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# POST-ISAF AFGHANISTAN: THE EARLY MONTHS

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# POST-ISAF AFGHANISTAN: THE EARLY MONTHS\*

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of a two-day workshop organized jointly by the Brookings Doha Center and the NATO Defense College and held in Doha on February 22-23. The workshop aimed to reflect on the prospects for Afghanistan following the drawdown of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and was attended by senior officials from NATO and the Afghan government alongside independent experts, representatives of Afghan civil society, and media.

The principal findings of the workshop were:

ISAF and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF):

- ISAF's contribution to the development of the ANSF and Afghan security institutions (ASI) leaves behind a solid foundation on which to build.
- Significant gaps in the Afghan security architecture nevertheless remain, with concerns about long-term sustainability.
- The political stagnation following the presidential elections of last year has caused some serious setbacks in terms of Afghan security development during the transition.
- The Afghan government must make up for lost time and fully leverage the NATO Resolute Support mission over the next 22 months.
- The success of the Resolute Support mission will be determined by the functional systems, processes, and mindset it leaves in place.

Security Concerns:

- Both NATO and the Afghan government are committed to keeping Afghanistan from ever again becoming a "sanctuary for terror."
- The primary security concern for Afghanistan remains the Taliban, which is struggling to improve capacity and showing signs of organizational/structural divisions.

- There is at least some support for a political solution within the Taliban, though a Pakistani role would likely be necessary, though not sufficient, to secure a settlement.

Regional Considerations:

- Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are working to improve relations to meet shared challenges, as Pakistan reassesses its historic links with the Taliban.
- Pakistan fears instability along its border with Afghanistan as well as encirclement by neighboring powers, and is taking peaceful steps to remedy this.
- Relations with other neighbors such as Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, and China will also prove vital in ensuring Afghanistan's stability.

Development and Governance:

- The new unity government has generated much goodwill, yet concerns about the potential for political gridlock remain.
- Powerful patronage networks will continue to exert influence over the nation's politics and economy. Badly needed anti-corruption efforts should proceed effectively, but with a greater degree of caution toward existing patronage networks, recognizing that they are an integral part of Afghan society.
- The Afghan economy still contains major structural weaknesses, and is heavily reliant on foreign aid. Meanwhile, foreign assistance to Afghanistan is likely to decline, which will make managing the transition to sustainability even more difficult.
- The illegal trade in opium and heroin remains a key challenge for the Afghan economy.

The following comprises the major themes and findings of the discussion. The workshop was held under the Chatham House Rule and the views expressed are those of the participants.

\* The Brookings Doha Center and NATO Defense College are grateful to all of the participants for their valuable insights and contributions to the workshop. We would specifically like to acknowledge the Afghan and NATO officials for their time and support. The authors also extend their thanks to the Brookings Doha Center staff for their work in planning and executing the workshop and producing this report, specifically Hind Abdallah, Kais Sharif, Lina Raslan, Andrew Leber, Bill Hess, and Sarah Abdelhadi.

## A COUNTRY IN TRANSITION

After more than a dozen years of international military presence in Afghanistan—the longest war in American history—NATO combat forces transitioned all security responsibilities to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at the close of 2014, a deadline set by both NATO and the Afghan government. The new NATO-led mission, “Resolute Support,” commenced work immediately afterward on January 1, 2015. NATO’s role in Afghanistan is now solely to train, advise, and assist the ANSF.

Last year, the Afghan people witnessed a political milestone—the first peaceful transfer of power from one elected president to another. This entailed several months of political wrangling after a disputed presidential election failed to produce a clear winner. During the first round in April 2014, Abdullah Abdullah won 45% of the votes and Mohammad Ashraf Ghani won 31.6%.<sup>1</sup> As none of the candidates won over 50% of the vote, the two competed in a run-off. The results of this election were also disputed, bringing the country to the brink of civil war when Abdullah Abdullah accused the election commission of engineering fraud on an industrial scale. Eventually, the two candidates sought the mediation of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and the U.N. mission in Kabul, which helped to negotiate the formation of a national unity government. This arrangement is an unprecedented form of political power sharing in Afghanistan.

Today, there are numerous challenges facing the national unity government, including some that are specifically related to the power-sharing arrangement between President Ghani and the “chief executive,” Abdullah. The coalition government is vulnerable due to the men’s connections with powerful warlords who have now been legitimized through the political process at both the center and the periphery. Ghani “became a major contender by teaming up with Abdul Rashid Dostum, a onetime Uzbek warlord.”<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, two of Abdullah’s most powerful backers are former warlords with large ethnic constituencies, Muhammad Mohaqiq and Muhammad Atta Noor.<sup>3</sup>

Aside from pressing security challenges, the national unity government seems to agree on several other top priorities, including reforming the electoral body and tackling corruption, aimed at securing the trust of the Afghan public and the international

community. Both President Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah reiterated these priorities during the December 2014 London Conference.

In a country with dynamic ethnic, tribal, and political relations, all mired in regional power struggles, it is unwise to expect a fast outcome. Ashraf Ghani has assumed office at a time when development assistance and international spending in Afghanistan are declining due to the withdrawal of NATO forces and the rise of other international priorities, including Syria and Ukraine. Tens of thousands of Afghans may lose their jobs at soon-to-be abandoned military bases, and economic growth is expected to fall dramatically even as the government struggles to sustain spending on reconstruction projects.<sup>4</sup> The international community pledged over \$100 billion between 2002 and 2012, but for the period of 2012–2015 it only pledged around \$16 billion, and seeks to sustain support levels of the past decade “only through 2017” to cover short-term fiscal gaps.<sup>5</sup> With pre-2015 foreign aid levels expected to make up a large portion of the country’s gross domestic product (GDP), significant losses in external assistance are likely to bring hardship to those areas upon which foreign spending has recently been lavished.

As a result, the country is undergoing near-simultaneous security, political, and economic transitions. It is unlikely that they will unfold in a well-ordered fashion.

What will happen in this post-transition period? Will Afghanistan’s security hold? What can Afghanistan expect from NATO and what should Afghanistan do for itself? These and many other questions were raised over the course of the workshop’s proceedings.

This report and the discussion it draws on, seeks to explore potential outcomes of the transition phase and—above all else—highlight the need to recognize that Afghanistan may not have a single fate. Rather, the post-transition period from 2015 onwards is likely to see different dynamics and trajectories in different sectors of the country. Equally important is the recognition that development and security are two faces of the same coin: without development there is no guarantee of security and without security the development wheel cannot turn. The start of this transition means preparing for the day when both dimensions are fully Afghan responsibilities.

For over a decade, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was the foundation of Afghanistan's delicate security and stability. On December 31, 2014, Afghan authorities assumed full responsibility for national security and stability, with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at the core. The transition from self-reliance to a self-sustaining security architecture is fundamentally an Afghan responsibility. As the September 2014 NATO Wales Summit Declaration affirmed: "We restate the aim, agreed at Chicago, that Afghanistan should assume, no later than 2024, full financial responsibility for its own security forces."<sup>6</sup> The path to 2024, however, will necessarily be built on: ISAF's legacy; the immediate support offered by NATO's new Resolute Support (RS) mission; ongoing financial contributions to the ANSF and Afghan security institutions (ASI); as well as a mutual, long-term commitment to the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership launched in 2010.

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

**ISAF's contribution to the development of the ANSF and ASI leaves behind a solid foundation on which to build.** It was observed that "placed in historical context, the development of the ANSF is a remarkable success story." The ANSF constitutes a force of over 350,000 now in control of Afghanistan's 34 provincial capitals and all major cities. It leads nearly one hundred percent of all security operations in Afghanistan, protecting the population during mass public events such as the opening of the Nawruz festival in Nazar e-Sherif and voting during multiple elections in 2014. The failure of the Taliban to make territorial gains in 2014 despite directly targeting ANSF checkpoints is also indicative of the ANSF's increasing competence and resolve. As one senior officer remarked, the "security situation, while still fragile, is holding," which has contributed to Afghans having a high degree of confidence in the ANSF: 77 percent in the army, 72 percent in the national police, and over 60 percent in the local police, according to the Ministry of Interior. Afghan officials repeatedly underscored that the new national unity government graciously acknowledges the significant blood and treasure expended to reach this point and is committed to working with the international community to build on ISAF's legacy.

**Nevertheless, significant gaps remain in the Afghan security architecture, with concerns about long-term sustainability.** There is an ongoing preoccupation in the Ghani government with several capability gaps noted in December 2014, at the point of the ISAF transition.<sup>7</sup> These include deficiencies in logistics, medical evacuation, aviation, and special operations forces. Illiteracy (including English for pilots) remains a challenge. So too does the underrepresentation of women in the security forces and the underutilization of already trained female recruits. Attrition rates are high due to low retention and increased casualties (reportedly up 5-7 percent in 2014 following the ANSF's assumption of greater responsibility). The net effect led several observers to conclude that the ANSF may be able to "clear" but its ability to "hold and build," especially in rural areas, is in question. There was broad consensus on the urgent need to appoint a minister of defense to provide overarching strategic guidance, improved civilian oversight of the armed services, and redoubled anti-corruption efforts.

**The Afghan government must make up for lost time and fully leverage the NATO Resolute Support mission over the next 22 months.** The drawn out negotiations concerning the signing of the NATO-Afghan Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) and the U.S.-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement (both ratified by the Afghan Parliament in November 2014) were counterproductive for the transition to the post-ISAF mission of train, advise, and assist the ANSF. They equally drew into question Kabul's dedication to sustained partnership with NATO. The Ghani administration must therefore demonstrate its unwavering commitment to the NATO-Afghan partnership by taking full advantage of the capacity building offered by the U.N.-endorsed RS mission, while at the same time demonstrating Afghan resolve to help itself on a broad spectrum of security and defense issues.<sup>8</sup> More than at any other time in history, there is no room for a *primus inter pares* in the NATO-Afghan equation in a post-ISAF environment. In this regard, putting a fully functioning national unity government in place—including a unified chain of command for the ANSF that is under full democratic control and reflects the nation's true character—will be essential.

**The success of the Resolute Support mission will be determined by the functional systems,**

**processes, and mindset it leaves in place.** For NATO, RS marks a cognitive and fiscal shift from combat advising to providing functional security assistance to the ANSF, ministry of defense, ministry of interior, and the National Directorate of Security in eight mutually supporting fields: planning, programming, budgeting and execution; transparency, accountability and oversight; governance and the rule of law; force generation; force sustainability; campaigns and operations; intelligence capabilities and processes; and strategic communications. The NATO Wales Summit reaffirmed member states' financial commitments to support the sustainment of the ANSF, including to the end of 2017. Partner countries in turn reaffirmed funding pledges for the ANSF through 2015-2017. Afghan reciprocity necessarily entails increased national contributions toward a self-sustaining force, and demonstrable transparent, accountable, and cost-effective governance of the national security architecture.

**The draw-down of Resolute Support and the international community's contributions to the ANSF and ASI should be conditionally, rather than temporally, based.** Afghan observers noted that while "timelines are helpful to focus the mind, conditions achieved on the ground should be the primary factor" in delineating the extent and duration of external support to Afghanistan's national security architecture. They pointed to the fluidity of the situation on the ground and the potential rise of Islamic State-like groups as key reasons for a more flexible drawdown scheme. It was equally pointed out, however, that in the absence of a compelling counter-narrative, the preoccupation of NATO member states' publics with cost and exit strategies will constitute the default setting for determining international commitments. The challenge, therefore, will be for both Kabul and

NATO to develop a communications strategy for RS and beyond that is primarily based on conditions and examples of positive changes achieved on the ground. For European and North American publics, demonstrating that conditions are being set to ensure that Afghanistan constitutes forward defense against terrorism and extremism will be particularly important.

**The NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership complements Resolute Support and provides the basis on which to develop, over time, a jointly-owned, fully-fledged Individual Partnership Cooperation Programme (IPCP) for Afghanistan.**

As a political, not just military, alliance, NATO offers partners a unique opportunity to interact with the transatlantic community on issues of strategic concern, including extremism. In this context, the need to jointly define a long-term counter-terrorism strategy was highlighted. The Enduring Partnership equally provides for tailored access to NATO training and educational programs. This includes NATO's Building Integrity and Defense Education Enhancement Programmes, designed to advise partners on how to build, develop, and reform educational institutions in the defense and security domains. Participants also emphasized the importance of senior leadership capacity, highlighting President Ghani's retiring of a number of senior officers as evidence of his efforts to reform the ANSF. It was also noted that 2015 marked the beginning of ANSF officer enrollment in courses offered by the NATO Defense College (NDC). Afghan officials advocated for the greater participation of ASI civilian personnel in such programs, as well as the strengthening of linkages between the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (established in 2012), NDC and independent public-policy research institutions in the wider strategic community like the Brookings Doha Center.

## PART II

### CONFRONTING THE TALIBAN AND ELIMINATING “SANCTUARIES”: WAYS FORWARD

**T**aliban insurgent attacks over the course of 2014—and the resulting increase in ANSF casualty rates—underscored the continuing security threat this group poses to the safety and security of Afghanistan. Despite organizational divisions within the group, the Taliban will continue to probe the ANSF for weaknesses over the coming year, requiring a multi-pronged strategy to contain and confront the threat the group poses. Negotiating with the group remains a possibility, and is at least being entertained by the Afghan government, but will likely require the facilitation of Pakistan and other third parties beyond the public commitment of President Ghani’s government.

#### PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

**Both NATO and the Afghan government are committed to keeping Afghanistan from ever again becoming a “sanctuary for terror.”** These concerns extended beyond the Taliban—a senior Afghan official noted that “the nature of terrorism is morphing,” and warned against the encroachment of IS militants on Afghan territory. “It is a reality in Afghanistan,” he claimed. NATO participants cautioned that some evidence of IS did not reflect an increased capacity on the ground, arguing that the group’s capabilities were often exaggerated. Still, Afghan officials warned that such groups might develop ambitions beyond Afghanistan, and underscored that the drawdown in NATO capacity would reduce its effective support of the ANSF. Other participants pointed to a potential rivalry between IS and home-grown organizations such as the Taliban.

**The primary security concern for Afghanistan remains the Taliban, which is struggling to improve capacity and showing signs of internal divisions.** Observers outlined the present structure of the Taliban, highlighting the ongoing competition between the three main *shuras* (governing councils) of the Afghan Taliban: Miranshah Shura in the East, Peshawar Shura in the Southeast, and Quetta Shura in the South. Additionally, analysts noted the appearance of a fourth shura, Mashad, in Iran, though its existence was only accepted by the Quetta Shura. They noted that having four competing centers of power made it difficult to coordinate Taliban planning, particularly given the weak central military commission. Some Taliban elements, particularly within the Quetta shura,

were noted as working to “professionalize” the governance of their areas by recruiting educated university graduates.

**Divisions within the Taliban present a mixed blessing.** Though some participants felt that fragmentation would diminish the Taliban’s fighting strength, others warned that administrative difficulties did not fully undermine the group’s offensive capabilities. An international observer noted that the Taliban should be expected to fight, as they will want to see what they can achieve post-ISAF. Also, he warned that further fragmentation of the Taliban would make it difficult to bring it to the negotiating table as a unified entity.

**There is at least some support within the Taliban for a political solution.** A researcher pointed to growing acceptance of an inevitable political solution, particularly among the Peshawar Shura. As he noted, the effects of the 2009 surge put pressure on the Taliban and strengthened reformers who sought better governance in areas of control, although the group will almost certainly seek to continue expanding. Regarding a potential political process, he noted that most believe that President Ghani is “talkable,”—they’ve been disappointed so far, but negotiations might re-emerge in the near future.”

**A Pakistani role would likely be necessary, but not sufficient, for securing a settlement with the Taliban.** Though government officials made only oblique references to negotiating with the Taliban, independent analysts argued that any deal would likely involve Pakistani cooperation, given the historic ties of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to the group. “[The Pakistani government] acknowledges that the Afghan Taliban will not be able to dominate Afghanistan, but also believes that an Afghan government that does not include the Taliban cannot possibly pacify the whole country,” noted one analyst. He held that Pakistan’s preference is for the Taliban to have a role in the Afghan government. He added, however, that the Pakistani government, because it is “not very popular” in Afghanistan, is unlikely to publicly advocate for such a formation. A development official questioned whether Pakistan could even guarantee a deal, noting that when talks were being considered, “the ISI Director General told Karzai that we will bring the Taliban to the peace table, but there will be no ceasefire.”



## PART III

### REGIONAL CONTEXT: DONORS, ALLIES, COMPETITORS

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The support and cooperation of regional countries and allies abroad will prove key to safeguarding Afghanistan's future. Nations from Turkmenistan to China have a vested interest in ensuring that Afghanistan is a safe and stable neighbor rather than a safe harbor for crime or extremism. Maintaining good relations with Western and other international donors is important to keeping the Afghan government's finances in good order, as mentioned previously. Still, the most critical relationship in the years ahead will be with Pakistan.

#### PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

##### **Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are working to improve relations to meet shared challenges.**

Several participants cited President Ghani's overtures to Pakistan, acknowledging that many problems in Afghanistan and the region can only be addressed through Pakistan. One academic emphasized that Pakistani policies towards Afghanistan were generally formulated within the Pakistani General High Command (GHQ), where views are largely driven by fears of Pashtun separatism. Afghan officials stated that the ISAF withdrawal would require the establishment of a new joint mechanism between Afghanistan and Pakistan regarding border control, and that preparation for this were underway. The Afghan Chief of Border Police recently met with counterparts in Pakistan to discuss new information sharing arrangements.

**Pakistan is reassessing its historic links with the Taliban.** A researcher held that the Pakistani government was no longer seeking to turn Afghanistan into a "vassal state" by backing the Taliban, given the threat posed by Pakistan's own branch of the group. "There is no longer any ambiguity about the threat from the Pakistani

Taliban and the need to combat it," he stated. Still, another expert cautioned that Pakistan would not take direct military action against the Taliban due to their underlying popularity, unless the Afghan Taliban were seen to reject a deal "with a real chance." Observers agreed that Pakistan was under Chinese pressure to contribute to a peaceful solution regarding the Afghan Taliban.

##### **Pakistan fears instability along its borders with Afghanistan as well as encirclement by neighboring powers, yet is taking peaceful steps to remedy this.**

One academic noted concerns regarding "political spillover effects" from an unstable Afghanistan, especially given the two countries' 2640 km shared border. He held that the Pakistani military's role in shaping foreign policy towards Afghanistan was understandable given the security concerns over Afghanistan. "How do you not include the army in policy making along this long border?" Likewise, he cited Pakistani fears of encirclement, given past economic engagement between Afghanistan and India and a November 2003 defense pact signed between India and Iran, renewed in 2009. However, he also pointed to constructive engagement in the form of 6 Afghan military officers who had entered Pakistan's military academy, the first to do so over the past 13 years.

##### **Relations with other neighbors will also prove vital to ensuring Afghanistan's stability.**

Afghan officials spoke of "good relations with Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan," but noted that better security coordination was needed to prevent the cross-border movement of armed and criminal groups. They also argued that ISAF's withdrawal would not necessarily increase risks for surrounding countries. "[The draw-down] will not impact neighbors as much as it will impact how neighbors affect Afghanistan."

## PART IV

### LOOKING TO THE FUTURE:

#### IMPROVED GOVERNANCE AND DEVELOPMENT AS PREREQUISITES FOR SECURITY AND STABILITY

Improving governance and development programs in a time of diminished international assistance will be a key challenge for the years ahead, particularly in rural areas, and will inevitably have ramifications on security and the ability of the ANSF to sustain stability in the country.

#### PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

**The new unity government has generated much goodwill, yet concerns remain about political gridlock.** Several participants acknowledged the “new spirit of cooperation and partnership in Kabul,” referring to the unity government. An Afghan government representative emphasized that the new government was still “finding its feet,” though a NATO civilian representative stressed the need to generate political consensus in the country and form a full cabinet. Some participants cautioned that continuing a Karzai practice of “ruling through inclusion” would lead to difficulties in terms of forming a political consensus and delays in decision-making, as reflected in the length of time taken to form a cabinet.

Still, it was held that the new government had largely marginalized the “the old mujahideen class,” drawing instead on younger officials better connected to the international community, making it easier for them to secure and manage international donor funding. This was seen as a positive development, but one that has clearly slowed down the process of establishing a cabinet. The international community should better understand and allow more leeway for the complexities involved in such a process.

**Despite the president’s efforts to marginalize the old mujahideen class, powerful patronage networks will continue to exert influence over the nation’s politics and economy.** One participant argued that the challenge of forming the government is as much about balancing the powers behind the political leaders as it is about striking a balance between them, noting the defections of key figures from the Ghani and Abdullah camps. “The president can consolidate [personal networks] to transmit power, but this would require co-opting or crossing key power brokers,” she continued. Another researcher opined that effective governance, as made possible by patronage networks, was necessary to put “the Taliban in their place,” yet cautioned that the

corruption and rent-seeking engendered by these patronage networks undermined the ability of the government to raise revenues and govern effectively.

**The badly needed anti-corruption efforts should proceed effectively, but with a greater degree of caution towards the existing patronage networks, recognizing that they are an integral part of Afghan society.** One researcher questioned the uniformly negative view of patronage networks held by many international organizations as mere “corruption,” arguing that they are embedded within the national economy and help foster a degree of stability. Still, an international development official noted that “there are unrealistic expectations about continued [donor] funding [to the Afghan government] unless there are major gains in transparency,” emphasizing the need to show credible progress against corruption. Another researcher focusing on the illicit economy recommended that the government “clean up a town,” picking a particular city and showing credible progress in a limited display of central government authority. The regimented nature of the forces may offer the government an opportunity to showcase fresh and effective ways of tackling corruption.

**The Afghan economy still contains major structural weaknesses, and is heavily reliant on foreign aid.** Meanwhile, foreign assistance to Afghanistan is likely to decline, making it even more difficult to manage the transition to sustainability. “The current economy is tailored to the effects of the intervention, especially construction,” noted one researcher. “There is almost no production that can compete on the world market.” Afghan officials should be well aware that international financial assistance will decline in the near term. “Afghans have to confront their own problems,” one participant held. Others highlighted “the enormous distortions in the Afghan government” fueled by foreign aid, and warned that a drastic cutback in aid would cause established patronage networks to collapse, fomenting chaos.

Some participants held that development plans centered on establishing a “new silk road” trade route or transforming Afghanistan into an energy hub through developing its natural resources would take some time and would not address joblessness in Afghan’s rapidly growing urban centers anytime soon. Meanwhile, a lot of the “development” interventions

were categorized as “glorified” relief efforts. Several participants felt that the international community had created an Afghan state far beyond the capacity of the country to sustain independently, fueling a reliance on foreign assistance.

**The illegal trade in opium and heroin remains a key challenge for the Afghan economy.** This was cited by one researcher as a key area of concern, given that the lucrative drug trade continues to drive a huge part of the Afghan economy and detract from other, more productive, economic sectors. At the same time, she noted the drug trade “only perpetuates or intensifies corruption, while causing further rule of law problems.” One expert on Pakistani politics noted the Taliban’s historic success in controlling the drug trade, and suggested they might leverage this in potential negotiations with the Afghan government. Discussion also touched on the possibilities of attracting pharmaceutical industries to invest in the country in an attempt to regulate part of the drug trade.

**Effective economic reform in Afghanistan will have to target unemployment and encourage domestic industry.** One researcher noted a key policy challenge in Afghanistan’s “youth bulge”—approximately two-thirds of the Afghan population is under the age of 24. Observing that 80 percent of the Afghan labor force is made up of unskilled day laborers, he emphasized the need for the Afghan government to support job creation or facilitate Afghan participation in regional job markets to discourage skilled workers from emigrating. Additionally, one security researcher advocated placing restrictions on foreign imports to encourage the development of domestic industry at the expense of cheap Indian or Chinese goods. Others mentioned the importance of opening up Afghanistan to transit trade in energy and goods, though cautioning that this would be subject to security concerns and Pakistani objections to closer ties between India and Afghanistan.

## ENDNOTES

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## Post-ISAF Afghanistan: The Early Months

### List of Participants

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- H.E. Sanjiv Arora**, Ambassador, Indian Embassy
- H.E. Mohammad Haneef Atmar**, National Security Advisor, Gov't of Afghanistan
- Najla Ayoubi**, Judge and Deputy Country Representative, Asia Foundation
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- Stephen Brooking**, Head of Joint Analysis and Policy Unit, UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
- Edward Chandler**, Major, USCENTCOM
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**Philipp Muench**, Research Associate, German Institute for Internat'l & Sec. Affairs

**Enayat Najafizada**, Freelance Journalist

**H.E. Ardasher S. Qodiri**, Ambassador, Embassy of Tajikistan

**Frishta Sakhi**, Director General, Border & Security Affairs, Gov't of Afghanistan

**Jean-Loup Samaan**, Researcher, Lecturer, NATO Defense College

**Salman Shaikh**, Director, Brookings Doha Center

**Brooke Smith-Windsor**, Deputy Director Research, NATO Defense College

**Arne Strand**, Deputy Director, Christian Michelsen Institute

**Aldo Zizzo**, Colonel, Italian Defense Attaché, Italian Embassy



## Post-ISAF Afghanistan: The Early Months

An international research seminar organized jointly by the  
NATO Defense College (NDC) and Brookings Doha Center (BDC)

Doha, 22-23 February 2015

### CONCEPT NOTE

On 31 December 2014, the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission came to an end. For over a decade, ISAF had been the foundation of Afghanistan's security and stability, facilitating significant advances in education, health, economic development, and human rights. With the conclusion of ISAF's mission, Afghan authorities assumed full responsibility for national security and stability, with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) at the core. In February 2015, approximately 100 days into the new unity government, the NDC and BDC will convene a two day policy research seminar among senior officials and leading experts to assess progress towards self-sustaining Afghan and regional security and stability. The seminar (and subsequent NDC-BDC Policy Briefing) will address key issues, including:

#### **Afghan Security post-ISAF**

Has there been an increase in Taliban activity or a shift in insurgent tactics since ISAF's withdrawal? What progress has been achieved in building the capacity of the ANSF through the NATO Resolute Support Mission? What progress has been made in defense sector reform (e.g. transparency and accountability of the ANSF to civilian authority)? What is the status of the other bilateral and multilateral partnerships now underway to replace the former ISAF mission? What is the status of financial pledges administered through the Oversight and Coordination Body? What additional military-technical assistance is required? What are the prospects for an enduring NATO-Afghanistan partnership? In addition to the armed forces, what progress has been achieved with respect to police reform and capacity building?

#### **Afghan Stability and Development**

President Ashraf Ghani has taken over for President Hamid Karzai and is leading a national unity government. Has he been able to form a functioning cabinet? Has President Ghani been able to make progress on those areas seen as weaknesses of the former Afghan administration (e.g. corruption and patronage)? Will the new president be able to use foreign aid effectively to stabilize the country and develop its legal economy and infrastructure while safeguarding rights for all, including women and minorities? What progress has been made in the development of rule of law institutions and the reform of the criminal justice system? What prospects are there under the new government for new political/diplomatic approaches to pursuing peace and stability in Afghanistan?

#### **Geopolitics of the Neighborhood**

Pakistan has a significant amount of influence on Afghanistan, and China, Iran, Russia, and India all have modest but important economic interests there. How is the situation in Afghanistan affecting the interests of these neighbors and vice versa? How has Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan—on economic and security matters, in particular—changed following ISAF's withdrawal and the leadership change in Kabul? How are the other bilateral relationships changing following NATO's redeployment (e.g. with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan)? What is the impact on Afghanistan's economic development? How is the situation in Afghanistan affecting the stability of the greater Middle East and vice versa? What are the respective foreign and economic policies of the Gulf states vis-à-vis Afghanistan? How is instability in Iraq and Syria and the emergence of the Islamic State affecting Afghanistan?



## Post-ISAF Afghanistan: The Early Months

Intercontinental Doha

Day 1: Sunday, 22 February 2015

- 0830 Arrival and registration
- 0900 Welcome
- Salman Shaikh and Sultan Barakat, Brookings Doha Center
  - Brigadier-General Heinz-Josef Feldmann, Director, NDC Academic Planning & Policy Division, former ISAF Spokesperson 2013-14
  - H.E. Sheikh Mohamed Al Thani, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Cooperation
- 0930 Keynote Addresses
- H.E. Haneef Atmar, National Security Advisor to the President of Afghanistan
  - H.E. Ismail Aramaz, NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan
- 1030 Refreshment Break
- 1100 **Session 1:** Afghan Security post-ISAF
- Lieutenant General Giorgio Battisti, former Chief of Staff, ISAF
  - Major General Gordon “Skip” Davis, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations and Intelligence, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
  - Brigadier General John S. Kolasheski, Deputy Chief of Staff for Communications, Resolute Support Mission, North Atlantic Treaty Organization
  - Brigadier General Ralph Groover, Deputy Director, J5, Strategy, Policy and Plans, U.S. Central Command
- Moderator:** Brooke Smith-Windsor, NATO Defense College
- 1230 Hosted Lunch
- 1400 **Session 2:** Afghan Stability and Development - 1
- Antonio Giustozzi, Visiting Professor, King’s College London
  - H.E. Mohammad Tariq Ismati, Deputy Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Afghanistan
  - Vanda Felbab-Brown, Senior Fellow, Brookings
  - Stephen Brooking, Head of Joint Analysis and Policy Unit, UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
- Moderator:** Sultan Barakat, Brookings Doha Center
- 1530 Refreshment Break





- 1545 **Session 3: Afghan Stability and Development - 2**
- Arne Strand, Deputy Director, Christian Michelsen Institute
  - Philipp Muench, Research Associate, German Institute for International and Security Affairs
  - Najla Ayoubi, Judge and Deputy Country Representative, Asia Foundation

**Moderator:** Sultan Barakat, Brookings Doha Center

1700 Conference Recesses

1930 Meet in lobby for transportation to hosted dinner at MAMIG Restaurant

Day 2: Monday, 23 February 2015

- 0900 **Session 4: Geopolitics of the Neighborhood**
- Farishta Sakhi, Director General, Border and Security Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan
  - Zafar Nawaz Jaspal, Director of School of Politics, Quaid-I-Azam University
  - Peter Paul Anatol Lieven, Professor, Georgetown University in Qatar and Senior Fellow, New America Foundation

**Moderator:** Jean-Loup Samaan, NATO Defense College

1030 Refreshment Break

1100 Summation and Closing Remarks

- Giuseppe Morabito, Head of Middle East Faculty, NATO Defense College
- Sultan Barakat, Director of Research, Brookings Doha Center

1200 Conference Adjourns

1230 Hosted Lunch