

## AFGHANISTAN - MISSION REVIEW

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*Michal Plichta, editor & Juraj Podolan, NST IV Program Coordinator*

The U.S.'s goal in Afghanistan is no longer "to build a flourishing democracy as an alternative to a hateful ideology," as George W. Bush stated during his presidency, but rather something more sober and realistic: to leave the country in a state of civil war in which the Kabul government has the upper hand. Two factors that indicate how this civil war might unfold are the state of the Afghan security forces and the economic viability of the country, neither of which invite optimism.

The attrition rate of Afghanistan's security forces is high and, as the Marjah offensive demonstrated, Afghan soldiers' performance in combat is poor. The state of Afghanistan's economy is equally dire. The country is dependant on foreign aid, and opium poppy accounts for about 30% of its gross domestic product.

There is potential in both areas. NATO has expanded security force training in the past year, and the discovery of almost \$1 billion worth of mineral deposits could someday save the country's economy. However, these endeavours will take time. Their progress will largely determine the Kabul government's strength in the long-term, but regardless, unfortunately, civil war is likely to continue long after ISAF's eventual withdrawal.

**Rob Grace**

New York, United States

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Afghanistan's short to medium term future turns not on ISAF moves but on the fortunes of the Karzai family. Reports have shown the Karzai family is entrenched in all aspects of Afghanistan's political economy. I have no doubt that due to the shrewd way President Karzai has woven his family into the very fabric of Afghan's daily lives, he will survive in office for some time, barring assassination. Nevertheless he, like the Taliban, is an impediment to Afghanistan's future.



In the long run, Afghanistan's future remains choppy. The country has a very young population with a median age of around 18 years. Life expectancy tops out around the mid-40. The literacy rate hovers around 30%, and within that there is a huge disjunct between the literacy rates of boys and girl's. Hence, nearly every index of development in Afghanistan bears on the tragic. But this also implies that any sustained international investment in all these indexes and sectors will likely improve the lot of Afghans. Now if only successive Afghan government's –Pashtun, or Taliban--can invest in their children, boys and girls and their health, Afghanistan might just have a shot at a brighter tomorrow a few generations out.

**Faheem Haider**

*Asia*

*Faheem Haider is a political analyst, writer and painter. He holds advanced research degrees in political economy, political theory and the political economy of development from the London School of Economics and Political Science and New York University. He has studied political psychology at Columbia University and has obtained certificates in Peace and Conflict Resolution and French History and European Politics from the American University in Washington DC and the University of Paris, respectively. Faheem has research expertise in democratic theory and the political economy of democracy in South Asia.*

In foreign affairs it seems to me that we need something akin to the medical doctor's Hippocratic Oath in which the first goal is not to do harm. I do not come at this from an idealistic perspective. Nations, including the United States, will continue to wage war and sometimes war is necessary. But the goal should always be to try to have mutually beneficial relationships in which the will of those on the ground is always a crucial factor in decision-making.

True partnership means that powerful nations will listen to the needs of the people they are purporting to help rather than imposing plans from the outside. If local communities say they need schools and hospitals, outsiders should not demand that they have banks and phone service. If they want to conduct their elections differently from how we would conduct them, we need to take their ideas seriously. Local conditions matter and locals know those conditions best. Too often paternalism and self-interest have taken the place of partnership and listening.

So how does this apply to Afghanistan? Eventually the goal of the United States and its allies should be to leave Afghanistan capable of governing itself how it sees fit to govern itself. Imposing solutions, however well intended, only breeds resentment and hostility and plays into the hands of extremists. In order to develop this partnership, though, the United States needs to be listening now and not simply maintaining that Afghans are not ready to have their own vision.

**Derek Charles Catsam**

Associate Professor of History,  
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In today's environment, the lines distinguishing a national versus international problem are blurring. One can no longer say what happens in one nation has no bearing on what happens in another; therefore it is safe to look the other way. For example, the failed state in Somalia has led to a situation where Pirates operating from that nation roam the high seas harassing international shipping. The world looked the other way when the Taliban came to power in Afghanistan. The Taliban gave safe haven to Al Qaeda and the rest is history.

What happens in Afghanistan's future requires an international solution. After a number of years of failed efforts, ISAF has made course corrections in the way they do business and is in the process of implementing a COIN strategy which involves an increased emphasis on increasing the size and training for the Afghan security forces. The COIN strategy also puts an emphasis on reconciliation with members of the Taliban who are prepared to accept working with the current government. The July 2011 deadline empowers the Taliban and discourages elements in Afghanistan from working with ISAF for fear of what might happen to them after ISAF forces leave.

**Gail Harris**  
blogger

*Author of **A Woman's War** (Available on Amazon.com), and the GailForce blog for the Foreign Policy Association.*

Over the past decade, the situation in Afghanistan has fluctuated from stable (early years of post-Taliban) to somewhat stable followed by a gradual spiral into instability. Unfortunately, since the ouster of the Taliban by American-led allied forces, the country has been victim of geopolitical rivalries that have significantly contributed to its current instability.

Today we should re-design our strategy in Afghanistan based on what I call a triangular approach. The triangular approach refers to significant investment in public education sector; continued patient efforts to engage Taliban in the political process; and make Pakistan's military, its intelligence apparatus in particular, come to the realization that its interests lie in a stable and peaceful Afghanistan free from the influence of violent fundamentalists. The latter would result in much-needed stability and subsequent economic prosperity for Pakistan, whose central government is teetering on economic bankruptcy and is increasingly dependent on Western financial aid.

It is important to note that this approach envisions an equilateral triangle; that is, a triangle equal in sides and angles. Therefore, to achieve long-term stability and resultant prosperity in Afghanistan, equal emphasis should be placed on each side of this triangle.



Slovakia's generous contribution to the Afghan mission can be extended not merely through military means, but also through offering its rich experience in building educational institutions.

**Reza Akhlaghi**

Toronto, Canada

The future of Afghanistan is too murky for me to honestly describe. The country's future makeup will depend on numerous inputs, including; How long will a substantial American/NATO military presence be in the country? How long will the US and Europe maintain a sustained interest in it? How much power will the Taliban maintain/grow/lose? Will the Karzai government make a deal with members of the Taliban? If so, who among the Taliban will be in it and what will those Taliban members holding out turn to? What will Pakistan's future look like, as that question is equally important to discerning the very future of Afghanistan. Will an extreme, violent form of Islam still be a vibrant, transforming presence in both Afghanistan and Pakistan? Is Osama bin Laden still alive and how strong is his influence?

The answers to these vital questions will paint a portrait of the future of Afghanistan. I'm afraid that's just too many unknowns for me to answer your question with any hope of accuracy. Sadly, I can say with near certainty that the very near future of the state of Afghanistan will be Hobbesian: 'the life of man...solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.'

**Pat Frost**

blogger

Peacebuilding in Afghanistan is contingent with security, as well as with the procurement of economic goals by the United States (U.S.), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and the Afghan people. In the past few years, there have been substantial improvements in economic and social Afghan infrastructure with the building of schools, hospitals, sewage treatment facilities, roads, and power plants. However, the reality remains that despite billions of dollars in assistance and an escalating international presence, security and a sustainable economy need to remain as a top priority. For many Afghan villages, poppy (opium) production has been a sustainable income because of its value on the international black market. However, the U.S. and ISAF have strongly enforced poppy eradication. But, what if there was another solution? Instead of eradication, do crop replacement. The 'Norman' strain of poppy is a type of poppy produced in Tanzania by Johnson & Johnson that is used to synthesize pharmaceutical drugs such as morphine. With this economic equation, an Afghan poppy farmer would make more selling this cash-crop to a pharmaceutical company rather than selling on the black market to fund terrorist activities.

**April Deibert**

blogger

I do not believe Afghanistan will be able to cohere into a modern state anytime in the near future. The divisions created by decades of war have established not just warlordism, but regionalism, both systems of rule being far more permanent than the nation-state idea. At best, we can hope for a decentralized and uneasy peace, free from international jihadis. Attempting to impose a weak and corrupt central government on the entire country will weaken the ISAF mission of fighting terrorism and preventing the return of the Taliban. It is unfortunate that we have such a degraded definition of victory or peace, but that is the sad truth. Afghanistan has to be allowed to be run in an traditional way, its own way, no matter how uncomfortable that makes us; trying to impose a Westphalian modernity will ensure another decade of futility.

**Brian O'Neill**  
blogger

V tak nevyspytateľnej krajine, akou Afganistan bezpochyby je, nemožno robiť presné predikcie budúceho vývoja. Civilný humanitárny sektor, a tiež milióny nespokojných Afgancov, dúfajú, že neúspechy vojenskej intervencie v posledných rokoch prinúti velenie medzinárodnej vojenskej misie NATO-ISAF ako aj afganskú vládu zmeniť taktiku.

Viacere členské krajiny NATO cítia z dlhej vojenskej prítomnosti v Afganistane únavu, a preto otázka vhodnej, a skorej, exit stratégie je viac než naliehavá. V súčasnosti sa ako termín definitívneho odchodu zahraničných vojsk zvažuje rok 2014. Na vybudovanie schopnej afganskej armády, ktorá by prebrala skutočnú zodpovednosť za bezpečnosť krajiny, však zjavne nebudú stačiť nasledujúce tri roky.

Zhoršujúca sa bezpečnostná situácia v Afganistane núti afganskú vládu vyhľadávať „alternatívne“ riešenia. Jedným z nich je napríklad vyjednávanie s niektorými vodcami militantov a ich integrácia do vedenia krajiny. Tohto kroku sa však obávajú najmä progresívne uvažujúci Afganci. Politický kompromis s Talibanom môže mať negatívny dopad na rešpektovanie ľudských práv a slobôd. Stratíť najviac môžu opäť raz afganské ženy, hoci ich situácia sa od pádu Talibanu výrazne nezlepšila – najmä v rurálnych oblastiach. Dôležitú úlohu v budúcnosti Afganistanu zohrá aj postoj susedného Pakistanu k vysporiadaniu sa s Talibanom na svojom území. Vývoj posledných týždňov, žiaľ, svedčí skôr o nepriaznivom vývoji v tejto otázke.

Demokratická obnova Afganistanu nie je, a nemôže byť, iba v rukách armády. Naše občianske združenie, ktoré v Afganistane pracuje viac ako 6 rokov, spolu s mnohými humanitárnymi partnermi verí, že účinnou stratégiou na zlepšenie bezpečnostnej situácie v krajine a budovanie demokratického Afganistanu bude najmä reálne zlepšenie situácie miliónov chudobných Afgancov – vo forme pracovných príležitostí, dostupných škôl a zdravotníckych služieb, opravených ciest, alebo aj pravidelnej dodávky elektriny nevyhnutnej pre rozvoj priemyslu a poľnohospodárstva...

Obavy z ďalšieho vývoja v Afganistane sú opodstatnené – napriek čiastkovým pozitívnym výsledkom je Afganistan aj po 9 rokoch rekonštrukčného úsilia stále jednou z najnebezpečnejších a najchudobnejších krajín sveta.

Dlhodobý prísľub medzinárodného spoločenstva pomáhať Afganistanu na ceste jeho obnovy je dôležitý. V budúcom vývoji krajiny však zohrá kľúčovú úlohu najmä vedenie krajiny. Doposiaľ zostali rekonštrukčné plány afganskej vlády v mnohých prípadoch iba v rovine prísľubov. Týka sa to aj boja s korupciou a miestneho drogového priemyslu, ktoré paralyzujú už aj tak slabé štátne inštitúcie. Avšak iba kredibilné vedenie krajiny môže Afgancov presvedčiť, že si zaslúži podporu svojich občanov.

Verme, že história raz nebude toto obrovské úsilie, ktoré vynakladá ťažko skúšaný afganský ľud a jeho medzinárodní spojenci, hodnotiť iba ako premárnenú príležitosť a ďalšiu smutnú kapitolu v dejinách Afganistanu.

**Marcela Ondeková**

O. z. Človek v ohrození

Z hľadiska operácií ostáva misia ISAF našou ako aj aliančnou prioritou, čo sa nezmení ani v dohľadnej dobe. Bezpečný a stabilný Afganistan je dôležitý pre Afgancov samotných, ale rovnako aj pre nás a pre našu vlastnú bezpečnosť. SR ako člen NATO a súčasť medzinárodného spoločenstva nesie na základe mandátu Bezpečnostnej rady OSN a jej rezolúcií zodpovednosť za vývoj situácie v tejto krajine. Je našou úlohou spolu s ďalšími krajinami doviest' misiu v Afganistane do úspešného konca. Napriek tomu, že bezpečnostná situácia v Afganistane nie je na želateľnej úrovni, v krajine sa podarilo dosiahnuť značný pokrok. Tento je badateľný v oblasti miestnej infraštruktúry, výstavby ciest, v zlepšenom prístupe miestneho obyvateľstva k zdravotnej starostlivosti a pitnej vode, pokrok je jasne viditeľný aj v oblasti vzdelávania žien a v rastúcej prítomnosti detí v školách. Investície do vzdelávania, zdravotníctva a budovania infraštruktúry sú cestou, ktorá umožní priniesť do krajiny trvalú bezpečnosť.

Pre úspech je kľúčový aj výcvik afganských bezpečnostných zložiek, ktorý umožní postupne odovzdávať zodpovednosť za bezpečnosť Afganistanu afganským vládnym autoritám.

Slovenská republika by mala v nasledujúcich mesiacoch potvrdiť svoj záväzok zvýšiť svoju vojenskú prítomnosť, minimalizovať národné obmedzenia a intenzívne sa zapojiť do výcviku afganských národných bezpečnostných zložiek a podporovať rekonštrukciu krajiny. Afganci musia vidieť, že do Afganistanu neprichádzame, aby sme krajinu ovládali, ale aby sme krajinu budovali, stabilizovali a zlepšili ich podmienky na život. Aj preto sa tzv. komplexný prístup stal jednou z hlavných agend NATO.

Vláda Slovenskej republiky sa musí sústrediť viac na civilno-vojenskú spoluprácu, ktorej reálne výsledky sa prejavujú pri spoločnom plnení úloh v operáciách krízového manažmentu, teda aj v Afganistane, kde budú vedľa seba pôsobiť slovenský vojak, diplomat, sudca, policajt, lekár, agronóm, odborník na rozvoj miestnej samosprávy, ale aj ďalší experti.

**Jaroslav Baška**

poslanec NR SR

Budúcnosť Afganistanu, vychádzajúc z poznatkov získaných počas písania diplomovej práce zameranej na sociálne problémy vo svete a v Afganistane, hodnotím ako neurčitú a tienistú. Všetky možné scenáre ďalšieho vývoja situácie vyplývajú zo začarovaného kruhu, v ktorom sa krajina nachádza.



Obyvateľstvo žije v hlade, strachu a nedôvere k vlastnej vláde a cudzím bezpečnostným silám, čo pramení aj zo zmeny režimov v minulosti. Ľudský kapitál je na nízkej úrovni, jazykové a kultúrne rozdiely brzdia snahu zahraničných odborníkov o zlepšenie situácie a vytvorenie domácich kapacít pre jeho ďalšie zhodnocovanie.

Podľa môjho názoru nastane zvrät vtedy, keď nastúpi nová generácia. Bude vedená k dôvere vo vlastnú vládu, schopná postaviť sa proti Talibanu a brániť svoju krajinu. Prioritou by teda okrem bezpečnosti mala byť eliminácia hladu a chudoby, boj s epidemickými chorobami a zabezpečenie vzdelania, zamestnania a následne príjmu jednotlivcov. Tým sa vytvorí kvalitný ľudský kapitál. Som si vedomá toho, že dané úsilie je finančne náročné a toky financií sú v súčasnosti obmedzované globálnou finančnou krízou. Preto je dôležité správne posúdiť účel a uvážiť použitie zdrojov plynúcich do Afganistanu. Krokom vpred by mohlo byť komplexné zameranie priorit nielen na bezpečnosť krajiny, ale aj na sociálnu sféru. Krajina totiž nie je tvorená armádou, ale obyvateľstvom.

**Silvia Kocmundová**  
absolventka FMV EUBA

