Leaving Afghanistan

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Origins

• Afghanistan as a buffer state, and as a quasi nation-state
• Soviet war (December 1979 - February 1989)
• Civil war I: Democratic Republic of Afghanistan vs. the Mujahideen (Feb 1989 - April 1992)
• Civil war II: Warlords vs Taliban (April 1992- late 1996)
• Taliban government (1996 - late 2001)
• UN-authorised and US-led intervention and establishment of Hamid Karzai headed government (late 2001 - )

1. **Authorizes**, as envisaged in … the Bonn Agreement, the establishment … of an **International Security Assistance Force** to assist the **Afghan Interim Authority** in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas …;

2. **Calls upon** Member States to **contribute personnel**, equipment and other resources to the International Security Assistance Force, and invites those Member States to inform the leadership of the Force and the Secretary-General;

3. **Authorizes** the Member States participating in the International Security Assistance Force to **take all necessary measures** to fulfil its mandate;

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Main players

- **Government and coalition forces**
  - Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
  - Tribal/militia leaders/warlords supporting the government
  - US [ISAF and Operation Enduring Freedom]
  - NATO plus [ISAF]
  - UN [UNAMA]

- **Anti-government forces:**
  - Taliban / Taliban groupings
  - Anti-government tribal/militia leaders/ warlords
  - Al Qaeda and other foreign fighters
Afghanistan: anti-government forces: Taliban

- Now effectively a nationalist resistance against foreign occupiers
- Afghan/Pakistan origin during anti-Soviet war
- US and Pakistani intelligence role in creation
- Pakistani military interest in maintaining Afghan unrest
- ethnically- and class-inflected Sunni Islamism
  - Pashtun ethnic dominance
- regional variations
- not a single united body, or equivalent to pre-invasion government
- Mullah Omar, leader (at least in south)
- overlaps with Taliban in Pakistan but not identical
Afghanistan: anti-government forces: 
Militia leaders/“warlords”

- regional/clan/tribal-based patron-client relationships
  - fusion of “feudal”/pre-modern relations and “modern” social and political relationships
- Haqqani Network
  - Jalauddin Haqqani
    - Claimed responsibility for Kabul bombing this week
- Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddun
  - Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
    - former PM
    - Deeply opposed to foreign intervention
- “warlords” on both sides
- shifting loyalties and finances
- central to current presidential elections

Afghanistan: anti-government forces: 
Al Qaeda

- Saudi- Egyptian-originated Sunni Salafi international militia group
- November 2001 invasion immediately destroyed training camps, displaced AQ activists to Pakistan, reduced AQ capacity, increased tensions with hosts
- Osama Bin Laden assassinated in targeted killing May 2011
- key leaders including Ayman al-Zawahiri still at large, presumably in Pakistan
- core AQ international combat reach doubtful; limited Afghanistan combat role - “100 fighters” acc. to US intelligence
- effective “franchising” of AQ through loose international networks continues
  - differentiation and development of loosely related networks
  - mega-terrorism threat continues
- Taliban distancing themselves; conflicts with foreign fighters
Australian forces, as of 2011

• a National Command Element in Kabul;
• a Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force based in Tarin Kowt, Oruzgan Province as part of an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Provincial Reconstruction Team;
• a Special Operations Task Group deployed to Oruzgan province as part of ISAF operations against insurgents; and
• an RAAF Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) deployed at Kandahar Air Field
• a Chinook helicopter detachment based at Kandahar in Helmand province in support of ISAF operations;
• an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle Detachment of approximately 30 personnel
• Force Level Logistic Asset consisting of approximately 60 personnel at ISAF headquarters in Kandahar
• three Operational Mentor and Liaison teams (OMLTs) embedded with the Afghan National Army in Oruzgan

US troops and private military contractors in Afghanistan

Total Weekly Kinetic Events 7-08 to 9-10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q1 2009</td>
<td>1054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q2 2009</td>
<td>1142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q3 2009</td>
<td>1139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q4 2009</td>
<td>1092</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kinetic Events (KE) include Direct Fire (DF), Indirect Fire (IF), Surface to Air Fire (SAFIRE), Improvised Explosive Device (IED) events, IED events comprise IED exploded, IED found/checked, mine-strike, mine found/checked, and non-KE.

There have been increases in all methods of attacks, except IEDs, which were lower in August 2009 than they were in August 2009, and direct fire (DF) is increasing at a higher rate than indirect fire (IF). This is partially due to the amount of reductions it takes to attack allowing the ISF to increase DF and IEDs. Overall, kinetic events are up 300 percent since 2007 and up an additional 70 percent since 2009. Total kinetic events increased nearly 10 percent over the previous quarter and 0.5 percent compared to the third quarter, 2009. A figure 12 below indicates the overall increase was almost entirely on increased incidents of direct fire. Insurgent indirect attacks also increased this quarter by over 60 percent, and indirect fire attacks comprised the majority of this increase. The rise in reliance is partly attributable to the increased numbers of Combined Forces and ISAF as well as greater operational tempo. The sharp increase in insurgent use of direct fire attacks may be significant, as it suggests capacity limitations for the insurgents.


ISAF Concept of Operations

- Operational Main Effort
- Mapping/Supporting Effort
- Security of Force

Key Terrain Districts (83)
Area of Interest Districts (41)
Border Crossing Points

Military geography (1)

Taliban Influence and Military Activity Coincided with Population Density

Source: globalsecurity.org


Military geography (2)

Where the Fighting Was: End 2009

Source: Afghanistan Security Incidents January – October 2009

Afghanistan and the Uncertain Metrics of Progress, CSIS, http://cis.org/program/burke-chair-afghanistan/
Presidential elections August 2009 - collapse of Karzai international support

- incumbent Hamid Karzai won; against Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani
- UN and coalition recognition of massive fraud by Karzai
- Opponents decided to not contest planned run-off
- deal-making with warlords and controllers of block votes
- ethnic/regional issues
- Corruption as central issue of governance and politics revealed globally
- US and Australian interests
- Afghanistan and political future of allied coalition governments: Netherlands, …?
Pakistan: the nuclear-armed Islamic “acronym” state

- origins (with Bangladesh till 1970) in the partition of British India as “a home for Indian Muslims”
- Punjab, Afghan border states, Kashmir, Sind and Baluchistan
- uneven and deeply unequal economic structure
- US ally in Cold War and GWOT
- succession of military dictatorships and ineffective civilian governments retaining strong feudal characteristics
- perceived enduring hostility and military imbalance with India justified development of nuclear weapons

“Pashtunistan” and the spill-over of the war into Pakistan

- Afghanistan and Pakistan both ethnically mixed
- structure/border legacies of colonial formation as nation-states
- key Pashtun ethnic group cross-border relations: hence “Pashtunistan”
  - largest single group in Afghanistan; southern and eastern concentrations
  - dominant in western border provinces of Pakistan
The war spills over into Pakistan

- Pakistani military intelligence manipulation of the Afghanistan war - from the 1980s onward
- Taliban and Haqqani Network across the Pakistani border provinces
- Cross-border illicit trade
- US operations in Pakistan
  - CIA and Special Forces assassination teams
  - CIA drone bombings
  - The assassination of Osama Bin Laden
Pakistan: what comes after the destabilisation of wobbly equilibrium?

- “acronym state” barely held together: substantial economic problems exacerbated by conflict and climate change
- enduring separatist insurgency in Baluchistan
- North-West Frontier Province and FATA (Federally-Administered Tribal Areas) = former colonial buffer regions; Pashtun cross-border links
- socially, politically and economically distinct
- effective long-running live-and let-live informal “contract for regional autonomy” broken by rise of Taliban in Pakistan and US intervention and demand for Pakistani central intervention
International community: the neighbourhood

- Central Asia: the former Soviet “-stans”, and the contest for hydrocarbons and regional influence
- supply routes for the war
- Iran: refugees, pipelines, Sunni-Shia
- India: Pakistani terrorism, nuclear issues, and Kashmir
- Baluchistan separatism as a constant
- The wild card: China
  - Moving Pakistan away from the US containment strategy
  - Central Asia initiatives,
  - warm-water ports
  - fear of Islamist contagion
International community: the allies

• US and NATO and NATO partners
• levels of commitment: numbers and arguments about “rules of engagement”
• shifting rationales for intervention - and progress:
  – democracy
  – drugs
  – terrorism
• What are western interests? What are coalition goals? What counts as victory?
• the UN and the war: UNSC resolutions as global law?
• war weariness, coalition strains and alliance maintenance

Public opinion and the war

• Summary data (updated frequently):
  International public opinion on the war in Afghanistan, Wikipedia
• Clear majorities against participation in the war in most OECD coalition countries
• Afghanistan policy brought down Netherlands government
• Why so silent in Australia?
Coalition public opinion: USA TODAY/Gallup Poll, 7-8 May 2011

- 59 percent of Americans agree that the "United States has accomplished its mission in Afghanistan and should bring its troops home."

Poll: With bin Laden dead, is it time to end war? USA Today, May 10, 2011

US Congress moves: The Afghanistan Exit and Accountability Bill

- Bipartisan Congressional support:
  - Introduced by Representatives Jim McGovern (D-MA) and Walter Jones (R-NC).

- The Bill, if passed, would:
  - Require timetable for handover to GoIRA
  - Require quarterly reporting of human and financial costs of the war
  - Require estimates of savings in the event of handover to GoIRA within six months (5, 10, and 20 year time periods)
Australian public opinion: majority against

Fig. 17: Military involvement in Afghanistan

Now about Afghanistan. Should Australia continue to be involved militarily in Afghanistan?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>YES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Lowy Institute Poll May 2010, p. 13
Coalition countries looking for the exit

• Already left or announced departure date:
  – Netherlands: 2010
  – Canada: 2011 (2800)
  – Germany: 2011-2014 (4,900 troops)
  – Sweden: 2012-2014 (530)
  – Britain: start mid-2011 (9,000)

• Probable in near future:
  – France (4,000)
  – Italy (4,000)

• Australia: 2014? (1550)

International community and the management of conflict: paths

• coalition strategic options
• the question of time
• return of colonialism in UN/coalition form?
• possible foundations of Afghan peace
  – no ideological impediments
  – shared social links and identity
  – experience of local truces and desire for negotiations
  – can the coalition be an honest broker?
  – does dealing with “the Taliban” = return of international terrorist base

• the Pakistan conundrum
Majorities against the war? Why so silent?

- Insulation of foreign policy and security policy from democratic pressures and public opinion
- Absent massive public mobilization, public opinion effects negligible
- Anxiety about terrorism
- Anxiety about future of Afghan civil society, especially rights of women and minorities
- “Responsibility to clean up the mess we have made”
Out of the war: policies for an Australian contribution to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan

1. Withdraw all Australian forces: completely, rapidly and unconditionally.
3. Form like-minded country groupings to frame honest broker role in an international push for peace negotiations.
4. Deny sanctuary to terrorists through containment, leverage, criminalization of terrorism, intelligence and policing, and overt deterrence.
5. Declare ongoing aid commitment comparable to war effort – strictly conditional on civil rights compliance.
6. Build a peace agenda that includes the constitutional framework and borders of Afghanistan.
7. Pilot test legitimate alternatives to the opium war economy.
8. Get serious about democracy in Pakistan.

Useful resources

- Today’s talk uploaded to Richard’s Talks and Presentations page
  - http://www.nautilus.org/about/staff/richard-tanter/talks
  - email: rtanter@nautilus.org
- Richard Tanter, Out of the war: eight steps to a sustainable peace in Afghanistan, Austral Policy Forum 10-03A, 15 December 2010
  - http://www.nautilus.org/about/staff/richard-tanter/publications
- Exiting Afghanistan: Challenges to transition, Strategic Policy Forum, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 10 March 2011
- Australia in Afghanistan Briefing Book:
  - http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad/afghanistan
- Brian Toohey, War leader, Inside Story, 5 May 2011
- Afghan Journal and Pakistan: Now or Never?, Reuters Blogs
- Anthony Cordesman, The End State Fallacy, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 2010
- International public opinion on the war in Afghanistan, Wikipedia
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