

Does the Defense of Europe start on the foothills of the Hindukush?

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Colonel Karl Ernst Graf Strachwitz is an officer in the German general staff, who has just completed a tour of duty as the Military Assistant to the NATO Commander of the ISAF forces in Kabul, Afghanistan. He entered the German army in 1974 as a conscript. After his decision to stay in the army he attended the Officers Training School in Munster and in the same year completed his single combatant training course. From 1976 till 1979 he studied economics at the German Armed Forces University in Munich and received a degree in economic sciences, an M.B.A. equivalent. He further became squadron commander of the 4 armored reconnaissance Battalion in Roding. In 1986 he completed his training as a general staff officer in Hamburg. He became a G2 officer of the 3rd Tank Division in Buxtehude. In 1990-1991 he completed the Australian Command and Staff Course at Fort Queenscliff. His subsequent positions were as a G3 officer in Brigade 7 in Hamburg and as commander of the Armored Reconnaissance Battalion 13 in Gotha. After these assignments he became planer in the German Ministry of Defense, staff leader of the staff: Planning and Exercises EUROKORPS, in Strasburg, France and Deputy Chief plans HQ SFOR in 1998. Further assignments were military assistant to the commander of Kosovo Forces in Prishtina, Kosovo and military assistant to the commander of NATO Joint Command Center in Heidelberg (2000 – 2004). The Colonel is a recipient of numerous decorations. The most recent medals being NATO-Medal Afghanistan and the Mission Medal of the German armed forces ISAF.

ABSTRACT

The NATO Nations gave ISAF-Command the primary task to support the transitional government of Afghanistan in restoring security and maintaining stability in the metropolitan areas of Kabul and Kunduz. The first six months of operation of ISAF under NATO Command were considered to be a success in all aspects, which can be attributed to all the participating ISAF soldiers. The soldiers (female and male) of NATO have executed their duty in a decisive manner supporting the Afghan government in restoring security and stability during the reconstruction of the country. This NATO Mission is highly respected by the Afghan population and this earned respect must be maintained by the ISAF at all costs. The present situation within the country is favorable and the Afghan government is supporting an increased engagement of NATO ISAF forces to expand its area of responsibility into the countryside providing similar security as already obtained in Kabul. Other friendly Nations which want to assist in the appeasement and reconstruction process of Afghanistan are carefully observing and evaluating the experiences which German forces are accruing during its supporting mission in Kunduz.

The expansion of influence of the central government in Kabul and the intended expansion of the pacification process into the provinces with the help of ISAF is not contested as the proper roadmap to appease this country. Only through such a process is it possible to establish the urgently required security structures and stability for all of Afghanistan. This expansion must be performed decisively without hesitation but it also must be performed carefully in full agreement with the Afghan population in order to avoid the stigma of being unjustly considered as an occupational force.

The biggest challenge on the one hand is the war on drugs, which has to be fought right from the beginning to prevent the establishment of organized crime and the development of “South American conditions.” On the other hand there still remain the tasks of organizing presidential and parliamentary elections. Both challenges must be accomplished for the establishment of national stability and to demonstrate that the international community is a reliable support for the provisional government of Afghanistan.

Achieving security and stability in Afghanistan will largely depend on the following:

- Being trustworthy to our commitment. In order to remain trustworthy in this dynamic environment the international community must follow-up with actions to the spoken words. Special support is required when considering the upcoming elections that were stipulated in the Petersberg (Bonn, Germany) Accords. Time is running out.
- The expansion of ISAF’s area of responsibility must be accelerated. The Planning of this expansion of the area of responsibility should coincide with the expectations of the Afghan population. These expectations are: The efforts of US led coalition forces must be effective in countering the terrorist threat. The mission of the international community is to rebuild the country but at the same time giving their neighboring countries an Afghanistan with stable and reliable structures. The presence of ISAF is steadily gaining in importance especially when considering the complex political and geographic situation as the central government is expanding its influence to other regions within this country.
- Flexibility of strategy. The participating nations supporting the ISAF mission must supply the required forces and materiel (even though the budgets may be very tight) in order to achieve the goals set forth in the Petersberg (Bonn, Germany) Accords. Recent developments have clearly shown that the war on the drug trafficking has taken the top priority. The reason for this priority change has been the rapid improvements within the remaining security sector which includes the following:
 1. Build-up of the Afghan National Army.
 2. Build-up police forces.
 3. Disarmament and reintegration of former combatants.
 4. Establishment of legal- and governmental structures.

The worries of the members of the United Nations is justifiable if the drug trafficking issue would not be addressed because it would enhance the build-up of further criminal structures and those elements which will use the profits from drug trafficking to finance

terrorist activities. The implementation of a unilateral strategy for the stabilization of Afghanistan is in many respects a race with time, which the United Nation and NATO must win.

INTRODUCTION

The prescribed time frame prohibits undoubtedly an encompassing historic overview, but there are several issues which deserve special consideration. Not only did the conflicts during colonial times between England and Russia and later during the Cold War period have detrimental impacts on Afghanistan but also internal factors like its rugged terrain, diverse ethnic and religious rivalry have had similar negative contributing effects (Figure 1).



Figure 1: Afghanistan.

During the last decades the following events have particular relevancy on the development within Afghanistan: Externally promoted religious extremism, which eventually led to the withdrawal of the Soviet Army and subsequently caused civil war amongst the Afghan tribes which finally ended in the take-over by the Taliban. As we already know the Taliban government not only terrorized its own population with religious fanaticism, but also became the center and promoter of a world wide operating terrorist network. Finally, this regime was forcibly expelled form Afghanistan through the successful military operation ENDURING FREEDOM.

Twenty three war torn years with all of its devastation are bearing down on this oppressed country and its people. The present political and military engagement of the western allied nation in Afghanistan is based on the UN Resolution 1386 to ensure security according to the Bonn Accords. This does not only represent the first major military 'Out-of-Area' engagement, but simultaneously represents a significant change in the NATO force structure. It should be noted, since the transfer to NATO responsibility in August 2003, a number of positive factors have been introduced into the total reconstruction and in the establishment of the security process within Afghanistan.

There is for one, continuity, the long term political commitment and the strategic military concept for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, but also credibility of this commitment is achieved by having the total resources of the NATO alliance at our disposal serves as a significant multiplier of the previous efforts of the international community. Therefore, the expectations of the Afghan population from ISAF would be that from now on they will deal with all of Afghan concerns for the entire country and not just with those security issues concerning the capitol city of Kabul. This is an expectation which at the present goes far beyond the present framework and achievements of the ISAF mission.

Finally, we cannot loose sight of ISAF's mission intent, which is to establish a secure environment by supporting the Afghan transitional government and supporting their security structures, while they are still being formed.

In contrast to the Balkan missions, the commander of the international security forces in Afghanistan does not function as a military governor. The ISAF-operations are generated moreover from the second echelon position in support of the transitional government in achieving the goals set forth in the Bonn Accords. This doctrine remains unchanged even for latest UN Resolution 1510 from October 2003 which extended the operational territory of ISAF. All this verbiage should not confuse our primary mission goal, which is to enhance and promote the political process, without being considered by the population as an occupational force. The power of the central government is to be extended to all of Afghanistan. By expanding the control of the central government, the governmental agencies will have to educate the population of their constitutional and civil rights. This process must be carried out very carefully, not offending cultural, social, religious or ethnic customs.

FORCES AND ENGAGEMENTS OF ISAF

The transfer of command to NATO did not change defense policy nor the available forces and engagements significantly. Among the 32 nations which are participating consist of 18 NATO nations and 12 Partnership-for-Peace nations as well as Macedonia and New Zealand. The contributions vary appreciably from individual officers of Switzerland to mid-sized contingents from Italy and France up to major force contributors like Canada and Germany.

By having such a large number of participating nations has the advantage that an enormous broad band of capabilities and experience are available for the mission. However, it must also be considered, that such national diversity leads to a manifold of national restrictions, which can jeopardize the entire operation. Such national caveats were painstakingly considered and were a constant challenge especially for the brigade command

of the Kabul Multinational Brigade when resources for the different engagements of the mission were being planned.

The ISAF forces are confronted with large action space which extends from the military tactical level up to the strategic-political level. The latter is the direct cooperation with the Afghan Transitional Government and the interactions with the different 'lead nations' concerning the encompassing reformation of the security structures. This is performed on the operational level in close cooperation with the remaining US-led coalition forces of the Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, but also on the tactical level through ISAF command in the host nation.

Kabul, a metropolis or more than 3 million inhabitants, cannot be pacified with a mere 6000 Soldiers, where more than two thirds of these soldiers are not in anyway available for patrolling tasks, but are performing essential tasks in the area of combat support or logistic services. Despite this limited force capacity up to 74 patrols could be carried out within a 24 hour period.

A large number of these patrols were so called 'joint patrols,' which were carried out together with Afghan security forces (Figure 2). Through this measure and through the use of different reconnaissance forces it was possible to appreciably disrupt the activities of the extremists and at the same time give the Afghan police hands-on training.



Figure 2: Joint Patrols.

On the operational level liaison officers had to rely on the cooperation with local administration and the military officials. This occurred through professional consultation but primarily for Information gathering in order to understand the heterogeneous web within the Afghan administration and their different loyalties.

Sufficient knowledge about ethnic association, religious commitment, regional origin and possibly the history of the individual was an important information base in order to carry out specific operations.

No doubt, the success of the military operation ENDURING FREEDOM (led by US coalition forces which expelled the Taliban Regime in 2001) were pre conditions for the installation of a transitional government and the implementation of the robust but non aggressive ISAF mandate. It has been this coalition forces which put in special efforts for many months in augmenting the anti terrorist campaign by also starting rebuilding projects in the civilian sector. Foremost was the steady build-up of **Provincial Reconstruction Teams** PRTs especially in the less threatened northern and western regions, which are intended to be turned over quickly to ISAF responsibility (Figure 3). Finally, it is intended that all of the PRTs are to be turned over to ISAF, whereby this step will bring for NATO a different kinds of challenges.



Figure 3: Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Konduz and Gardez.

The operations ENDURING FREEDOM and ISAF certainly have different mandates; however both operations still pursue the same strategic goal. Both operations can be viewed complementary to one another. Due to their overlapping geographic operational area, both

operations require the utmost of coordination and cooperation. If in the future insurgencies or attempts to reinstate the Taliban regime or Al Quaida should occur, the responsibility for the neutralization and elimination of such attempts would lie by the forces belonging to operation ENDURING FREEDOM. Should the military situation become critical for ISAF, ISAF – Forces would receive close air support or even be evacuated by these forces of O.E.F. By taking over more responsibility for further PRTs by ISAF, a change of competence for both operations must be mutually agreed upon.

As a result, cooperation in the headquarters of the coalition forces has steadily increased. Especially useful in achieved this state of cooperation was a basic MOA as well as weekly meetings with the American commanding general. In addition, the communication networks were linked together and information if appropriate was also mutually evaluated. These common efforts led to noticeable successes such as the smooth takeover of responsibility of the ISAF – PRTs in Kunduz (Figure 4), the successful protection of Loya Jirga, who wrote the constitution in December of 2003 but also the arrest of three extremist leadership cadres through ISAF are proof of this excellent cooperation amongst the parallel running operations.

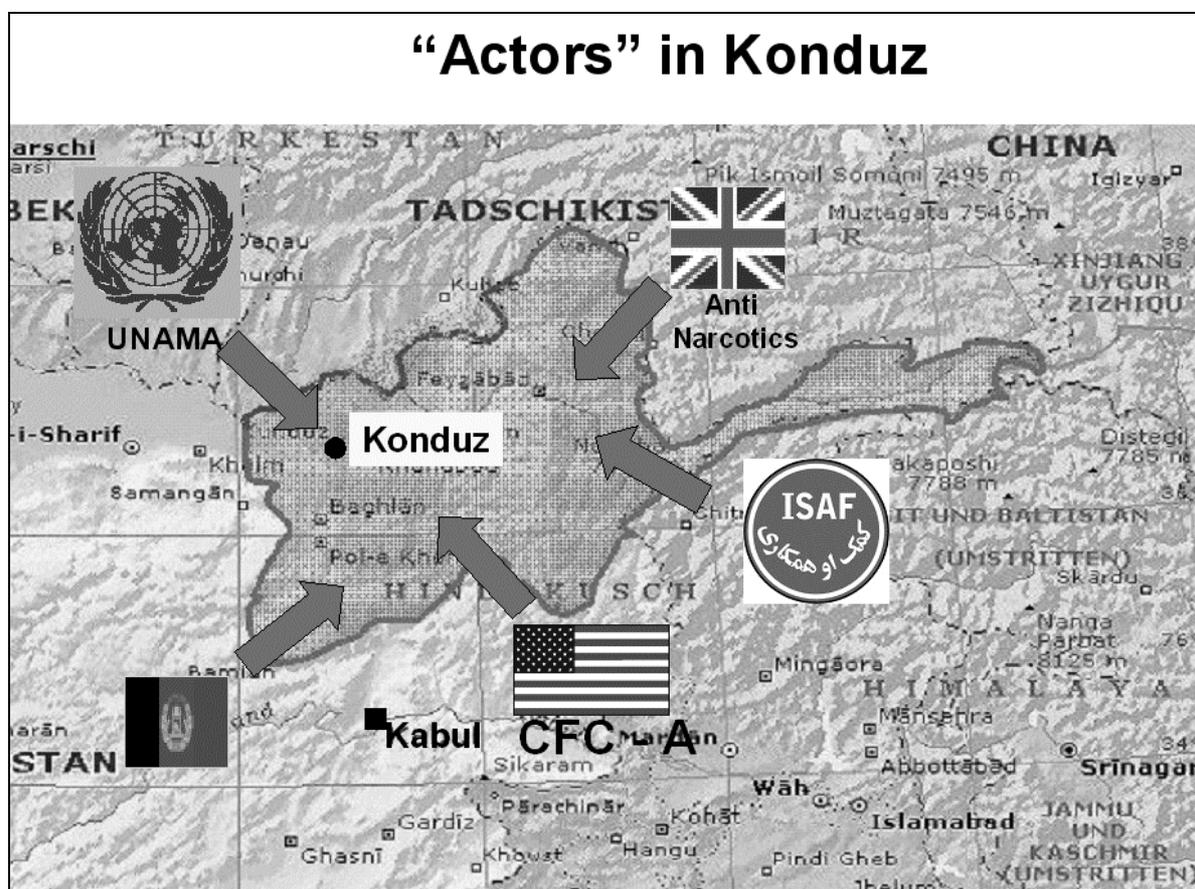


Figure 4: Key Role Players in Afghanistan.

The oldest key player in Afghanistan is assuredly the United Nations being present with its diversely branched Help – organizations. Even before the war against the Taliban regime, the UN was present in Afghanistan. The special mission of the United Nations for Afghanistan, UNAMA played a central role in the political reconstruction of the country. Since the very start of the ISAF – Mission, the relationship to UNAMA took a favorable course after some initial skepticism on the civilian participant's side on UNAMA. UNAMA

has the lead in supervising and implementation of the Bonn Accords an example for this are the preparations and implementation of the CLJ in the year 2003 as well as the organization of the elections within the same year.

DISRUPTING FACTORS

The work toward a more secure environment depends naturally on the disrupting factors and opponents. As expected, the coalition forces were not entirely successful in their military campaign to decisively destroy or ultimately ban the extremists and terrorists from Afghanistan. This is primarily due to the rough terrain of this country. In many places within Afghanistan heterogeneous groups supporting Mullah Omar, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and also the terrorist cells of Al Quaida strive to prohibit or at least attempt to disrupt the political stabilizing process.

One could observe a steady adjustment of our adversary's approach. After having suffered significant losses in strong direct attacks against forces of the O.E.F. in late summer of 2003, the strategy changed by performing smaller operations more frequently on so called 'soft targets.' However, the expected fall offensive, which was expected for a large part of Afghanistan, never did develop. The reasons for this lies in two circumstances:

1. Increased presence and reinforced engagements of the coalition forces belonging to Operation ENDURING FREEDOM along the Pakistan – Afghan border.
2. Combined Operations of ISAF and coalition forces in the vicinity of Kabul as of mid September 2003, which led to the elimination of three important solicitors of Hekmatyar.

Noteworthy, is that a change in attitude of the Afghan population towards the extremists was becoming noticeable. It could be observed that resistance of the population against terrorist activities grew within the provinces especially outside of Kabul. For example in the city of Ghazni, a city 100 km south of Kabul, the Afghan civilians arrested and nearly lynched an assassin who had shot and killed a young French UN employee. Nonetheless it is imperative that material reconstruction as well as law and order are brought to the population especially for those living in rural areas within the provinces.

A constant source of unrest still remains in the long unsecured border regions toward Pakistan where extremists groups can infiltrate unnoticed through the rough terrain into the southeasterly Afghan provinces. The use of the Pakistan border region as staging area and sanctuary is only possible since the population within this area is of the same ethnic and cultural background. The population consists primarily of Pashtunes, where the terrorists can rely on traditional loyalties amongst the clans that are much more important than personnel identification papers of countries to which they belong. The border between Pakistan and Afghanistan separates a people, clans and families and reminds us of the former border between East and West Germany. This is one major reason why terrorism in this region could develop without being noticed.

In Kabul and in other urban areas the threat of terrorist activities initiated from either Al – Quaida, Taliban still remains on a high level. Taliban and Al – Quaida and HIG still possess the capability of launching terrorist attacks regardless of seasonal limitations (Figure 5).

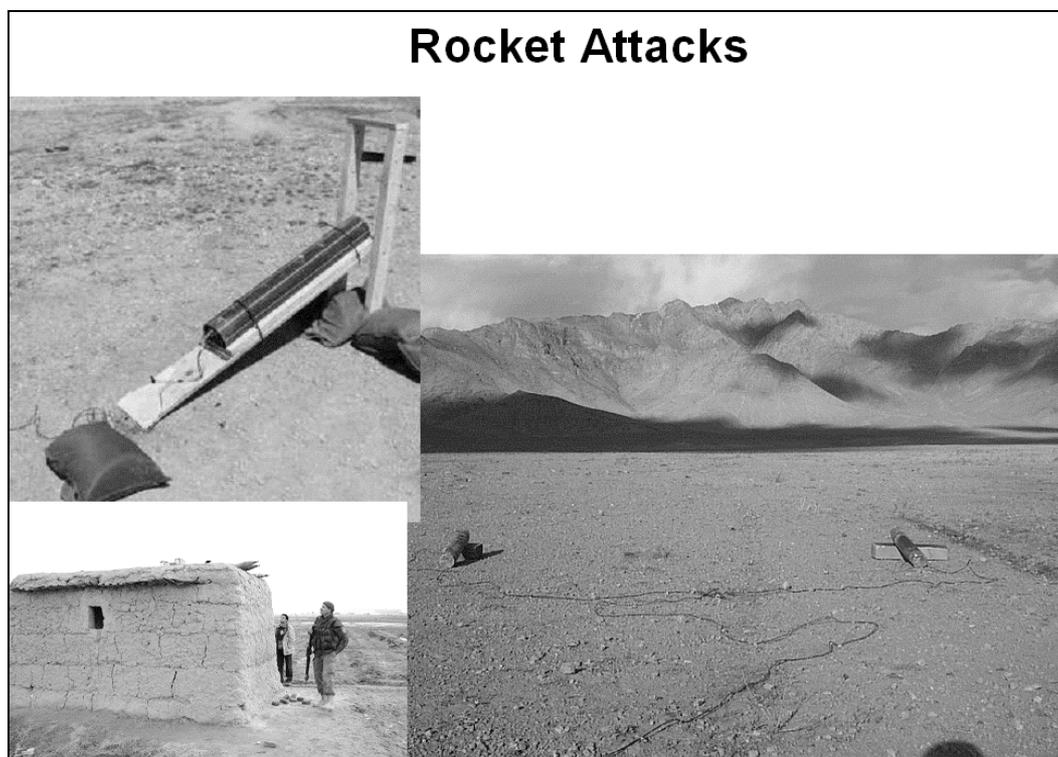


Figure 5: Rocket Attacks.

The primary strategy still is to destabilize the transitional government by creating an atmosphere of uncertainty by employing rocket, bomb and suicidal bomb attacks and therefore discredit all those forces, which have taken responsibility for the security of this country. The capital city of Kabul is therefore a primary target. And we have experienced during our mission stay numerous rocket attacks on the military camps sites of ISAF – forces, which, thank God, caused no appreciable damage.

Especially lamentable were the deaths of two Canadian comrades, who were victims of a dastardly planned mine assault, while on patrol (Figure 6). Through fortunate circumstances another lager booby trap along a major road with much traffic was discovered on the same day and was neutralized. Unfortunately, the recent successes of two suicide bomb attacks in the center of Kabul on the January 27 and 28 against Canadian and British ISAF soldiers resulted in 2 deaths and a number of seriously wounded comrades. The soldiers of ISAF have been and will remain exposed to high danger and despite all precautionary measures especially against suicide assassins no absolute protection is possible.

A further disrupting factor which forms the financial base of the extremists and terrorist but could destroy the overall positive developments in Afghanistan is the continuing farming and trafficking of drugs. Afghanistan is presently, with a yearly production of 3600 tons, the world's largest producer of raw opium. Two thirds of all opium drugs in the world have Afghanistan as their source nation. Ever since the fall of the Taliban regime, the planting of poppy has steadily increased. This has occurred mostly in plantation similar surroundings,

where the small farmers are earning their livelihood. The yearly opium production and local trade has a volume of approx. \$ 2 billion and amounts to about one half of the gross national product of this country. These illegal sources of income are closely tied together to a number of warlords with claims of dominance, who finance their military forces through drug production and drug trafficking.



Figure 6: Hazardous Patrols.

In order to prevent a similar situation as in Columbia an extensive and well orchestrated anti drug strategy has become of fundamental importance. By transferring the responsibility to ISAF, NATO will have to deal with this problem. Even though military forces are the least suitable force in this war on drugs, avoiding the issue altogether while expanding the control into the provinces is also not an acceptable solution. But the primary goal is through international support of the Afghan government in obtaining and adequate police forces in order to confine or completely eliminate poppy production.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FRAMEWORK

Considering the aforementioned rough sketch of disrupting factors Afghanistan is with international assistance in the middle of a multi faceted reconstruction and reform process. But before this situation is explained in greater detail it may be useful to give a brief overview of the social and political framework in Afghanistan.

It is not infrequently encountered that the basic structures are non-existent when reforms are considered in Afghanistan. The country does have some administrative capability at their disposal, but most of it has been destroyed by the 23 years of war. The lack of expertise and essential infrastructure combined with wide spread corruption are the primary challenges for the stabilization process within this country. There are definite constraints on the reinstatement of the previous elite leadership cadre.

Civilian, social and democratic structures are just emerging. Their further developments are hampered by not having had the appropriate traditional background. The terms building of political parties and democracy have been discredited and tainted at the time when the communists had reigned. The long armed conflict lasting for more than 2 decades has had detrimental consequences for the educational system and associated high illiteracy rate.

For the last quarter of a century it has not been the educated elite, who for the most part went into exile, but the Mujaheddin, which used military force successfully and seized political power. These military oriented forces had shown that they were incompetent in generating administrative or robust political structures.

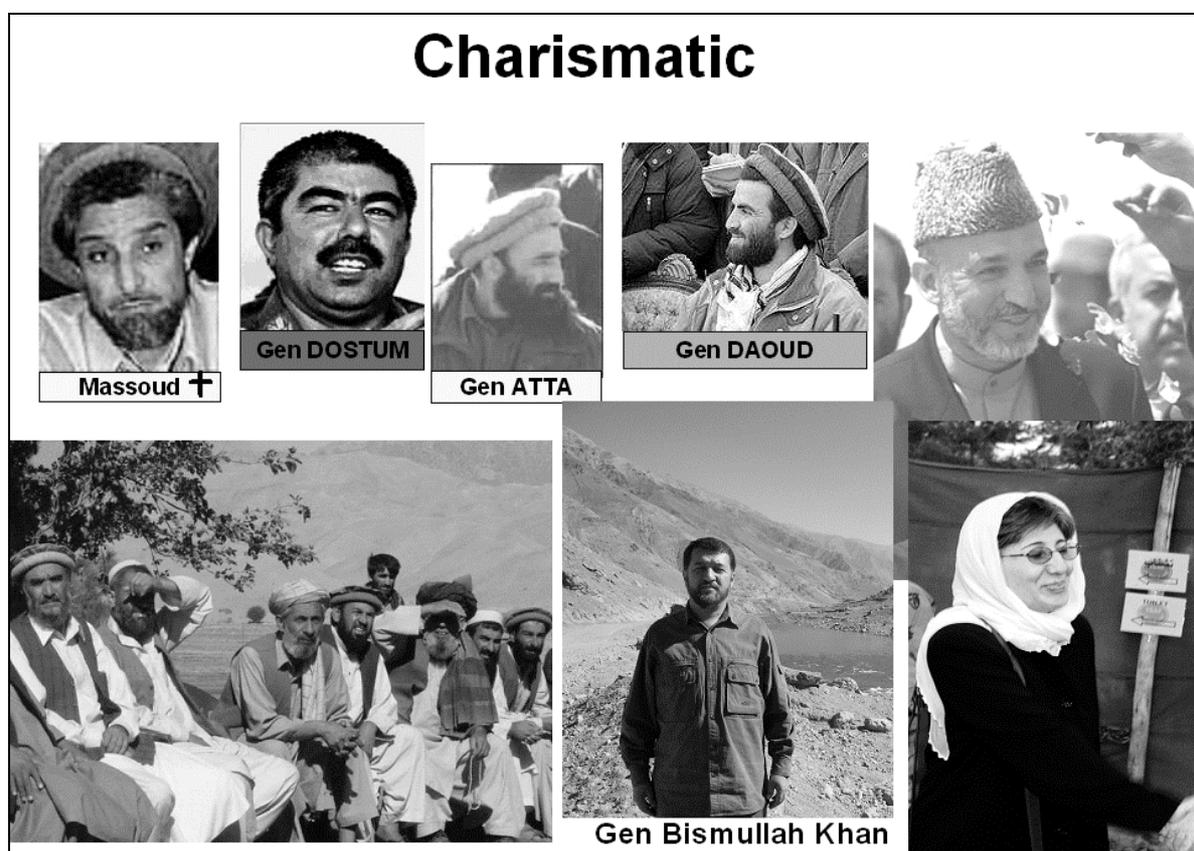


Figure 7: Local Leaders in Afghanistan.

One can be certain, that not every provincial governor or militia commander can be equated to a "warlord" (Figure 7). In this respect president Karzai was repeatedly successful in incorporating ethnic leaders into his cabinet such as the Panjiri – Commander Fahim Kahn as minister of defense and his offer to the Taliban and to the Hekmatyar fighters to participate in the elections or even take part in building the government. But of course all participants are just anxious in maintaining their positions of political and military power for the future.

These skirmishes for power also take place within the government, governmental agencies and subordinate security authorities.

Besides the conservative and in part radical interpretation of the Koran and the prolonged military fixations of the Afghan society have isolated women from politics and society. Additional problems in rural areas are old tribal traditions which limit the rights of women even further. These infringements on rights are much more limiting than those rights granted by applying even the most orthodox Islamic interpretation of the Koran. The reconstruction of a modern civil society is further aggravated through the fact that it is presently supported only by an extremely small group of former exiles, who are isolated and have no roots into the mainstream of present Afghan society.

It is especially lamentable that from the many hundred thousands of Afghan exiles only a miniscule number of them are prepared to come back only for a limited period to their homeland. It is obvious, that the Afghan government headed by Karzai in spite of international support is at the present in no position to break out alone of the vicious circle of terror, national fragmentation and warlord rule.

In spite of all efforts and the progress that has already been achieved, Afghanistan is still a third world country, which relies on assistance from the international community in every respect.

SECURITY STRUCTURE REFORM

In order to process the wide spread requirements in a structured manner, the Bonn Accords had developed the concept of "Security Structure Reform." This is based on five pillars, where each "lead nation" will take responsibility for any one of these pillars (Figure 8).

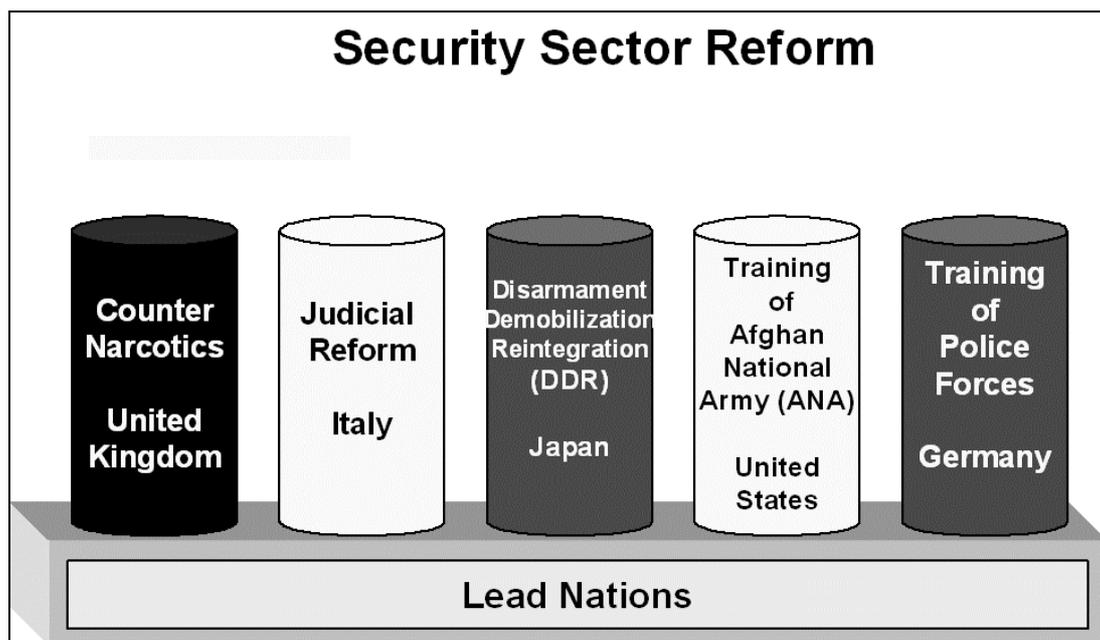


Figure 8: Security Reform in Afghanistan.

The responsibilities of the judiciary reform was taken on by Italy; the anti drug campaign was lead by Great Britain; Japan is responsible for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs; Germany has the responsibility for the training of police forces. Finally, the US took the responsibility of building the future army of Afghanistan.

The overall leadership lies with UNAMA. Besides having the forces of ENDURING FREEDOM and ISAF in Afghanistan a large number GOs and NGOs have been integrated into the multifaceted reconstruction process. Despite the great number of progress report meetings, the described pillars must more or less stand by themselves. Only little progress has been made in the area of the ant drug campaign and the structuring of the judiciary, but other areas have shown significant progress. Foremost, a comprehensive strategy is still missing; integration of the tasks between the defined pillars is not being performed. A master plan for the development of Afghanistan as a whole is also missing.

The buildup of a functioning police structure is a decisive factor in restoring security for the population and for the diverse international help organizations. Germany has taken here the lead and pressed ahead with the build-up of police academies. Further significant support has been obtained through other organizations from the US and Great Britain in the area of general training.

The objective is to have up to 65,000 policemen trained within the new police academies for the police forces, boarder police and anti drug units by the end of 2005. The first graduates of these 8 week training courses have left the academy and are already performing their duties as police officers with great success. One of the successes being, the separation of rival militia forces which belonged to General Dostum and Atta.

The limited financial resources, but most of all irregular payment of policemen salaries is a cause of serious problems. With an average monthly salary of about € 40, which is not always paid regularly, opens the doors for wide scale corruption. The ISAF support encompassed the entire spectrum of activities beginning by offering one week basic courses, checking the salaries of the policemen and tracing the entire financial paths but also improving the infrastructure of police stations as part of civil military cooperation CIMIC – projects.

Finally, we need to consider the future “Afghan Nation Army” ANA (Figure 9). The final structure should encompass approximately 70,000 men. At the present it consists of only about 8,000 men, who have been integrated into 7 Battalions and the barracks of those battalions are located in a suburb of Kabul. Weapons and equipment are primarily of former soviet origin. The country-wide expansion by PRTs has developed quite well.

Noticeable is how the variation of ethnic background was carefully considered in the compilation of the units. The main efforts of thorough training are carried out by the US with a training team of Task Force Phoenix. ISAF gives additional support in special crash courses in specialized training areas. Especially noteworthy are the so called embedded training teams. They serve as consultants and mentors to the officers of the newly formed battalions. Based on a suggestion made by the commander of the ISAF – IV, Germany has integrated such an “embedded training team” into the only tank battalion of ANA. The embedded training team is led by a Lieutenant Colonel.



Figure 9: Training Program for the Afghan National Army.

For quite some time small force contingents of the ANA have been integrated into the O.E.F. – Forces and have participated in combat operations in the Southeast of Afghanistan against the Taliban for a limited time but on a regular basis. On the other hand efforts must be taken to reduce large-scale desertion within the military garrison of Kabul. This can be achieved by adjusting the wage scale and by building further barracks in other regions of this country. In addition, the accelerated build-up of the ANA must be closely coordinated with the parallel running programs of demilitarization, demobilization and reintegration programs of the various militia forces, thus avoiding large military power vacuums.

In the autumn of 2003 this program started out with 6 pilot projects with a limited scope. If this program is applied to all of Afghanistan it would have a scope to disarm nearly 100000 militia soldiers. After having applied pressure, our ISAF contingent was successful in reactivating the original pilot project for Kabul, which had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared from the UNAMA agenda, presumably because of the delicate situation within Kabul. The reactivated program has since then been successful. The overall program, which should withdraw military power from the warlords, but at the same time the reintegration process must be activated in order to give former combatants a long term perspectives as civilians.

A steady threat of the improving security situation in Kabul were the 400 to 500 major weapon systems (main battle tanks, mechanized infantry combat vehicle and canons), which were still in the hands of the militia in various places within the city and which should have been demilitarized before the first ISAF contingent arrived. These weapon systems formally

belong to the ministry of defense of the transitional government of Afghanistan, but actually were under control of the local commanders, who have different loyalties. This represented a potential threat to the Afghan government and to the international community. This situation, lead our contingent of ISAF to start an intensive campaign of cantonment of all heavy weapon systems outside of Kabul (Figure 10). The destination was the construction of a collection camp that would be entirely controlled by the ministry of defense and the commander of ISAF. The heavy weapons systems would then be turned over to ANA as the final recipient.



Figure 10: Heavy Weapons Cantonment.

Under the growing pressure of the international community to show strength and willingness to act, an intensive campaign was started to gain support for this initiative by consulting and convincing the appropriate embassies and also the NATO General Secretary Lord Robertson and other high ranking visitors. At the beginning of 2004 approximately 250 weapon systems from mechanized infantry combat vehicle up to scud rockets were transported out of Kabul under the surveillance of UN and ISAF. Additional weapons have since than arrived. This persistence of ISAF, which operated from the second echelon position, has definitely been successful. The use military force would have simply been impossible. This success is even more pronounced when considering that Fahim Kahn surprisingly surrendered 1/5 of the heavy weapon systems of his militia forces from the Panjir Valley and brought them to the collection camp close to Kabul. This was without a doubt a political sign for the Loya Jirga and at the same time the opportunity to reposition Fahim Kahn politically.

The successful implementation of the security structure reform is one of the requirements of the Bonn Accords just like the security function for other important constitutional and political contents of those Accords.

And within this framework the constitutional work of Loya Jirga was the most important mile stone in the winter of 2003 up to the first free elections in Afghanistan for more than 30 years. While UNAMA responsibility assumed for the organizational processes and the monitoring of the constitutional assembly, the required security was given by Afghan security forces; whereby ISAF interacted only from a second echelon position. The support of ISAF in this respect was to develop an appropriate security concept, while the multinational brigade offered training, guidance and air rescue capabilities as well as an intervention force in reserve. Undoubtedly this was a successful operation, because it demonstrated to the world some independence for Afghanistan.

But certainly much more important were the political result; that is to say the unanimous ratification of their constitution, which can be described as one of the most progressive constitutions in the Near and Middle east if Israel's constitution is not considered. Of course, this constitution must still stand the test of time.

Above all through these changes the foundation for conducting presidential and parliamentary elections first became possible. Being able to conduct such elections still requires a number of challenging tasks for the Afghan transitional government and the international community. These tasks will include the registering of approximately 10 million voters; organizing the election and creating the necessary security structures for the election. In the meantime if voter registration is too slow and delays in the election are the consequences, this can only be beneficial for the country.

Considering that approximately 1/3 of the Afghan territory is inaccessible because of security reasons emphasizes the urgency for the central government to expand its influence into the provinces and rural areas.

EXPANDING THE MANDATE/PRT

In light of this situation and the UN Resolution 1510 from October 2003, expansion of the mandate area is of course essential. In the mean time most international and national actors are pushing for a geographic expansion of the area, where ISAF has responsibility. For this expansion ISAF will also employ the concept of PRT as already installed by operation ENDURING FREEDOM and successfully operated by Great Britain and New Zealand. This is a stepwise approach, which began with the transfer of Kundus and this process will continue into the less dangerous North and Western regions of Afghanistan.

The goal of PRTs is to create islands of stability within the provinces and at the same time providing humanitarian aid and enhance the civilian reconstruction. In addition recruitments and training of police forces are promoted and cooperation with UNAMA supported. But most of all legal authority can be promoted through cooperation with representatives of the government such as governors and police chiefs.

This concept is necessary and will succeed. One thing is certain: if the international community together with the Afghan government fails to bring stability into the provinces, instability will return to the city of Kabul. While O.E.F. is presently operating in the South and Southeast and generating new PRTs, the intent of NATO is to take command and operate of at least another 5 PRTs besides Kundus.

Considering the available forces, this does not by itself mean a further increase of security components, but rather a subsequent integration of all available forces by employing the concept of "Forward Support Bases". Besides having logistic components the need for critical enablers, such as air transport, Forces or medical aid are required. The planning of these issues has progressed significantly. But even more important it is that NATO demonstrates its resolve and their capability and that they have learned from the past not to mobilize inadequate forces. But it must be mentioned, that the requested combat and transport helicopters were first available very late in the mission

RESULTS AND PERSPECTIVES

ISAF under NATO command has had a significant impact, even though the biggest challenges still lie ahead.

It was determined: ISAF is not considered as an occupational force, moreover a unanimous consensus exist for ISAF to rapidly expand its operational area within Afghanistan. The PRT – Concept seems to be the most appropriate vehicle, besides offering reconstruction, humanitarian aid and promoting the influence of the central government power in achieving this goal. The demobilization of militias must be closely coordinated with the accelerated build – up of the new Afghan army, but also the operations of O.E.F. and ISAF must be considered as complimentary operations. These are reasons enough to call for the development of a master reconstruction plan for the continuing development of Afghanistan. The international Anti – Drug – Conference and the Conference of the supporting countries are prove that despite the strong focus on IRAQ the international community has not lost site of Afghanistan.

The framework for an increased engagement is better than ever. It is important to strongly support the present dynamic political climate in Afghanistan, and this seems to be supported by the NATO Secretary General de Hoop Scheffer, who clearly stated, that his main effort will lie in operations in Afghanistan. In a meeting of political leaders of NATO countries, which is to be held in Istanbul, a will show a road map of their long term commitment for the political design process.

Ultimately, the NATO engagement in Afghanistan will be a measure of the commitment and perseverance to act upon on the agreed transformations within the alliance as stated in the NATO summit meeting in Prague. By accepting the ISAF operation, NATO's credibility and relevancy are at stake.