

ISSUE BRIEF

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES

Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action



To tackle the tough issues facing NATO and the transatlantic community, the Atlantic Council created the Strategic Advisors Group (SAG). Co-chaired by Council Chairman General James L. Jones, former Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and Kristin Krohn Devold, former Norwegian Minister of Defense, the SAG is comprised of American and European defense experts with deep experience in transatlantic security and defense issues.

This Issue Brief reflects the SAG's work and deliberations on how NATO should proceed to create a winning strategy in the difficult mission the Alliance faces in Afghanistan.

Make no mistake, the international community is not winning in Afghanistan

Unless this reality is understood and action is taken promptly, the future of Afghanistan is bleak, with regional and global impact. The purpose of this paper is to sound the alarm and to propose specific actions that must be taken now if Afghanistan is to succeed in becoming a secure, safe and functioning state.

On the security side, a stalemate of sorts has taken hold. NATO and Afghan forces cannot be beaten by the insurgency or by the Taliban. Neither can our forces eliminate the Taliban by military means as long as they have sanctuary in Pakistan. Hence, the future of Afghanistan will be determined by progress or failure in the civil sector.

However, civil sector reform is in serious trouble. Little coordination exists among the many disparate international organizations and agencies active in Afghanistan. Legal and judicial reform (including reducing corruption), and control of narcotics are interdependent efforts and must receive the highest priority. To add insult to injury, of every dollar of aid spent on Afghanistan,



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less than ten percent goes directly to Afghans, further compounding reform and reconstruction problems.

Urgent changes are required now to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a failing or failed state. Not just the future of the Afghan people is at stake. If Afghanistan fails, the possible strategic consequences will worsen regional instability, do great harm to the fight against Jihadist and religious extremism, and put in grave jeopardy NATO's future as a credible, cohesive and relevant military alliance.

Building a functioning Afghanistan is inherently fraught with difficulty. Much of the nation's infrastructure was destroyed by the Soviet occupation and the years of Taliban rule. But despite the resources and nearly seven years of effort put into Afghanistan by the Afghan government and the international community, the situation on the civil side is not improving as expected. Taliban still control sparsely populated parts of Afghanistan. Civil reforms, reconstruction, and development

work have not gained traction across the whole country, especially in the South.

Surprisingly, many NATO nations engaged in Afghanistan lack a sense of urgency in comprehending the gravity of the situation and the need for effective action now. Fortunately, NATO and the George W. Bush administration have announced separately that studies are now underway to assess conditions on both the security and civil sectors in Afghanistan as a first step that will result in corrective action. But hope is not a strategy or a plan of action. And unfortunately, recent dissension within NATO over the ability of the different militaries to conduct counter-insurgency operations has not helped.

The dangers and difficulties in Afghanistan have been intensified following the assassination of former Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in December. The turmoil and violence Pakistan faces with Bhutto's death and the February elections could too easily overwhelm any interest Islamabad might have to work with Afghan President Hamid

Strategic Recommendations in summary

Swift Completion of the Security and Reconstruction Assessment: Without properly assessing the current situation, it will be impossible to design a coherent way forward for NATO and the international community in Afghanistan.

A Comprehensive Campaign Plan and Strategy: One essential step to achieving success in Afghanistan is to create a comprehensive campaign plan that brings together all of the disparate security, reconstruction and governance efforts and coordinates and integrates their work.

Appointment by the UN of a High Commissioner: He must use his stature, gravitas, and authority to cajole, convince or even coerce better coordination and integration of the international effort with the Karzai government.

Create a Regional Approach and Regional Solutions: Bringing in interested parties and neighbors could be done through a meeting or conference that could include the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (of which Russia and China are key members); India; Iran; and of course Pakistan.

These recommendations are explained in more detail in the next section of this paper

Karzai to secure the Pakistan-Afghan border. That means a porous border that will continue to provide a safe haven for Taliban and insurgents to stage attacks into Afghanistan.

Conclusions and Prescriptions in Brief

These realities lead to two major prescriptions. First, only a regional solution can bring peace, security and some measure of prosperity to Afghanistan. Second, efforts inside Afghanistan must be coordinated and integrated, in the first instance with a “high commissioner” given the appropriate authority by the UN Security Council to carry out this integration, to develop a regional approach to Afghan problems, and to implement a comprehensive plan of action. To implement these prescriptions, we urge the following steps.

Swift Completion of the Security and Reconstruction Assessment: The Afghan assessment studies announced by the Bush Administration and NATO must be completed soon – preferably before the spring when fighting will begin anew. Without properly assessing the current situation and identifying the problems and obstacles to progress across all sectors, it will be impossible to design a coherent way forward for NATO and the international community in Afghanistan. Through these assessments, Allied publics and politicians must understand the stakes and risks involved if we fail; what the real situation on the ground in Afghanistan is concerning security and civil sector reform; and the urgency needed in taking action. At present that is not the case. Any assessment should define the mission in Afghanistan over a long-term framework that would clearly and unambiguously demonstrate that there are no quick or easy fixes to the country’s many challenges. The international community must understand that international efforts in Afghanistan will require a lengthy commitment. From this assessment, a comprehensive campaign plan must be developed and put into action.

A Comprehensive Campaign Plan and Strategy:

International efforts engaged in rebuilding and securing Afghanistan include over 40 countries, three major international organizations (the UN, EU and NATO) and scores of other agencies and non-governmental organizations. They are disorganized, uncoordinated and at present insufficient. That must be fixed.

One essential step to achieving this vital goal is to create a comprehensive campaign plan that brings together all of these disparate security, reconstruction and governance efforts and coordinates and integrates their work. This effort to write a plan could be organized under NATO auspices, with the plan submitted to the UN for inclusion in the UN Security Council Resolution which provides the authority for the high representative. Participants in the development of this plan must include not only NATO, which is responsible only for providing a safe and secure environment, but the international organizations and Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) representatives who do the bulk of the civil reconstruction work. *The Karzai government must play a key role as well.*

The focus of their efforts should be to develop a plan that improves security and safety; weeds out corruption; establishes a fair and just legal system; puts in place an effective and legitimate police force; Creates jobs and, crucially, reverses the epidemic in opium production through a sound and innovative set of policies that controls the cultivation of poppies by providing incentives to alternative crop cultivation and punishing producers of opium.

Appointment by the UN of a High Commissioner:

The Karzai government must understand the need for a High Representative to help coordinate and integrate the international effort in Afghanistan. The failure to appoint a “High Rep” with the experience of Paddy Ashdown is a blow to improving the international effort. The High Representative must use his stature,

gravitas, and authority to cajole, convince or even coerce better coordination and integration of the international effort with the Karzai government. To ensure the international legitimacy of the commissioner and to enhance coordination, his mandate should be approved by the UN Security Council to permit him to oversee and implement the proposed comprehensive campaign plan. Without such an individual with the authority to implement the campaign plan, the civil sector reforms in Afghanistan will continue to be inchoate and far less effective than the situation demands.

The high commissioner should also play a critical role in organizing a regional solution. For instance, the high commissioner and the international organizations and nations (especially the U.S.) could seek to develop a Pakistani-Afghan “Camp David process” of intensive, multilateral diplomacy with the goal of brokering an agreement that addresses boundary problems and other bilateral irritants, and especially deals with Pakistan’s tribal regions that provide sanctuary for Taliban and other insurgents. Without such a regional effort, success in Afghanistan will be impossible.

Clearly, any High Commissioner can only be effective once a political arrangement with the Afghan government is agreed enabling him to have authority to coordinate reconstruction and a counter narcotics strategy, while at the same time working in close cooperation with the Afghan government and preserving Afghan national sovereignty.

Create a Regional Approach and Regional Solutions: The call for “paradigm shift” is over-used. However, in this case, one is justified. Unless those parties interested in saving Afghanistan understand that a regional approach is essential, the stalemate will continue. Bringing in interested parties and neighbors could be done through a meeting or conference that could include the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (of which Russia and China are key members); India; Iran; and of course Pakistan. A regional approach will

not be fashioned over night. But the international community and the UN High Commissioner must put energy and focus into a regional approach if gains in Afghanistan are to endure.

Consequences of failure

By its interventions in the Balkan crises of the 1990s, NATO demonstrated that even with the end of the Cold War, the alliance was still relevant and needed to help address many of the security threats that will arise in the 21st century. But if the Afghanistan effort fails, NATO’s cohesion, effectiveness and credibility will be shaken and the rationale for NATO’s expeditionary, out of area, role would be undermined. Member states would become reluctant to embark on other out of area operations, and the United States would be less likely to turn to the Alliance in crisis. This could lead to a moribund Alliance, which could find itself reduced to geopolitical irrelevancy and marginalization, much like the long defunct Cold War pacts of CENTO and SEATO.

Fortunately, both NATO and the Bush administration have finally decided to assess the deteriorating conditions in Afghanistan as a first step in taking action. NATO, the U.S. Central Command and the Washington interagency have announced each is undertaking an assessment. However, much greater urgency is required than is currently evident on both sides of the Atlantic. Study is necessary. Action is vital. The U.S. and NATO need to complete these studies by the spring and begin implementing changes even as they work.

The Neglected War

Afghanistan remains a dangerously neglected conflict in a Washington transfixed by Iraq and by European publics indifferent at best and opposed to engagement at worst (where Afghanistan is blurred in the public mind with Iraq). This despite the fact that casualty reports are front-page news

In addition to the recommendations covered in the preceding pages, success in Afghanistan will also require the international community to focus on the following recommendations covered in more detail in the section “Plan of Action”:

- **A Comprehensive Counternarcotics Effort.** The drug issue must be addressed now in a comprehensive and effective way if Afghanistan is to become a successful state. Bold thinking and a holistic approach combining development and enforcement tools are essential.
- **Improved training of the Afghan national police force.** A competent police force is key to sustained stability in Afghanistan, and this effort needs to be a top priority for the international community.
- **Emphasis on effective governance and creation of a credible Afghan judicial system.** The reach of the Afghan government is limited beyond Kabul, and with new elections in 2009 the legitimacy and effectiveness of the government will be put to the test.
- **Development assistance.** The international community must develop a coherent strategy for development assistance in Afghanistan that will ensure efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Public outreach to the allies, partners, and regional stakeholders.** The UN, NATO, and the EU must develop a public outreach strategy that will powerfully communicate the importance of a stable Afghanistan, and that this will be a long-term effort. Also, many publics in Europe and elsewhere have mistakenly associated the efforts in Afghanistan with the unpopular war in Iraq. Public diplomacy must separate these two campaigns, in order to bolster support for Afghanistan.
- **A rebalancing of national caveats on force participation in the International Security Assistance Force.** Care needs to be taken when dealing with national caveats. There needs to be an understanding of each nation’s ability to contribute forces according to their national directives. Furthermore, nations unable to contribute more forces should instead be encouraged to bolster their civilian aid to Afghanistan.

in Canadian, Dutch, and British media. Yet, what is happening in Afghanistan and beyond its borders can have even greater strategic long-term consequences than the struggle in Iraq. Failure would be disastrous for Europe, North America, and the region. Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan are already breeding grounds for insurgency and terrorism, potentially worse than before September 11th. The drug trade presents major national security and domestic criminal dangers to Afghans, and can unleash a fresh wave of cheap narcotics into Europe and North America. And what happens in Iraq, Iran and Pakistan will most likely influence and be influenced by conditions in Afghanistan.

On the ground, the situation has gradually settled into a strategic stalemate. Politically, the Taliban have expanded their control to less populated areas. Neither NATO nor the Afghan security forces have the numbers to prevent this from happening. For the time being, many Afghans are taking a wait and see attitude towards the Karzai government. But Afghans are losing confidence after almost seven years since the fall of the Taliban, while the international engagement has failed to show significantly improved conditions in the country.

NATO, as its commanders have repeatedly stressed, is short of troops in Afghanistan. Even though the Taliban cannot defeat U.S. or NATO forces, at least four maneuver battalions, additional helicopters and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets are needed to improve the security situation in Afghanistan.

The U.S. decision to deploy an additional 3200 Marines to Afghanistan this spring will help ease these shortfalls. However, this one time deployment to plug a gap in the ISAF force pool is not a long term solution.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is beginning to make a difference in providing lasting security for the Afghan people. Unfortunately, this is not

the case with the Afghan police. Until the police forces can be made effective and self-sustaining, the security situation will remain tenuous. And, as long as the Taliban and insurgents can find sanctuary, recruits and supplies in Pakistani tribal areas, they cannot be defeated. This leaves few good options for NATO and the coalition, especially given the recent political crisis in Pakistan created by Bhutto's assassination.

President Musharraf clearly understands the extent of the grave risks of Islamic militancy. However, securing the border with Afghanistan and effectively fighting an insurgency in northwest Pakistan is an enormously complex problem. The Pakistani Army is reluctant to fight against other Pakistanis especially when ethnic and tribal relationships make it difficult to tell friend from foe and intermarriage in the tribal areas has made many Taliban and other insurgents part of local Pakistani families.

This stalemate poses a great dilemma for NATO: how can the 26 NATO governments convince their publics to support a long-term effort in Afghanistan without clear indications of real progress either in the security or reconstruction sectors? Those allies with substantial forces fighting in Afghanistan are already fatigued by the political battles at home, as adverse domestic opinion challenges the governments to continue their strong support for Afghanistan. Canada, Germany and the Netherlands are the most immediate cases. While each has renewed their mandates for force deployments, finding replacement forces for them in 2009 and beyond will be difficult. If NATO cannot provide new forces to fight in the south, its credibility will be dealt a powerful blow, throwing into doubt its future cohesion and hence viability.

Key to success in Afghanistan, and ultimate withdrawal of coalition forces, is helping the Karzai government win on the civil front. Currently, the Afghan government is not winning the crucial battle in the civil sector to create the judicial, legal

and police reforms essential to governance and is losing the fight in curtailing corruption and drug production and creating job opportunities. NATO and Afghan forces are capable of coping with the immediate military and security threats posed by the Taliban and other insurgents, although there is continued fighting in the south. But unless civil reforms are put in place by the Karzai government with increased assistance from the international community, tactical military success will never bring the political or strategic victory that will allow NATO to go home. It is critical that the government take the lead in improving governance. The international community can provide security and reconstruction assistance, but only the Afghan government can build lasting government structures.

Problems and Dysfunctionalities

A multi-front war is being waged in Afghanistan. On the security side, military forces from some three-dozen states are dealing with the largely Taliban inspired insurgency. The major combatants are NATO, with about 41,000 troops under the command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and coalition forces with approximately 7,000 troops under U.S. command. The definition of Taliban is by no means clear with some full-time, part time and even amateur Afghans participating in the insurgency.

By most press accounts, the insurgency appears to be spreading, warlords seem to be accumulating power and the split between President Karzai and the Afghan legislature over power is growing. However, the insurgency does not threaten the survival of the current government in the short term. Meanwhile, Afghan security forces are still in the process of being recruited, trained and equipped with the police falling far behind the army in that regard. Even with growing Afghan Army strength, NATO still has the primary responsibility for maintaining security and stability.

Reform of the civil sector, particularly counternarcotics and job creation, remains painfully slow. After the Geneva donors' conference in 2002, division of labor was assigned to various states to oversee reforms in Afghanistan. Germany was assigned responsibility for the Afghan national police; Italy for the judicial sector; Japan for demobilization of militias; and the U.S. for building and training the Afghan army. The responsibility for Afghan reconstruction rests with the Afghan government, assisted by the international community most visibly by "Provincial Reconstruction Teams" (PRTs) of which there are now 25. The PRTs come from the various nations and report back to national capitals. Hence, most are not under central command and coordination, and integration of planning has been modest at best.

Regarding the issues of coordinating and integrating the many foreign resources directed to Afghanistan, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ronald Neumann points out that the tribal and political nature of Afghanistan means that there would be divided authority and responsibility and that no equivalent of a General MacArthur in the case of Japan could fit the Afghan case. Hence, to a large degree, the failure of reconstruction has been a failure of having sufficient points of real control. Whether that can be corrected or not is crucial to Afghanistan's future. While the Karzai government has largely failed to make civil reforms and stem the growth of poppy production, Afghanistan has always been a loosely governed state and it would be counterproductive to expect dramatic changes to the political culture of the country. A UN high commissioner with a strong and accepted mandate could address the coordination problem, but for that to happen the Afghan government may have to agree to an outside voice in its chambers.

The most striking sign of the international community's failure is drug production. It has grown to the extent that the World Bank estimates that close to 90 percent of the world's illegal opium

originates in Afghanistan. The stark alternatives that could reduce the poppy growth are unacceptable. Elimination through eradication of the poppies would create massive economic hardship and disruption that would turn a substantial portion of the population against the Karzai government and the NATO forces as more insurgents would now be recruited if only to derive income.

The last problem area is job creation. Simply put, despite all the other efforts, job creation is the most essential. Stimulating and growing the economy are key to any form of long-term stability. Yet, as with the PRTs, coordination of reconstruction and job creation has proven elusive.

In summary, despite efforts of the Afghan Government and the international community, Afghanistan remains a failing state. It could become a failed state. Were that to happen, the geostrategic consequences would likely prove profound for the West. NATO would not be able to just go back to business as usual, it would emerge from a failed mission greatly weakened. And a weakened NATO would find itself facing a strengthened Islamic insurgency with an Afghan sanctuary from which to base its expansion and a confidence developed from its ability to grind down both the USSR and NATO in Afghanistan. But attention in Washington and in European capitals on Afghanistan needs to be sharpened especially as the NATO Summit in Bucharest approaches. Islamabad must realize that instability in Afghanistan negatively impacts its goal of building a stable democracy. The first step is to draw attention to this crisis and ensure that policy makers and Alliance publics understand that urgency in taking action is essential.

While an assessment, campaign plan, a UN High Commissioner, and enhanced regional cooperation are the most urgent requirements and necessary pre-conditions for success, there are additional steps that NATO and the international community can take at the same time. These additional steps can be found in the “Plan of Action” section.

Conclusions

Perhaps the best that can be hoped for *in the short term* is to reduce Taliban control and freedom of action, especially in the south, and to improve stability elsewhere in the country. This will take more NATO forces in the south and stepped up civil efforts everywhere. It may be that the worst that can happen is a protracted insurgency in the south and instability elsewhere. It may be also that an Afghan state cannot be created that is effective and legitimate throughout the country.

The key to success - as in any counter-insurgency - rests on the Afghans. If enabled with effective security forces, the promise of a growing economy and legitimate institutions of government including the legal and judicial system, Afghanistan can become a functioning and secure country. This will take a great deal of time. Hence, NATO and the international community must reaffirm its commitment for the long haul that will be measured in years and perhaps decades, though the form and substance of assistance will change as that nation progresses towards peace, stability and democracy.

But, if NATO and the international community, together with the Karzai government, cannot put forward a coordinated and comprehensive effort that is sustainable and adequately resourced for this long-term, Afghanistan will experience only the worst of possible outcomes, and NATO itself could be on the path towards irrelevancy. This need not be the case and it is still not too late to act decisively as the main foundations for solution are essentially in place. The first step is to understand that the situation in Afghanistan is grave and that immediate action and attention are needed by the United States and the international community in order to prevent a setback to regional and global security. Urgency is the watchword. The international community must act, and it must act now.

Specific recommendations follow in the section “Plan of Action”.

Plan of Action

For NATO, the international community and the people of Afghanistan, the challenge is to strengthen and sustain efforts to provide security, and to make progress in building a nation in what will be a long campaign. Steps that can be taken to do this in a long campaign include:

A Comprehensive Counternarcotics Effort.

Among the many sub-tasks of a comprehensive campaign plan, counternarcotics must have the first priority. The drug issue must be addressed now in a comprehensive and effective way if Afghanistan is to become a successful state. Bold thinking and a holistic approach combining development and enforcement tools are essential.

Currently, a combination of law enforcement, interdiction, eradication, education and information and alternative job creation form the elements of the counternarcotics program. However, there is little consensus on the balance between and sequencing of these different tools. Some alliance countries emphasize interdiction and eradication, (with the United States pushing for herbicide spraying), while others see more promise in education and alternative crops. The various countries contributing to the counternarcotics campaign in Afghanistan must reach an overarching agreement on the balance and the sequencing between these tools.

Some have suggested ISAF take on an aggressive drug eradication role. This is not a good fit for ISAF; armed forces should not be used as an eradication force, being neither trained, manned nor equipped to do that job. Drug eradication must be an Afghan job, performed by Afghan forces, especially the police, which will require major improvements in the police force's ability and willingness to interdict drug producers and traffickers, as well as protect Afghans that cooperate with government and

allied efforts. A carrots and sticks approach could be used where regions are given an opportunity to cooperate with a holistic counter narcotics approach, but their failure to do so would result in Afghan eradication of their poppy crops.

Also, the possibility of limited use of legal opium purchases should be explored by the international community, beginning in Helmand Province, to see if limited purchases can become part of the comprehensive approach to fighting the drug problem.

Another idea to provide incentives for farmers to leave poppy cultivation, suggested by Edmund Phelps and Graciana del Castillo on January 9, 2008, in "The Financial Times", is for the international community to provide farmers loan and price support programs and other incentives like special preferential tariff treatments for light, labor-intensive manufactures (such as textiles) that make it easier for farmers to transition to non-poppy crops.

Regardless, the Karzai government must be as effective in providing security and social services to alternative crop farmers as the drug traffickers are in protecting poppy farmers if Afghanistan is going to wean the poppy farmers off their dependence on the drug trade. The Ministry of Agriculture can be helpful in providing services (such as an extension service); however, the Ministry is not a priority and needs civil mentoring, which is another area where nations (or the private sector) can assist. Experience

from other counternarcotics campaigns suggest that such economic development is far more successful in persuading poor populations to stop producing illicit drugs, rather than harsh measures such as law enforcement raids and eradication.

Improved Training of the Afghan National Police. A competent and effective Afghan police force (including border guards) is critical to the long-term sustainment of Afghan stability and the eventual withdrawal of international forces. In some provinces of Afghanistan, crime is seen as a greater threat to stability and security than the insurgency, but current police forces are too few and too poorly equipped and paid to be effective. Therefore, building competent law enforcement units who have the trust of the local population should be a key priority for the international effort in Afghanistan.

A pay and promotion reform designed to curb corruption by reducing the incentives for bribes is especially needed within the Afghan National Police. NATO led Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams have proven successful in training the Afghan National Army. Similar teams composed of police from the international community should be considered for embedding with the Afghan police units.

The “Focused District Development” concept should be encouraged and spread to other parts of Afghanistan, where certain key districts identified by Afghans take whole police formations off the line for 8 weeks to make sure the force is composed of the right personnel who are then trained until they reach a uniform level. In addition to providing better equipment and training, the Afghan National Police must be taught a culture of service. Nothing will enhance the legitimacy and effectiveness of the government more than a police force that has the confidence and trust of the Afghan people.

Governance and Creation of a Credible Afghan Judicial System. While the year 2008 is important, 2009 is decisive. That is the year of new elections in Afghanistan, and governance will be tested not just in the transfer of power, but in how the government will prepare for and conduct those elections.

Governance and rule of law in Afghanistan are clearly underdeveloped. The reach, capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan government are weak and do not extend very far outside Kabul. This is true partly because of the lack of trained officials to implement government decisions and to work with national governments and international organizations. The development and mentoring of professional government staff, from the provincial governors to ministry staff in Kabul, is an important area for donor countries to contribute either advisors or training resources in the donor country.

Perhaps above all elements of governance, a credible and capable Afghan judicial system is most critical. Without an integrated and effective justice system and institutional development of the Supreme Court, Office of the Attorney General and Ministry of Justice, a campaign plan to deal with the narcotics problem will fail, as will fail the legitimacy of the Afghan Government. The international community has lost focus and let slip its support in this area. As a top priority, it must re-energize with funding and expertise its assistance to Afghans in building an Afghan judicial system that is in harmony with Afghan traditions and international legal practice.

One way to bolster the effectiveness of the Afghan judicial system is to continue the construction of the judicial infrastructure with prisons, police stations, and courts. However, continued reforms in this area must also take into account the informal tribal systems of justice that can be found in Afghanistan. Imposing a judicial system without proper attention to these social mechanisms of justice will lead to

a lack of legitimacy among the Afghan people.

PRT Coordination. Coordination between the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) is essential. Because most PRTs report directly back to national capitals, coordination among all the PRTs, with NGOs and with the Karzai government is at best ad hoc. In fact, most PRTs are stovepiped back to national capitals and the ISAF commander has no ability to influence or coordinate their work. That must be corrected so that what happens in one province is related to both neighboring provinces as well as the national effort.

In fact, with experience gained in the past few years in running PRTs, the whole concept should be part of the assessment review, with an eye not only on best practices and better coordination, but also on whether some PRTs should be merged.

Additionally, to be effective, PRT personnel should remain in country at least twelve months (not the normal six month rotation in some PRTs) so they can establish relationships with the leadership in the local area. In this way, they can exploit these relationships to make sure local leaders identify not just wants but needs. Additionally, some PRT staffing is too heavily weighted towards military personnel for force protection, when more civilian personnel who are expert in reconstruction tasks are needed to do the nation-building job of the PRT.

Development Assistance. While coordination of development assistance is a primary goal for the campaign plan, there are other ways developmental assistance can be improved. For example, there is no coherent international strategy on how nations should provide funds for reconstruction and development projects in Afghanistan. While some countries have chosen to funnel their development funds through the Karzai government, others use NGOs or private companies for this purpose. On the U.S. part, the civilian economic and developmental

assistance funding should be increased from its current level of only \$1.5 billion a year. Too much U.S. assistance and funding goes into the military sector at the expense of badly needed civil reconstruction. Better coordination in providing development aid funds could help in the coherence of an Afghan reconstruction and development strategy. An Afghan Development Corps along the lines of a public works program could also help the Afghan government better organize internally its development needs and priorities that can help international donors better shape their assistance.

The international donor base can be deepened, because the entire international community has a stake in Afghanistan. Nations in Asia and the Gulf can do more to provide resources, both human and financial, for Afghan reconstruction. The private sector as well can work with the Afghan government and NGOs, as well as look for opportunities to assist with micro-enterprise assistance of their own.

Public Outreach and de-linking Iraq and Afghanistan. The UN, NATO and the EU must intensify efforts at 'strategic outreach,' especially in Europe, to communicate more powerfully the importance of building a stable Afghanistan. Part of this outreach is to de-link Iraq and Afghanistan. Publics, especially in Europe, regard Afghanistan as part of the highly unpopular war in Iraq. As a result, publics are unsure whether or not to support the ISAF mission. American declarations must cease describing Iraq and Afghanistan as the two main fronts in the war on terror and instead focus on each as separate, unique actions with different goals and objectives. Political leaders in Europe should also focus on the importance of Afghanistan for European security. Allied publics should know too, that the NATO mission will be a long one and that their patience and sustained contributions by all Allies are vital. The upcoming NATO Summit in Bucharest in April is an appropriate forum for heads of state to make this case for sustained, long-term effort to ensure success in Afghanistan.

Rebalancing the national caveats on force participation and allied support for reconstruction. We should be careful in dealing with the issue of national caveats. While we need our forces to be able to accomplish many diverse missions on the ground in Afghanistan, military capability remains the cornerstone of NATO's *raison d'être*. We should respect each nation's ability to contribute directly as they are able and according to their national directives. Rather than forcing nations to undertake operations that will not be approved by domestic legislatures, commitments in kind to civil reform and non-security related actions should be valid substitutes. In lieu of military forces, these members should

increase their civil support, both financial and in human resources, for Afghan reconstruction and development. This could include establishing PRTs, or providing experts in governance to those areas of the Afghan government under development, such as police training, judicial reform, agriculture or economic development. That will give individual states the chance to make additional capabilities beyond certain military tasks that have been foreclosed for national reasons. National caveats that restrict the commander's ability to use forces as needed, especially in emergency or in extremis are a cancer that Allies should attempt to remove, much as the Alliance did in Kosovo in 2004.

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The members of the Strategic Advisors Group believe that the recommendations stated in this paper promote an overall effective approach for the international community to the challenges in Afghanistan. While there may be some parts of the report with which some participants are not in full agreement, each participant believes that the report, as a whole, provides a sound basis for future actions by NATO and its partners. The views of the participants do not represent the official position of any institution.

The Atlantic Council is grateful for the financial support for this project provided by Lieutenant General Brent Scowcroft (USAF, Ret.) and the Scowcroft Group.

Without their support, this work would not have been possible.

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