the other EU Member States**

#### **7. A fully-fledged national position:**

- Like the other EU Member States, Belgium cannot judge its contribution to crisis management in Afghanistan from a national perspective only. Each government must actively participate in the broader international debate, in the EU, NATO as well as the UN.
- On the basis of the consensus forged in those frameworks should the national contribution be decided, not only in military terms, but also in terms of police and justice, and financial means.
- In light of the desired end-state, longer-term policies must be developed in order to generate the indicated sustained civilian and military contributions and corresponding budgets.

#### **8. Public opinion:**

- At each level, but at the national level especially, a communications strategy must be developed to inform the public of the objectives set with regard to Afghanistan, Pakistan and the region and their importance for one's own society.
- The exact motivation of all national decisions to contribute or not must be explained, including the risks of either option.