

NATO in Afghanistan Evaluation of its Challenges for Establishing the Security in an Islamic Country

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Abstract

The mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan is seen by many as a test of the alliance's political will and military capabilities.

The situation in Afghanistan has seen a rise in the overall level of violence due to increased Taliban military operations, an increase in terrorist-related activities, and recent major offensive operations conducted by the allies.

In August 2003, NATO took control of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. At the time of the takeover, the mission was centered on Kabul. Today ISAF is leading the international operation in the whole of Afghanistan – known as Theatre Command –, and the mission has evolved to become the most complex NATO has ever been engaged in.

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) faces serious obstacles: shoring up a weak government in Kabul; using military capabilities in a distant country with rugged terrain; and Rebuilding a country devastated by war and troubled by a resilient narcotics trade. As our major question, we try to evaluate the challenges faced NATO in Afghanistan for establishing the security during the past decade.

Keyword: Afghanistan, NATO, Islamic Country, Security

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1- Introduction

The mission of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Afghanistan is seen by many as a test of the alliance's political will and military capabilities. Since the Washington Summit in 1999, the allies have sought to create a "new" NATO, capable of operating beyond the European theater to combat emerging threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Afghanistan is NATO's first "out-of-area" mission beyond Europe. The purpose of the mission is the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

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The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) faces serious obstacles: shoring up a weak government in Kabul; using military capabilities in a distant country with rugged terrain; and

Rebuilding a country devastated by war and troubled by a resilient narcotics trade.

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2- Afghanistan, a Test of Capabilities for New NATO

ISAF was created by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386 on December 20, 2001.

Led originally by the United States, the ISAF mission was initially limited to Kabul. NATO took over command of ISAF in Afghanistan in August 2003. The Security Council passed the currently governing resolution, Res. 1883, on September 23, 2008. The resolution calls upon NATO to provide security and law and order, promote governance and development, help reform the justice system, train a national police force and army, provide security for elections, and provide assistance to the local effort to address the narcotics industry.

Table No 1: Number of forces of each member (ISAF.2014)



NATO		International Security Assistance Force		ISAF	
Troop Contributing Nations					
	Albania	72		Germany	2,095
	Armenia	121		Greece	10
	Australia	356		Hungary	100
	Austria	3		Iceland	3
	Azerbaijan	94		Ireland	7
	Bahrain	0		Italy	2,000
	Belgium	147		Jordan	1,069
	Bosnia & Herzegovina	53		Republic of Korea	50
	Bulgaria	378		Latvia	31
	Croatia	146		Lithuania	83
	Czech Republic	250		Luxembourg	1
	Denmark	165		Malaysia	2
	El Salvador	0		Mongolia	40
	Estonia	20		Montenegro	25
	Finland	95		Netherlands	200
	France	177		New Zealand	2
	Georgia	805		Norway	67
	Poland	968		Portugal	66
	Romania	1,002		Slovakia	275
	Slovenia	4		Spain	247
	Sweden	219		The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia ¹	152
	Tonga	55		Turkey	457
	Ukraine	27		United Arab Emirates	35
	United Kingdom	5,200		United States	32,800
				Total	49,902

Note on numbers: Numbers of troops should be taken as indicative as they change daily.

¹ Turkey recognises the Republic of Macedonia with its constitutional name.
² In line with ISAF's planning and in coordination with NATO, Singapore has completed its contribution to ISAF on 22 June 2013, Canada on 31 March 2014.

1 June 2014

NATO's effort in Afghanistan is the alliance's first "out-of-area" mission beyond Europe. The purpose of the mission is the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Although NATO has undertaken stabilization and reconstruction missions before, for example in Kosovo, the scope of the undertaking in Afghanistan is considerably more difficult. Taliban and al Qaeda insurgents are providing stiff resistance to the operation, Afghanistan has never had a well-functioning central government, the distance from Europe, and the country's terrain present daunting obstacles to both NATO manpower and equipment. Stabilization and reconstruction must take place while combat operations, continue. And, although the allies agree upon the general political objective of the ISAF mission, some have had differing interpretations of how to achieve it. Politically, the mission in Afghanistan is likely to remain important for NATO's future. Several key NATO members, above all the United States, view the Afghanistan mission as a test case for the allies' ability to generate the political will to counter significant threats to their security. These countries believe Afghanistan provides a test of will against the concrete danger of international terrorism although some allies may disagree with such an assessment.

3- Rise of Insurgency

The conflict in Afghanistan continues to present a significant challenge to NATO's military commanders as well. Over the past ten years, Taliban attacks have increased in scope and number, and Taliban fighters

have adopted some of the tactics, such as roadside bombs and suicide attacks, used by insurgents in Iraq. In January 2008, a report issued by the Afghanistan Study Group claimed that the year 2007 was the deadliest for American and international troops in Afghanistan since the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. (Center for the Study of the Presidency.2008:17)

However, in 2008 the violence continued to escalate with a reported 30% increase nationwide and an estimated 40% rise in attacks over 2007 in the U.S.-led eastern sector. The continuation of violence throughout 2009 including allied operations in Helmand province has increased the number of casualties resulting from these and other attacks by Taliban forces and has now made 2009 the deadliest year for the allied effort.

Suicide attacks and insurgent violence have continued and have escalated thus far in 2009. Although by June 2009 some 400 insurgent attacks had been recorded, a higher than normal number, the anticipated large scale spring/early summer offensive did not materialize as expected.

U.S. officials, in July 2008, apparently confronted Pakistani officials with evidence that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI) was actively helping Afghanistan militants, particularly the Haqqani faction. (Mazzetti.2008)

Since the resignation of Musharraf, the new government in Pakistan has dispatched military units to the border region and has authorized the army to conduct offensive operations against Taliban forces in the northern tribal areas. In October 2008, the Pakistan government began to arm anti-Taliban tribal militias in the northern region in an attempt to control Taliban activity.(Washington Post.2008)

In early 2009, the Pakistan government attempted to curtail Taliban military activity in the Swat Valley region by agreeing to allow the Taliban to enforce strict Sharia law in exchange for ending support for military operations against Pakistani government forces and Taliban operations into Afghanistan. This initiative ended rather abruptly when the Taliban continued its anti-government activity and the Pakistan military launched a major military operation in the region. Pakistan has reported that since the beginning of the offensive, it has inflicted serious casualties on the Taliban and has secured large areas of territory once controlled by the Taliban.

The Karzai government in Afghanistan has also come under both domestic and international criticism due to rampant corruption and an inability to improve security and overall living conditions for its citizens. Some warlords continue to exert strong anti-government influence, and the narcotics industry remains an entrenched threat to the country's political health. The allies have not always been in full agreement on how to counter these problems, but allied officials said that they needed a strong, competent, and reliable Afghan government to provide reasonable services to the population if NATO were to succeed. The national elections held on August 20 in which President Karzai was reelected for another term were considered seriously flawed in many areas of the country and a run-off election had been initially scheduled. However, the opposition candidates decided against another campaign and vote.

Figure No 1: Insurgent-initiated Attacks, 2007-8. (Progress toward Security.2008:32)

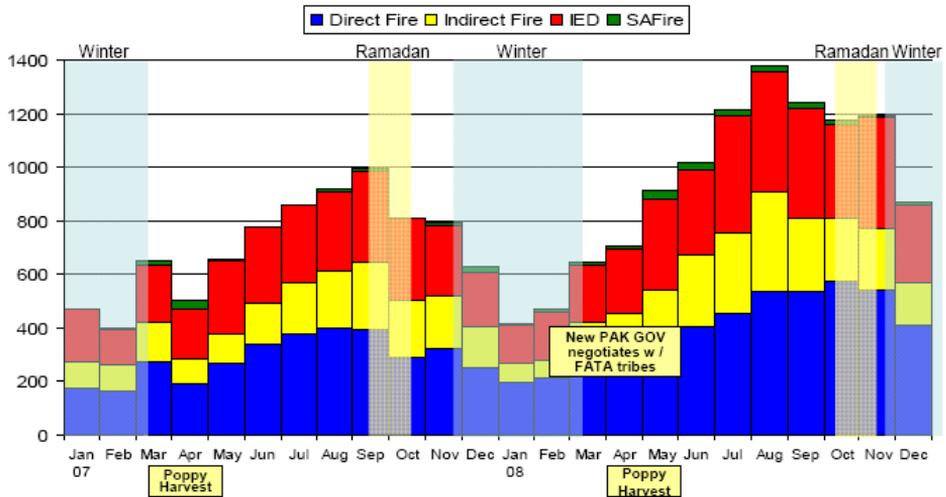
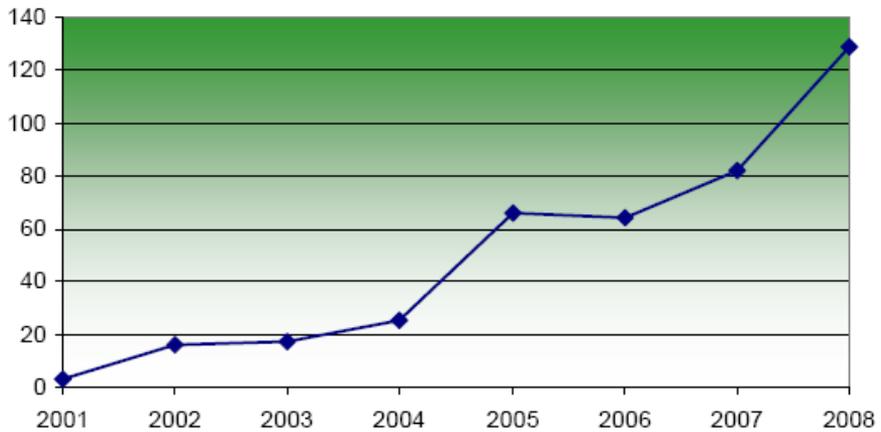


Figure No 2: U.S. Fatalities as a result of Hostile Action, 2001-2008(Progress toward Security.2008:32)



Afghanistan's results to date have been mixed, and no concrete end of the war is yet in sight.

Despite the achievement of some major political milestones—including ratifying a new constitution and holding presidential and parliamentary elections—progress to date in extending the rule of law, establishing effective governance, and furthering economic development has been relatively limited. Meanwhile, for several years, practitioners and observers have expressed concerns about a worsening security situation on the ground, including the greater frequency and sophistication of attacks, exacerbated by the ability of insurgents to find safe haven across the border in Pakistan.(Bowman.2009)

4-Security Situation

The year 2009 witnessed an increase in security incidents that led some observers to argue that the insurgency was gaining ground—that the Taliban was “winning”—while others argued instead that insurgent tactics were evolving. The insurgency remained a loose and sometimes internally fractious network of Afghans, supported by some outside help including the availability of safe haven across the border in Pakistan.

ISAF officials note that from 2007 to 2008, there was a 33% increase in the overall number of kinetic events. ISAF defines “kinetic” events to include attacks against Afghan or international forces, whether by improvised explosive device (IED), indirect fire, or direct fire; but not, for example, kidnappings or intimidation. IED events, the single largest cause of casualties, increased by 27%. In addition, attacks on GIROA officials and facilities increased by 119%. Afghan civilian deaths, in turn, increased by between 40 and 46%.

The FY2008 National Defense Authorization Act requires the Department of Defense to provide a semi-annual report to Congress describing the state of security and stability in Afghanistan. The latest report was released in June 2009.

Among the report’s observations are the following items:

- Insurgent attacks increased 60% over the same reporting period in 2008.
- Though military casualties, both international and Afghan increased by 48%, civilian casualties decreased by 9%.
- Insurgent activities were more widespread and at a higher intensity.
- Although NATO allies increased their contributions, NATO’s Combined Joint Statement of Requirements for ISAF remained unfulfilled in terms both personnel and equipment.
- Many contributing nations continue to maintain “caveats” or restrictions on how their troops be of use, often prohibiting offensive combat, and thereby constraining their forces’ usefulness.

These developments led some observers to conclude that the balance had tipped in favor of the insurgency. A study by the Paris-based International Council on Security and Development, released in December 2008, concluded that “...the Taliban has been experiencing a renaissance that has gained momentum since 2005. The West is in genuine danger of losing Afghanistan.” (Dreazen.2008)

5- Characterizing the Insurgency

While many observers use the term “Taliban” as a short-hand for the insurgency in Afghanistan, senior western officials in Afghanistan stress that the insurgency is not unified. ISAF prefers the term “insurgent syndicate” to refer collectively to all its various strands. Further, insurgent activities are closely linked with criminality, always a potent force in ungoverned spaces, and in particular with drug cultivation and sales. (Seth. 2008)

5-1 Taliban

The Taliban itself, Afghan and ISAF officials note, is more a network than a single organization. (Afsar. 2008). The Taliban emerged from the

Afghan civil war of the early and mid-1990's, and the organization ruled Afghanistan from its capture of Kabul in 1996 until its defeat in 2001. Mullah Mohammed Omar, the *de facto* head of state during Taliban rule, is generally assumed to be alive and leading the organization from Pakistan. In December 2008, for example, he reportedly issued new threats over the Internet against international forces in Afghanistan. (Reuters.2008)

The Taliban leadership includes two main "shuras" (councils)—a leadership council in Quetta, Pakistan, under Mullah Omar's watch, and another shura based in Peshawar, Pakistan. (Stanekzai.2008)

The Taliban reportedly receives support from some current and/or former Pakistani officials, including members of the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), in the form of logistics, medical, and training assistance. (Seth. 2008)

5-2- Haqqani Network

The Haqqani network is closely associated with the Taliban and one of its strongest factions. Reportedly, the network is also particularly closely linked to al Qaeda. Jalaluddin Haqqani fought as a mujahedin leader against Soviet forces, receiving substantial assistance from the CIA by way of Pakistan's ISI. (Solomon.2007)

When the Taliban came to power, he joined the government as a Minister but retained a separate power base in his home Zadran district and tribe, east of Kabul. His son Sirajudin has reportedly ascended to a key leadership role, and has reportedly called for changes in the leadership of the Quetta shura. U.S. officials in Afghanistan note that Sirajudin, like his father, has focused on his home Zadran district but has also expanded

5-3- Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG)

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar was a key mujahedin leader against Soviet forces. His organization, then known as the Hezb-e-Islami, received substantial aid from the U.S. government, which reportedly considered him a key ally. He twice held the title of Prime Minister during the early 1990's civil war period, before seeking refuge in Iran when the Taliban came to power. He has re-emerged in Afghanistan as the leader of the insurgent group, Hezb-i-Islami Gulbuddin (HiG), which is affiliated with both the Taliban and al Qaeda. In 2008, Hekmatyar apparently opened the door to talks with GIRoA, in part through a spring 2008 letter addressed to President Karzai. Some practitioners and observers suggest that there may be good potential for drawing Hekmatyar away from the insurgent fight and into a constructive role. Others caution that his reputation for Islamic extremism and human rights abuses call into question the likelihood and advisability of any reconciliation with him.

5-4- Foreign Groups

Foreign groups play critical roles in the insurgency by variously supporting and enabling Afghan insurgents. (Stanekzai.2008)

Al Qaeda, which both enabled and leveraged the Taliban during its years in power, reportedly mobilizes foreign fighters from the Arab world,

Chechnya, Uzbekistan, and other locations, to join the fight in Afghanistan.

Tehrik Taliban-i Pakistan (TTiP) is an umbrella organization for indigenous Pakistani Taliban commanders, based in Pakistan, in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the border with Afghanistan. TTiP is led by Baitullah Mahsud, who is from South Waziristan in the FATA, and who has reportedly built up strongholds in North and South Waziristan by recruiting and training young men, and “killing uncooperative tribal leaders.” (Perlez.2009)

Lashkar-e-Tayba, a Pakistani insurgent group originally focused on the disputed Kashmir region, reportedly cuts its insurgent teeth along the border with Afghanistan by training insurgents to fight there.

Tehrik Nefaz-e Shariat Mohammadi (TNSM) is a Pakistani insurgent group based primarily in the Northwest Frontier Province next to the FATA. Focused primarily on deepening its local control, the TNSM has also supported some Taliban operations in Afghanistan. (Yusufzai.2007)

6- Challenges Facing NATO

From the beginning of NATO’s command of ISAF, political leaders and local commanders have had to deal with several significant issues which have influenced the implementation of the ISAF mission. In fact, NATO faces complex issues both in its own ranks and on the ground in Afghanistan that are likely to concern ISAF over the future. Although the allies agree on their overall mission to stabilize the country, even with their endorsement of the U.S. strategy, some allies have differed on the means to reach that objective and on the amount of resources to be made available. As a result, NATO commanders have had difficulty persuading allies to contribute forces to ISAF or to provide NATO forces the appropriate equipment for their tasks.

6-1- Structural Challenges within NATO

6.1.1. Weakness of Unity of Command

Unity of command is normally a non-negotiable principle within NATO operations. NATO principles place much emphasis on the issue because of a tendency towards restrictiveness when it is not applied. With unity of command, a clear command and control mechanism is in place so that the authority, roles and relationships involved in accomplishing an assigned task are clear and unrestricted. This enables the commanding officer to lead his forces with free maneuverability in order to counter any situation that might develop in the area of operations. The lack of a unity of command is often reflected in national restrictions imposed on the use of different national forces in operations. National restrictions, also called caveats, are written restrictions formulated by the particular country deploying forces and they are mainly intended to limit how that country’s military contingent may be used.

6.1.2. ISAF National Caveats

From the outset, ISAF operations have been constrained by “national caveats”—restrictions that individual troop-contributing countries impose on their own forces’ activities. Caveats tend to be informed by domestic political constraints—a government may consider, for example, that only by limiting its troops’ activities, and hedging against taking casualties, can it guard against strong popular domestic opposition to its troop contribution. As a rule, troop-contributing countries state their caveats explicitly; but additional constraints may surface when unanticipated requirements arise and contingents seek additional guidance from their capitals.

The nature and extent of national caveats varies greatly among ISAF participants. Senior U.S. military officials point with concern, for example, to constraints on German forces in Afghanistan, which are imposed by Germany’s parliament the Bundestag. These include restrictions on German training and advisory teams that do not allow them to conduct combined offensive operations with their Afghan counterparts, and on capable German Special Operations Forces (SOF) that are “FOB-locked,” that is, effectively confined to their Forward Operating Base. Not all contingents are so constrained. U.S. officials praise, for example, the 700-strong French infantry battalion that works closely with U.S. SOF and Afghan counterparts in Kapisa province, at the “north gate” into Kabul, which witnessed growing insurgent infiltration in 2008.

National caveats frustrate commanders on the ground because they inhibit commanders’ freedom to apportion forces across the battle space—to move and utilize forces freely. With caveats, the “whole” of the international force, as some observers have suggested, is less than the sum of its parts.

6.1.3. Difficulties in Raising Troops

The debate over the mission and public opinion throughout Europe has from the beginning affected the effort to raise forces for the ISAF mission. The highest priority for any ISAF commander is to have the forces necessary along with the greatest amount of flexibility possible to provide a safe and secure environment in which the government of Afghanistan can extend its authority. Since the beginning of the ISAF mission, NATO officials have consistently experienced difficulty persuading member governments to supply adequate numbers of forces. U.S. Defense Secretary Gates had been critical of the allies at times for not providing more troops, although he has softened his tone. In December 2007 he told the House Armed Services Committee that an additional 7,500 troops were needed, in addition to the 41,700 then in ISAF. At the time, he suggested that approximately 3,500 should be trainers for the Afghan army. He also called for at least 16 more helicopters. **(Testimony of Sec.2007)**

According to NATO officials, the 2006 attack on the Norwegian-Finnish PRT awakened some governments to the continuing threat posed by instability fueled by the insurgency. **(Interviews with NATO officials.2006)**

Canada was one of the first allies to recognize the need for combat forces. By a close vote in the Canadian parliament in May 2006, the government designated 2,300 troops for Afghanistan until February 2009, most of which have been sent to Kandahar province. Britain initially promised to send 3,600 troops to Helmand province by the beginning of Stage Three operations in July 2006, and has steadily increased its contribution to its current 8,300 troops. In early 2008, Germany agreed to send 200 troops to replace a Norwegian contingent in the north. In February 2008, the United States deployed the 24th Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) to southern Afghanistan.

6.1.4 Provincial Reconstruction Teams

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are civilian-military units of varying sizes designed to extend the authority of the central government into the countryside, provide security, and undertake projects (such as infrastructure development and the delivery of basic services) to boost the Afghan economy. Although some allied governments believe that poor governance, rather than the insurgency, is the principal problem impeding stabilization of the country, NATO officials describe the PRTs as the “leading edge” of the allies’ effort to stabilize Afghanistan.

There are 26 ISAF-led PRTs in operation. Virtually all the PRTs, including those run by the United States, now operate under ISAF but with varying lead nations. Each PRT operated by the United States is composed of U.S. forces (50-100 U.S. military personnel); Defense Department civil affairs officers; representatives of USAID, State Department, and other agencies; and Afghan government (Interior Ministry) personnel. Most PRTs, including those run by partner forces, have personnel to train Afghan security forces.

There is no established model for PRTs, and many are dominated by military forces, rather than civilian technicians. By most accounts, those serving in PRTs make an effort to move about surrounding territory, engage the local governments and citizens, and demonstrate that the international presence is bringing tangible results. Despite general support for PRTs, they have received mixed reviews and there have been criticisms of the overall PRT initiative. Some observers believe the PRTs operate without an overarching concept of operations, do not provide a common range of services, do not have a unified chain of command, and often do not coordinate with each other or exchange information on best practices. (Afghanistan Study Group Report.2008:22)

Another problem that has risen for PRTs in some areas is that civilian relief organizations do not want to be too closely associated with the military forces assigned to the PRTs because they feel their own security is endangered as well as their perceived neutrality.

6.1.5 Allied Viewpoints

Allied views began to change between the time of the December 2005 NATO communiqué describing ISAF’s mission and today, largely due to the surge in Taliban activity. The following sections represent a look at only a few allies and their early views and does not necessarily represent the views of the entire 28-member Alliance.

Germany: Reconstruction as the Priority

After coming to power in October 2005, Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government initially expressed a more decisive commitment to securing stability in Afghanistan than its predecessor. Chancellor Merkel and her Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier (Merkel's opponent in national elections scheduled for October 2009) have consistently expressed their support for the ongoing German military engagement in Afghanistan.

However, Berlin had consistently advocated a shift in its and NATO's Afghanistan strategy toward civilian reconstruction and development projects, army and police training activities, and enhanced political engagement with Afghanistan's neighbors.

Britain and Canada: A Broad Mandate

The governments of Britain and Canada have shared similar views with the United States on how ISAF should fulfill its mission. They have sent combat forces to Afghanistan, maintained PRTs in the most unstable parts of the country, and have engaged the Taliban resurgence aggressively.

France: Combat and Stabilization

The French government believes that ISAF must be a combat force that buttresses the efforts of the Afghan government to build legitimacy and governance. Unlike German forces, for example, many French forces are trained both for combat and stabilization. As of October 2009 France has deployed 3,100 troops in ISAF; most are in a stabilization mission in Kabul and in army training missions elsewhere in the country. (Le Monde.2007)

6.2. Challenges Derived from Indigenous Situation

The NATO mission in Afghanistan is also compounded by a number of problems facing the Afghanistan government led by President Hamid Karzi, including corruption, the slow progress of reconstruction, widespread poppy cultivation and the continued power of local warlords and militias. (PakTribune.2004)

6.2.1. Poppy Cultivation

Criminality, particularly poppy cultivation and the heroin trade, has blossomed in Afghanistan, generating billions of dollars for forces outside the control of any legitimate authority. Much of this trade and the money it generates is under the control, or at least the influence, of various major and minor military commanders, who use this money to increase their military capability and gain independence from the central government and any international troops working with them. The Taliban, too, has used this trade to finance its increasingly sophisticated and brazen attacks.

As a result, Afghanistan has regained its position as the world's leading producer of heroin. According to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crimes, the country's 3,000 metric tons of opium production in 2003 constituted two-thirds of the world's supply and generated revenues of \$2.3 billion

for Afghan warlords, corrupt provincial authorities, and even the Taliban. Both the absolute and the proportionate impact of drug trafficking is expected to be still higher in 2004 because the laboratories used to transform poppies into opium and heroin are now increasingly located in Afghanistan. This sum—equivalent to nearly half of the legitimate gross domestic product—finances forces opposed to central authority.

The lure of illicit income is especially strong in the absence of legitimate economic outlets due to failures of reconstruction. Not surprisingly, there are strong indications that the regional armed leaders—the warlords—are extensively involved in the drug and smuggling trade. (Zia-Zarifi.2004)

Figure No 3: Area under Poppy Cultivation (ha) & Potential Production of Opium (mt), 2001-2008. (Progress towards Security.2009)

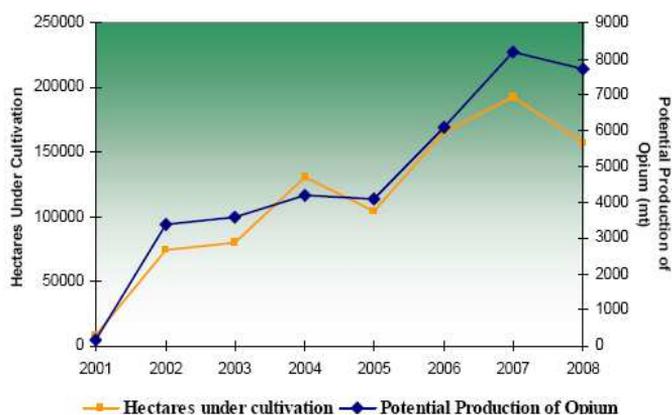
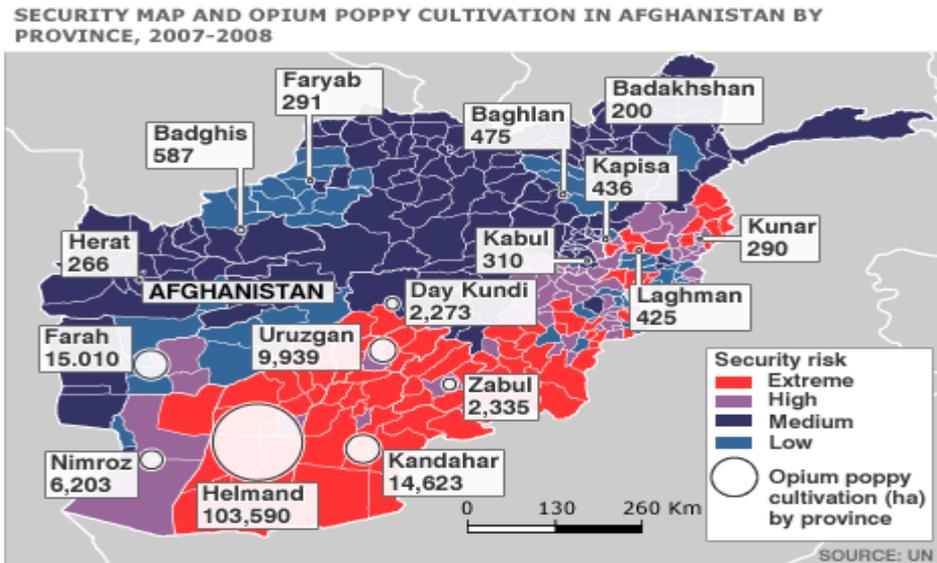


Figure No 4: Security Map & Pooy Cultivation(security_by_district_and_opium_poppy)



6.2.2. The Rule of the Warlords

Who are these warlords? Warlord is not a technical word. In Afghanistan, it is a literal translation of the local phrase “jangsalar,” and it has simply come to refer to any leader of men under arms. The country has thousands of such men, some deriving their power from a single roadblock, others controlling a town or small area, and still others reigning over large districts. At the apex of this chaotic system are some six or seven major warlords, each with a significant geographic, ethnic, and political base of support.

Human Rights Watch has documented criminality and abuses by commanders small and large, and by nearly all of the major warlords: General Atta and General Dostum in the north, Ismail Khan in the west, Gul Agha Shirzai in the south, Abdul Rasul Sayyaf in the center, and, the most powerful, Marshall Fahim, the senior vice president and minister of defense. (Zia-Zarifi.2004)

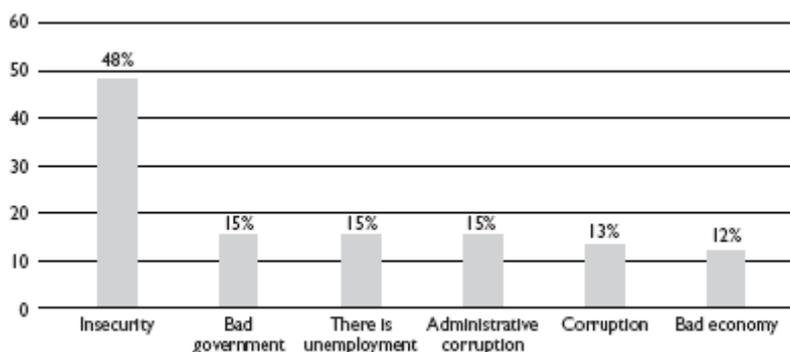
6.2.3. Governmental Corruption

The Karzai government is increasingly unpopular throughout the country, despite its attempts to build support with various giveaway programs, such as free seed distribution. It is widely seen as corrupt and having embraced the very warlords who pillaged the country in the lawless years preceding the Taliban and impotent in the face of rising terrorist violence.

"Transparent" is not an apt description of the general business culture of Afghanistan. Corruption and collusion between government and business is believed to be commonplace. Business is conducted based on personal,

familial, ethnic and historical relationships, and businesses must negotiate a maze of bribes, taxes and murky government requirements that raise the risks and costs of doing business. Those businesses with the right connections are able to sidestep many of these costs and risks. They are also more successful in getting access to land and capital, two critical constraints in the business enabling environment of Afghanistan. However, for small businesses and potential new investors or entrepreneurs without political influence, there are significant and sometimes insurmountable barriers to entry. (Pike. 2012)

Table No 2: The problems facing Afghanistan. (Dahl Thruelsen.2007)



6.2.4. Perceptions about NATO as an ‘Occupation Force’

A final, perhaps more important, reason for the failure of NATO’s mission in Afghanistan are growing domestic and regional perceptions about NATO as an ‘occupation force” in Afghanistan with an expansionist regional agenda. The ISAF was mandated by the UN to secure and stabilize post-Taliban Afghanistan. Instead, its primary mission, even after NATO assumed its command in 2003, has been to secure the Karzai government in Kabul, which is perceived to be unrepresentative of the majority Pashtun interests, especially in Taliban infested south and south-eastern parts of the country.

Even otherwise, the Afghans in general have historically distrusted a strong central authority, what to speak of a foreign power trying to forcibly dictate its will upon them. Given that, it is but natural for the Afghan people living in southern and south-eastern regions and in the firing line of US/NATO operations to increasingly perceive NATO as an "occupation force." The significant rise in civilian deaths caused by ill-planned NATO air-strikes has alienated the very civilian population whose support is essential for the success of NATO mission. (Pak Tribune.2004)

6.3. Regional Context

Afghan officials, and international practitioners and observers, generally agree that Afghanistan’s security is intimately linked to its relationships with its neighbors, first of all Pakistan, and to relations among those neighbors.

6.3.1. Support to Taliban from Pakistan

NATO's failure to co-opt Pakistan for jointly managing the threat from Taliban and their militant-extremist sympathizers in Pakistan's tribal regions bordering Afghanistan is another major challenge facing the NATO mission in Afghanistan. There is no doubt that Pakistan's tribal regions have served as an important base for Taliban re-grouping and infiltration across the unrecognized Durand Line into Afghanistan.

Preventing Pakistan's tribal regions from becoming a safe heaven for Taliban requires close collaboration between NATO command in Afghanistan and Pakistan's security apparatus. Pakistan has, indeed, been a part of the Tri-Partite Commission tasked with ensuring security in Afghanistan's border areas—with Afghanistan and US/NATO being its two other members—but the NATO leadership has preferred in much of the past four years of its ISAF command to side with the Afghan and US leadership in blaming Pakistan for not "doing enough" to prevent Taliban regrouping in its tribal regions and their infiltration into Afghanistan.

The stiff resistance that Pakistan military has received from pro-Taliban extremists in the tribal regions indicates that preventing the re-grouping of Taliban in these regions and their infiltration into Afghanistan is quite a huge task that Pakistan alone may not be able to perform. Had the US/NATO and Afghan leaders been more forthcoming on the measures Pakistan proposed to institutionalize new security arrangements along the Durand Line within the framework of the Tri-Partite Commission, the said problem could have been solved considerably over time.

Millions of Afghan refugees are still camped in Pakistan's tribal regions. The Afghan refugee camps are an important source of Taliban militancy. As long as Pakistan's tribal regions are beset by extreme poverty and illiteracy, they will remain an ideal place for the generation of extremism and terrorism. Given the prevailing state of insecurity in the tribal regions, the US plan to develop them economically has not materialized.

6.3.2. Iran

ISAF officials note that the role of Afghanistan's large neighbor to the west, Iran, is also critical to its future, and they describe Iran's approach as a "dual-track strategy." On one hand, Iran enjoys close, long-standing cultural, linguistic, and religious ties with significant portions of Afghanistan's population. ISAF officials estimate that Iran is the second-largest contributor of reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, after the United States—its efforts are most evident in Herat Province in western Afghanistan. And since Iran is a major destination for Afghan heroin, with all of its attendant concerns about crime and drug addiction, Iranian officials share with their Afghan counterparts a vested interest in effective counternarcotics approaches. Some officials also point to the generally positive role Iran played at the 2001 Bonn Conference, to help forge consensus among Afghan factions about the creation of a post-Taliban government, as evidence that Iran can play a constructive role on Afghan matters.

At the same time, ISAF officials state that Iran has provided some weapons and training to Afghan insurgents. Some add that Tehran may be concerned about a growing U.S. military footprint along both its eastern and western borders, as additional U.S. military forces flow into southern Afghanistan, and U.S. forces assume battle spaces in southern

Iraq that were formerly manned by coalition partners. One official argued that Iran's interest is to "keep it simmering" in Afghanistan. **(Bowman.2009 :35)**

Most practitioners and observers suggest that, in some capacity, a comprehensive solution for Afghanistan must take Iran into account. **(Bowman.2009)**

7. Final Assessment

Afghanistan's long history without an accountable central government able to extend its reach over the country's difficult geographic and political terrain continues to present the allies with problems rivaling the specific threat of the Taliban.

For some, Afghanistan's political transition was completed with the convening of a parliament in December 2005. However, after seven years neither the government in Kabul nor the international community has made much more than incremental progress towards its goals of peace, security, and development. According to a March 2008 report issued by the Atlantic Council of the United States, the situation on the ground has settled into a strategic stalemate. NATO and Afghan forces cannot eliminate the Taliban threat by military means as long as they have sanctuary in Pakistan, and the civil development efforts are not bringing sufficient results.

With this reality, there have been increasing calls for the Afghan government and the US/NATO leadership to consider reaching out to moderate Taliban forces and sympathizers inside Afghanistan to explore the idea of a cease fire and coalition government. Meetings between the Kabul government and some elements of the Taliban were held during the summer of 2008 but it would appear at this point that the Taliban is too disjointed of a movement to provide any realistic political settlement. The idea of approaching moderate elements of the Taliban has also been adopted as part of President Obama's strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Here we can observe the NATO strategy vs insurgents which is called "anaconda" for now and near future.

Figure No 5: NATO Strategy vs. Insurgents
(<http://ricks.foreignpolicy.com/>)



The declining fortunes of the Afghan government has presented a difficult obstacle. NATO is attempting both to respect the policies of a nascent representative government and to urge it forward to better governance. The Afghan government's own problems have been apparent: discontented warlords, endemic corruption, a vigorous drug trade, the Taliban, and a rudimentary economy and infrastructure.

A number of key practitioners and observers have supported "reconciliation" outreach initiatives, to insurgent leaders and/or their foot soldiers, as one avenue toward final settlement of the conflict in Afghanistan..

For multifarious reasons, maintaining security can be one of the biggest challenges to Afghanistan after 2014. When inside attacks technically called as blue and green attacks increased, American, Australian and German trainers took precautionary measures that harmed training process of the Afghan National Army (ANA). Besides, Afghan government halted sending their troops to Pakistan for training due to the security situation in both the countries.

Afghan National Army (ANA) and Police do not represent the entire ethnic groups of the country. The forces of the Afghans do not have the balanced proportion of the ethnic groups like Pashtun, Hazara, Tajik and Uzbeks, therefore; technically the Afghan troops are on the 'fault line.' Due to these reasons, desertions, that is commonly known as "Bagora" in Pakistan is on the rise from Afghan forces. Even constant vigil is kept on Afghan forces so that they may not harm their trainers or leak secrets to Taliban.

Both the US and NATO forces do not trust ANA, if this is the existing plight of an army, their future strength is really a big question mark.

The fight between Afghan troops and Taliban will continue after 2014, but the nature of the war will be changed. Taliban have lost the capability of capturing districts or cities, however, they will continue their resistance to the Afghan troops, this resistance can continue even for ten-long years. The security will be a challenge for Afghan government, but perhaps its nature will be changed.

Giving due share to all ethnic groups in political power can be a great challenge, as the deprivation or intolerance of any group can cause political upheavals in Afghanistan. The emerging and capturing of power by Taliban in 1996 was the main reason of keeping Pashtuns away from power.³⁴

After 2014, foreign interference can mount in Afghanistan. The neighboring countries including Pakistan, Iran and India, and even China, will again become active in Afghanistan. (Rahmanullah. 2014)

Then as a final conclusion we could state that NATO has not achieved its expected objectives in the Afghanistan case. Our assumption is that sustainable peace operations and providing a democratic context require the involvement of organizations and institutions that have a similar nature. The structure of NATO in its nature is a military organization. Establishing a sustainable base for constructing a democratic political system in a territory like Afghanistan is not a task which could be exercised by a military organization.

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