

A NEW VISION FOR AFGHANISTAN



LIECHTENSTEIN INSTITUTE
ON SELF-DETERMINATION
AT PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD) at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs convened a review conference under the theme, "A New Vision for Afghanistan: By Afghans, with Afghans, for Afghans and Afghanistan," on September 4-7, 2008 on the Petersberg/Bonn, Germany. This was the tenth LISD-sponsored colloquium on Afghanistan since 2001. The meeting was funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the Government of the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the Stiftung fuer Selbstbestimmung und Internationale Beziehungen, in Vaduz, Liechtenstein.

Participants assessed progress made and addressed critical issues currently facing Afghanistan in the areas of security, regional relations, elections, governance and rule of law, and the economy and human development. More than sixty leading experts participated from the US, EU, Afghanistan, and the region, representing academia, the diplomatic community, governments, and the private sector.¹

Considerations of "perception and misperception" were high on the agenda throughout the meeting. Misperception is focused on the problems of security and criminality, and ignores major improvements in education, health, infrastructure, and the economy that have been made since 2002. But participants felt a sense of urgency about the situation in Afghanistan and in the region. Afghanistan cannot be won only militarily or politically, but instead demands a combined civil-military approach, a change of strategic culture, and a new regional compact including both the neighborhood - especially Pakistan, Iran, and China - and the macro-region including Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, and Turkey, as well as the EU and the US. Conference participants therefore outlined specific recommendations for the Afghan government, the international community, and the US government with the goal of crafting an agenda for moving Afghanistan toward a stable, peaceful, and prosperous future.

Recommendations

Security

The international community should reinforce donor and military commitment by reviewing current strategies, developing more effective ones that will regain the trust of the Afghan people, and garnering increased national domestic support. The Afghan government, with international support and buy-in, must build upon the Paris Conference and the London Compact and should draft and make available an overarching political and security plan that will provide the basis of a unified vision for Afghanistan's future. Any strategic rethinking of how to move forward however must take into account possible changes in national and regional strategy by the new incoming US presidential administration as well as new limitations that may result from the global financial crisis and the widespread economic downturn currently impacting key donor countries. The management of the India-Pakistan and US-Iran relationships will be of critical relevance for security and stability in Afghanistan.



1. Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, LISD Director, served as conference chair; Leanne Smith, Woodrow Wilson School MPP '08, was the conference rapporteur.

For the Afghan Government

- The Afghan government has failed to convey its authority throughout the country. A strategic political and security plan must be developed by the Afghan government. This plan must marshal clear support from the United Nations, NATO, and the US, EU, and other leading donors. This plan should include:
 - An assessment of the roles, missions, and relationships between Afghan security institutions.
 - A plan for all assets on the ground to be identified, deployed, and directed towards the military, development, reconstruction, social, and economic objectives of this plan. International and national force numbers and PRTs should be included.
 - A unified vision of the development of an Afghan police force that bridges paramilitary and civil policing requirements, and the possible expansion of ANP numbers.
 - A strategy for an increase in the numbers of ANA forces, set in the context of the overarching national security policy that is sustainable for the Afghans.
 - A plan for the development of comprehensive Afghan intelligence capabilities which are essential to the successful prosecution of counter-terrorist and counter-insurgency campaigns.
- In view of the Afghan frustration with civilian casualties and international forces, Afghan security forces must assume a larger role in bringing security to the country.
- Attention must be given to growing criminality that often has direct links to the Afghan police and the Taliban.
- There can be no purely military victory in Afghanistan today, given Taliban strength and inadequate international troop numbers. Many consider a deal with certain elements of the Taliban as an important way to move forward. This needs to be discussed more, by and with Afghans, and should address the questions:
 - How should the Taliban be defined?
 - Who can and cannot be dealt with?
 - What is the best strategy to move the Taliban from a current position of strength to a position where it is compelled to compromise?
 - Given the Taliban's stated agenda of bringing down the government and forcing out international forces, and the movement's documented history of human rights abuse, what are the issues on which there can be compromise?

It is time for the international community to start perceiving security threats through Afghan eyes and through the prism of human security, rather than seeing security as being all about international access.

- Internally, police reform must be the most important security priority. Police reform efforts must be strengthened, and intervention at the district level is required. Specifically:
 - The police need to be educated, better equipped, and police positions must be hardened.
 - Improving the existing police force is more important than increasing numbers at this point. The retrained local police lack effective oversight and gains may prove to be short-lived. There is an inherent risk that deputizing local militia groups will continue to fragment the authority of the central government.
 - Every effort should be made to secure and patrol existing lines of transportation, mostly highways, in order to ensure an unobstructed flow of commerce. Subsequent focus should fall on population centers and areas of communication, as well as breaking the linkage between mid-level commanders and their men. This will require evaluating the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) program, as well as strengthening oversight provisions for Focused District Development (FDD) and considering rotating commanders across districts and provinces.
 - Consideration should be given to broadening EUPol's mandate to contribute at the district level rather than just the provincial level.
 - A reform-minded leadership within the Ministry of Interior is required to enact these changes.

For the International Community

- The international community must strengthen its determination through adequate resources and a long-term commitment. Domestic constituencies of donor and NATO states need to understand that there are no quick fixes.

- It is time for the international community to start perceiving security threats through Afghan eyes and through the prism of human security, rather than seeing security as being all about international access. Afghans are experiencing a growing level of fear. It is time to engage local communities, including local leaders and tribal elders who are increasingly under attack by insurgents.
- The top Taliban leadership should be targeted via UN Sanctions Committee (1267) action, rather than hunting mid-level Taliban. The current list must be updated and used to publicly ostracize these individuals. Efforts should be made to urge some neighboring states to apply these sanctions. Finally, as part of UN Security Council Resolutions 1735 and 1822, narco-traffickers should be proposed for inclusion on this list.
- The international community should not only attempt to bridge the gap between the fragmented elite and the Taliban, but broaden the base to include democratic, secular reformists who have largely been left out of the process to date.
- Because foreign forces are increasingly resented, their continued and increased presence must be part of a broader security strategy and accompanied by an effective public relations strategy.
- Islam has been the theoretical common thread in Afghanistan but recently there has been a fragmentation within the urban elite between those, many from the diaspora, who favor a secular approach, and those who are skeptical of western-led secular changes and favor a more indigenous and Islamic approach. Afghans are often confused and torn between the internationally led secular reformers and the indigenous Islamists. A bridge is needed to link these groups and will require a new strategy, if the Afghan elite and the international community are prepared to rise to the challenge.
- It will be important to discuss increases in troop levels and how they should be deployed with the Afghan government.

Afghanistan must develop a proactive regional diplomacy agenda that focuses on outstanding regional issues with short-, medium- and long-term benchmarks.

For the US Government

- Any increase of US forces will require a careful strategic communications strategy, in order to prevent armed insurgents from exploiting an impression that an increase in international troops amounts to an occupation force in the southern, largely Pashtun region of the country.
- Any increase in US troops is likely to focus on the South, East, and border regions, and other NATO countries will need to be prepared to strengthen their focus in the North and West of the country which also face complex security challenges.
- It will be important to discuss increases in troop levels and how they should be deployed with the Afghan government.

The Region

A regional strategy is necessary to make progress toward improving Afghanistan's internal security. Multiparty talks under the auspices of the UN are needed, including the US, EU, Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, India, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and some of the northern Afghan border states. Importantly, the West, especially the United States, must acknowledge that Iran has legitimate national interests in Afghanistan, and recognize the constructive role it has played in the past and can play in the future. Pakistan plays a crucial role in the regional dynamic, and the insurgency within Pakistan's tribal belt is a major cause of regional instability and a key contributor to the insurgency within Afghanistan. The relationship of Pakistan with India is critical for the future of Afghanistan as is the relationship between these states with the US.

For the Afghan Government

- Afghanistan must develop a proactive regional diplomacy agenda that focuses on outstanding regional issues with short-, medium- and long-term benchmarks. A third Regional Economic Cooperation Conference should be on the agenda and include Pakistan and all other regional players.
- Progress toward resolving the Durand Line border dispute between Afghanistan and Pakistan is essential to the realization of cooperation on regional security issues.
- Afghans must take responsibility for other factors contributing to the insurgency beyond Pakistan's involvement.

For the International Community

- The international community, and particularly regional powers, must unite to support the efforts of Pakistan's new government to control the Taliban insurgency in the Northwest. The highly sensitive internal politics of Pakistan must be acknowledged and reliable partners must be identified.
- International pressure, including well-targeted US sanctions, may be required to gain greater cooperation from Pakistan in counterterrorism. Any new pressures should take into account the role of the "deep state" in Pakistan, which is composed of an entrenched network of high-ranking military representatives and intelligence officers.
- Resolution of Kashmir would have a strong, positive impact on Afghanistan and bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. India-Pakistan disputes, particularly over Kashmir, continue to feed Afghanistan's problems and color regional relationships.
- Any new US strategy vis-à-vis Iran has to be aware of the potential ramifications for the situation in Afghanistan and the relationship with Pakistan and India.
- The international community needs to do more to encourage Central Asian involvement in Afghanistan's reconstruction, particularly in areas where Central Asian nations have comparative advantage and/or national interest, especially power and energy, trade, border control, and security.
- China must be encouraged to not only invest financially but politically in Afghanistan, including through using its leverage with Pakistan.
- Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE must be more closely engaged and their interests and roles in Afghanistan and Pakistan acknowledged.

The international community's focus on elections must be on the process, including between electoral cycles, rather than only on the event. As a process, the international community must support it consistently over time.

For the US Government

- Regardless of bilateral tensions with Iran, states involved in Afghanistan – the US in particular – should seek Iran's cooperation in the fields of security and stability, development and promotion, and fighting against drugs and terrorism.
- Confidence building measures must be adopted to assure regional neighbors that the international military presence has no other objective than stabilization of Afghanistan and that it seeks no strategic advantages.

Elections

Important questions shape any discussion about Afghan elections: Can elections actually be conducted in the context of current security conditions? Is consensus better than a contested election? Should elections go ahead even in inadequate conditions to ensure the faith of the people in the process? Related to election legitimacy, three additional questions must be considered: Is there still domestic support for elections as a vehicle for bringing reform? Will elites accept election results as legitimate? Will the Taliban attempt to undermine the election process?

For the Afghan Government

- Turnout problems in past elections indicate the need for effective outreach. Turnout declined from 70% to 50% from presidential to parliamentary elections, and likely will be less in 2009 and 2010.
- To try and rebuild some kind of national consensus before holding the next elections, a Loya Jirga could be hosted first, thus supporting the elections process but also allowing more time to regain control of the security environment.
- Civil society groups need more support and security as they are more likely to be targeted at this time.
- There should be some consideration of seeking a ruling by the Supreme Court on postponing the provincial council elections.
- The Single Non-Transferable Vote (SNTV) electoral system has proven to be inappropriate for a country like Afghanistan and should be revised through the adoption of either a first-past-the-post or a proportional system.
- The constitutional calendar for elections should be revisited. According to the constitution, Afghanistan must hold

109 elections over the next 60 years. This is unsustainable, unnecessary, unaffordable, and could lead to voter fatigue.

For the International Community

- “Elections” must be decoupled from “democracy” in the sense that the first does not equate with the second, but is only one element of enhancing democracy in Afghanistan. Elections without rule of law institutions and genuine vetting procedures are merely a playground for those with money, power, and guns.
- The international community needs to consider the possible need for a “Plan B” in the event that the elections cannot be held as scheduled for security reasons. In the event that logistics and security interfere with the timetable for the conduct of elections, caretaker arrangements for the conduct of government should be considered as a way of ensuring a level playing field for electoral competition.
- Elections were difficult in 2004 and 2005, and they will certainly be much more difficult in 2009 and 2010, not the least due to reduced security and due to reduced standing of the Afghan administration. Despite best efforts, if elections are held as scheduled they will be imperfect to a greater or lesser extent. The best an election can achieve is to produce as legitimate a leader as possible. Planning for elections should keep this in mind.
- The international community should be prepared for a second-round of voting due to the likelihood that no candidate clears the 50% hurdle. The second round is likely to be considerably more tense.
- The international community’s focus on elections must be on the process, including between electoral cycles, rather than only on the event. As a process, the international community must support it consistently over time.
- The international community should take the opportunity provided by the newly legislated media law to encourage responsible reporting ahead of the election that can mobilize voters and create a sense of national interest and cohesion. The media should be encouraged to reflect in their reporting the diverse opinions and positions of the candidates.
- The recent decision by the Afghan government not to hold registration and voting for Afghans in Pakistan and Iran should be reinforced through a clear signal by the international community that funding for out-of-country voting is not available.

Civil society groups need to be supported to reach policy makers and have an impact on the policy directions of reform. Civil society can act as a crucial “bridge” between people at the remote district level and the capital.

- Recognizing both coordination already in place and the commitment from ISAF to assist Afghan security forces in securing voter registration, the importance of the upcoming registration should be emphasized by ISAF and troop contributors. Difficulties in providing security, including potential troop losses, should not detract from a commitment to voter registration.

For the US Government

- Upcoming Afghan elections need a “security surge” that US troops should be equipped to provide to allow them to be implemented effectively and ensure maximum access.
- The upcoming elections will also need a “political surge” including US, international, and Afghan consensus on the process, security, vetting, removal of Pakistan and/or Taliban influence, civic outreach, and cooperation with civil society.

Governance and Rule of Law

Good governance is the key to restoring Afghan self-determination. The only solutions that have worked in Afghanistan have been institutional ones – these were absent in the Bonn Agreement but were present in the Afghanistan Compact and the Paris Conference. In 2002 the international community traded peace for ministries, so now there is an overblown bureaucracy in Kabul. For the government, there is an urgent need for a “roots and branch” review of bureaucratic structures based on needs and to assess whether or not Afghanistan needs all of the ministries that have been created. For the international community, a general principle of involvement in the rule of law, governance, human rights, and transitional justice is that international actors must make themselves more accountable

and provide consistent support to initiatives instead of paying lip service to these principles when it is politically expedient to do so and undermining the new structures it has helped create when they become inconvenient.

For the Afghan Government

- It is time for a periodic review of the Afghan Constitution to determine how well it is serving the Afghan people and whether it is able to be effectively implemented, to determine whether the balance of responsibilities between the executive and the legislature is appropriate for Afghanistan, and whether the role of the president is sufficiently resourced or overburdened.
- The constitutional structure of Afghanistan must be addressed, especially the imbalance between executive and legislature, and a parliamentary system should be given consideration. The president has too many responsibilities and not enough institutional support. This model is premised on the assumption of a strong bureaucracy like that of France or Turkey.
- The holding of a credible census is essential to holding elections, drawing accurate provincial and district boundaries, and determining aid priorities and gauging progress toward human development indicators. Support should be given to realizing the Paris Conference goal of holding a census by the end of 2009, in time for the parliamentary elections.
- The issue of property rights, complicated though it is after years of conflict, needs to be urgently addressed through the development of a land titling system.
- There must be an increase in the priority of building state institutions in relation to other apparent priorities. Capacity building, particularly of the civil service, is essential as is the development of an effective civil service academy.
- The emergence of a new class of Afghans, enriched by corruption, is a serious problem that must be addressed.
- There should be a government focus on decentralization by building central, provincial, and district institutions. The district should be the unit of stabilization.
- The Afghan government, with the support of the international community, needs to pursue urgent reforms to the legal system and to try to define what role and function the formal and informal systems should play, through a process of broad and representative consultation. A draft model for developing a hybrid legal system might form the basis for further development of a new model.

Despite the difficulties of funding donor projects through the central government, an increased transfer of responsibility to the Government of Afghanistan is essential to increase the legitimacy of the state and to build capacity.

- An Afghan Legal Institute should be established to undertake research and collect data on the current functioning of the Afghan legal system.
- The creation of a strong system of administrative law, beyond the current formal legal system, that would make officials accountable, such as an Ombudsman's Office or an independent administrative complaint mechanism like a tribunal for police abuse and misconduct, should be created.

For the International Community

- Afghanistan has a clearly defined, well researched, and appropriate National Action Plan for Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation, adopted in 2006 and supported by the international community through a lengthy consultation process with ordinary Afghans. The international community needs to provide real support for this plan and the government's implementation of it. Any discussion of reconciliation with the Taliban must be developed within this framework.
- Civil society groups need to be supported to reach policy makers and have an impact on the policy directions of reform. Civil society can act as a crucial "bridge" between people at the remote district level and the capital.

Economy and Human Development

The initial development of the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) was well coordinated, but now lacks sound coordination and support in its implementation. The ANDS now has too many competing objectives and needs to be better prioritized by Afghans, through more community consultation. Human development and culture should also be considered in any overarching reconstruction and development strategy.

Economy

- As acknowledged in the Paris Conference, coordination efforts of the international community under UNAMA's leadership needs to be strengthened.
- Of the \$40-50 billion in aid allocated to Afghanistan at the various international donor conferences, only \$13 billion has been spent through the Government of Afghanistan. As a result this extra-budgetary spending has not been accountable to the parliament. Despite the difficulties of funding donor projects through the central government, an increased transfer of responsibility to the Government of Afghanistan is essential to increase the legitimacy of the state and to build capacity.
- There is a national and regional necessity for a railroad infrastructure project. It could provide 24 hour, 7 day a week transport of goods and materials under any climate conditions and would address unemployment issues and energy needs. It also would connect the region and make Afghanistan a regional transit country connecting the West-East and North-South.
- As agreed in Paris, a major priority must be the agricultural sector. Greater capacity building through agricultural colleges and vocational training centers is required. There should be a refocus of agricultural strategy onto subsistence agriculture instead of commercial agriculture.
- Funding must be available for agricultural development. It should be ensured that loans are available to subsistence farmers and small- to medium-sized investors. If funds are available, low-interest loans should be provided.
- A reevaluation of the geographic allocation of development aid is needed. Focus should not only be paid to unstable regions. Instead, successful regions should also reap benefits and receive effective financial support from the international donor community, to ensure there is no distortion of incentives.

Human Development

- In terms of aid funds, whether they are spent through the Government of Afghanistan or directly through NGOs or private contractors – as is more often the case today – spending should be allocated through consultation with, or made accountable to the Afghan parliament, to increase Afghan ownership of the development process. This will increase aid effectiveness and accountability.
- Some PRT “quick impact” projects have had little impact and PRT funding needs to be reevaluated with input from

and support of the Afghan local governments and people.

- The role of women in Afghanistan's reconstruction cannot be underestimated for improving the situation in Afghanistan and for the sustainability of development. The international community should continue to support the Afghan government's efforts to improve the situation of women and empower them to play a greater role in Afghanistan's future.
- A comprehensive approach to addressing the specific needs of Afghan widows and their children must be crafted so that they have the resources necessary for sustainable livelihoods and to lessen the possibility of the radicalization of a generation of impoverished Afghan youth.
- Cultural programs between Afghanistan and Pakistan should be created and supported. Cultural programs between Afghanistan and Iran should also be accepted. Those that currently exist should be intensified. Additional initiatives should be created that work to bridge language and cultural differences between Afghans and international actors for the purpose of facilitating increased understanding and meaningful cooperation.
- Food security, as a result of drought and rising food prices, has become a time-critical issue. Five percent of the population is in the high-risk category and many more are now border line.
- Increasing attacks against aid workers are inevitably impacting the delivery of service and programs and must be addressed. This is being used effectively by the Taliban to scare off internationals and show that neither Afghan nor international forces are able to guarantee security, even in districts in and around Kabul. There is the danger of Kabul's encirclement, at least in perception.
- The degeneration in security and the resulting reduction of open and free contact actually compounds the problem of lack of interaction and cooperation between international actors, NGOs, and Afghans at a time when increased contact and cooperation is necessary. New strategies have to deal with this aggravation and reduced interaction.
- Job creation has to be emphasized, and the focus should not just be on training, but on jobs as a long-term source of income.
- The creation of educational institutions, curricula, and training programs in cooperation with Afghan authorities must be prioritized, focusing not only on Afghan children and youth but also considering the generation of Afghan adults who had few or no educational opportunities during the years from 1980-2002.

Partial List of Colloquium Participants

Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein

Christopher Alexander, Ambassador, Deputy Special Representative for the UN Secretary-General in Afghanistan; former Ambassador of Canada to Afghanistan

Mohsen Aminzadeh, Advisor to H.E. President Mohammad Khatami; former Deputy Foreign Minister, Islamic Republic of Iran

Nipa Banerjee, Professor of International Development and Global Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ottawa

Nematullah Bizhan, Afghanistan Compact Monitoring Manager, ANDS Secretariat; JCMB Secretariat Manager

Thomas Christensen, Professor of Public and International Affairs, Woodrow Wilson School; former US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Asia

Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Director, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination and Chair, Liechtenstein Colloquium

Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, Deputy Chairman, NATO Military Committee; former Commander, Combined Forces Command, Afghanistan

Christine Fair, Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation

Robert P. Finn, Ambassador, Senior Research Associate, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination; former US Ambassador to Afghanistan

Ali Jalali, Distinguished Professor, Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies; Distinguished Visiting Fellow, Institute for National Strategic Studies; former Interior Minister of Afghanistan

Michael R. N. Jansen, Director, Department of Urban History, RWTH Aachen University

Rüdiger König, Ambassador, Deputy Director-General for Asian Affairs and Director, Special Task Force for Afghanistan, German Foreign Office, Berlin

William Maley, Director, Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy, Australian National University

Ahmad Nader Nadery, Commissioner, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission; Chairperson, Fair and Free Election Foundation of Afghanistan, Kabul

Mohammad Asif Rahimi, Deputy Minister for Programs, Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Kabul

Thomas Ruttig, Independent Consultant for Afghan Affairs, Berlin; 2000-2006 Political Affairs Officer, UNSMA/

UNAMA

Varun Sahni, Professor in International Politics, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Amin Saikal, Director, Center for Arab and Islamic Studies (Middle East and Central Asia); Professor of Political Science, Australian National University

Hans-Ulrich Seidt, Ambassador, Ambassador of Germany to Afghanistan, Kabul

Rangin Spanta, Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kabul

Volker Stanzel, Director General of Political Affairs, German Foreign Office, Berlin

Zahir Tanin, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the UN, New York

Francesc Vendrell, Ambassador, Senior Visiting Fellow, Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination; Frederick H. Schultz '51 Professor of International Policy, Woodrow Wilson School; former EU Special Representative for Afghanistan

Ali Wardak, Senior Researcher, Centre for Policy and Human Development, Kabul University; Principal Author, 2007 Afghanistan Human Development Report on the Rule of Law

Marvin Weinbaum, Scholar-in-Residence, Middle East Institute, Washington, DC; Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois

Bernhard Zimburg, Ambassador, Head of Asia Department, Ministry for European and International Affairs in Vienna, Austria

Additional information about the colloquium, including the conference program, presentation summaries, and a full list of participants, is available online at: www.princeton.edu/lisd/projects/afghan_region/afghan_region.html

Contact Information:

Wolfgang Danspeckgruber, Director

Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination
Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey 08544
USA

Electronic Mail: lisd@princeton.edu

Telephone: (609) 258-6200

Facsimile: (609) 258-5196

Website: www.princeton.edu/lisd