Australia in Afghanistan 2001 -2010: the way out of the quagmire

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Outline:

• Now a two-country war: Afghanistan, spilling over into Pakistan
• Origins and legal foundation of intervention
• Main players and strategy: government and UN-authorised coalition vs “anti-government forces”
• Political economy of the Afghan war: aid, corruption and the narcostate
• Current state of the war
• Pakistan and the neighbourhood
• Australian role and stated goals
• What way out?
The Challenge of Afghanistan vs. Iraq

**AFGHANISTAN**
- Land Mass: 647,000 sq km
- Population: 31,900,000 people; 28% literacy
- Landlocked, primarily agrarian economy; $35.8B GDP, $1,000 PC
- Budget: $2.0, $8.9B in aid pledges
- Lacks both transportation and information infrastructure; 34,782 Km of roads, 8,229 KM paved
- Restrictive terrain dominates

**IRAQ**
- Land Mass: 432,162 sq km
- Population: 27,500,000 people; 84% literacy
- Economy dominated by the oil sector: $100.0B GDP, $3,000 PCI
- Budget: $48.4 billion; $33B+ in aid pledges
- Comparatively developed transportation and information infrastructure; 46,692 Km of roads, 38,319 Km paved

**TOTAL US AND COALITION FORCES**
- ~49,000

**IRAQ**
- ~175,000
Origins and now

• Afghanistan as a buffer state, and as a perpetual 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 - )
• Now: Civil War III: disputed government with international support vs Islamist-based national resistance?

Original legal foundation for international intervention:

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;
Afghanistan government and UN-authorised coalition

- Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
  - Afghan National Army (ANA)
  - Afghan National Police (ANP)
  - supporting militia/warlord groups
- International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)
  - “NATO plus”
- Operation Enduring Freedom - Afghanistan
  - US Afghanistan combat operation structure for Global war on Terror
- United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)
The Problem of “Stand Aside” Forces:

US Fully Committed 61% 62,415
Allied Fully Committed 16,515
Allied Caveat & Stand Aside 23% 23,724

4,715 of 16,515 fully committed allied forces leave in 2011
Afghanistan: anti-government forces: Taliban

- origin during anti-Soviet war
  - US and Pakistani intelligence role in development
  - But at root indigenous
- Pakistani military interest in maintaining Afghan unrest: border concerns
- ethnically- and class-infected 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; family/clan leadership
- Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddun
  - Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
    - former PM; Islamist; deeply opposed to foreign intervention
- “warlords” on both sides
  - shifting clan loyalties and inter-relationships
  - narco financing both sides

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, long-running tensions with hosts
- key leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri still at large, presumably in Pakistan
- core AQ international combat reach doubtful; limited Afghanistan combat role
- effective “franchising” of AQ through loose international networks continues
  - differentiation and development of loosely related networks
  - not Afghanistan-based
  - mega-terrorism threat continues
“Time is Running Out....”

- The Taliban-led insurgency has the momentum... but additional effective counterinsurgency forces and operations will challenge them in select districts and provinces.

- Taliban Influence expanding; contesting and controlling additional areas.

- Kinetic events are up 100% since 2007 and an additional 60% since 2008.

- The Taliban now has "Shadow Governors" in 33 of 44 provinces (as of Dec 09).

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Number of average daily attacks per month

- Total average daily attacks
- Average daily attacks-ISAF/Collapse forces
- Average daily attacks-Afghanistan security
- Average daily attacks-civilians

Source: GAO analysis of Department of Defense data.
### Afghans’ Perception of Violent Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Activity</th>
<th>Respondents Who Replied Yes (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bombing or shelling by U.S., NATO, or ISAF forces</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians killed or hurt by U.S., NATO, or ISAF forces</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians killed or hurt by ANA or ANP</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car bombs, suicide attacks</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snipers, cross-fire</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilians killed or hurt by Taliban, al-Qaeda, or foreign jihadists</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidnappings for ransom</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Percentage represents total “yes” replies out of 5,156 surveyed.


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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2009-2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US, ISAF, Afghan Gov</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“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
- emerging US perception of a cross-border war against Pashtunistan: hence “AfPak War”
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
- China: Pakistan connections, Central Asia initiatives, warm-water ports, and fear of Islamist contagion
- Baluchistan separatism as a constant
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

Australia in Afghanistan

- Australia in Afghanistan Briefing Book:
  - http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad
- troop levels, types, tasks, locations
- duration of deployment, 2001-2003, 2004-2010
- casualties
- Government rationales for deployment
  - Howard/early Rudd: democracy, drugs, terrorism
  - Later Rudd: terrorism and training Afghan army/police
Australian forces, as of early 2010

- 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

International community and the management of conflict: paths

- the McCrystal/Petraeus “counter-insurgency” (COIN) strategy
  - requirements
  - Is it different from “Nation-building” = changing a culture?
- 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
Possible foundations of Afghan peace

- no deep ideological impediments
- shared social links and identity
- experience of local truces and desire for negotiations

- Deal-breakers
  - Hosting/facilitating Al Qaeda international terrorism
  - Violation of basic human rights
    - In particular Taliban sadism towards women
A path out of Afghanistan

- Australian withdrawal
- United Nations movement away from backing of one side in civil war
  - Rescinding/replacing UNSC 1386
- Like minded-countries grouping to frame honest broker role in international push for peace negotiations
- Agenda includes Afghanistan constitutional framework and borders
- Overt deterrence threat against resumption of AQ support
- Economic aid commitment equal to coalition war effort
  - conditional on civil rights compliance
- Get serious about the real strategic interest: Pakistan

Useful sources on the web

- Anthony Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies (source of most slides in this PPT)
  - http://csis.org/expert/anthony-h-cordesman
- Informed Comment, blog by Juan Cole, University of Michigan
  - http://www.juancole.com/
- Nautilus Institute in Australia
  - http://www.nautilus.org/offices/australia
- Australia in Afghanistan Briefing Book:
  - http://www.nautilus.org/publications/books/australian-forces-abroad
- Austral Peace and Security Net: free twice weekly by email and on the web
  - http://www.nautilus.org/mailing-lists/apsnet
- this talk [PPT]:
  - http://www.nautilus.org/about/staff/richard-tanter/richard-tanter
Two new “must-reads”: Taliban and US military as parallel and non-communicating universes

• Abdul Salam Zaeef, *My Life with the Taliban* (Scribe Books, Melbourne, 2010)

• Sebastian Junger *War* (London, Fourth Estate, 2010)