



CHATHAM HOUSE



# AFGHANISTAN: SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT TO 2014 AND BEYOND

## KEY FINDINGS



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# INTRODUCTION

Late 2012 was a time of gloomy predictions about the future of Afghanistan. Several Western think tanks had recently produced reports predicting that the country would slide into civil war after international forces withdrew in 2014. The airwaves were full of pundits discussing these doomsday scenarios.

International attention was suddenly focussed on the possibility that the much vaunted triple transition (security, political and economic) in Afghanistan could fail - and lead to an exacerbation of the conflict.

At the end of November 2012, BAAG and Chatham House convened a conference to canvas views on the future of the country. All the participants had a close involvement with Afghanistan and were high-achievers in their professional or academic fields. Some had reached extremely senior positions. The majority of the delegates were Afghans, a third of them were Afghan women. Some had travelled from Afghanistan; others were postgraduate students in Europe. Their areas of expertise included state-building and local governance, human rights, medicine, community development, national and local governance, refugees, peace-building and the private sector. We wanted to gauge their views on how successful they felt the transition in Afghanistan was likely to be - and what steps they felt were essential to guarantee the country's future stability. The key issues for discussion were political reconciliation, security, governance, the economy and the role of foreign powers.

The delegates were asked to consider three scenarios (see Annex 1 for full details). These included a "best case" scenario (a stable Afghanistan with only sporadic insurgent attacks) "muddling through" (relatively stable) and a "worst case" scenario (prolonged civil war, collapse of the political system, restrictions on the media/women's rights). All envisaged a series of actions which would lead to this particular result.



# THE FINDINGS

Despite the “doom and gloom” atmosphere in the media at that time, the feeling within the conference was not unduly pessimistic. Delegates generally felt that both the “worst case” and “best case” scenarios for Afghanistan’s future were unrealistic. In fact, all Afghan participants felt strongly that the “civil war” scenario was far too negative – a result, they thought of “over analysis” from Western commentators. Participants pointed out that the complexities of Afghanistan made it very difficult to make accurate predictions, but the overall consensus about Afghanistan’s future was marginally more positive than negative.

Everyone agreed that it was crucial for the success of both the political and security transitions that the Taliban become involved in peace talks. Excluding them was not an option. Whether or not the movement would participate, they felt, depended on the incentives on offer – and whether it felt it had more to gain by staying outside of the process. One of the many reasons why the Taliban might be reluctant to engage was the fact that they stood to lose a good deal of income from the current “war economy”. It was still not clear what the Taliban’s political aims were, partly because the movement’s membership included a wide range of people with very different views and motivations. It was vital, delegates felt, to achieve at least a nominal ceasefire ahead of Presidential elections, scheduled for April 2014. To do this, they suggested, efforts must be made to target the entire structure of the Taliban, on all levels, with a view to persuading the movement to engage in the political process.

All were agreed that the Presidential elections will mark a defining moment in the history of Afghanistan. In a country where democracy is still taking root, the electoral process itself is, in some ways, as important as the outcome. However, delegates differed on what might constitute an “acceptable” process and result – and what the West’s reaction to that might be. Western delegates expressed fears about the impact of a flawed election with no democratically-elected successor. Afghan participants disagreed, feeling that Western-style democratic legitimacy is not as important in Afghanistan. Overall, they felt that the West could settle for a result that is acceptable to most Afghans and did not lead to significant violence. However, some participants felt that if the West settled for a flawed democracy – one “good enough for Afghanistan” - it would be an insult to Afghans.

Delegates believed that good governance, corruption and accountability could become core election issues, despite the fact that the concept of “governance” is poorly understood in Afghanistan. They pointed out that frustration with corruption and bad governance currently extends across most of the country. The new government would have to address those issues in order to survive. They also identified specific problems related to bad governance and recommended possible solutions.



The conference stressed the need for a comprehensive economic plan for Afghanistan after 2014. This would help fill the gap left by ISAF, the largest development and economic actor in the country over recent years. It would also help to allay fears that the international troop pull-out would lead to lower salaries, the loss of contracts and growing unemployment. The West, delegates felt, must deliver on pledges made at international conferences in 2012. International aid must continue, including support for Afghanistan's National Security Forces, which would be solely responsible for protecting Afghans' security.

The conference acknowledged that regional and international powers would also have an important part to play in Afghanistan's future. The US and the UK should help to ensure that Pakistan plays a positive part in any peace process and that the country's powerful intelligence service, the ISI, does not try to block Taliban involvement in peace talks. Serious consideration should be given to how Afghanistan would cope should large numbers of refugees return from neighbouring countries.

Participants also emphasised the vital role that civil society, in its widest sense, would play in the run up to transition and beyond. They felt that young people in particular would need to be empowered as part of the drive for stability. And rather than depending on the international community to provide a strategy for the country, Afghans would need to develop their own clear vision for the future. The conference felt that there was still time for civil society to initiate a dialogue about Afghanistan's future ahead of the 2014 elections.

Delegates were unanimous that an alternative narrative on Afghanistan was essential, pointing out that the current negative atmosphere was causing Afghans to lose hope for the future. Gloomy media reports reinforced this feeling, helping to fuel the brain drain. Meanwhile the international community tended to portray Afghans as an unsophisticated, violent and innately warlike people. All sides, participants felt, must take action to present a more balanced view of Afghanistan. Other positive views should also be reflected. For instance, some people in Afghanistan felt that the departure of international troops could lead to an improvement in the sense of purpose, morale and involvement of the Afghan security forces. Others felt that a drop in international aid after 2014 might actually help to improve governance.

# KEY ISSUES

## **The Taliban**

There was a strong recognition that as 2014 approaches, there is an urgent need to engage with the Taliban at both leadership and local levels. Excluding them, the conference felt, was not an option. It also recognised that those discussions would eventually have to extend to include those countries providing financial support and political/ ideological backing.

Participants felt that the Taliban were keen to prove their legitimacy by involvement in the political process. However, they also felt that Taliban participation would depend on the incentives being offered – and whether the movement felt it had more to gain from remaining outside the process. They suggested the following as possible “disincentives” to Taliban involvement:

- *The Taliban are in a relatively strong military position, having increased their influence across large areas of the country over the past decade;*
- *They may think they would be in a better bargaining position if they joined talks after the NATO withdrawal is completed;*
- *Different parts of the Taliban have different views about joining a political process – these differences may be hard to reconcile within a short period of time;*
- *Given their financial gains from the “war economy”, the Taliban could suffer substantial financial losses if they become involved in the political process;*
- *The absence of an obvious interlocutor and questions as to who would represent the Taliban hamper the negotiating process;*
- *The “moral incentive” - plus the emotional impact of previous sacrifices on the battlefield - makes it hard to abandon the armed struggle; and*
- *The Taliban based in Pakistan have a growing sense of being part of a globalised jihad, strengthened by having a safe haven there.*

Despite all this, participants felt that ways must be found to engage the Taliban. It was essential, they thought, to have at least a nominal ceasefire in place before Presidential elections, scheduled for April 2014. A wider settlement could be worked out later. However, they acknowledged getting the Taliban involved would not be a simple matter. The movement’s aims regarding the elections and political leadership remained unclear. Different generations of Taliban might have different motivations. The older ones, delegates suggested, might be more motivated by ideology, while the younger ones were more likely to be motivated by economic incentives. Economic factors, they felt, were an increasingly important factor for people joining the movement.

Therefore, persuading the Taliban to join a peace process would require targeting the movement from every angle. This would include its leadership, its ideology, its finances, its social environment and its external supporters.

The Afghan attendees added a slightly different perspective. Some suggested that the Taliban were not the biggest threat to the stability of Afghanistan, pointing out that many stable countries have localised insurgencies. Others felt that the strength of the Taliban threat was being exaggerated by the media and worried that fear of the Taliban might be used to justify a less-than-democratic election.





## 2014 Presidential Elections

Participants all recognised that these polls would be a defining moment in the country's history. At the most basic level, the process itself is important. Afghans, they felt, need a chance to practise participation in a democratic election, regardless of the outcome.

It was deemed vital to secure a pre-election consensus and agreement on the political process among front-running candidates and power-brokers. Without such an agreement, participants feared, the results could lead to violence. Power brokers should not use anger over election results as a reason to arm themselves – this could create the perception that civil war was coming.

While there was general agreement that Western countries should monitor the election process closely, differences emerged between Western and Afghan participants about what would constitute an "acceptable" process and result.

Western attendees expressed fears about the impact of a flawed election with no democratically-elected successor to President Karzai. However, Afghan participants generally felt that the West would not completely reject such an outcome or disengage with Afghanistan as a result. Western "acceptance" they believed, is likely to hinge on a result which is acceptable to most Afghans and which does not lead to significant violence.

The Afghan participants generally felt that Western-style democratic legitimacy was not as important in Afghanistan as it was in the West. However, some of the same group also



felt that if the West settles for a flawed democracy in Afghanistan, it would be an insult to Afghans. The idea emanating from the international community that after 2014 the country would be left in a state “good enough for Afghanistan” was regarded as both derogatory and patronising.

Delegates raised the following concerns:

- *Deteriorating security could lead to some communities being cut off, providing opportunities for fraud and disputed results;*
- *Not enough was being done to protect female candidates;*
- *The status of the Independent Election Commission remains unclear, along with the status of election laws;*
- *People do not have adequate access to information about the elections and funding is not available for an information campaign;*
- *Uneven participation across certain regions is possible because of security, logistics and registration;*
- *Legitimacy of candidates is still questionable - investment should have been made in political parties; and*
- *Afghans are likely to vote along ethnic/tribal lines; giving rise to ethno-politics.*

There was agreement that international stakeholders would need to prioritise the upcoming election. Oversight would be crucial to ensure that the process is as participatory as possible. The West’s insistence that the process be “Afghan led” was welcome. But it was clear that practical assistance would also be needed.

## **Governance**

Participants warned that a government’s legitimacy does not just come from winning an election; it is also a result of its honesty and accountability in office. The current government, they felt, had failed to achieve this legitimacy. While there had been some improvement in governance over the past decade, recent years had seen an erosion of trust. Frustration with corruption and bad governance now extended to even the most remote rural areas. Issues of good governance, corruption and accountability had become even more important to Afghans than the insurgency. These were likely to become central electoral issues and the new government must address them in order to survive. In this sense, delegates believed that the political transition was the most important challenge. However, they also felt that governance was unlikely to improve ahead of the election, as politicians would be preoccupied with holding on to power.

The concept of governance is poorly understood in Afghanistan. It is often confused with other issues, such as development, or the delivery of basic services. Local councils are not regarded as part of the governance structure. Even in Kabul, there is limited understanding of what “good governance” means. Policies are vague and inconsistent, leaving a lot of room for discretionary practices. Provincial Governors and line directorates don’t have clear mandates; many different ministries can be responsible for one sector. Delegates pointed out that bad governance is made possible, in part, by the centralised form of government enshrined in the Afghan Constitution. Some of them felt that a devolution of power would improve the situation. It had been a mistake, they suggested, to treat Afghanistan as a “project” in state building. Several also felt that the West had invested too much in individuals, such as President Karzai, rather than institutions and state building.

The absence of an adequate justice system, participants thought, was a major obstacle to providing good governance and fostering legitimacy. Transitional justice systems must emphasise accountability. Several people raised the lack of accountability for past war crimes and human rights violations in Afghanistan, suggesting that a blanket amnesty would do little to help the Afghan people. Some suggested that the international community had a role to play in obtaining justice. Others felt that Afghans themselves were reluctant to tackle this issue - and that this reluctance was only reinforced by the ambivalent policies of Western governments.

Participants were divided on how governance could be improved. Some advocated “top down” policies, requiring resources from central government and better infrastructure. Others suggested a “bottom-up” approach – making efforts to improve governance in rural parts of the country, where the majority of Afghans live. They pointed out that the most successful programmes in Afghanistan are the ones which have grassroots support. They attributed the success of the National Solidarity Programme to the fact that it involves local people in all its projects.

Some delegates believed that the huge influx of money channelled through ISAF troops, particularly since the “surge”, had significantly damaged governance. They felt that a drop in aid after 2014 might improve the quality and impact of governance by reducing opportunities for corruption and forcing government departments to operate more efficiently.

## **Economic Issues**

Several participants regarded the economic transition as being more important than the security transition.

Control of the Afghan economy, they felt, currently lay in the hands of too small – and too powerful – a group, which is now worried about big contracts running out.

They felt very strongly that what the Afghan people needed most was employment and better education. If they had both of those, they believed, Afghans themselves would be in a stronger position to secure a better future for their country.

Overall, the group identified the following problems, which they said were contributing to ‘2014 fever’:

- *Fear of lower salaries, job losses and loss of contracts post-2014, especially amongst Afghan youth;*
- *The need for a comprehensive plan to fill the gap left by ISAF, the largest development and economic actor in Afghanistan over the past 5-6 years; and*
- *the need to address the issue of civil servants’ salaries – the Afghan government has struggled to pay them even with international support.*





The attendees were concerned that not enough was being done to create jobs and develop sustainable livelihoods. More opportunities are needed for young people, particularly college graduates, in order to prevent a further brain-drain. They also felt that economic development would be one of the most effective ways of constraining the Taliban, along with sustained education programmes. They recommended the following actions:

- *Any reduction of international support should match increases in Afghan capacity to generate revenue through taxation and diversification;*
- *More research to understand the possible effects of rapid urbanisation; and*
- *Massive infrastructure projects to generate employment opportunities.*

## **Future security and geopolitics**

The conference was unanimous in stressing the importance of long-term support for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in order to provide security for Afghans. Delegates felt that Afghan forces must be properly equipped and the Government should have enough money to pay their salaries. The ANSF, they believed, would act as a deterrent to insurgents, reinforcing the government's legitimacy. Within Afghanistan, the ANSF currently needed to receive more support and recognition. However, it was also felt that support for the ANSF was likely to grow as it took on the entire responsibility for defending the country after 2014.

The issue of maintaining Western military bases after transition is a sensitive one in Afghanistan. Participants felt it was crucial that Afghans should not negotiate too aggressively; this could lead to Western forces being completely withdrawn from the country. Some Afghan delegates also suggested that the international community must be patient. Foreign governments must realise that they may need to keep a small and largely symbolic military presence in the country for many years to come, as has happened in several other post-conflict countries.

Participants recognised that Afghanistan needed to take measures to ensure its own stability. However, they also recognised the importance of regional geopolitics. They frequently cited Pakistan and Iran as the neighbours with the greatest ability to destabilise Afghanistan, although they also felt that issues with Russia and China should be addressed.



They were concerned about what would happen if large numbers of Afghan refugees living in neighbouring countries were to return home, pointing out that the needs of returnees have been largely ignored in the past. Any large scale return in the future could have major social, economic and political effects.

Delegates suggested that:

- *The US and UK have a part to play in ensuring that Pakistan does not disrupt the electoral process;*
- *The ISI is alleged to be playing a major role in keeping the Taliban from the negotiating table - Western powers should address this; and*
- *Efforts should be made to change the perception that the UK, regarded as Washington's closest partner, is pursuing a pro-Pakistani agenda in Afghanistan.*

## **Afghan Civil Society**

Participants frequently referred to the important role of civil society during the transition and beyond. They felt that civil society must play a key part in brokering a ceasefire. This issue could not be left entirely to the Afghan Government as the major political actor. As part of any peace process, people would need to be willing to talk about terrorist networks, dangerous individuals and dispelling conspiracy theories. The group believed that civil society, as a neutral party, would be well placed to facilitate such a sensitive dialogue. It felt that there was enough time before the election to open a civil-society initiated dialogue about how Afghanistan will cope with the departure of ISAF.

The attendees also felt strongly that Afghans need a clear vision of their own for the long-term future. They could not be reliant upon the international community to provide that strategy for them. Civil society, the media, women's organisations and youth movements would have a crucial role to play in maintaining stability, both in the build-up to transition and after 2014 .

They also felt that there was a need to challenge negative perceptions of Afghan civil society organisations and NGOs. After all, they noted that Afghanistan has a history of a culture of volunteerism which can be rekindled and redefined.

## **Changing the Narrative**

The Afghan participants believed that "doomsday" predictions from the international community about what might happen after 2014 were causing Afghans to lose hope. The Afghan media was also guilty of fuelling this "2014 fever" through negative reporting.

The dominant narrative developing in Afghanistan was that there is no hope of change under the current government, due to indecisive and corrupt elites and the absence of political will.

Meanwhile, the international community often unfairly portray Afghans as an unsophisticated, corrupt and innately warlike people.

The Afghan attendees all felt strongly that urgent action was needed. Western countries, the Afghan government, the media and civil society all needed to change their narrative for one based on shared visions and principles, which could allow for an inclusive process moving forward to 2014.

This would involve changing perceptions on all sides. Afghanistan should be promoted as a land of opportunity. Cultural exchanges with the West could be a useful way of combating negative stereotyping. Afghan delegates felt that Afghan diplomats could do more to counter negative narratives by bringing positive stories to the attention of the media. Meanwhile the media – both in Afghanistan and abroad – should try to avoid fuelling instability and paint a more balanced and accurate picture about life in Afghanistan and the country's future prospects.

Participants noted that there is already a parallel, more positive narrative in Afghanistan which suggests that the Western troop withdrawal may bring positive benefits. Some believe that the purpose, morale and involvement of the ANSF will increase after the transition – as long as Western support continues. Supporters of this theory point out that this has happened before, in the period between the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the collapse of the Soviet empire. In rural Afghanistan the narrative is also more positive; there is a perception that many of Afghanistan's problems are really Kabul's problems, and that rural areas will suffer less than the capital from the withdrawal of the international community. The conference felt that Western countries should also do their part to promote positive messages. These could include messages like "The military withdrawal will reduce the culture of dependence", "Leaving is an opportunity", or "It's time to give more responsibility to Afghans".

Due consideration should be given to regional narratives. For example, more clarity is needed about what people mean when they use terms such as 'Pakistan' and 'The Taliban'. These terms can refer to a variety of different groups within Pakistan or within the Taliban movement and are used differently by those inside and outside Afghanistan. Such gaps in understanding need to be identified and addressed. Overall, the conference believed, there is a need for a greater understanding both of the regional context and the realities of life in Afghanistan.

Finally, participants felt that a broader national discussion is needed to examine Afghans' aspirations, their priorities for the future and the challenges ahead. They felt that civil society could stimulate this dialogue and that the international community would respond positively. It would also be important to develop a long- term narrative, drawing on Afghanistan's rich heritage and ensuring that it was protected for future generations.

It's clear that some Afghans, worried about what might happen after 2014, are trying to leave the country. But others are determined to stay and were doing their best to contribute to a positive, united Afghanistan. This included adopting a variety of methods, including sport and culture, to try to overcome the country's ethnic differences. Delegates stressed that these people are doing their best to build a new Afghanistan – and they deserve the international community's continued support.

## **What next**

The participants agreed that this meeting had been worthwhile. For most it had been the first of its kind, in which the majority of speakers were Afghan. They requested that the process continue; especially that of bringing together the younger generation of Afghan achievers, men and women, and initiating activities which would change the narrative on Afghanistan.

# ANNEX: SCENARIOS

## Post-transition Afghanistan, Scenario 1: Best Case

### Political situation

- *Hamid Karzai hands power to a democratically-elected successor*
- *Strong successor, acceptable to international community, forms a government in Kabul with a political consensus*
- *Opposition groups are kept within the political system, preventing violent opposition*
- *Respect for human rights gradually improves*
- *Increasing confidence in the future leads to a reduction in levels of corruption, although small-scale corruption persists*
- *Public confidence in the government and the political status quo is enhanced and more power is devolved to local governments*

### Security situation

ANSF is competent, handling sporadic insurgent attacks, and earns the respect and support of the Afghan public

- *Remaining Western troops maintain low visibility while performing predominantly intelligence-gathering functions and training Afghan security forces*
- *Some form of political reconciliation takes place with "moderate" Taliban following a ceasefire*
- *Taliban publically renounces links to Al Qaida and Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for international terrorists*

### Regional situation

- *Regional powers, in particular Pakistan and India, recognise the mutual interest of Afghanistan's stability and so refrain from competition there*
- *Afghanistan acts as a confidence-building measure for India and Pakistan; Afghan-India trade transits Pakistan*
- *Pakistan regains stability and withdraws backing from the Taliban and other insurgent groups in Afghanistan*
- *China increases investment in Afghanistan's natural resources, thus acquiring a stake in the country's stability*
- *Peaceful resolution regarding Iran's nuclear issue*
- *Increased inter-regional connectivity, both bilateral and multilateral*

### Socio-economic situation

- *Narcotics cultivation continues, maintaining small livelihoods, but profits are no longer channelled to insurgents*
- *Civil society has an increased role in policy processes and service delivery*
- *Mining projects and related infrastructure projects begin, generating employment for Afghans*
- *Contracts are awarded transparently; success of first-round mining projects encourages greater investment*
- *Stable security situation and good progress in agricultural and resource sectors enable Afghanistan to achieve best-case prediction for average annual growth of 6.7%*

Decrease in international aid encourages better use of financial resources and helps curb corruption; gradual increase in self-sufficiency and domestic resource mobilisation.



## **What has been done to bring about Scenario 1: Best Case?**

### **What measures have internal actors implemented?**

- *Some form of political reconciliation process with the Taliban; ceasefire agreed prior to transition.*
- *ANSF's rigorous re-vetting of recent recruits greatly reduced the number of "green on blue" incidents in the run-up to transition. The Afghan government also targeted and reduced the ANSF's 90% illiteracy rate and 20% desertion rate of 2012.*
- *Hamid Karzai oversees a transparent transfer of power to a popularly-supported candidate in 2014, increasing the legitimacy of the office. Through policy reforms, good governance, and investment in infrastructure supporting agriculture and natural resource development, the Afghan government successfully moved from an aid-based model of economic growth towards a more inclusive and sustainable model*

### **What measures have external actors implemented?**

- *Reductions in international aid were gradual and carefully planned. Foreign aid continued to fund the security sector.*
- *Western and regional countries partnered with Afghanistan to help in the process of democratisation and institution building*
- *In the run up to the 2014 presidential election, the US and NATO maintained a detailed dialogue with the Afghan government on constitutional and legal issues, ensuring that the election was fair and had the confidence of the public*
- *Pakistan managed to halt its slide towards civil war and regain stability, ceasing to be a safe haven for terrorists and a site of cross-border attacks into Afghanistan*
- *Regional actors reached a consensus not to interfere with Afghanistan's internal affairs*
- *US and NATO policy in the run-up to transition moved away from military action and towards strategy for implementing policies aimed at peace after transition*
- *Mining companies from countries such as China and India begin to implement related infrastructure projects prior to 2014*

## **Post-transition Afghanistan, Scenario 2: Muddling through**

### **Political situation**

- *Long, drawn-out political negotiations result in a broad-based coalition government which includes Islamic insurgents OR local powerbrokers ensure that the Taliban are confined to their strongholds*
- *Government is still corrupt and inefficient, with high levels of decision-making authorities retained in the central government but this decreases year-on-year and manages to maintain a fragile balance of power*
- *"Monetisation" of political power is maintained by international funding, the exploitation of natural resources, income from narcotics and the shadow economy. Desire to access this forms a minimal consensus across ethnic and political factions.*

### **Security situation**

- Many Taliban return home after foreign troops withdraw, while some join the government, leaving a greatly reduced fighting force
- Attacks by Taliban and other insurgents continue but are confined to certain areas beyond the control of the central government
- The Taliban are powerful in rural areas but lack the strength/inclination to take over the urban centres
- Competence of ANSF remains questionable, Afghanistan is no longer a safe haven for international terrorists
- As foreign support declines, ANSF numbers fall leading to increased numbers of unemployed ex-soldiers

### **Regional situation**

- China remains ambivalent about the viability of exploiting Afghanistan's natural resources and is hesitant about committing itself
- Pakistan continues to provide some support to the Taliban
- India, Iran, Central Asian countries increase interaction with their former allies in the Northern Alliance

### **Socio-economic situation**

- Drug cultivation continues and some of the proceeds are still channelled to extremists
- Civil society continues to engage in service delivery but with limited voice in policy processes; delegating responsibility to the provincial level improves service delivery
- Mining projects delayed because of security concerns; promised investment not forthcoming
- Corruption increases as officials fear for the country's future
- International aid decreases, but a gradual and planned approach to the process mitigates the adverse effect on the economy

## **What has been done to bring about Scenario 2: Muddling through?**

### **What measures have internal actors implemented?**

- Rigged or postponed presidential election
- Gradual militarisation of former warlords
- Factionalisation of Taliban and upsurge in local militias
- Plethora of weapons and low-level violence prevents complete breakdown of authority

### **What measures have external actors implemented**

- US/Israel conflict with Iran
- Deteriorating Indo-Pak relations

## **Post-transition Afghanistan, Scenario 3: Worst Case**

### **Political situation**

- *Constitutional amendments or legal changes to satisfy Islamists*
  - *Press restrictions*
  - *Women's rights curtailed*
- *Eventual implosion of the political system as a result of :*
  - *Plainly fraudulent elections*
  - *Lack of strong successor to Karzai*
  - *Ethno-political divisions and factionalism preventing political consensus*

### **Security situation**

- *ANSF lacks competence and loses morale in the face of sustained and coordinated Taliban attacks. ANSF fragments as Pashtun members desert to join southern insurgency*
- *Prolonged full-scale civil war ensues, destabilising the whole region*
- *Afghan warlords regain their independent political status and pursue own agendas*
- *The Taliban take control of Kabul and large parts of the country*
- *Evidence arises of international terrorist groups operating out of Afghanistan*

### **Regional situation**

- *Large numbers of Afghans flee the country because of civil war, spreading unrest and destabilising Pakistan and Central Asia*
- *Pakistan continues to fully support the Taliban*
- *US uses Afghanistan as a regional base in a war between Israel/US and Iran*

### **Socio-economic situation**

- *Rapid decrease in Western funding for ANSF and development in Afghanistan*
- *Growth shrinks to 3-4% amidst deteriorating security and governance*
- *Taliban increase narcotics cultivation to fund their civil war campaign*
- *Development initiatives stop, education and health services regress*
- *Civil society's role in service delivery and policy processes are greatly curtailed*
- *Agricultural performance is poor and mining projects cancelled because of security concerns*
- *Unemployment increases as aid-financed job opportunities, which previously benefitted 6-10% of the population, disappear.*



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### **Member agencies:**

- ActionAid*
- Afghan Action*
- Afghan Connection*
- Afghanaid*
- CAFOD*
- Care International UK*
- Children in Crisis*
- Christian Aid*
- Concern Worldwide (UK)*
- Glenree Centre for Peace & Reconciliation*
- Global Witness*
- Hope Worldwide*
- International Medical Corps*
- Islamic Relief Worldwide*
- Khorasan*
- Marie Stopes International*
- Mercy Corps*
- Minority Rights International*
- Muslim Hands*
- Oxfam*
- Refugee Action*
- Relief International*
- SAFE*
- Tearfund*
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