



The conference held on 16th March with professor Chaliand on terrorism and the Afghan conflict was illustrated by his interesting if not provocative views on these issues.

In a nutshell:

On Al Qaeda and terrorism:

- Failure of Al Qaeda to trigger a “clash of civilizations” and loss of its sanctuaries
- Dismantlement of the C&C structure
- But it has retained a powerful appeal/image in parts of the Muslim world, which means that the struggle will be a long one

On Iraq:

- Negotiations for the future Government will be lengthy and the role of the army (shia?) will increase in the next future
- It remains to be seen who between Chalabi & Moktadar al Sadr or Maliki & Alami will prevail in the future Government
- The Kurd minority will probably pay the bill for some deal between the shia and sunni components; the shia majority imposing its will to the sunni but for a price... (Kirkuk and some windfalls of the petroleum benefits)
- US forces will stay present but on limited scale (30 to 50 thousands men) to ensure the unity of the country

Concerning Afghanistan:

- The Taliban represent a real power and enjoy broad popular support in the pashtun areas and in other provinces where they can count on some support (the southern half of the country and the stronghold of Gulmudin Hekmatiar in the North). It is actually an insurrection against an unpopular regime which is backed only by half of the population (but a divided one between Azara, Tajiks and Uzbeks) and by an inefficient and heavily corrupt police and army
- During the years 2002-2006, the Taliban, due to the weaknesses of Kabul and the disinterest of the Bush administration in the wake of the Iraqi campaign, developed a systematic network in the country where, quite often, they fulfill the basic role of the State (a relatively equitable justice among others). As a result, they feel now confident to win the war and bet on the reluctance of the western public opinion to accept human losses
- Basically it is the failure of the legal government to answer the most basic needs of the population which has allowed for a resurgence of the insurrection since 2007. But it is worth noticing that the allied forces have been reluctant to engage the guerillas and that the

Provincial Reconstruction Teams are not in a position to fill in the gap left by the Afghan Authorities.

- The new US administration has grasped the importance of that conflict. Not that Afghanistan as such is viewed as an asset, but it remains essential in order to stabilize Pakistan. The problem is that a strategic military success is most improbable. The situation has evolved towards a “stalemate” where neither adversary could win! But if the prize is too heavy for the Taliban and if the Kharzai regime could deliver to the population, a kind of compromise could be considered. Hence the renewed effort of the US forces to inflict some serious blow to the insurrection, which will probably culminate with the reoccupation of Kandahar, the main asset of the Taliban.

Considering the US electoral schedule, some decisive evolution has to happen by end 2011.

- Fortunately, China and Russia share the US concern regarding the stabilization of Pakistan and Central Asia, which explain their moderate support to the US effort. Iran, for its part, is not keen to see radical Sunni Muslims regain preeminence in Kabul.

Report made by the Director general of the Institute