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ULUSLARARASI STRATEJİK ARAŞTIRMALAR KURUMU
USAK

AFGHANISTAN IN TRANSITION: INSTITUTION AND SECURITY NEXUS

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NATO OTAN

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AFGHANISTAN IN TRANSITION: INSTITUTION AND SECURITY NEXUS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	5
Program	6
Introduction	7
The Promising Future of Afghanistan	8
Elections	9
Post-2014	11
Political Elite in Afghanistan	12
Turkey and Afghanistan	13
Conclusion	14

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This report is a compilation of all the discussions that took place in the events mentioned above through the lens of the authors. All responsibility lies with the authors.

Istanbul, August 2014
Cana Tülüş, Çiğdem Tongal and Emre Hatipoğlu

PROGRAM

Panel I: Elections and Security

Date: May 6, 2014
Venue: Minerva Han, Karaköy, İstanbul

09.15–09.30: Registration and Coffee
09.30–09.40: Opening Remarks:
Ahmet Evin, *Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University*
09.40–10.00: Bülent Aras, *Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University*
10.00–10.20: Maihan Saeedi, *Afghan Foreign Ministry*
10.20–10.40: Savaş Biçer, *Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies (TASAM)*
10.40–11.10: Eric Povel, *NATO*
11.10–11.30: Coffee Break
11.30–12.00: Panel Discussion
12.00–12.30: Q&A
12.30-14.00: Lunch
14.00-16.00: Closed Workshop

Panel II: Security, State-Building and Ethnic Cohesion: Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's Contributions

Date: May 9, 2014
Venue: Ankara, USAK House

09:00–09:15: Registration and Coffee
09:15–09:30: Welcome Speech
Özdem Sanberk, *President of USAK*
Fuat Keyman, *Director of IPC*
09:30–10.00: Keynote Speaker
Hikmet Çetin, *Former Turkish MFA-Former NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan*
10:15–12:00: Session 1: Security, State-Building and Ethnic Cohesion
Speakers:
Oktay F. Tanrısever, *Middle East Technical University*
Timor Sharan, *Political Economy Consultant for Afghan Parliament at Department for International Development (DFID-Afghanistan)*
Moderator:
Fuat Keyman, *Director of IPC*
12:00–13:30: Lunch
13:30–15:00: Session 2: Turkey's Contribution to Afghanistan as a NATO Member
Speakers:
Davood Moradian, *Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies*
Metin Gürcan, *Bilkent University*
Reşat Bayer, *Koç University*
Moderator:
Özdem Sanberk, *President of USAK*
15:00: Conclusions
Amanullah Jayhoon, *Afghan Ambassador to Ankara*
Selçuk Çolakoğlu, *Vice President of USAK*

Panel III: Economy, Development and Security in Post-Conflict Zones

Date: May 20, 2014
Venue: Minerva Han, Karakoy, İstanbul

09.15–09.30: Registration and Coffee
09.30–09.40: Opening Remarks:
Emre Hatipoğlu, *Sabancı University*
09.40–10.10: Haldun Yalçınkaya, *TOBB University of Economics and Technology*
10.10–10.40: Gypsy Mclean, *METU*
10.40–11.10: Bülent Aras, *Istanbul Policy Center, Sabancı University*
11.10–11.30: Coffee Break
11.30–12.00: Panel Discussion
12.00–12.30: Q&A
12.30-14.00: Lunch
14.00-16.00: Closed Workshop

INTRODUCTION

After more than a decade of NATO-led intervention, Afghanistan is now transitioning into a fully functioning state. Two main challenges lie ahead as NATO plans to withdraw its forces and turn security over to the Afghan government. The short-term challenge relates to guaranteeing an effective and efficient turnover of power to Afghan authorities. In the longer term, NATO wants to ensure a healthy consolidation of Afghan state institutions. The way in which NATO manages this turnover as well as its role in the transition's aftermath will have immense implications on the evolution of the Afghan state.

As such, the transatlantic alliance, as well as civil and military policy makers, are at a critical juncture in its Afghanistan endeavor. The transition from a stage of acute conflict to that of institutional consolidation will bring about new challenges for Afghanistan across a spectrum of policy issues. In this transition stage, Afghanistan needs not reinvent the wheel in many of the challenges it will face.

Istanbul Policy Center at Sabancı University (IPC) in cooperation with International Strategic Research Organization (USAK) and the financial support of NATO Public Diplomacy Division (PDD) convened a series of panels to further the debate on specific policy challenges facing NATO and the Afghan government during this transition. More specifically, these panels hosted experts in specific fields that we deemed may be critical to a healthy consolidation of the Afghan state. We chose the panel topics to address concrete policy challenges that stand at the security-economics-society nexus and that can lend themselves to specific policy proposals. These topics were:

1) **Security, State-Building, and Ethnic Cohesion:** Future of Afghanistan and Turkey's Contributions: How to promote ethnic cohesion and state legitimacy through security policies; what specific roles Turkey can play during and in the aftermath of the transition.

2) **Elections and Security:** how to bolster the legitimacy of the central authority through free and fair elections; the lessons from previous NATO and EU missions.

3) **Economy, Development and Security in Post-Conflict Zones:** how technology can be used as a lever to circumvent some of the acute security problems in promoting the growth of Afghan economy; lessons from other conflict and post-conflict zones.

Through these informed discussions on the Afghan transition, we aimed to (i) supplement the current debates in Afghan transition with the existing body of knowledge and experience obtained elsewhere; and (ii) highlight what lessons NATO can draw from its operations in Afghanistan, which can be used in NATO's future endeavors.

In this report, the authors will elaborate on the debates that took place in the events and enumerate specific challenges/developments faced by the Afghan government. The first section gives an overview of the current standing of the Afghan government. After this introduction, this report will then analyze the impact of the presidential elections that took place in April 2014 and the evolution of the political environment after 2014.

The authors will also touch upon the importance of the political elite in Afghanistan and Turkey's role in the region. To conclude, the authors will present several policy recommendations to key stakeholders.

THE PROMISING FUTURE OF AFGHANISTAN

Given the fact that Afghan security forces have proved their reliability during the presidential elections in 2014, it wouldn't be far-fetched to say that the future of Afghanistan is promising. Nonetheless, several challenges such as security, infrastructure, civilian capacity, and education lie ahead in creating a free and prosperous Afghanistan.

During our series of panels, we have identified two main tasks in the reconstruction of Afghanistan: (1) establishment and (2) consolidation of institutions.

Establishment

One of the key issues to be tackled by the Afghan government and society is sustainable design. Our seminars have shown that sustainability requires promising a "future" to the individuals in Afghanistan. In establishing the best design, it may be beneficial to go beyond the typical discourse of ethno-tribal politics but to also take note of the well-being of the individual. The elections have shown that the Afghan people, be it Pashtun or Tajik, have shown a profound interest in elections – and more generally in a system that values the individual.

Beyond political participation, the economic dimension is significant as well. Here, an interesting security-economic complex is emerging. As Gypsy Mclean, Middle East Technical University, evoked during the third panel, like the patronage case in South Sudan, alternative actors find their own ways in the economy with the absence of a functioning central state structure. This experience shows, again, that the debate should move beyond politicking among ethno-tribal groups.

Consolidation of Institutions

Capacity-building/consolidation of institutions also plays a vital role in the future of Afghanistan. During the events, the role of international bodies on this issue was discussed thoroughly. Consolidation of institutions in this case is a matter of coordination, resource allocation, and expertise transfer. Thus, in the Afghan case, regional cooperation becomes key. Bülent Aras, Istanbul Policy Center at Sabanci University, underlined the international community in Afghanistan is invisible in public spaces due to security reasons. Aras drew attention to the dilemma created: a community whose sole aim is to tackle security issues cannot work due to security challenges. Thus, it is of utmost importance that the current human and financial resources that have been assigned to the region to be managed well.

In line with this statement, Haldun Yalçınkaya, TOBB University of Economics and Technology, stressed the need for the abundance of the knowledge in the field that exists in consolidating institutions. This tacit knowledge has to be transferred to local authorities. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), which holds this experience, fade away and thus the expertise, is lost, unless NATO initiates an incentive to retrieve this tacit knowledge.

Within this framework, NATO has played a powerful role in the establishment phase. The case of recent presidential elections, which the authors will elaborate on in the following sections, constitutes solid evidence of NATO's success. The challenge posed now involves how NATO will position itself during the post-election phase.

ELECTIONS

The presidential elections were held in Afghanistan on April 5, 2014. Twelve million[4] Afghanis out of the country's 31 million[5] were registered to vote. Eight candidates competed in the first round, with total 6,604,546 votes cast. Candidate Abdullah Abdullah from the National Coalition received the highest number of votes (45%), followed by Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai who received 32% of the total votes. Mr. Abdullah owes much of his support to ethnic Tajiks, while Mr. Ghani is of Pashtun ethnicity.[6] As neither of them secured the majority vote,[7] Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Ghani competed again in the second round on June 14, 2014.

The recent presidential elections can be interpreted as the declaration of the will of the Afghanis to determine their future in this crucial period of transition. The rate of participation was high, despite several obstacles such as the Taliban threat, low literacy rate, problems in the voting system, and voting regulations.

During the three talks held in May 2014, the panelists highlighted the elections as a significant achievement for the Afghan people. The success of the elections is indeed important for Afghanistan's future. As Bülent Aras stated, "If these two elections fail, there will be no hope for building an Afghanistan on its own." Similarly, Davood Moradian stated that the recent elections were safer in comparison with the electoral processes in Pakistan or India.

Most of the participants of the three talks emphasized both the difficulties and the successes of the election despite challenges. Hikmet Çetin, Former Turkish MFA-Former NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, indicated that participation of Afghan women in the elections of 2014 increased from 5% to 45%. This can be interpreted as a response by the Afghan women against Taliban threat.

Currently, Afghanistan has an electoral commission which works better and more efficiently compared to previous elections. Nevertheless, problems in the voting system and voting regulations are still visible. The recent elections reveal that there is a possibility that the new elections will be conducted and supervised better than the commission during the Karzai government.

Maihan Saeedi from the Afghan Foreign Ministry addressed the will of the Afghanis and support for democracy. For him, the most positive sign is that there is a general consensus among all the political leaders and individuals in Afghanistan where they believe that the only way to get "inside the palace" is through democratic means not war. Saeedi indicated that the perception is changed and the high voter turnout in the recent presidential and provincial council elections is a clear indication that the people of Afghanistan prefer democratic means.

Saeedi enumerated some factors that helped increase the voter turnout, such as the crucial role of the media in influencing voting behavior. Accordingly, he stated that all the TV channels were promoting elections and democracy, and that the media promoted freedom of speech and encouraged people to go and vote. In addition, the establishment of Afghan civil society was another important development affecting high voter turnout and the success of the elections. Afghan civil society, however, is yet to thrive. In the past thirty years, it was not as free as a civil society should be in a democracy, but according to Saeedi there now is a very young and energetic civil society in Afghanistan. This changed the perception of people and encouraged them to defend their rights.

Representatives of the election commission, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and international commissions held meetings before the elections. Security forces protected people who risked their lives by going to ballot box.

The role that NATO has played in this election was minimal. The international community helped in terms of logistics, such as the transportation of ballot boxes to areas that could not be accessed through roads. The majority of the work has been done by the Afghan institutions, the ANSF and an independent election commission in the government.

Therefore, the successful conduct of 2014 elections was a clear indication that Afghanis want democracy, and neither war nor the rule of Taliban. Afghanistan

4 Eltaf Najafizada, Afghans Risk Lives to Vote in First Democratic Election Since 2001, April 4, 2014, Bloomberg, http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2014-04-04/afghanistan-begins-voting-in-first-democratic-transfer-of-power.html.

5 Afghanistan Population 2014, http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/afghanistan-population/.

6 Western Officials Press for Audit of Afghan Presidential Vote, New York Times, July 7, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/07/world/asia/western-officials-press-for-audit-of-afghan-presidential-vote.html?module=Search&mabReward=relbias%3Aw%2C%7B%222%22%3A%22RI%3A13%22%7D&_r=0.

7 IEC, http://results.iec.org.af/en/elections.

demonstrated to the region that elections can be run in extreme circumstances.

The second round of elections was held in July 2014 and Mr. Ghani gained 56% of votes.[8] Mr. Abdullah and his supporters accused Mr. Ghani of committing fraud in the second round and President Karzai was accused of manipulating the elections.[9]

8 IEC, http://results.iec.org.af/en/runoff.

9 Afghan elections: Audit of disputed run-off halted, BBC News, July 20, 2014 http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-28389911.

POST-2014

The withdrawal of NATO forces and recent elections make 2014 an important transition year for Afghanistan. For post-2014 period, Afghanistan faces two main challenges: namely, establishing strong regional cooperation schemes and sustaining the flow of international assistance. The international community's message in the Tokyo Conference in 2012 was that they care about Afghanistan, particularly with development aid and financial support.

In the three IPC-USAK-NATO talks, participants discussed achievements and failures during the preparation of the country for the post-2014 period. The establishment of state institutions, as well as the formation of the national army and policy consisting of 350,000 Afghanis stand out as major achievements.

As being one of the poorest countries in the world, holding presidential elections towards the consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan should be considered as a big success. A similar success has ensued in physical infrastructure, such as the establishment of the Afghan central bank, construction of numerous hospitals, paving of roads. Despite such investments, per capita income is still low compared to Bosnia and Iraq, and Afghanistan still needs economic support. Towards this end, the series' third session on technology and investment underlined the need for the use of advanced technology (and especially wireless telecommunications) to circumvent Afghanistan's difficult geography with a view to building a prosperous nation with solid physical infrastructure.

Developing human resources of Afghanistan is as another critical challenge. Raising the status of Afghan women stand as a key element in overcoming this challenge. Introducing Afghan women into social and economic life is critical towards this aim. During the Taliban rule, girls were not allowed outside of their houses. Recently, more than eight million Afghan students are enrolled in schools, and more than three million of these students are girls.

In spite of the aforementioned achievements and the success of the recent elections, security and stability continue to be a problem. Afghanistan needs long term economic support, both for enduring stability and security in the country, and by implication, prevent regional destabilization. The implications of Afghanistan's problems are not limited within the confines of the country; such negative implications will also spill over to the region. If the neighbors and the international community are reluctant in extending assistance, Afghanistan, the region, and the wider neighborhood will suffer. According to Maihan Saeedi, countries like Turkey can foster this process for Afghanistan to go forward so Afghanistan as a state can stand and protect its achievements.

NATO decided to continue its presence in Afghanistan with training-advice-assist scheme. NATO will not involve itself in combat, but rather assist and advise the ANSF. Oktay F. Tanrısever, Professor of International Relations at the Middle East Technical University (METU) voiced the view that although ANSF has already demonstrated its preparedness for coping with Afghanistan's security challenges considerably, its main weakness stems from its lack of advanced air force and sufficient modern equipment. He also noted that the tendency of the ISAF countries not to leave considerable advanced military equipment in Afghanistan is justified given the risk that Taliban or other terrorist networks may capture these sophisticated equipment in the aftermath of NATO's ISAF mission. Meanwhile, Eric Povel, from NATO, reiterated NATO's commitment to continue funding on training and equipping of the Afghan national security forces. In the post-2014 period, NATO's focus for the training will be on quality rather than quantity.

For Tanrısever, Afghanistan's political leadership and the ANSF should use political as well as military instruments against Taliban or other terrorist networks. The use of political instruments and tactics could be very effective in creating frictions among the insurgents, and in broadening the political alliance against radical elements in Afghanistan. Tanrısever also suggested that regional cooperation and international assistance are crucial elements of a strategy of promoting a stable political system as well as developing a self-sufficient and productive economy. In this respect, Tanrısever emphasizes that new political class of bureaucrats and technocrats who received their education and training in developed Western countries could contribute to the institutionalization of more effective state-building practices and norms throughout Afghanistan. Therefore, they should be given a greater political role in order to counterbalance the destabilizing activities of certain warlords and Mujahedeen groups in Afghanistan. For Haldun Yalçınkaya, the establishment of a secure banking system and telecommunication should be supported, in order to propel the necessary economic initiatives in Afghanistan, both at the local and international level.

POLITICAL ELITE IN AFGHANISTAN

To devise an effective international assistance and regional cooperation scheme for Afghanistan, understanding its current social system and economic structure is imperative. Center and periphery is quite divided in Afghanistan, and for ten years, the center has received most of the international assistance. Quite a number of participants have underlined the problematic nature of the centralized system by referring to the inequality of assistance distribution between central areas and the periphery. The need for a balance among regions is evident. Timor Sharan, a Political Economy Consultant for Afghan Parliament at the Department for International Development, explained that, social, political and economic networks (including vertical and horizontal liabilities) exist between security forces, political figures, and the local people in Afghanistan. Networks are maintained and reproduced through clientelism, local nepotism, and patronage. In those networks, ethnicity-oriented politics, and illegal/opportunist economic activity (especially in the ownership, extraction, and trade of natural resources such as oil, gas, and opium) are quite visible. For the maintenance of nation-wide stability, different local networks should be integrated with one another to a certain extent and incorporated into inclusive political coalitions and alliances at large.

On the other hand, the Taliban's network is already weakened, and the Taliban will lose its legitimacy substantially in this post-2014 period. If local needs can be accurately and sufficiently provided, and the central government can penetrate deeper into Taliban's local networks, moderate and non-ideologically motivated masses will detach from the Taliban.

Establishing a decentralized governance system is another suggestion. The system is very centralized and dependent on Kabul. There is more capacity in the periphery regions to decentralize the system. In this sense, Afghanistan needs strong local governance; therefore some form of federalism is required in the country. That is because after the central authority of Kabul is fully instituted, the multi-ethnic fabric of the country should be kept intact with different groups living in coherence, with a special emphasis on local dynamics, socio-political networks, and material needs.

In its history, Afghanistan has always been ruled by powerful regional/ethnic authorities but the people always had a shared identity of being "Afghans" at the same time. Different from some other countries in the region, the Afghan government is formed by peaceful allies, and they have more connection with the periphery than before. In sum, the federalist system may be a solution to narrow the gap between the center and periphery.

TURKEY AND AFGHANISTAN

There has been a sense of closeness between the two countries and the last decade has been exemplary for Turkish-Afghan relations. In 2001, the first Turkish PRT in Jawzjan was established. Under the command of Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA), this PRT represented the Turkish efforts in Afghanistan.

Unlike the representatives/aid mechanisms of other countries, Turkish PRTs in Jawzjan and Wardak were solely civilian, focused exclusively on peace building. Instead of creating an overwhelming domination through military threats, Turkish units kept their troops out of the insurgency. Their key duties were to make sure that the immediate needs in education and infrastructure were met, where governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations were unable to do so.

Davood Moradian, Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, referred to the fact that, to date, Turkey has donated around 600 million dollars to provinces in Afghanistan. The stock of Turkish humanitarian investment in Afghanistan reached the level of 2 billion dollars. These expenses are mostly covered by Turkey's public budget. Furthermore, over 4,000 Afghan officers were trained in Turkey. This number includes 2,000 commando units, 100 military advisers, and 100 military students who are officers by now.

To serve Afghanistan's interests the best, the Turkish public and private sectors need to invest more in urban infrastructure. Bilateral relations pertaining cooperation through higher education institutions between Turkey and Afghanistan are at their highest level. Also, women's NGOs should cooperate further, despite its own challenges, Turkey, as a Muslim country, is more advanced in the field of women's rights. Turkey also has the potential to assist Afghanistan in the fields of agriculture, veterinary medicine, and textile industry.

A line of communication should be established between counter-terrorist forces of Afghanistan and the Turkish intelligence. For Moradian, cooperation along the axis of Turkey-Iran-USA will isolate the Taliban and form a strong basis for international coordination after the withdrawal of NATO troops. The two countries should step forward for a "functional strategic partnership."

CONCLUSION

In this brief report, the authors identified several specific challenges/developments the Afghan government is facing based on the debates that took place in the panel series. As stated at the beginning, Afghanistan has a promising future ahead. Nonetheless, in order to tap into this potential, it is of utmost importance that the Afghanis address some key challenges. It must be noted that many of these challenges belong to a post-conflict environment, rather than one of acute conflict. As such, NATO's efforts in changing focus towards consolidating institutions in a post-conflict Afghanistan should be commended.

The solutions to the challenges depicted below are all interlinked with each other, i.e. without establishing a solid secure environment, it would be almost impossible to build an effective state apparatus and a functioning infrastructure to help Afghanistan out of poverty. This immediate need for security, however, should not overshadow Afghanistan's future needs towards establishing a sustainable economy, investing in its human capital, and eventually, creating a prosperous nation.

Enhanced Military Capacity: As stated in the previous sections; there is already existent knowledge and faith in the Afghan security forces. The next step concerns the strengthening of these forces and in retaining soldiers and security officers. In order to realize this, the key step is to go back to the Afghan "individuals" and advocate for people's basic rights, e.g. their right to vote, right to education, and right to live.

Effectiveness of Security: Enhancing the capacity of security forces alone is not sufficient to establish a "secure" system. The protection of the infrastructure – just as the voters were protected during the 2014 elections – is as vital to Afghanistan's security. Furthermore, Afghans who have participated in an exchange program or who are refusing to be a part of the Taliban are in need of a system that will keep them safe.

Sustainable Conditions: NATO's ongoing training system with the mechanism of trainers currently works. However, as previously stated, keeping high retention rates also remain an important goal. Thus, stability, through keeping conditions that would not push back the Afghani civic and especially public figures, e.g. soldiers, officers, is as important as creating those conditions.

Economic Challenges: Establishing a well-functioning formal economy is imperative for a modern Afghanistan, which will be an exemplary member of the international community. A largely informal and corrupt economy would exacerbate the aforementioned challenges. Corruption would (and has) hurt the legitimacy of the central government. The Taliban could easily shadow-tax illicit trade. To address this challenge, the talks highlighted a sequential approach for improving Afghanistan's economy. The most urgent step is to establish and consolidate major institutions for economy, such as the Central Bank. Securing sustained flow of international assistance, especially in integrating Afghanistan into the world economy, plays a key point here. In the medium term, Afghanistan needs to establish effective transport, telecommunications, and finance infrastructures to reap benefits of trade and allow more entrepreneurial activity within the country. Securing such a trading environment will also constitute one of the biggest blows against the Taliban. An equally difficult medium-term challenge is to create matching human resource that will utilize these new institutions and infrastructures. Finally, the Afghan people will need to establish long-term development goals, investing their limited resources strategically.

In order to address these challenges, the authors of this report suggest a multi-level engagement through (1) establishing a functioning state mechanism with a federal governmental structure (where the focus from the center shifts to other regions); (2) enhancing security provided on the ground; and, (3) the normalization of daily socio-economic conditions.

NOTES

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