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Sustainable Outcomes in Afghanistan

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Background

A review of recent history in Afghanistan and the decisions made after the fall of the Taliban in 2001 is necessary to understand the obstacles that need to be overcome to build a future for our country. Afghanistan is a small country situated in central Asia. It is one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries of the world. The majority of the inhabitants' practice Islam as their religion, with the majority belonging to the Sunni sect.

The country is home to many different ethnic groups and tribes. Although the different ethnic groups have co-existed for centuries, their attitudes and behavior sometimes have not been very friendly toward each other. A single ethnic group has always dominated the political and power scene of the country. This highest position has been held by the Pashtuns for the last two centuries. This dominant ethnic group has tried to enforce its own culture, religion, language and social and political mores on the subordinate groups. The situation has often given rise to prolonged conflicts among the ethnic groups, which have played an important role in hampering the stability and progress of Afghanistan.

Afghan society still follows some of the primitive codes of conduct set from old times, for example, the patriarchal system of families. The women have lower and secondary status to men. Dictatorship and misinterpretation of religion have limited the rights of the people and particularly to women. However, 35-40 years ago, partial democracy was introduced into the country and a constitution was

drawn up in which women were allocated some rights. Under this change in the constitution, women were granted freedom to obtain all existing forms of education in the country, and they could participate in political process and run for office. Having easy access to education, the women living in the cities made good progress. Unfortunately, women living in the rural areas could not avail themselves of these opportunities provided to them by the constitution, as the facilities did not exist in the rural parts of the country.

After the invasion of the Russian Soviet Union in 1979, the constitution ceased to be in effect thus a state of war and havoc prevailed in the country. Countries interested in Afghanistan for various reasons engaged in proxy wars against each other on Afghanistan soil. Those who emerged as winners did so at the expense of the Afghan lives and resources. Regrettably, the countries that started supporting the Afghan people against the USSR invasion in Afghanistan chose the most backward and conservative groups of Afghans as their proxy fighters. Later on, these groups became out of control and brutal monsters.

After the fall of Dr. Najib's communist regime in April 1992, Afghanistan's constitution, which guaranteed fundamental rights to all people including women, was suspended by Mujahedeen groups who took over the power in Kabul. The pre-existing weak and feeble legal system was ignored and the judicial structure was largely dismantled. Those who committed human rights violations and abuses did so with virtually no impunity.

The fractured and warring groups which were based in Peshawar, Pakistan started to rule the country. Soon their internal in-fighting and civil war

intensified as none of the groups were willing to share the power with the others. Most of the governmental system and the country's infrastructure were destroyed during this war. The national army, national police and all the other civilian institutions and services were either dismantled or taken over by one or another group.

Civilians, especially women, were the main victims of the continued human rights crisis in Afghanistan. They were being killed and maimed in what appeared to be deliberate artillery attacks on civilians and were being targeted for assassination, abduction and rape. The so-called government forces and armed political groups who committed these atrocities were never shy to terrorize the civilian population in order to reinforce and expand their power bases.

As the USSR collapsed and the cold war was won, the western countries which supported the Afghan war by arming different groups in Afghanistan lost their interest in this country. Consequently, a total chaos and anarchism prevailed in Afghanistan. Each group was controlling one part of the country or a city. Civilians were the primary victims since illegal taxation was common place, and looting of public and private properties was a daily practice. In general, a total lack of basic security was the order of the day in the whole country.

Emergence of Taliban

The Taliban (literally meaning religious students) stepped into the chaotic and unstable political scene of the country in 1994. Their presence was noted first in the area of Kandahar Province that borders Pakistan. The initial emergence of the Taliban followed by a series of rapid military victories which

carried them across the country and made them the unchallenged and sole rulers of almost all of Afghanistan.

Initially, some people felt the Taliban introduced much needed security and peace to some areas in the country where the people were tired of lawlessness and the absence security. In a way, they welcomed the Taliban as an alternative to the different brutal armed groups who were intimidating people and committing every kind of human rights violations with impunity. However, the Taliban's human rights violations were the most extreme and were most harsh on women, and minority groups.

As soon as the Taliban took control of the power, they enforced their harshest restrictions, which stemmed from misinterpretation of Islamic laws. After the Taliban took over Kabul in September 27, 1996, Kabul became the largest prison for women in the world. The female population was ordered to stay at home. They were forbidden from getting education and working outside their homes. Women had always worked in Kabul. Before the Taliban, it is estimated that more than 60% of the teachers in Kabul were women. Women were all ordered to stay at home, which caused a severe shortage of school teachers. The girls were not allowed to attend school and many boys couldn't attend either, due to lack of teachers and facilities.

The Taliban ordered female patients to leave hospitals, since the medical staff included male doctors. Male doctors were not allowed to treat female patients. Some female medical workers were allowed to return to work, but

couldn't work with their male colleagues. Other medical staff, who tried to return to work, were turned away by the Taliban.

The impact of the Taliban restrictions on women was most acutely felt in cities where there were significant numbers of educated and professional women, compared to the countryside where women were usually illiterate and were traditionally denied their rights.

In the past 3 decades, the people of Afghanistan had no say over who was ruling them. These proxy wars were fought in Afghanistan for more than two decades that were funded from outside. Unfortunately, the international community supported the most extremist groups to fight against USSR during that time.

The chaos resulted from these wars laid down the ground for establishment of madrassas for refugee children in Pakistan. Funded by the Western countries and Saudi Arabia, the madrassas trained pupils in the most extreme interpretation of Islam who later on became the Taliban. The situation became more favorable for madrassas since none of those funding countries, including UN agencies or international NGOs supported the formal education at the early stage for Afghan refugee children.

During the war against the USSR, poppy cultivation was increased which was introduced to the people during the Jihad. The international community at the time turned a blind eye to the issue, while the income from opium trade was used to buy weaponry and supplement the fight against the USSR. As Afghanistan lost its importance to international community, both the Mujahedeen

and Afghan Arab fighters stayed armed in Afghanistan while production of opium continued.

During the Taliban's rule, Afghanistan was politically isolated by the International community. The diplomatic relationships with Afghanistan were little to nonexistent. Most NGOs left the country. The country turned into a breeding ground for training camps for all the terrorist activities and a prized jewel for the international drug cartel as the biggest producer of opium in the world.

After 9/11/2001, the world could no longer ignore the Taliban and realized the threat their rule posed to global security. In October 2001, with the military intervention of the US and its coalition forces in Afghanistan, the Taliban regime was toppled down during the operation Enduring Freedom. Women rights and human rights in Afghanistan gained importance. They became the legitimate reasons to protect the people of Afghanistan and to give them the chance to work towards freedom and democracy.

However, Operation Enduring Freedom repeated the previous mistakes. US and coalition forces entrusted the future of the Afghan nation to the same political parties and groups who were in power from 1992-1996 and with whom the people of Afghanistan had already very negative experiences and sad memories. One could argue that at that specific time, this alliance was necessary and the only option. Nonetheless, if this argument holds, then cooperation with these different armed groups should have been conditional upon their behaviors and functions.

Bonn Agreement

In addition, the United Nations-backed Bonn agreement in Germany was put in place too quickly without a thorough analysis for a long term plan. It was an emergency situation. The goal was to provide peace and stability on the ground and to fill the political and power vacuum in Kabul. The US and international community pressed the convening factions to accelerate the process of peace agreement. A policy of accommodation was adopted because it seemed to be the only viable solution at that time to make the Bonn accord possible to take effect. Mechanisms to provide for accountability and justice for the past and the present crimes should have been put in place.

The Bonn accord arranged for the official transfer of power to an interim administration on December 22nd, 2001 and laid down a very ambitious time frame for building state institutions. The plans called for 6 months for an Interim Administration. An emergency Loya Jirga (Grand Assembly) then would be convened that would decide on the next president of a two year transitional government. During the transitional government the new constitution would be drafted. At the end of this process, Afghanistan would have election to bring democracy in this war torn country. The plan was not realistically designed for promotion and protection of democracy, human rights, and justice in Afghanistan. The implementation of the Bonn agreement was sped up and rushed when the country was not ready for a quick fix policy. Some people may argue that Afghanistan has never had a strong central government, which is partially true, but even before the 1978 coup, the country was under control with a functional government

In the Interim Administration, most of the governmental higher posts and positions, such as ministries, were distributed among the political parties and ethnic groups who were present in Bonn during the negotiation. But one of the political parties that entered Kabul before the arrival of Interim Administration occupied most of the other positions (such as deputy ministers and director generals). Later on it became difficult to remove them from such positions.

Drafting the Constitution

Compared with the previous constitutions, Afghanistan's new constitution is a much better crafted national document. However, the accommodation policy was very apparent in the process including the selection of the people who were to draft the constitution, the election of delegates for the Constitutional Loya Jirga, and the Loya Jirga itself. Delegates were selected based on the favoritism, ethnicity and party affiliations. There were no clear policies in place for vetting those people who were accused of perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity. The constitution would have been a much stronger document. The lack of political will for honest promotion of equality and human rights was not there. The biased discussion and skewed squabbles continued over the designation of the national language and whether a presidential or parliamentary system best suited the country. Intimidation occurred and promises were made during the Constitutional Loya Jirga among delegates and leaders of the parties in order to pass the constitution rather than forging a constitution that better fits and serves the Afghan nation. The final document was filled with contradictions.

After the convention of constitutional Loya Jirga, the election is held as one pillar of building a democratic society. However, the mistakes of favoritism and fraud were repeated again during the election. Elections are only one ingredient of a democracy. By themselves, elections do not guarantee the presence of a democratic system, Afghanistan is a prime example and proof of it and holding election by itself is just an exercise of democratic act as it was for the Afghans.

During the presidential election some mistakes and problems surfaced but they were not taken seriously and were not corrected. One election observer stated, "In accordance with the Afghan standards, the election was free and fair." I don't agree with this statement, and I am asking what are Afghan standards of democracy ? Are there any other standards other than Afghan standards of democracy and basic human rights?

Many examples of the mistakes and fraud surfaced during the election. Turbans were put on the young boys as young as 12 or 13 years old. The children were photographed and then given the cards to vote as adults. What does the democracy mean to these young Afghan boys? Will they believe in it? For them democracy and election will be an act of fraud. They will take this exact message to their families, their friends and their villages. In another example, in many areas, men came with long lists of women's names and collected the voting cards. On the Election Day, the men voted on behalf of the women. The excuse was "they do not want their women to be photographed". Are these

attempts of holding the election going to build peace and democracy in Afghanistan?

The parliamentary election

The mechanisms that were developed and put in to effect for parliamentary election also were not democratic (SNTV). Once again there were not clear conditions for the vetting of those people who were accused of perpetrating war crimes and crimes against humanity. Any candidates could stand for election. The only restriction and condition to bar a candidate from standing for election was not having or being affiliated with an illegal armed group, which I think was not sufficient enough to lead us towards democracy.

Despite the ban on the candidacies of people affiliated with armed groups, some very well known people who had close connections with armed groups were allowed to stand for election and won. Some who had money and resources bribed or intimidated the people to vote for them and yet others came with very clear electoral fraudulent actions and won seats in the parliament and became members of the parliament. There was concrete evidence on election fraud in some places, but the government and the international community turned a blind eye. A few other candidates, who were vetted and removed from the ballot were given high rank posts in the government. The people who were vetted from the list should not have been appointed to higher positions. The fraud that was committed by some of the candidates should been exposed to the public to

prevent these actions in the next elections. Double standards send the wrong messages to the public. These actions suggest that if people who have enough power and support in the government, no one will dare remove them from their positions of power.

What are the opportunities for Afghanistan?

One of the main opportunities that Afghanistan had in the past several years was the support and desire of the people of Afghanistan for peace and their strong opposition to the Taliban's brutal type of regime. The people of Afghanistan were deprived of their basic rights and freedom by different warring factions and their human rights were commonly violated by these perpetrators. Fighting continued for more than two and half decades. People had hopes for their new found freedom and waited for some changes to improve the miserable situation that they had experienced under different cruel regimes for more than 23 years.

Perpetrators have committed gross violations of basic human rights while enjoying impunity. A lot of innocent citizens of this country either lost their lives or disappeared. Some of whose families are still waiting for the return of their loved ones. However, the lost will never return, because those cruel regimes had murdered all those innocent people and were never held accountable for their crimes. Accountability and justice were never part of the agendas of these warring groups. People believe that justice and accountability is an important pillar of stability and peace. They understand that peace and stability will not come without justice, as it is evident from our daily lives.

Perhaps for the first time in its entire history, Afghanistan has had strong support from the international community. Historically, different countries mingled in Afghanistan's internal affairs by supporting the governing regime or opponent groups. But this time the entire international community is united to fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, with the strong support of the United Nation's Security Council resolution.

The people and the country were ready for change, and they were supportive of the international community's military intervention, The people of Afghanistan were supportive and expected their daily lives to be changed for better. Citizens of Afghanistan have also had a lot of hope from international community would bring development, rule of law and to create job opportunities for them in the country.

Unfortunately, the support for the international community presence has been reduced from 2002 and 2003. Support has eroded because of the not enough of change in people's daily lives, the high number of civilian casualties, corruption, and the unfulfilled promises of development, reconstruction, and peace.

To rebuild confidence and trust among the people, the international community and the government have to enforce rule of law, strengthen judiciary and justice system and take initiative to reduce and eliminate poverty and provide human security to them. In any country when the people lose their trust and confidence on the government, the sustainability of the government will not be guaranteed.

What are the constraints?

Unfulfilled Promises

The promises that were made by the Afghan government and international community regarding security have not been fulfilled. Development cannot take place without sustainable security. Security will not be brought without development. Both will not be possible without respect for human rights and human dignity.

While some political analysts believe that Afghanistan is a post-conflict country, the actual situation is far more complex. One part of the country is in conflict. Another part is in the post-conflict stage. Yet another part of the country is getting ready to get involved in the conflict. Reconstruction, security and military strategies need to be adjusted to reflect the reality on ground.

Security is not only the presence of physical security or absence of active war. Security also includes human security. Human security encompasses very basic rights such as access to proper food, access to clean drinking water, access to basic health care, and access decent shelter. Security also includes freedom from abuse, mistreatment, and poverty. Little has been achieved in these areas. In fact, the security situation is deteriorating and getting worse. 2008 was the most violent year since the fall of the Taliban.

Attention has been paid almost entirely to the military dimension of security rather than winning the battle of hearts and minds of the people. While military pressure is important for bringing about security, attention also should have been paid to development, providing basic social services to the public and building the confidence among the people, government and the international

community. The rapid fall of the Taliban regime made the international community think that they were winning the war in Afghanistan and eradicating the Taliban, but they have only removed the regime from the power. More development projects should be focused on the secure areas where people are ready for the support. Projects are needed in these areas to give the possibility of shelter for the IDP's from areas in which security is lacking and to encourage the people in the insecure area to take the responsibility for the security of their villages in order to enjoy the benefits development.

Poverty

Poverty is one of the most important problems. The lack of a comprehensive strategy for economic and social development in the country is a major reason for the poverty. The Afghan government and the international community did not pay enough attention to creating jobs and providing opportunities to the younger generation of this country. For the anti-government element, poverty is a recruitment tool. They can hire more young men on their side. The absence of job opportunities for the young population of Afghanistan creates a dire living situation. Not being able to feed their families, they are attracted and recruited to side with anti-government elements. Labor intensive projects, such as mines , road construction and water dams projects can be done, which keep the people employed and can be seen by the public.

Since one of the only skills that most of the young Afghan men have acquired is carrying and using guns, they will again use the gun to make out a living if circumstances do not change.

Lack of Accountability and Justice

The lack of accountability and justice in Afghanistan is a major constraint. The public were very hopeful that the new government, with the support of international community, will bring some kind of accountability and justice for the past crimes committed by different warring factions. However, the same crimes continue to be committed by almost the same people without any questioning or accountability. The people who are accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity again hold positions of power and oppress people with impunity. Those people should have been vetted from the government positions, and their action should have been monitored closely. If they have committed crimes again, they should be brought to justice. In order to win the war the culture of impunity has to be stopped. There can only be peace with just resolution of longstanding conflicts such as Afghanistan and there can only be prosperity with accountable and transparent government.

Lack of Coordination

The lack of coordination and a unified approach between the international community and the Afghan government on the military front and in the implementation of the development projects has further impeded progress. Most of the development projects were not planned according to the needs of the

people and the communities. Instead, programs were implemented according to the wishes of the concerned donor countries.

The unfair distribution of the funds and projects in the country has been an important cause of concern. Most of the provinces were not involved in terrorist activities and production of opium were punished by either being ignored or receiving little benefit from development funds and projects. On the contrary, the provinces where there has been active war, instability and production of opium were rewarded with more development funds and projects. The deprived provinces see this pattern. It has caused them disappointment and has widened the gap of mistrust between the government and the public. People feared that this government was just the continuation of the previous unjust and unfair regimes and worry these fears are coming true.

Lack of Good Governance

Afghanistan has been submerged in devastating wars for a long time, which rendered the governmental system completely dysfunctional. After the fall of Taliban regime, not much attention was paid to either the institutional rebuilding or good governance. Good governance is very important tool to build confidence between the people and the government. Unfortunately, it was not been taken very seriously. The accommodation policy was adopted by the government and the international community to pacify the ex-warring groups. The same people who were ruling the people for the past thirty years continued to be legitimized by having key posts and positions in current government with the support of the international community. They continue to misuse the power and

violate people's human rights. Some of these same people are also involved in opium production and trafficking.

One of the most important pieces of the state building and good governance puzzle is the vitality of the legal system, including law enforcement and the judiciary. The people of Afghanistan do not trust the police since the most crucial and important positions have been given to the individuals who are corrupt and have a background of involvement in the illegal drug business. They were given these positions based on their contact and relationships in the government or on the amount of the bribes that they pay.

During the training and the reform of the police forces in Afghanistan, there was a lack of coordination between the concerned countries who were supporting the police reform and the Afghan government. Rather than putting more funds and emphasis on the fundamentals of police force training, they opted for quick fix policies such as promoting the tribal militia or community police and called them "auxiliary police." The experience in Afghanistan has shown that this quick fix was not a wise solution to the problem. For example, when the tribal militia that were assembled by Dr. Najib's regime became disenchanted with the regime, they joined General Dostoum and help topple Najib's regime. Counting again on tribal militia will be the repetition of the same failed policies of the past. It will risk dividing people based on ethnicity to an even greater extent. Arming the tribal militia will be counterproductive to the DDR and DIAG programs, where a lot of funds and effort have been invested for disarmament.

Judiciary reform is very slow. Very few independent, honest and professional judges and prosecutors have been trained and appointed to provide justice to the people. The judiciary system in every country is the guardian of the constitution and rule of law. The independence of the judiciary system is an important key to democratization of the country. For the moment, most of the personal in the judiciary system are uneducated and untrained. Most have been appointed based on existing nepotism in the system. Despite constant pressure from AIHRC and civil society, none have been brought to justice for their wrong doings except in a few cases where they were removed from one area and were reappointed in another.

Opium Production and Counter narcotics policy

The policies of counter narcotics have not had much success yet. The international community again opted to the quick fix policy instead of a long term strategy by paying farmers to destroy their own poppy farms. On one hand, despite paying millions of dollars to the farmers, the amount of poppy production did not go down. On the other hand, accountability and evaluation process were not put in place by the donor countries to track the distribution of the money. This situation sent the wrong message to the poppy growers. For next year, they thought they would be able to get money and also the profit from the farming opium. By 2007, Afghanistan became the largest opium producer in the world. Opium production and trafficking fund the insurgency in Afghanistan. Yet no serious effort was made by the Afghan government and international community to arrest the drug lords.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration:

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) is important to prevent an active war and to promote stabilization in Afghanistan. Disarmament is the physical removal of the means of fighting from the hands of armed groups. Demobilization disbands the armed groups. Reintegration is the process of bringing the ex-combatant elements to the civil life in the community. Through these processes, the aim is to reduce the risk of possible resurgence of armed and criminal activities. The DDR program started in 2003 and finished in 2005 in coordination of the UN, the international community and the Afghan government.

Although it has been said that DDR program was successful, it was not very transparent or effective. Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) succeeded DDR in this objective. DIAG has failed because some of the commanders refuse to be disarmed or disband. It is estimated that 850 illegal armed groups have not participated in any kind of DDR. Even if some of the warlords participated in DDR, they did not hand all of their weapons. In addition, some of the commanders exaggerated the number of their combatants in order to gain more financial resources. Limited pressure was put to collect the functional active weapons as oppose to the old ones as in every other post conflict countries. More pressure and attention was put on collection of heavy weapons that could not hid easily be hidden in their homes. Most of the commanders who partially participated in DDR are now running a private security company with their same group of the armed combatants. There should be gun control laws. [According to some people if every one keep the gun to protect

them selves then there is no need for DDR and DIAG. and obviously there are no need to have National Army and National Police.]

Independent Directorate of Local Governance

While establishment of the new institution of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) might have been a promising development, the qualifications that the IDLG has put in place for appointing Governors do not include requirements to check the appointees background for any human rights violations or their involvement with the illegal drug business. Some of the recent appointments by IDLG are disappointing since appointees who failed to fulfill their job responsibilities in one province were simply transferred to another province. But we still hope that this institution will promote good governance based on the principles rather than on nepotism.

Lack of Political Will to Promote Human Rights and Women Rights

In a country like Afghanistan, it is very important to have human rights and women's rights principles at the center of the policy making process. Women's rights have been used by the government as a symbolic gesture. Although there are some women in high governmental positions, there are not enough. No woman serves on the Supreme Court Council. The only women minister in the cabinet is there because no man is willing to serve as Minister for Women's Affairs. Tradition and culture are used by politicians as excuses for not promoting women's rights in the country. The other argument has been that women lack qualifications. However, the question is, where are the qualifications among the men who are appointed to positions in Afghanistan? No country will have peace

and democracy without the involvement of women who comprise half of the population.

Lack of Comprehensive Long-term Strategies and Coordination

Most policies in Afghanistan are made in reaction to the daily crises. The international community has failed to provide clarity and awareness to the people about their strategies and objectives in Afghanistan. As a result, the opposition to the government actively uses the media for their propaganda.

The lack of transparency in the governmental and international community policies causes suspicions among the public. For example, the concept of Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is still not clear to the public. People do not understand whether the PRT is there to provide protection to civilians, to flight against insurgents and Al-Qaida terrorists, or to training our national army and national police. It is not clear whether PRTs are doing reconstruction work or development projects. These ambiguities create concerns among the ordinary Afghan citizens. The international community should use the media to send the very clear message that they are partners with the Afghan government and that support the people to overcome the problems that they face. They should not make promises upon which they cannot deliver. They should not raise false expectations of the ordinary people. The international community also needs to acknowledge the suffering caused by the use of military force and violent actions.

In addition, there is a lack of coordination among the PRTs in the exchange of information in different provinces of Afghanistan. Some of the PRT's are doing much better job than others. They all should have better

understanding and coordination in learning from each other positive and negative experiences by better communication and exchange of information. This will help one PRT to avoid the repetition of the mistakes done by other PRTs in another provinces. Although different parts of the country have their own cultures, exchange of information will help the PRTs to understand the country. Plans also must be coordinated with the Afghan authorities and relevant ministries to not only avoid misunderstanding and duplication, but to also increase the chances for success.

Civilian Casualties

The civilian casualties caused by NATO and governmental forces have been one of the biggest problems. Enemies and friends are not clearly recognizable by the NATO and US forces. The intelligence and information provided to the international forces by their Afghan counterparts usually are not accurate. Years of conflicts and war in Afghanistan has created a lot of disputes and problems among the different political parties, tribes and ethnic groups in the country. Unfortunately, the international forces chose some of those warring ex-commanders as their allies. These friends of the international community use their connections and relationships with the NATO forces to defeat their ex-enemies by passing biased information to NATO or US forces. Based on this tainted information, the attacks by the NATO and US on villages cause civilian casualties. These friends of the international community are then not held accountable for their tragically misguiding information. Lack of sensitivity on the part of NATO and the US forces also creates resentment among the population,

entering the houses without permission , use of insensitive tactics have caused Afghans to rethink their welcome of the foreign troops.

Lack of Regional Policy

Unfortunately, Afghanistan's case was looked at in isolation and was not seen as a regional issue. For the last thirty years, Pakistan has played a major role in the Afghanistan's conflicts. During the Afghan resistance war against the Russian Red Army, a large number of the Afghan refugees and political leaders were hosted by Pakistan and stayed there for almost three decades. Pakistan's territory was used by the western and other countries for supporting the Afghan Mujahiden. The religious schools (Madrasas), which were funded US, British and Saudi Arabia to teach Afghan children, trained them as Taliban. The majority of the Mujahiden groups that were based in Pakistan also were either directly or indirectly supported by Pakistan's intelligence services (ISI).

Pakistan played a primary and very influential role in the creation of Taliban movement and in supporting them in taking over Afghanistan. Even after the US attack on the Taliban government, Pakistan was bargaining on behalf of Taliban for the future of Afghanistan's government. The concept of the so-called moderate Taliban and conservative Taliban was created by the Pakistani government. Without the international community's clear, unified and strong position toward Pakistan's role, it will be very difficult to solve the problem of Afghanistan's stability.

ISI also had crucial and strong role in creation and support of the Talibanization of Pakistan itself, which started during Zia UlHaq's administration.

It was promoted and continued by subsequent leaders of Pakistan. During Benazir Bhutto's administration, the Taliban became implanted in Afghanistan as well. Currently, Pakistan itself is trapped in the Talibanization problem that has resulted from policies of their past regimes.

We also should be mindful of the involvement and interest of Afghanistan's other neighbors: Iran and Russia. Since the political problems between US and Iran have increased in the past years, Iran naturally will try to create problems for Americans in Afghanistan. We also should be aware that the Russians have not forgotten their defeat by the Afghan people with the strong support of the US and other western countries. They too still want to have a role in Afghanistan and to play their political games. The focus must be done on collaboration rather than confrontation. Keeping contact and dialog with the countries in the region would be beneficial.

Corruption

Another major problem in the country is pervasive presence of corruption. Corruption widens the gap between the government and Afghan citizens and erodes the trust of the people on the government. Although several anti-corruption commissions have been established in the country, they have not been very effective. The anti-corruption commission itself is directed and lead by a corrupt person. The commission itself lacks any weight of trust and bears no integrity as an institution. The Afghan government and other state institutions are all complaining about the existence of corruption, but no institution takes any strong stand or practical steps to fight it. Generally, the lack of transparency and

absence of any useful mechanism to fight the corruption causes further suspicions among the ordinary Afghans. Thus far, no corrupt person in a higher position has been arrested or punished by government for involvement in corruption.

Lack of Effective Enforcement of Laws

The enforcement of laws in the past seven years have not satisfactorily met the hopes and expectations the ordinary people in the country. It was expected that law enforcement would be done by state institutions, but these institutions themselves have not yet been reformed.

Reform of the laws must be based on respect for human rights and the international instruments to which Afghanistan is a party. The Afghan government has an obligation to change its laws according to those instruments. However, the capacity required to draft the laws does not exist. The legislative branch of the government, which is supposed to understand and be committed to passage of these laws, is not cooperative. Legislators usually try to block the passage of the progressive laws. Support and pressure by the international community in these matters is not sufficiently strong. The capacity of the people who are responsible to draft laws should be build.

Unfinished Job in Afghanistan

The war in Iraq shifted the US's focus from Afghanistan toward Iraq. Finishing the job and building the needed and stable democratic institutions in Afghanistan would have been the better strategy for the future of Afghanistan and global security. The war in Iraq gave more opportunities to Al Qaida to

recruit young Muslims to join them in their war against the westerners. After the invasion in Iraq, the Afghan Taliban learned and adopted the new tactics of fighting such as suicide attacks and remotely controlled explosions. Suicide attacks have never been a part of the culture in Afghanistan war. Like every thing else in the world, suicide attacks also have become a globalize phenomenon.

Monetary Shortage for Afghanistan's Reconstruction

Once there was a talk of a Marshal Plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In reality, it never materialized. Afghanistan should have received enough money to at least start to rebuild its very basic infrastructure. However, the funding has been far from sufficient. Even Kabul still lacks electricity, clean water, and sewage systems. The policy should be fewer promises and more delivery and action.

Hope of A New Life

Finally, the people of Afghanistan want to see a change in their daily lives. A small number of the people gain profit and get rich because of their connections with the international community or with the Afghan authorities. However, the majority of people are worse off. They need the very basic and essential things such as basic food commodities, which have become very expensive and unattainable for them. A large number of the people cannot afford to feed their families. Even worse, people have begun to lose hope and

confidence on the government and international community as the partner to Afghanistan government. Because the government is not able to protect them and improve their lives, the people go back to the warlords and tribal ties for their needs. These fears are what have emboldened warlordism in the country.

Seven years after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the situation is not what the Afghan government and international community promised. While a lot has been done in the country, the achievements have not fulfilled the desires of the Afghan people. The Afghan government and the international community have not been able to build the confidence between the public and the state institutions. Security is a very basic requirement of state building and it is the responsibility of the state. Unfortunately, the security situation worsens day by day. The Taliban and anti-government elements are control more and more territories in the country. The Taliban makes gains not because it is supported by the people, but because the state institutions are corrupt, weak, incapacitated and are unable to protect the people. The people are forced to adapt as a survival policy.

The weaknesses of the government of Afghanistan and the international community as partner of the Afghan government have been mentioned in detail. Unless the people of Afghanistan support the government and state institutions, the government will not survive as recent history shows. In 1988, the number of Russian soldiers reached 140,000. Logistically, it was much easier for them to bomb and destroy the villages, but they could not control the country and could not gain the support of the public. They tried everything such as establishing

tribal militia and supporting different ethnic and tribal groups, but failed. The Afghan government, the international community, NATO and the United Nations did not learn from the history. They committing and repeating the same mistakes that have already failed and it was not very long ago.

Attention has not paid to human rights and justice in Afghanistan. The argument always was to have stability and security first, and then we can talk about human rights and justice. Seven years later, we do not have security and we do not have respect for human rights and justice. The culture of impunity continues. The same people hold positions of power. Reactionary measures taken by the government and the international community have not resulted in tangible changes in the daily lives of people. Afghans want to see some positive changes in their routine lives. They want to have education and health care for their children. The chronic problems in this country such as discrimination against women and minority ethnic groups are unchanged.

What can be done?

Security

Security is a prerequisite for all of our objectives in Afghanistan, including respect for human rights, building democratic society, and establishing the rule of law. To create a more secure environment, clear lessons must be learned from the past to remedy shortcomings and strengthening the ANA and particularly ANP. The experiences of the last seven of years in Afghanistan clearly demonstrate that relying solely on military strategies will only enable the Afghan

government and the International forces (CF, NATO and ISAF) to achieve short-term tactical gains.

Mechanisms must be put in place to closely monitor, evaluate and keep them accountable for their actions. First, the best policy to provide security to the people in Afghanistan is to build and train an Afghan National Army (ANA) that has been properly vetted. The backgrounds of all personnel must be checked to make sure that they have not been accused of human rights violation or on opium trafficking. Second, soldiers must be well-equipped and paid a proper salary to be able to feed their families and survive. Equipping the ANA does not necessarily mean that they need modern guns. New weapons require special training and cost more money. We will lose time and resources. They can use the weapons that they already have and know how to use. The weapons and ammunition that were collected through DDR and DIAG should be used. Third, jobs have to be given to those who are qualified and not to people of one ethnic group or personal friends. Fourth, the performance, especially of the top officials, should be monitored and evaluated properly. They have to be accountable for their actions and performance. Finally, the number of ANA should be sufficient to be able to fight against insurgency in the country.

The same policy should be applied to the national police. Strategies of quick fix and creation of tribal militias should absolutely be avoided. In recent history of Afghanistan, it had been shown that militias will not protect the state. Their loyalty will be to the commander that gives them money rather than to the constitution of Afghanistan. Creating tribal militias questions the effectiveness of

the DDR and DIAG. creating support police, auxiliary police or community police in conflict area will cause mistrust among the ethnic groups in the country , rather to build trust and confidence.

National Directorate of Security (NDS) or Intelligence Service is another sector of security forces in the country that are in need of reform. NDS's authority has to be limited to the collection of intelligence and information regarding criminal activities and threats against national security as well as to providing information to concerned agencies. Unfortunately, NDS and intelligence services in Afghanistan have the authority to detain, torture, prosecute and keep the accused in detention indefinitely. Most of the suspects in their custody are kept incommunicado. They serve longer terms than a court would sentence. The legislation of the NDS is not made public on the excuse of confidentiality, which raises serious questions about the status of transparency of the law. Greater transparency will engender more trust and cooperation from the public. If the people trust the security forces they help on passing the information to them.

Unified and coordinated action by international, NATO and Afghanistan security forces are very important. While military operations are not the only solution to war and security in the country, they remain necessary and should be supported by comprehensive multi-dimensional policies to implement reforms. Foremost, every possible means should be used to stop civilian casualties. To promote and build consistency, as troops end their tours of duty, they should leave clear instructions for their successors. Information provided by informants

to NATO and international forces has to be double-checked. If information passed by an informant proves to be false and causes civilian casualties, the informant should be held accountable and brought to justice. During the conduct of military operations, both the Afghan government and international forces must be bound by internationally accepted laws and international human rights, and Humanitarian law including eradication of the civilian casualties. Collection of small illegal arms from the public should be taken seriously since these arms are used in threats, intimidation and criminal acts. Finally, the role of PRTs also needs to be clarified. More effort should be put in place to make public understand the mandate of PRTs. A gun control law should be drafted and passed by the parliament. Any illegal gun should be collected.

Good Governance

Governance comprises the institutions and processes that determine how authority is exercised and how public decisions are made. Good governance in Afghanistan should include:

- Participation: All men and women should have a choice on decision making through legitimate institutions that represent their interests, freedom of association and speech, constructive and active participation in election.
- Rule of law: Legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly laws of human rights. All citizens should be treated equally before the law, not only in paper but also in reality.

- Transparency: transparency must include free flow of information and knowledge about political processes. Institutions and information should be accessible to the public to enable them to understand and monitor legislative and judicial decision- making.
- Responsiveness: State institutions should serve all citizens equally and without discrimination. Institutions should respond to citizens in a timely manner.
- Consensus orientation: Good governance requires mediation of differing interests in order to reach broad consensus on what serves the public interest and aids vulnerable groups in the society.
- Equity: All women and men must have opportunities and rights to improve or maintain their well-being.
- Effectiveness and efficiency: Processes and institutions should produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources.
- Accountability: Decision makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations must be held accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders.
- Strategic Vision: Leaders should have broad and long term perspective on good governance and human rights along with sense of what is needed for the development in the country. While an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in Afghanistan is necessary, these issues should not be used as an excuse to compromise on principles of rule of law or human rights standards.

- **Corruption:** Corruption is an enemy of Afghanistan's state, which can destroy the government from inside. Transparency is a key tool with which to end corruption. The fight against corruption requires strong political will and impartial behavior toward corrupt officials. The law should be applied to everyone without any discrimination. Reasonable salaries for civil service and state employees are another important anti-corruption strategy. Providing economic security encourages people to work with commitment and honest. Furthermore, corrupt officials must be held accountable for their wrong doing. They should be punished and brought to justice, not simply transferred to a new job. I strongly believe that sustainable development and security cannot be achieved without building the institutions of democracy and good governance. The institutions of central government and local governments should build in the same time. Because they have direct impact on each other. All the above mentioned points for good governance should be supported.

Finally, the more people support the government, the more opposition groups are getting marginalized and isolated. The more the Afghan government is assertive on human rights and good governance, the more is chance for ending impunity and replace of law of force with the force of law.

Poverty Reduction

Poverty is one of the main causes of the conflict in Afghanistan. War itself increases the level of poverty. Poverty reduction requires a comprehensive approach.

- Education: Education is prerequisite to reduce poverty. Access to quality education is a basic human right. Education for every citizen of the country, especially for the girls, plays an important role in the reduction of poverty and building the country. Education in all level is important and playing a vital role to change the mentality of society. more educational possibilities for the afghan young generation including scholarships for higher education.
- Access to health care: Access to health care, especially to reproductive health care, is essential for reduction of poverty. Population control should be an important part of the public health policy. Women should have access to contraceptives and reproductive health care. Health care in this situation of Afghanistan should be provided by the government for free of charges, or very small charges. Special attention should also be paid to psychological treatment of mentally disturbed people and to drug addiction. While private health centers should be promoted, their work should be monitored and evaluated by the Ministry of Public Health.
- Economic policy and Job Opportunities: The economic policies for Afghanistan cannot be copied from another region or country. Fair distribution of the national wealth is highly needed. Job opportunities for men and women are also very important part of the stability and

improvement of the lives of the people. Due to the lack of job opportunities, young men are joining the insurgencies and Taliban forces in order to feed their families. Free distribution of food commodities except for a disastrous situation should be avoided. Promote food for work projects to give self confidence to the ordinary person.

Reconstruction should be a source of job opportunities. Enough funds should be made available for building the basic infrastructure in the country. Construction of the infrastructure such as roads, electricity, hospitals and schools will enable people to fulfill their daily needs and will have a big impact on their trust and confidence toward the government. After seven years in Kabul, the people still do not have electricity, which is a basic requirement for cities and modern life. Afghanistan has enough minerals, mining can be done which can provide job opportunity to the young Afghan man.

In addition, alternative livelihoods have to be introduced to the farmers to enable them to replace poppy cultivation. Simply spraying and destroying poppy fields is not a long-term solution. In fact, destruction of poppy fields only pushes people to side with Taliban because they have to live and to feed their families. All the basic need of human being should be considered as basic human rights and should be respected.

Justice and Ending the Culture of Impunity

Justice is an important part of peace and stability. Without justice, peace and stability will not be sustainable. There is an urgent need to tackle the culture of impunity in Afghanistan. If we do not put an end to the culture of impunity, we will not be able to achieve any of our objectives in this country.

Reform of the judiciary system should be taken very seriously. Qualified people should be appointed in important positions in this system, and their human rights records and, honesty should be checked. People should not be hired in positions because of their relationship or connections political groups.

Training is an important part of the reform of this sector of the state. More emphasis should be put on the young generation who are graduating from the Law and Sharia faculties, rather to train the aged semi educated people.

The institutions and infrastructure of the judiciary must be functional. The judiciary must be inclusive of all ethnic groups and of women and men. Proper salaries should be paid to prosecutors and judges to avoid corruption. They should be held accountable for corruption or any wrong doing. They should not simply be removing and placed in other positions. Their behavior and actions should be monitored and evaluated continuously.

The capacity of the Ministry of Justice should be build, especially those departments that are responsible for drafting legislation. They need to be able to draft the laws according to human rights and international standards in order to comply with Afghanistan's treaty obligations.

Respect for Human Rights and Women's Participation

Women's participation in every sector of the society is very important. No country or society will achieve development with out participation of half of the population. Positive discrimination should be used by the government to involve women in decision-making level. Women's physical participation should not be used symbolically. Women' voices and causes should be seen as an important part of democratic society and peace building.

Similarly, all the strategies and policies should be based on human rights. Human rights principles should be in the center of every action by the government and international community. The state institutions should kept accountable to promote and protect the human rights of the people. No political gain should be exchanged for justice and accountability for the crimes committed in the past and present in Afghanistan. No one has the right to victimize the victims of human rights violation again and again. For example, women's rights should not ignored or sacrificed for reconciliation with Taliban.

Democracy and state building must be inclusive processes in which the people of the country are active participants. It cannot be imported from outside. People in Afghanistan who believe in democracy and show commitment to human rights should be supported.

Regional Policy

United and clear regional polices should be considered and pursued by the international community. In this context, the realities on the ground should be understood very well. The neighboring countries of Afghanistan and Afghanistan

itself should accept that we cannot change or even think about changing the geography of our countries. The countries in our region have to live together and help each other to fight against the global terrorism in a united way with strong political will. Unless the situation of Kashmir between India and Pakistan is not solved, the question of Islamic fundamentalism will not be finished in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The international community can play an important role in overcoming the problems in, and between our countries.

Civil society

The capacity of civil society has to be built to enable them to monitor and hold accountable state institutions for their actions. The civil society should be supported financially and politically by the international community to enable them to create a space for their activities. A democratic country requires a strong role for civil society. It is very clear that the democracy without an active civil society is not possible. And civil society should be accountable to the people of Afghanistan, civil society activity should be used for fund raising purposes.

Political Parties and Participation in Elections

Sustainable peace and democracy in Afghanistan will not be possible without a strong, committed democratic political party. Afghanistan currently lacks such a party. While it is not bad to have more than 100 political parties in the country, these parties are not in a position to promote a significant change in the country. Most of these political party's leaders were not able to get elected in the past election. Not much attention was paid in this area. And some of the

Jihadi leaders formed new political parties but used the word such as democracy and democratic to cover their past reputations.

There is an urgent need to support a democratic political party with the capacity to participate in the upcoming elections in Afghanistan. Financial and political support for democratic political party is required. The country is approaching the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009 and 2010. We hope concerted efforts are focused on enhancing security and creating a desirable environment to enable all Afghans to actively take part in the election processes. While elections alone cannot guarantee democracy in any country, at least these elections are an exercise of political rights for the Afghan people. The constitution must be respected. Breaking the constitution does not send a good message to the ordinary Afghan. We hope that we have learned lessons from the last elections in the country, and that the mistakes will not be repeated again.

Conclusion

To achieve sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan, we need to reshape our policy and learn from our past mistakes. We must respond directly to the reality and the existing problems on the ground. If we commit ourselves to make changes, we can still do it.

The definition of the situation in Afghanistan has to be looked at carefully. This is not a post- conflict country. It is a country in conflict. Afghanistan is a traditional and tribal country, but this does not mean that the people do not want changes. Tribalism and traditionalism should not be used as an excuse to not

promote up-to-date institutions, rule of law and responsive government. We have to build the values of fairness, compassion and mutual understanding and respect. **Our security and your security are inseparable.** It will be very dangerous to keep the country as it was a century ago. None of the past regimes provided alternative trustworthy systems to the public. Almost all of the people of Afghanistan are victims of conflict either directly or indirectly and witnessed violations of human rights, war crimes, and crimes against humanity. They have remained calm for the sake of the unity and peace. They may be able to forgive, but they will never forget the brutalities. They want justice. Their desire and thirst for justice should not be sacrificed to the lack of political will, commitment, and understanding of the situation of victims.

The chronic problems in a country like Afghanistan require a comprehensive multi-dimensional, long-term commitment by international community to enable the Afghan government and its people to overcome the challenges and trouble facing peace and stability in the country. The past seven years clearly shows that the challenges for establishing credible government are immense and require better coordination based on a coherent strategy and policy among United Nations, donor countries and international community.

The Afghan government also has to enhance its capacity to absorb international aid and development assistance. It needs to increase its commitment to reforms for upholding good governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights and justice. Neither peace and stability nor development and security can be achieved unless human rights are respected, sustained and

promoted and unless transparency and accountability replace impunity. If we do not learn from our past, it will not be possible to build the future.

The only solution to the problem in Afghanistan is the promotion of democracy, which is not possible without active and full participation of the people in Afghanistan. The voices of the people in Afghanistan must be heard and their rights and dignity must to be respected. As the problem in Afghanistan is not only an Afghan problem, it is problem for humanity. We all have to join efforts to save our human dignity. Finally, I would advocate the importance of the building the institutions and systems in the country, rather than supporting one individual.