



International Centre for Democratic Transition

AFGHANISTAN AFTER ISAF

POLICY PAPER

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PREAMBLE

Dear Colleagues,

It is my pleasure to lead in the International Centre for Democratic Transition's (ICDT) "Afghanistan After ISAF" policy paper.

The ICDT is an international non-profit organization based in Budapest, Hungary which collects the experiences of recent democratic transitions, and shares them with those who are determined to follow that same path. Within the general promotion of democracy ICDT has focused its efforts on creating concrete and pragmatic goals. Through collecting and analysing data, organizing and hosting conferences, drafting and presenting reports, and perhaps most importantly by running field-projects in many transition countries ICDT has been able to compile the collective and individual experiences of peoples from all around Europe.

As the antecedent of this study and policy paper, the International Centre for Democratic Transition organized a roundtable discussion on 27 January 2012 in Budapest with the support of NATO's Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) on the future of Afghanistan. ICDT has been planning to bring together representatives of the governmental and non-governmental sector, NATO and the academic sphere to discuss the implementation of the so-called inteqal/transition process in Afghanistan since the Lisbon NATO Summit in November 2010, where the „road map" of transmitting the functions of governance and security from the international forces (ISAF) to the Afghan government was endorsed.

The following study is not per definitionem a policy paper; it aims to achieve perspicacity on the topics of the inteqal/transition process in Afghanistan. Experts of ICDT are introducing the history of the transition process and at the same time present the background, the implementation issues and some regional questions.

I am acutely aware of the complexity of the inteqal/transition as a process, as it is not merely a security-related issue. As Hungary has recently undergone a democratic transition, we know full well the fragility of the processes where several factors play an important role, therefore it is essential to have studies, papers, treatises on the future of Afghanistan in order to understand the difficulties of the processes that the international community would face in the country.

The following paper is the first ICDT study on the future of Afghanistan, but surely not the last one. An important message of the Lisbon and the Chicago NATO Summits is the necessity of coordinating the activities and the joint commitment, therefore the next steps of ours will be to stimulate these activities and relations.



Amb. Prof. Dr. István Gyarmati

President of the Centre for Democracy Public Foundation

I. THE INTEQAL PROCESS: LEAVING AFGHANISTAN RESPONSIBLY?

Ali Ahmed Jalali, a former Afghan defense minister and researcher characterized the US policy in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2009 the following way: “An American warrior of the Vietnam War famously once said that America had not been fighting the war in Vietnam for 12 years, but for one year 12 times. The same can be said in Afghanistan today where the international forces have fought nine, one-year wars”.¹ After the overthrow of the Taliban movement the international community embarked on a state-building mission in Afghanistan but it undertook too much. The over optimistically defined goals naturally ended up in a sense of failure in the West when after years of fighting the achievements were still few in number and the Taliban re-emerged as well.

The US attempted to abandon this failed approach starting in 2010. On 1 December 2009 Barack Obama announced the new Afghanistan strategy at West Point Military Academy. In his speech the president framed the US’s counterterrorism efforts and Afghanistan-policy since 2001 in a new narrative. The president highlighted the causes of the re-emergence of the Taliban and al-Qaeda, described Pakistan’s role in the conflict, and concluded by stating that the status quo was unsustainable.²

In the second part of his speech, President Obama set the goals of the new strategy: to disrupt, to dismantle, and to defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.³ The three elements of the strategy were: a military effort to create the conditions for transition; a civilian surge that reinforces positive action; and an effective partnership with Pakistan⁴. With this new strategy, Washington lowered the expectations by prioritizing the struggle against al-Qaeda instead of state-building in Afghanistan or the defeat of the Taliban. The president also emphasized the need for the creation of conditions for a future handover of the security to the Afghan government as well.

The most debated component of the strategy was the 30,000 increase in the troop number which showed several similarities to previous steps in Iraq. The Bush administration tried to improve the security situation in Iraq and initiate withdrawal in 2007 with similar measures.

The first steps in preparing the transition were made in London where the international community and Afghan leaders met. Next to other important decisions, the parties pledged “to develop, by the Kabul Conference, a plan for a phased transition to Afghan security lead.” The Inteqal (the word of transition in Dari and Pashto languages) process was a plan at that time by the Afghan government for a step by step transition to full Afghan responsibility for security.⁵

¹ Ali A. Jalali: “Afghanistan in Transition”. Parameters, No. 3. (2010). p.

² Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on the Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, 2009.december 1. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakistan>

³ Ibid

⁴ Ibid

⁵ “Communiqué of »Afghanistan: The London Conference«. ISAF

In July 2001, more than 70 nations and international organizations gathered in Kabul. Here the international community endorsed the Inteqal process to strengthen the Afghan government in all its functions of governance and security. To assess and lead the transition, the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board was established. The board's first meeting took place in September 2010 where it set up a timetable for full transition. The Afghan Government made several pledges during the Kabul Conference: to reform the Afghan public administration, to initiate electoral reform and to fight corruption.⁶

At the Lisbon NATO Summit, on 20 November 2010, the Afghan government and NATO agreed on the Inteqal process. The announced 2014 deadline for closing the process generated a plethora of responses because public opinion interpreted it as NATO's complete withdrawal. On behalf of NATO members, a list of principles was agreed upon regarding the role of the ISAF during the transition. An example would be the further strengthening of ANSF capacity and civilian efforts.⁷ Another result of the Lisbon Summit - though still just a promise at that time - was that NATO confirmed its long-term commitment in Afghanistan and that it would not abandon the country even after 2014. As such, the events after the 1989 Soviet withdrawal would not recur.

I.1 The Inteqal Process

The central element of the Inteqal process is the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB). The JANIB is chaired by the representative of the Afghan government, co-chaired by the ISAF Commander and NATO Senior Civilian Representative, and comprised by key Afghan and NATO/ISAF stakeholders. The Afghan government and the ISAF decide on which provinces are to be handed over. The process is irreversible because territories taken over by the government cannot be retaken by the ISAF.

The official document outlining the transition, the Joint Framework for Inteqal, states that "Inteqal is a process" which consists of two elements: assessment and implementation. In the first phase the readiness of the respective provinces, districts or cities destined for a transition under full Afghan sovereignty will be assessed in terms of security, governance and development.⁸ Owing to the irreversibility of the Inteqal, the most important concern is obviously security. In this field, the assessment does not only consider the strength and character of the opposition, but it also includes an evaluation of the strength and quality of local security forces (military and police), their operation effectiveness and the support it might need from ISAF. It is not a coincidence that President Obama's 2009 statements were followed by a surge of 30,000 in regions in which the security situation was dire. In South and East Afghanistan and certain Northern areas (Faryab province and the Kunduz

http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/stories/File/factsheets/Documents_Communique%20of%20London%20Conference%20on%20Afghanistan.pdf

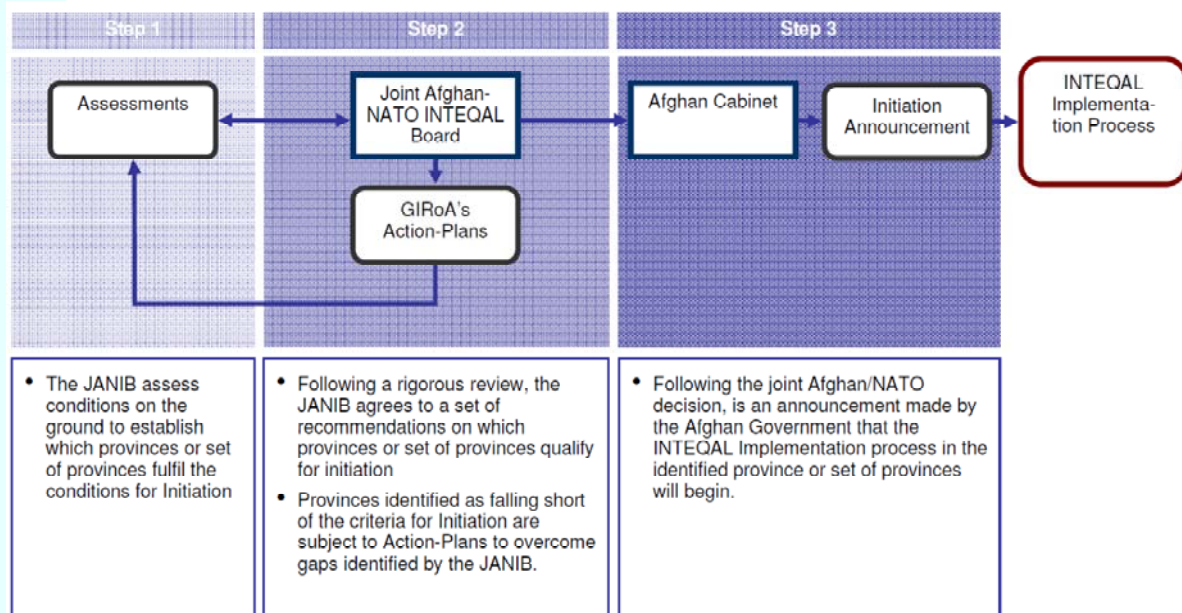
⁶ <http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/Documents/Kabul%20Conference%20Communique.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.isaf.nato.int/images/media/PDFs/111005inteqal.pdf>

⁸ See the agreement between NATO and the Afghan government: "Declaration by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on an Enduring Partnership". NATO, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68724.htm, November 20, 2010

Baghlan Corridor), they attempted to degrade the resistance and achieve tangible results as a preparation for the transition.

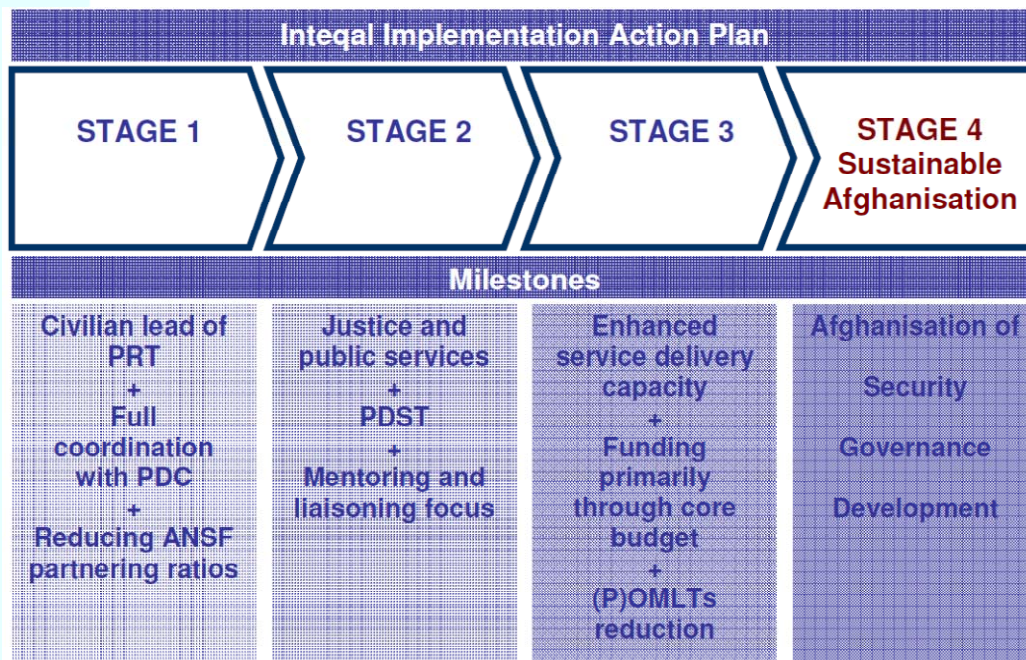
Diagram 1: Inteqal assessment



Source: Joint Framework for Inteqal, p. 4.

After the assessment of the environment by JANIB a list of necessary recommendations is made for the respective administrative units. NATO and the Afghan government will only make a decision on the transition's implementation after the assessment. In this phase, the Afghan government will achieve full sovereignty on its territory in four steps. During the different phases, the presence of NATO/ISAF forces will thin out and Provincial Reconstruction Teams will evolve into Provincial and District Support Teams. By the end of the transition these entities will be disbanded. In the fields of governance and development the Afghan government's role will continuously expand. The capacities of local institutions will improve. The efforts of international donors will increasingly focus on the civil sphere instead of the military.

Diagram 2: Inteqal implementation



Source: Joint Framework for Inteqal, p. 6.

1.2 The Current State of the Inteqal Process

The Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board started its assessment of the security, governmental and development capacities in late 2010. The first set of Afghan provinces, districts and cities was announced by President Karzai on 22 March 2011. The areas set to transition under full Afghan security included the safest parts of Afghanistan like the Bamiyan and Panjir provinces and the cities of Mazar-i Sharif and Herat. The formal process started months later in July in Bamiyan, and remaining areas followed. In the first tranche approximately the 20-25 percent of the Afghan population fell under the supervision of the ANSF.

The second phase of the transition was announced in November 2011, and mainly included provinces and districts in Northern Afghanistan. Some Eastern and Central Afghan territories were also shifted to the ANSF. With the conclusion of the second tranche, over half of the population will be under the control of the Afghan government.⁹

On 13 May 2012 President Hamed Karzai announced the third tranche of administrative units to be transitioned under Afghan rule. After the third stage is completed approximately 75 percent of the Afghan population will live under Afghan governance and security. At the time being we don't know all the 122 new administrative

⁹ Kabul International Conference: Joint Framework for Inteqal: A Process for Strengthening Peace and Stability in Afghanistan and the Region. July 20, 2010. p. 1.

units covered by the third tranche, but according to the official website of the Afghan President Karzai, Parwan and Uruzgan provinces will be among them.¹⁰

According to the original plans there would have been seven tranches, which means that the last one would be announced in the summer of 2013, and implemented at the end of 2014. However, in February 2012 Leon Panetta, US Secretary for Defence, said that the international troops could end their combat role by the end of 2013, which means that there will be only five tranches.¹¹

II. AFGHANISTAN AFTER ISAF WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Ambassador Prof. Dr. István Gyarmati, President of the Centre for Democracy Public Foundation, opened the roundtable discussion titled “Afghanistan after ISAF”, held on 27 January 2012 in Budapest. The speaker called for a fresh approach from the participants on the current international changes and changes in Afghanistan by recognizing that we are at the beginning of a new era. Current international changes are more revolutionary, radical, dangerous and unpredictable. These will also take much longer than the fall of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact did.

In this context Afghanistan is the perfect example of a so-called „veterinary horse” that shows all negative symptoms of those diseases that are going hand in hand with these changes. The conflict in the 80s with the Soviet Union destroyed everything that was functioning in Afghanistan. Western countries supported the opposition to fight against Soviet troops, but at the end the country was destroyed not only physically, but mentally and socially, as well. Late in 2001, we went to Afghanistan for a good reason, but we became the victim of our own success. We believed that the fall of the Taliban regime would be followed by a quick period of democratization, and the transformation process would not take more than five years. This approach ignored the fact that a state building process requires several decades or more. Prof. Gyarmati believes that the „winning of hearts and minds” concept of the ISAF nations is wrong. Because of the fact that the emphasis was put on the above-mentioned concept, we have both failed on winning the war and winning the hearts and minds. The international mission as well as the Afghan government can only receive a significant public support if there is good governance. On this field we have only worsened the situation in the eyes of the population. Currently, we have started the withdrawal of our forces based on a new alternative solution. We believe that the transfer of power to the Afghan army and the transition of the ISAF mission into a training mission will solve most of the problems, while the real problem is not training but loyalty. There is a deep concern over the fact that history could repeat itself, and there is a high chance that we are currently training our future enemies as we did during the Soviet occupation.

¹⁰ Announcement by President Hamid Karzai on the Official Launch of Transition Tranche 3, 13 May, 2012. Office of the President, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. <http://president.gov.af/en/news/9553>

¹¹ US plans to end Afghan combat mission in 2013, The Guardian February 1, 2012. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/feb/01/afghan-combat-mission-2013>

Therefore we must spend the rest of our remaining time with at least partially restoring our credibility in terms of good governance. The transition will happen anyway - as happened in Egypt, Tunisia or in Libya - but in the end it will not be the transition that we would like to see. What else we can do in 2 years, especially when we don't know what to do? The conference's job is to identify out of box solutions and answer what kind of Afghanistan we want to see. What kind of Afghanistan the Afghan people would like to see? What could we do to support them to reach their goals? How do we deal with the military situations? What will we do with the neighbours, especially Iran and Pakistan? How will we get Russia more involved? And, last but not least, how can we coordinate our activities better?

II.1 Current Situation in the Af/Pak Region

*In the analysis of the current situation of the Af/Pak region, **H.E. Homayoun Tandar**, Ambassador of Afghanistan to Belgium and Chief of the Afghan Mission to the European Union (EU), argued about the „Af/Pak“ approach of the workshop and the Western countries in general. The Af/Pak concept originates in Washington, and it was taken over by European allies. As Af/Pak represents only a small part of Afghanistan's foreign policy towards the region, it is also worth to examine the wider picture. The process of creating a regional policy that started with the Kabul Declaration in 2002 aimed to reset regional relations of Afghanistan. According to Ambassador Tandar, if we wanted to describe Afghanistan's foreign policy in the region, we could say that schematically the Afghan diplomacy has two main circles.*

The external circle of Afghan diplomacy includes the Russian Federation, Turkey, India and China, all members of the G20. Afghanistan takes serious efforts to leave behind its conflict with Russia. During the last year, on a historical visit of the Afghan president, parties signed multiple economic agreements. The role of Russia in the future of Afghanistan is crucial; therefore common projects have vital importance.

Turkey had a major role in the ISAF mission not only by leading the PRT in Wardak, but also by being one of the most important economic investors in the country. More than 2000 Turkish companies are present in Afghanistan, and Turkey is the leading development actor and key political player (a mediator between Afghanistan and Pakistan, too) recognized by each actor based on historical and cultural relations.

India has also important development and reconstruction projects and it supports Afghanistan's regional development. In 2011 India and Afghanistan signed a strategic agreement, the first one of Afghanistan. The active role of India in the country could be explained through its relationship with Pakistan.

Currently, China is the greatest investor in the Central Asian country. The first mining contract was signed in 2007, since when numerous agreements have been signed on the exploitation of the natural resources including oil and gas. Due to its economic power, China played a positive role at the Second Bonn Conference on

Afghanistan. The increased Chinese interests and the protection of their business can play a long-term positive role in the stabilization of the country.

The circle of the external relations consists of Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kirgizstan. Afghanistan tried to create an adequate atmosphere for a broader cooperation with its neighbours, not to limit these relations to security questions. Regarding Tajikistan, the country is important in terms of water management, cross-border, cultural, and educational cooperation. It also considers Afghanistan as a key partner since it is the main transfer country for exporting its goods. Tajikistan is also a member of the trilateral mechanism that includes Iran. Concerning Uzbekistan, the most important factors are mainly energy agreements but it is also worth mentioning the first railway line connecting the two countries. Turkmenistan is also a strategic partner mainly in energy issues; in the future it can be an advantageous railway connection providing easy and straight access for Afghanistan to the Black Sea and Europe.

It is a crucial question to improve relations with the neighbouring Pakistan in order to reach success on a long term. The democratic elections have improved the situation in the last years, but there are still a lot of things that should be accomplished. Historically, the civilian governments of Pakistan had good relations with Afghanistan. Since many extremists are based in Pakistan and they receive logistical support from the country, the authorities have to adjust to this problem more intensively in the future. In the past decades the history of the two countries went hand in hand with each other in many senses, and the Afghan people received a lot of help from Pakistan. The core of the problem remains in the Pakistani military and security services. Afghanistan is aware of the fact that it is also a deep internal problem which resulted in a civil war. Currently, the number of casualties due to insurgency was higher than in Afghanistan. The problem can only be addressed through a regional approach. If the military chooses cooperation and not confrontation, there are a number of opportunities to create sustainable development for the region. A peace process between India and Pakistan would further strengthen that.

Mr. Thomas Ruttig, Co-Director of the Afghanistan Analyst Network summarized the challenges and results of the international community. *The mission is definitely not accomplished, not even in a single field due to the short time. Unfortunately, there is an “Afghanistan fatigue” among the international community. The date has been set to 2014, and whether it means withdrawal or just force reduction, it means the same. It means less attention to Afghanistan which will be reflected financially, as well. As an example, decision-makers in Germany are moving to other areas, especially to the Middle East and to the countries of the Arab Spring.*

Following the fall of the Taliban the most important years were 2004 and 2005 when the international community created the whole framework of the new Afghan system. We are reflecting only the symptoms of the illness we have created, but we are not really questioning the structure itself. The over-centralized presidential system was created outside the country, and more than 50 percent of the population opposed the system in the Constitutional Loya Jirga. This resistance was broken by massive interference which influenced Afghan thinking about the role of the international community in the state-building of Afghanistan.

There are numerous achievements and steps forward but laws largely exist only on paper. Education, health service, and infrastructure have been improved. Unfortunately, this is only the physical infrastructure, while little effort has been made towards capacity building projects. Teachers are undertrained and miserably paid. The quality is also a problem. Half of the schools do not even have a roof. Regarding health, although there is access to clinics, trained personnel and medicine is missing from most of them. The roads might be in good condition but many of them cannot be used due to security reasons.

Most of the development concentrated on the insurgent effected regions undermining the trust towards the international community in the peaceful regions. As the majority of the countries channelled their development money based on the interest of their forces, development became security related. The main problem with this practice is that it questions the future of development resources after the PRTs complete the transition. The international community is compromised due to security reasons on corruption, drug smuggling and the abuses of warlords. Democracy is highly manipulated which results in the fact that bigger and bigger part of the population finds themselves on the sidelines. In the past years the ethnic diversity was strengthened, and the symptoms now are very similar to the ones in the Balkans. As an example of the mistakes of the current military and police structure, if homogeneous communities are responsible for the security of other villages, abuses immediately create ethnic conflicts.

Due to the election frauds the current Parliament is even more delegitimized than the previous one. The further centralization of power only strengthens these trends. The latest symptom is that President Karzai started criticizing international community for strengthening other ethnic groups and CSOs.

The narcotics problem is also essential in the conflict. On the one hand, we are fighting against drugs but on the other hand, it is prohibited for the German troops to intervene, since keeping the ceasefire and winning allies have priority to the anti-drug policy. Therefore not just poppy but also hashish production increased dramatically in the Northern territories.

The international community should take a step backwards and has to stop making decisions instead of the Afghan people. Despite the last term of Hamid Karzai will succeed, we can't choose the next President of Afghanistan. We also have to forget the military solution and find another approach. That means we have to keep the troops but redefine their mandate.

Ms. Laila Bokhari, Research Fellow with the Afghanistan and Pakistan Programme of the Department of Security and Crisis Management at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), focused on Pakistan's role in the region. The main problem is more a "Pak/Af" question rather than an Af/Pak, since most of the problems affecting the region are rooted in Pakistan. Numerous actors are challenging the structures of Pakistan, which is identified as a Muslim state and has an unstable relationship with nearly all its neighbours, and a constantly unstable one with the United States. Then the question rises whether Pakistan could define itself. There is only a created identity, a weak civilian government, porous borders, and an extremely strong

military. The year of 2011 was the worst in its relationship with the United States due to the death of Osama bin Laden and the constant drone attacks. The friction between military and government was even more strengthened by political murders, worsening internal security, and the state of the economy. Pakistan is not able to control its internal problems anymore, which has increased the attention of the international community.

Pakistan's demands should also be taken more seriously. There are a number of points that can reduce tensions, such as improving the peace process with India, starting negotiations, and cutting a deal with fractions of the Taliban, nevertheless a less frustrating interference, and a better dialogue with the United States. Pakistan also blames the US for not deciding on the future management of Afghanistan.

Pakistan's interest in Afghanistan remains permanent no matter if there is military or civilian leadership. Its aim is to reduce India's influence in the country and to secure a regime that is the least hostile towards Pakistan, as long as a friendly one cannot be secured. Above all, Pakistan wishes to regain its supremacy and remain the security manager of the region.

Pakistan demands to be involved in the decision-making regarding the situation of Afghanistan as well as in the negotiations with the Taliban. It is also an important precondition for the reconciliation between the two countries.

The long-term key to stabilize Pakistan is the solution of the question of India. As long as the existential fear exists, this fear will run the army, which will run the country. If security was strengthened, there would be free resources and energy to reform Pakistan in order to become a more attractive country. There is not a single solution, only simultaneous bi- and multilateral initiatives can improve security. Pakistan can also play a positive role and take responsibility for its own security problems.

II.2 Strategy of NATO and the Key Contributing Nations for the Post-2014 Period

Mr. Jonathan Hill, Deputy Head of the Afghanistan Division at NATO expressed his disagreement on former negative opinions about the failure of the strategy and about the task to win the "hearts and minds" in Afghanistan, and pointed out some positive developments.

Mr. Hill mentioned that the initial aim should have been focusing more on governance rather than bare transition. According to him there are certain actions that are needed to be done to guarantee the security in a country. On the other hand, we should also examine the starting point, as it has defined the mandate that was given to the international community by the UN Security Council. In 2003 it was purely a security mission that aimed to establish security, initially in Kabul, to provide the necessary requirements for governance, and first of all to establish a government.

Where did it go wrong? The principle of security intervention was good to give a base to the development of the country but there was a misunderstanding about how the three main pillars (security, governance, and development) fit together. In a Chapter VII type of intervention like this, we are talking about a security intervention first to provide security and stability as grounding, and only after that can a functioning government be established as the next step. The governance has to be created in all levels to genuinely control internal security mechanisms and national security, and only then can the development start naturally.

In 2009 there was a general stagnation when the risk of failure was high. General McChrystal made an assessment then, as the rising number of insurgents required troop reinforcement from NATO since security was simply not provided. First, NATO raised the number of international forces as Afghan security forces were not present in a sufficient number at that time, and parallelly the government was urged to raise the number of the Afghan national forces. Raising the number of troops, however, was not enough, we also had to extend the competence of troops serving.

The current situation of transition clearly indicates our progress in the level of governance. We have already handed over responsibility to Afghan forces in several provinces. These steps are the first two tranches of transition as we have defined it. Currently, about 50 percent of the country's population is living already in such ISAF-assisted provinces where Afghan forces were already taking over the lead – a fact that cannot be considered as a failure.

Mr. Hill mentioned the new NATO strategic plan for Afghanistan which is still under development or particularly the portion of the plan that covers the time beyond 2014. Beyond 2014 our strategy is to continue training, assisting and supporting Afghan security forces as they take an increasing responsibility throughout the country.

Underneath is what we call Enduring Partnership for Afghanistan. That is the framework for the implementation of the NATO Strategy. Enduring Partnership covers multiple areas.

On the one hand, these areas are partly similar to the traditional political partnerships that NATO has established with many countries in the past, covering areas, such as confidence building, intelligence sharing, training, and some other development activities.

On the other hand, there are more significant programs within the Enduring Partnership that are more relevant to our discussion. The ISAF mission in its current form will be finished by the end of 2014. For that we need to complete the transition process, so the Afghan forces will have a full security control in the country by the end of 2014. The transition is approximately an 18-month process, in the end of which the Afghan forces will lead the entire country by 2014. As a consequence, NATO participants can fully focus on training, which is a great change of the ISAF mission since this will be the core of our mission beyond 2014, as well. The speaker concluded that NATO's ultimate goal would be the same in the future as it had been since 2001, along with preventing the country from becoming a safe haven for international terrorism.

H.E. Hikmet Çetin, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey and former NATO Special Representative to Afghanistan, believes that a successful strategy should focus on the citizens of Afghanistan. Effective governance is the first condition to win the loyalty of the people by providing security. This effectiveness simply does not culminate in eliminating insurgents and terrorists. The Taliban also recognized that fact, therefore their ultimate goal is to undermine successful governance. Consequently, the foremost aim of the government should be to display its ability to rule effectively and fairly at this point. It is essential to have a social reform that reaches every segments of the society regardless of gender, age or ethnic background.

Mr. Çetin stressed five pillars of a strategy as keys to success. These are:

- 1, the isolation of insurgents*
- 2, transferring both security matters and responsibility to the Afghan people*
- 3, building civilian and military capacities*
- 4, peace and reconciliation efforts*
- 5, achieving an enhanced interregional cooperation*

None of these pillars excludes the other.

The Kabul Process in July 2010 and the partnership in Bonn between the international community and Afghanistan that renewed cooperation until 2024 ensure the continuity of transformation.

Regarding insurgency, everybody agrees that only the political reconciliation can create a long-term solution but nobody has initiated a serious process or has a clear strategy of approaching the groups of insurgents. The opening of the Taliban representation in Qatar is a promising step towards a new approach. The political process has to address not only Afghan but regional questions.

The Istanbul Process can be a useful tool for dealing with the regional risks like arms, drug or human trafficking, organized crime or cross border insurgency, as they are all transborder risks by nature. There is no real chance of dealing with the problems of Afghanistan without a regional approach and regional cooperation.

The Soviet invasion once already proved that the long-term sustainability of the Afghan national forces is essential. Without significant international assistance there is a great chance that history will repeat itself. It is essential to create a roadmap for the sustainability of the armed forces. This doesn't necessarily mean that we have to keep a current size army but at least we should maintain its quality.

Even though the economic crisis deeply affected security budgets, the international community has to show its commitment by strengthening the local Afghan private sector and also by ensuring social and legal equality, and the rule of law. Without this support Afghanistan won't be able to reach the international market and become financially sustainable which would only prolong the necessity of the international military presence.

Mr. Çetin closed his speech with emphasizing the necessity and the importance of continuously reassuring Afghanistan about our long-term commitment as this would already strengthen the consolidation.

***Mr. Zoltán Nagy**, Deputy Special Representative of Hungary for Afghanistan and Pakistan, first recalled the development process of Baghlan province. He agreed with Mr. Hill’s optimistic assessment on the transition but also agreed with Prof. Gyarmati that transition itself is not enough, we also need to ensure that the local forces be loyal to their government. In this aspect the increase of troops to 350,000 can be dangerous by generating armed capacities that do not serve their original purpose. Only good governance can reduce this potential danger. We also have to analyze if Afghanistan will ever be able to financially maintain an army of 350,000 soldiers.*

The mistake of the 1990s when the international community refused to deal with the problem of Afghanistan cannot occur again. It is essential that Afghans lead their own country but allied assistance is vital both on central and regional level. Therefore, mutual commitment for long-term development is necessary.

In addition, the Afghan government should avoid making the same mistakes they did previously, like the case of the Central Bank or the 2010 elections. The process of redirecting the former insurgents into the security sector has also been controversial as the composition of forces does not reflect the state of the Afghan society. All of the processes should reflect the ethnic realities of Afghanistan.

Mr. Nagy emphasized the importance of Pakistan and Russia in the long-term solution. He acknowledged the latter one’s contribution “under the political radar screen” to the fight against international terrorism and drug trafficking. Unfortunately, Russian participation is often a highly business-oriented approach.

The Afghan government should take more serious approach on good governance as well. Unfortunately a serious problem is that the central government doesn’t provide the necessary resources for the regional level.

Since Afghanistan lacks a proper security sector it is pointless to focus on a sector reform, besides the whole sector needs to be established by the cooperation of locals and the international community, furthermore the civilian control of the armed forces should also be developed.

II.3 Afghanistan after the Transition (Inteqal)

*According to **Prof. Nasrullah Stanekzai**, Senior Legal Advisor to the President of Afghanistan, there are two main categories of issues concerning the possible situation of Afghanistan after 2014. The first consists of the political issues and the other contains the legal system and the rule of law in Afghanistan. Currently, the greatest challenge for the country is security, corruption, extremism, and the varying interests of the international community. In the future the two biggest challenges will be poverty and extremism.*

In the last 10 years the biggest mistake of the international community was the lack of coordination among their activities. Another problem is that the international community does not understand the Afghan society. Security has three pillars and only one of them is physical security while the international forces only concentrate on this one pushed by the military forces. The other two dimensions, such as economic and psychological security are often forgotten.

Prof. Stanekzai described the complexity of the problem by analyzing the key stakeholders and parallel systems, particularly in the legal system. Regarding the peace process that has started in Afghanistan, there are three players: the international society, the Afghan government and the Afghan people.

The Afghan legal system has also three parts: Islam, secularism, and the customary law. Secularism has two branches, the Afghan legal system and the international treaties. The three parts of the legal system generate a lot of conflicts for the government and the international society as they refer to different values.

Similar to the legal system, the Afghan life has also three branches: Islam, tradition, and modernism. A serious problem is that some countries would like to export democracy and different laws to Afghanistan not recognizing this complexity. The best example for this is the civil criminal procedural law which was drafted by the Italians. Many parts of the law should be changed and they already had to modify many of the articles because they didn't take into consideration the differences of the Italian and the Afghan societies and the fact that they have different crimes and regions, therefore different problems.

Another challenge for the rule of law in Afghanistan is the parliamentary system. The Afghan parliament is diverse, including extremists, liberals or warlords. Obviously, some of these groups not always support the modern and secular law.

Due to all these reasons, the current legal system needs revision but beyond the legal system there is also a difference between the formal and the informal justice system. In the rural areas people still prefer informal justice. As corruption is a great challenge for the rule of law in Afghanistan, most of the people who use the informal justice system use it against justice. But to be honest, the reason for the presence of informal jurisdiction is partly the fact that the government doesn't have the capacity for providing formal justice. In some of the provinces there are only five judges available in the framework of the formal jurisdiction, leaving no other choice for the people but turning to the informal system.

What is the meaning of democracy for Afghanistan? Afghanistan does have democratic traditions. After the independence in 1919, the country had a good system and exercised democracy. The elements of the original Afghan civil society can be tracked in the Sura, the Jirga and the mosques. The majority of the Afghan population lives in villages not in big cities, while the international society often focuses only on the latter ones. Prof. Stanekzai concluded his presentation with his belief, according to which what Afghanistan needs to be able to run a justice sector is a strong legal system but not a copied one.

Mr. Michael Semple, former Deputy European Union Special Representative for Afghanistan, tried to answer the question where Afghanistan will be in 2014. He urged allied forces to give up on the “Alice in wonderland” approach and face the true facts about possible scenarios. In any kind of scenario setting for Afghanistan, the key question is whether there will be a major national conflict or not. Mr. Semple believes that there is a 70 percent possibility that a serious national conflict will break out where there are Afghans on both sides, if this is the case NATO proceeds with its current strategy. If a civil war breaks out after 2014, it creates the capacity to stay there for a long time. There are also realistic concepts for ending the conflict in Afghanistan; however, the chance for this scenario is much smaller. We should keep in mind that there is also a chance that the possible outcome of the conflict is a “draw” where both sides can declare victory and both can coexist in the country. Although the Taliban side has the advantage of playing the “hit and run” game and time is also on their side, they can take advantage of the same events as the ISAF takes, for example the general elections. They are well organized, replace their key “players” quickly, therefore, they are still “in the game”.

The fundamental goals of the international society are at stake whether the Taliban get to pull off their armed strategy for their own campaign or not. There are well-informed, well-networked, and internet-user thinkers among the insurgents who are also identifying their opportunities, and their opportunity set is quite similar to the one that NATO is looking at. Therefore, the international society should also look at the other side which they are set to exploit.

The insurgents have their ideological commitment to be able to sustain their organization beyond 2014. They have many of the conditions of sustainability in place. Most importantly, they have demonstrated their capability to sustain steady access to finance, which is helpful for sustaining the cohesiveness of their military political organization. And they are operating at relatively low cost. The chance of the Taliban maintaining a steady access to funding that they need for being able to sustain their campaign “towards the day of Judgement” is extremely high. We have to keep in mind that the Taliban are still in this game. The conclusion is that probably there will be an ongoing conflict in Afghanistan depriving the Afghan people from the opportunity of peace in the post-NATO period. The first thing we can do against this negative scenario is anything that can influence the outlook, making it absolutely clear that forceful overthrow of the regime is absolutely impossible now.

A rapid and violent change will not guarantee success, every plan needs to have longer timetables and bring the dialogue as close to the insurgents as possible. We also need to rethink the financing system of the ANSF to keep it sustainable – and of course all of our efforts are pointless if we forget to promote human rights, for example the prohibition of torture. During the upcoming elections we need to guarantee that everyone will be involved and will be able to vote, even in the conflicted areas where it seems impossible.

One of the most interesting outcomes is that the ideal role that NATO could find for itself to play before 2014 would be to help in agreeing upon a ceasefire rather than just working its way through three more fighting seasons.

The key element of a possible future strategy is the option of a ceasefire, even though it seems rather wasteful to finance troops on the other side of the globe to do nothing but this option will give us the opportunity to consolidate the Taliban side.

Meanwhile, we will have to keep an eye on Pakistan which is playing a double game: acting as a bastion of the region's stability and still providing support for insurgents at the same time. It is futile to act against Pakistan as a whole; we should rather contain that particular problem and promote the country in other successful fields and areas.

II.4 Strategy of the EU and Role of Some Key EAPC and Partner Countries

Ambassador Vygaudas Ušackas, Special Representative and Head of the EU Delegation in Afghanistan elaborated the role of the EU beyond 2014. According to him, we should focus especially on our long-term commitments, such as building a sustainable institutional framework for Afghanistan (rule of law), providing security guarantees by enhancing the civilian sector, contributing to an adequate environment for sustainable economic development, and strengthening regional dynamics. Actually, long-term strategy has to be created with the leadership of the Afghan government. The real question is how to do it. Ambassador Ušackas believes that military transition has to be combined with civilian efforts. As one of the poorest countries in the world, Afghanistan needs long-term external help. Stabilization should be the core of any partnership concentrating on civilian training of the Afghan police, public administration reform, counter-narcotics actions, and border management, while justice and the rule of law is vital for the long-term stability.

In Bonn in 2001, EU made the necessary guarantees for a long-term agreement by signing a legally binding document. These negotiations have to wake up the Afghan government. The leaders of the EU member states pledged the same level of development aid, more than one billion EUR for the years to come. The narrative of Bonn was about mutual commitments. The Afghan government had to send strong signals for the EU tax payers. In line with the Kabul and London commitments, the Afghan government has to take tangible steps to show the necessary moves before the Tokyo Conference, which will take place in July 2012. The main actions should be in the field of tackling corruption, reforming the electoral system, and improving good governance. The more they reach, the higher the chance for concrete pledges by the international donor community in Tokyo.

Ambassador Niclas Trouvé, Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan of Sweden summarized the Swedish experience in the four northern Afghan provinces that Sweden supervises. Since the area is huge the job would be impossible without the contribution of the locals. Swedish forces have never taken over the control of services in the PRTs; therefore, it is much easier to perform the transition. Currently, 70 percent of the Swedish financial support goes to Kabul; the rest 30 is distributed directly to various northern regions. Sweden is

planning to raise this sum. There is no existing deadline on troop withdrawal, Sweden will comply it with the Afghan needs. 500 troops are serving daily now, and this number will decrease to 400 by the end of the year 2012, and 200 by the year 2014. MEDEVAC support will remain available for longer term despite its costs. 620 million Euros have been spent by Sweden since 2002 in Afghanistan. The support currently goes directly to specific areas, such as human rights promotion, gender issues, education, and private sector development.

EUPOL support will continue and the PRTs will be changed to transition support teams (a development and a security one), and the leader will be the senior civilian representative. The three main challenges are phasing out, handing over and maintaining support but the monopoly of applying force should remain with the Afghan state. Ambassador Trouvé concluded that the country needs long-term plans, as quick solutions never lead anywhere.

III. SLOWLY AGAINST HEADWIND: AFGHANISTAN AFTER 2014

Innumerable analysts and journalists compare the present conflict in Afghanistan to the Soviet intervention due to the similar political and military mistakes. The obvious conclusion of this logic is that the West's experiment is doomed to fail, almost the same way the Soviet involvement did. After NATO leaves Afghanistan the civil war returns and the painstakingly established post-Taliban system will crumble.

We cannot state with complete certainty that this will not happen. However, it is probable that the events of the 1990s will not repeat in the near future. As long as the 2014-2024 strategic partnership between Afghanistan and the West is filled with tangible content, Kabul will not remain without support in key fields, such as security forces, international development assistance and diplomacy. The reason why this is important is that the Western, and especially American, support will be essential in discouraging the attempts of Afghanistan's neighbours to meddle in the country's domestic policy, just as they did in the pre-2001 period.

Usually, most of the Afghans like to view foreign interventions as the root of their domestic problems. However, they also have to face the fact that they cannot continuously blame others for their own inability or failures. In spite of tangible success in the last decade, there are several unresolved issues which need to be handled primarily by the Afghan political elite and not NATO, the UN, or the European Union. Results in these fields are terribly modest.

The public opinion in Afghanistan is concerned that history will repeat itself. One of the main fears manifests in the prospect of a state abandoned with its inner conflicts, similarly to the case in the past when the West turned its attention away from the country after the Soviets withdrew. The Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) between the United States and Afghanistan is a positive sign in this case. The document which was signed on 2

May 2012 offers only a few concrete details in the field of cooperation.¹² The US military will stay in Afghanistan until 2024 although it will not seek permanent military bases.¹³ Washington will support Afghanistan in social and economic development, and the Afghan government reaffirmed its commitment to the democratic values, human rights, and fighting corruption.

III.1 Problems within Afghanistan

Afghanistan developed a lot during the past decade, even if its shortcomings are significant compared to other parts of the world. The international community and NATO engaged in an ambitious state-building project with billions of dollars. However, it was surprising to see that when the ISAF listed the most crucial achievements of the past ten years in October 2011, only one was related to these efforts, the rest was achieved by the Afghan private sector.¹⁴ The involvement of the international community and NATO after 2001 was based on the idea that state-building goals could be resolved in just a couple of years, while the necessary attention and resources have only been provided in the last few years. As a result of the West's campaign-like thinking, instead of an all-inclusive approach, the emphasis changed from time to time between key issues, such as countering drug production or public administration reform. Currently, corruption is the main area of concern.¹⁵ However, political, social, and economic problems are all interrelated in the country and, therefore, this campaign-like approach could only achieve partial success or none.

Next to corruption, there are a few fields in which solid reforms are necessary to reduce internal conflicts. The results of the 2009 presidential elections and the 2010 parliamentary elections indicate that the most valued element of Afghan democracy, free and democratic elections, is in danger. To sustain the political stability of the country in the future it will be essential to present improvement in this area. The goal of the elections is to legitimize the government and the state. Unfortunately, due to electoral frauds, the exact opposite happened.

¹² Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. May 2, 2012. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/2012.06.01u.s.-afghanistansignedtext.pdf>

¹³ In December 2014, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) will cease to exist, but the international military presence will not. The number of troops operating under a new and currently unknown name will be significantly reduced. According to one concept, two components from the current ISAF strategy would be retained after 2014. One element consists of targeted "kill or capture missions". These are aimed at low and midlevel commanders and are carried out as night raids. The other is made up of so-called Village Stabilization Operations. During these, US special forces provide stability and security in rural areas (villages) which are considered key by coalition forces. The main players in both areas are special operations forces. Post-2014, they will engage in close cooperation with Afghan security forces. The 4000 (planned) special operators will be aided by a large body of intelligence professionals, analysts, and supporting regular military units. The US Air Force will continue to operate from several bases as well as supporting the special forces. Afghanistan War: Special Operations War Plan Proposed, Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/12/afghanistan-war-special-operations-war-plan_n_1420659.html

¹⁴ The NATO briefing lists four achievements: 1. 7 million students attended schools (½ of them are females) 2. Half of the population had televisions (in 2001, almost no one had one) 3. The population can choose from 75 TV channels and 175 radio stations 4. Approximately 60% of Afghans have a cellular phone. The last three are due rather to the Afghan entrepreneurial sector and private capital than to international efforts. ISAF press briefing, Oct. 4, 2011.

¹⁵ Gran Hewad: On the Way to Chicago: Fighting Corruption – and Condoning It? Afghan Analyst Network, April 4, 2012. <http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=2640>

The reform of the electoral system is a recurring theme, but the West (primarily the US) cannot intervene into this for a second time.¹⁶

While the electoral system's reform would decrease tensions primarily among the political elite, clearing up issues regarding land properties and performance of the public administration at provincial and district level would be beneficial for the population, as well. The 80 percent of the altercations were due to issues related to unclear ownership and illegal land grabs according to an Afghan analysis in 2006. Perhaps the data was a bit exaggerated but ever since conflicts related to land ownership abound. Especially, in cities former commanders and influential politicians often abuse their influence in order to gain land property. In rural areas the conflict is the result of the wars of the last thirty years, returning refugees, and old and new landowners. Due to the corruption anyone can provide documentation to prove claims of ownership while the judiciary is unable to provide justice.

Would all problems be solved if all of a sudden the Taliban simply disappeared? The answer is no. Warlords, corruption, petty crimes, structural weakness of the state would still remain. This is extremely important to remember when the international community and our Afghan partners think about long-term solutions to their problems and underlines the need for sound institutions.¹⁷

III.2 Regional Outlook

When I wrote my first scholarly article on the relationship between the Taliban and al-Qaeda in 2001 as a junior researcher, I thought about using the term "Janus-faced" to characterize Pakistan's role in Afghanistan. When this year one of my fellow presenters at an Afghanistan conference used the term "Janus-faced" when referring to Pakistan's Afghanistan policy, all of a sudden I was reminded of how nothing has actually changed.

The role of Pakistan, just like in the past, will remain critical even after 2014. If history teaches us anything in this regard then it is apparent that Islamabad will aim to manipulate the situation in Afghanistan according to its own goals in the future. The country's geopolitical interests have barely changed in the past decade. Despite all efforts, India is still more of an enemy than a friendly neighbour.

To Pakistan's political elite the threat from New Delhi has not decreased. As such, the state's priorities concerning Afghanistan have not changed. The key phrases of "strategic depth" and "Pakistan-friendly government" continue to typify the relationship. Though, previously the concept of Pashtunistan existed, which threatened Pakistan's territorial integrity (at least theoretically), Islamic currents in the present-day Pashtun community are so strong that this idea is mentioned solely to provide a complete list of options.

¹⁶ The US was a forceful advocate of the current strong presidential arrangement and the SNTV electoral system.

¹⁷ To be honest, for an Afghan it isn't obvious to think or to seek long term solutions. In any society teared apart by years of civil war short term solutions are the rule. This exists at micro and macro levels of the society. Corruption, nepotism, embezzlement of public funds are the consequences of this.

From Pakistan's point of view, there have been two processes that brought real change into the life of the country and which could not be considered as evident in 2001. On the one hand, the US returned and involved itself in regional politics with its full political, economic, and military weight. After 9/11 Washington immediately made Pervez Musharraf make a choice with regard to his support for the Taliban. The initial Pakistani change of direction, however, was later understood to be quite superficial. The hiding places of Mullah Omar and the Taliban leadership are thought to be in present-day Quetta, while Osama bin Laden spent his final years with his family near one of the Pakistani army's garrisons. Letting various radical terrorist groups who support the Afghan resistance stay on Pakistan's tribal areas showed that while Islamabad was America's main ally in the war against terror, parallel it secretly aided the enemy. One, if not the most surprising, element of this phenomenon was that the Pakistani leadership was able to maintain a great bargaining position with the Bush administration. However, this relationship has weakened since the US and NATO started to build an alternative resupply line through post-Soviet Central Asia and the Afghan war became an election promise for the Obama administration in 2008.

The increased number of drone attacks, the humiliating bin Laden operation, and the aggressive border operations have strained bilateral relations. But because the US was less dependent on Islamabad's benevolence in the resupply for Afghan operations, Washington had considerably more leverage.

The Pakistani military/intelligence establishment's policies would be very difficult for the US to change but there can be other factors which could moderate Islamabad's policy towards Afghanistan. One of these is the Talibanization of Pakistan which was expected by few if none back in 2001. The Pashtun tribal areas in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) were the homeland of the Afghan Taliban. Later the Talibanization of the FATA itself took place. Without the interference of the Pakistani government they appeared in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and scarcely in the Punjab province, as well.¹⁸

The army's siege of Lal Masjid Madrassa (2007) and the offensive initiated in the Swat valley (2009) clearly indicated a line beyond which the military leadership was no longer willing to allow the advance of the Pakistani Taliban. The army continues to initiate punitive military operations in tribal areas from time to time but they are generally unable or perhaps unwilling to substantially change the situation. The challenges posed by Talibanization entered a new phase in March 2012 when a Salafist group from the Pakistani city of Chitral infiltrated several Afghan villages on the border, and drove out their inhabitants. They even had their own families settle in them.¹⁹

Next to the problem of the Talibanization and the future of the US involvement there are other two factors which can influence the leadership of Pakistan after 2014. One of these is the development of economic integration with its neighbours. The sooner this field becomes prominent, the more it will force the leadership to alter its foreign policy. A plan for natural gas pipelines from Turkmenistan to Pakistan (which would cross

¹⁸ Mohamed Waseem: Patterns of Conflict in Pakistan: Implications for Policy, Brookings Institution, Working Paper No 5, January 2011, pp. 9-10.

¹⁹ http://www.rferl.org/content/afghans_cry_for_help_in_nuristan/24531213.html

Afghanistan) already appeared under the rule of the Afghan Taliban. At that time its execution was hindered by the fundamentalist organization's unfavourable international reputation. After 2001 the plans were revived and the pipelines elongated to reach India. After the participating countries the concept was named TAPI. It became reality in 2012.²⁰ If the pipeline is constructed Afghanistan will have a leveraging tool for its Southern neighbour for the first time in its history, and Pakistan will have a common economic interest with its neighbours.

The other factor could be China, if its desire for natural resources and economic expansion in Afghanistan will continue.²¹ Beijing is Islamabad's biggest ally and the military relations are excellent, Pakistan's ballistic missile and nuclear technology is built upon Chinese expertise, the second commercial port of Pakistan was built from Chinese money, not to mention the fact that when it comes to India, China is a much closer ally than the US. The key in this relationship is the appearance of Chinese companies in Afghanistan. If China becomes an essential player in Afghanistan's raw material export market then perhaps they will be less interested in "re-establishing the chaos". However, this can be a significant motivating force for the Chinese leadership to do everything in its power to harmonize its own interests with those of its allies with regards to Afghanistan.

When it comes to Afghanistan, the main fear of Central Asian countries is the return of the Taliban and other radical groups, which, like pre-2001, endangers the region's security. This fear is significantly exaggerated in public rhetoric because maintaining a sense of danger legitimizes certain restrictive measures. Due to the perceived threat posed by radicals it is possible to limit human rights, the freedom of religion, and control over civil society and NGOs. As it might be expected, radical terror groups also operate in Central Asian countries but their influence and power is much less significant than they might appear in public portrayals.

With regards to trends in Afghanistan, the Taliban's rhetoric lost its pre-2001 territorial ambitions, the creation of a caliphate in Central Asia. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was embraced by the Taliban in 1998, was engulfed by al-Qaeda during its stay in Afghanistan. After the downfall of 2001 they escaped to Pakistan's tribal regions together where IMU showed a surprising will to survive in an unfamiliar environment. It survived the deaths of its founders, a schism in the organizational structure, and still it was able to reorganize its presence in Northern Afghanistan. It could pose a threat in Central Asia, especially to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. However, both countries could handle this threat with their current security institutions.²²

For Central Asian countries the situation after 2014 also gives another cause to worry. This is the reduced role of the United States in the region. All of the five Central Asian countries conduct a multidirectional foreign policy

²⁰ TAPI gas pipeline: Final round of talks in Kabul on April 19, Business Recorder, 29 March 2012. <http://www.brecorder.com/topnews/1-front-top-news/51008-tapi-gas-pipeline-final-round-of-talks-in-kabul-on-april-19-.html>

²¹ A Chinese corporation was entrusted with one of Afghanistan's largest surface copper mines. The size of the investment is \$4.3 billion. Afghan Copper Deal Helps Build Nation's Future, China Daily, 21 Sept, 2011. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2011-09/21/content_13745377.htm. A Chinese corporation will conduct feasibility studies for two railroad projects from Kabul, while the national Chinese oil company was awarded the first oil extraction contract in 2011. CNPC Gets OK for Afghanistan Project, Chinamining.org, 28. Dec. 2011. <http://www.chinamining.org/Investment/2011-12-28/1325034574d52859.html>, China Mining Giant Tapped for Afghan Rail Project, Business Week, 11 October 2011. <http://www.businessweek.com/ap/financialnews/D9QE3H9G0.htm>

²² Christian Bleuer: Instability in Tajikistan? The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Afghanistan Factor. OSCE Central Asia Security Policy Brief # 7, February 2012. pp. 5-6.

which ensures that their security is financed from the outside. The local regimes often maximized their resources by playing the superpowers against each other in the past decades. The post-2014 American foreign policy in the region is uncertain, and, therefore, the countries are rightfully worried about being abandoned in the midst of a Chinese-Russian rivalry.

The relationship between Central Asia and Afghanistan will most likely evolve intensively in the field of economics. Transportation networks have improved notably in the past years. Mazar-i Sharif is connected to Uzbekistan with a railway while a bridge for trucks was built in Tajikistan's direction.²³ The two countries supply Afghanistan with electricity, and perhaps the TAPI project will become reality, as well. If Afghanistan remains on a path of growth it could become an important partner and a transit country for Central Asian states. It could also offer the possibility of diversification with regards to Russian/Chinese relations.

It is customary to note two factors when discussing Iran's Afghanistan policy. Firstly, the country was previously an enemy of the Taliban, they almost even engaged in a war in 1998.²⁴ Secondly, Tehran was simultaneously interested in supporting the Karzai regime and weakening US influence.²⁵ It is worthwhile to add that in many respects Afghanistan acts as a backyard for Iran since the country's priorities of foreign policy are the Persian Gulf and the Arab world. For the past thirty years Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Israel, or the United States played a considerable role in Tehran's foreign policy.

Obviously, Iran is not apathetic regarding the stability in its immediate vicinity or the lack thereof but it does not place such a grave emphasis on this as we would think at first. In the field of security the country will be indifferent whether Afghanistan is run by the Taliban or a government friendly to the West because neither is a real threat to the Iranian regime. Secondary considerations, such as problems with refugees or the illegal drug trade might come up but they will not be pressing issues.

IV. Conclusion

The West appears to be committed to supporting Afghanistan in the future. The Chicago NATO Summit in May and the donor conference in Tokyo in July 2012 will illustrate their approach and their willingness to allocate resources. In our opinion the US and its allies must be prepared that the development will be extremely slow and there will be times when the West will feel they are the only ones who really want this project to progress.

²³Hairatan-to-Mazar-i-Sharif railway opens, Central Asia online, 23 Aug. 2011.

http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/08/23/feature-01

²⁴ The interpretation of the conflict between the two parties was that the Taliban as a radical Sunni fundamentalist organization, despised the Shi'ite Hazara minority and the Shi'ite Iranian leadership supporting them. The Taliban killed 12 Iranian diplomats at the Mazar-e Sharif consulate. International organizations documented human rights violations against the Hazara community on numerous occasions during the conflict. At the same time, there were certain Hazara warlords who cooperated with the Taliban.

²⁵ Due to this duality, on the one hand the Iranian Revolutionary Guard support the opposition and facilitated the movement of al-Qaeda members from Iraq to Afghanistan, while on the other hand Iran is the largest investor in Western Afghanistan and secretly hands over millions of dollars in cash to President Karzai to promote its interests. Dexter Filkins: Iran Said to give Karzai Aide Cash by a Bagful. October 23, 2010.

Internally, we see three main players in Afghan politics: the ex-Northern Alliance commanders, the Presidential Palace, and the Taliban. At the present, the former two are on the same side of the political game. If the negotiations between the latter two are successful, the Northern commanders have few options to remain as constructive partners in a future Afghan government. Although, the Afghans are masters of survival and they have previously struck unimaginable political deals, the division between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance seems pretty antagonistic. Leaving aside the everyday political (and military) conflict, the Afghan state should show at least minimal progress on providing services. It needs to be a little more responsive to people's needs.

As the last twenty or so years have shown, regional cooperation will be out of the question. The country's neighbours have divergent interests regarding Afghanistan, and there is a serious lack of trust among the main players regionally and internationally. A lot will depend on the attitude of Pakistan as the only country which could seriously hinder development in Afghanistan. With full US support to Kabul, Islamabad will have to restrain itself but it will still have countless opportunities to slow down the process.

With continuing (although decreased) Western military presence, the support of international donors, and 230,000 Afghan security forces, Afghanistan will advance after 2014. We all know why the international community should stand by Afghanistan. We can all presume the consequences if we fail to do so. But we must hope that our and our Afghan partners' efforts will finally lead us to an end which will be not only satisfactory for all of us but sustainable in the future, as well.