

“Security Sector Reform and State Building in Afghanistan”

Address to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London

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5 April 2005

My address today is intended to provide an overview of the security situation in Central Asia and Afghanistan. I will explain the role and reform of security institutions, in particular the Afghan National Army, and their impact in the recreation of the Afghan Nation. I will describe the requirements for international community engagement. Finally I will give you a summary of President Karzai's vision to create a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Central Asian region continues to provide some of the most difficult security challenges. The threats of conventional and nuclear warfare between states, territorial disputes, the fault lines of cultures, societies and religions, economic under-development, radical Islam, transnational terrorism, organized crime, narcotics and weapons trafficking all trouble Central Asia.

Afghanistan's geographic position as the cross roads of Central Asia, and its proximity to many locations of geopolitical interest lend it considerable strategic significance.

Afghanistan has traditionally played an unhappy role as the proxy battleground for competing interests in the region. I'm certain you are all very familiar with the

roles played by Tsarist and then Soviet Russia, British Imperial India, and US-supported Pakistan during Afghanistan's past 150 years. A weak, fragmented or failed Afghanistan quickly provides an irresistible vacuum inviting external exploitation. Afghanistan's strategic position, at the centre of many competing interests, continues to attract unwelcome and disruptive attention.

So our regional relationships are of great significance. Recently we have made much progress, building on joint threats and problems to develop common solutions and coordinated responses, including border cooperation with Pakistan and counter-narcotics cooperation with Iran. Progress on regional solutions to security and economic development issues will increasingly define our ability to deliver regional stability and prosperity.

The need for stability and moderation in Central Asia, and the dangers inherent in failing to achieve it, are now universally recognized. The tragic events of 9/11, and the omnipotent effects of proliferation, transnational crime and narcotics are felt worldwide.

So, what about Afghanistan itself? Where are we 3 ½ years after the defeat of the Taliban? And what are the current threats and likely trends for the near future?

- Politically, the Presidential election was an historic step. The people of Afghanistan feel involved in the political process. We need to continue to develop a sustained dialogue with the people, make them feel responsible and recognized, and listen to their concerns. The Parliamentary elections will help to deliver this.

- It is clear that there is no popular insurgency against the Karzai government or Coalition forces. There are sporadic attacks from forces based across the border, but there is no sanctuary for terrorists to recruit, train, plan or operate within Afghanistan. The Government is reaching out to moderate former Taliban, and there is a clear trend towards reintegration.
- The environment throughout Afghanistan has changed considerably in the past 18 months and the influence of the central Government over the regions has improved significantly. There are no longer fiefdoms under the control of self-appointed regional leaders. The democratic process is now seen as the route to achieving influence.
- Lawlessness and criminality remain serious problems. They result in a culture of fear and repression. Ultimately our society cannot tolerate or function with the current levels of crime. Eventually it will destroy our attempts to create a prosperous nation.
- I have already mentioned external interference. As long as regional influences upset Afghanistan's equilibrium, there will always be instability and conflict.
- We have made great progress in dismantling many of the militia elements that dominated Afghanistan since 1992. We have disarmed and demobilized over 45,000 former combatants. We have collected over 90% of the heavy weapons in the country, which previously prevented the government from exercising control. Now we move to the next phase, to initiate nationwide disarmament.
- The cultivation, processing and trafficking of narcotics from Afghanistan are serious dangers which threaten regional security and global welfare. It is well understood that this trade can destroy the very existence of a country. So we

welcome all international efforts to end the production and distribution of narcotics from Afghanistan, and I reinforce the importance that our Government places on these efforts. I am optimistic that we will defeat this plague, and I am confident that we will see substantial progress this year.

- Failure to deliver real progress in reconstruction and development will undermine every effort to stabilize Afghanistan. People who cannot feed their families, find jobs, and make a living through legitimate means will quickly fall under the influence of those who promise other solutions.

The process of confronting the threats I have just outlined is generally described as Security Sector Reform. In Afghanistan it is more a case of Recreation than Reform. We are starting from a baseline of nearly 25 years of almost continuous warfare, through the Communist coup, the Soviet invasion, the civil war, the seizure of power by the Taliban and their defeat. The institutions of security required a fresh start; the organizations responsible for security ceased to function effectively, or became so tainted with factionalism, corruption and mismanagement that they were part of the problem.

My personal responsibility lies, of course, with the Army. Afghanistan has a rich history and culture in the military. I would like to think that our martial skills won a certain admiration and respect from so many invaders, including the British. Our Army was for many years a highly respected pillar of the society, and a symbol of national unity. Of course, the dark days of the past 25 years led us to a position where the man in uniform was feared not trusted, and brought insecurity instead of peace and stability.

So our challenge is diverse and colossal. We have to not only recruit, train, equip, field and sustain a new Army, starting from the most basic beginnings.

But we have also to recreate the traditions and the trust that have been eroded. We have to introduce a new culture and change the entire nature of the military.

- The role of the National Army is an interesting issue, and one that will transition through time. Ultimately of course it is to provide for national sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan. Due to the nature and capabilities of the threat and the lack of other options we have had to use the Army to deliver internal security in the past two years. The Government recognizes the need to avoid the Army playing a law enforcement role.
- The National Army is one of the success stories of the last few years. The Army has recently crossed the 20,000 mark. And this Army is truly representative of the peoples of Afghanistan, rather than representing political factions or ethnic groups. We are now training over 4000 soldiers at any one time. This will complete the training and initial fielding of the ground forces by the end of 2006. Crucially we have delivered a regional presence for the Army, through the establishment of Commands and deployment of forces nationwide. The Afghan National Army is under legitimate civilian authority for the first time in 25 years.
- And the impact of this progress is the expansion of central Government control. Their professionalism, national representation and operational effectiveness are winning friends for the Army. Now, the National Army presence is welcomed, they bring stability and we are beginning to develop the trust that is so crucial. The Army is conducting counter-insurgency operations with Coalition forces, stability operations, delivering support to elections and humanitarian support to the people.
- The Army has become the physical manifestation of the new united Afghanistan and by embracing their new Army, the people of Afghanistan

have emphasized their desire for change. Perhaps most importantly for the future, the creation and fielding of the National Army is providing a catalyst and a guarantor for state building efforts through political and economic means.

- Our success comes from Afghan ownership and responsibility, timely international investment, high levels of mentoring and training support and a dedicated and unified lead in support from the United States.

- We are benefiting from a generous investment in resources and personnel from a multinational venture led by the United States. Our ultimate goal is to defend ourselves without being a burden on the international community. Afghanistan providing for its own security has a price tag, and it is one that we are not yet able to afford alone. But the Afghan solution is more cost effective than retaining high levels of Coalition forces. And I stress that it is not in the Afghan character to become dependent.

The requirements for international presence in the recent past and in the near future have been clear. I am certain that the presence of ISAF and Coalition forces in the period since 2001 has averted another disaster that we witnessed from 1992 to 2001. The international forces have been the guarantors of stability. They have also provided a deterrent effect against external interference.

- The requirement for international military presence will certainly change over time. We are already seeing a shift from international forces actually having to provide security themselves to supporting the National Army and National Police.

– The long term requirements are both military and political. We will certainly seek enduring relations and partnerships with our international friends. This will prevent the repetition of the catastrophic disengagement of the international community from Afghanistan in the 1990s, which cost us all so dearly. We also intend to develop regional security cooperation and agreements with our neighbours, further building on areas of common concern and interest.

In the long term, the major threat to stability is unlikely to be terrorism or warlords, but failure to eliminate organized crime, narcotics trafficking or to achieve economic regeneration. With the help of the international community, we will ensure that terrorism and warlordism is defeated. The Afghan people have shown very clearly that they embrace the democratic process, and have no desire to live under the rule of the gun.

But for stability and peace to be sustainable, we must provide the people of Afghanistan with hope for a prosperous future. 3½ years after the defeat of the Taliban, and even with the attention of the international community, Afghanistan continues to suffer from a lack of foreign investment. We must deliver a security environment that supports economic development. At the same time we must prevent Afghanistan becoming a safe haven for criminals and end the curse of narcotics.

I would like to end by setting out President Karzai's vision for Afghanistan.

It is an Afghanistan which is not a threat to regional stability, but achieves its own security and is strong enough to deter interference.

It is an Afghanistan which is not a burden on the international community, but stands on its own feet, determines its own destiny and repays its debts to those who have given lives and resources to help us.

It is an Afghanistan which is a respected member of the community of nations, and an example of an Islamic state which exports tolerance, moderation and stability.

Of course, we will continue to need the help of the international community to realize these noble ambitions. But I want to leave you with the message that the Government, and most importantly the people of Afghanistan, believe in this vision and will spare no effort to achieve it.