



National Defense University

Institute for National Strategic Studies

## **INSS Roundtable Series on Post-conflict Stabilization and Crisis Management**

### **Workshop Proceedings:**

### ***Afghan Presidential Elections: An Exception, or The Start of a New Future?***

**with Michael E. Parmly**

**4 November 2004**

### **Executive Summary**

- ✓ The elections were a success because the Afghan people took possession of the elections with determination and therefore election spoilers were unable/unwilling to significantly disrupt election activity.
- ✓ Over many months, the Karzai Government, the UN, Coalition and ISAF Forces worked to inform, educate, register and provide protection for voters. Intensive, well-coordinated security by ANA, ANP, UN, Coalition and ISAF leading up to elections was successful.
- ✓ Even problems like Taliban threats, candidates withdrawing or contesting the results, warlord coercion of voters in certain locations and controversy surrounding the use of non-indelible ink and markers did not affect the overwhelming feeling that the elections were successful.
- ✓ Polls show that Afghans have already experience improvements and expect further improvements in their lives over the next year and are generally hopeful about the future. That will be the test of election success.

### **Introduction**

Michael E. Parmly, current Senior Foreign Service Officer recently returned from Afghanistan where he was the Election Coordinator for U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad during the October 2004 Afghan Presidential elections. Mr. Parmly addressed key lessons learned from the Afghan experience, with specific emphasis on the security and stabilization aspects of the elections. He also discussed civil-military relationships and how they affected national and international support to the electoral process. His presentation was followed by a question and answer period, which looked at the future of Afghanistan and the upcoming Parliamentary

elections.

## **Presentation**

Mr. Parmly started by reminding the audience that Afghanistan is not blessed by a very kind past either in terms of geography or history. It is a country of few resources and a long history of foreign invasion and, in some cases, foreign occupation. However, the Afghan people have shown their resilience, specifically after the 25 years of “near-hell” that they recently endured during the Soviet invasion and afterwards during the chaos of the early 1990’s and then the Taliban regime. This resilience was the prevalent factor during the recent Afghan Presidential elections, the first truly free and fair national.

The Afghan people defied all predictions showing that it is never wise to bet against the Afghans. In the three years preceding this election, and throughout the Bonn Process (December 2001), the Emergency Loya Jirga (2002), Constitutional Loya Jirga (2003), and the registration of voters (Spring/Summer 2004), most people doubted that the Afghans would successfully continue on the political path or be ready for free elections. The Carter Center, among others, even refused to monitor the elections stating that they would not be free and fair. However, election day proved all the skeptics wrong. The long lines outside the voting stations showed the Afghan’s determination to vote regardless of violence, interference or other intimidation. The effort by Taliban to disrupt registration, intimidate election officials and threaten voters was a total failure – hugely discrediting the Taliban. Attacks by Karzai opponents to discredit the election were equally unsuccessful, due to overwhelming opposition by the Afghan people. The Afghan people did not tolerate interference with “their” election. President Karzai comes out of the elections much strengthened, able to focus upon other serious problems (e.g. narcotics, warlords, and governance). The challenge will be whether he uses that mandate for effect.

## **Security**

The only notable security incident to speak of on election day was an attack on a convoy in Uruzgan. The credit for preventing large-scale attacks goes mainly to the massive security preparations that were made and the efforts of ISAF, Coalition forces, UN and, above all, Afghan security forces (Afghan National Army - ANA and Afghan National Police - ANP) who all worked together to prevent any disruptions on voting day. Election security also worked well because it was organized in concentric circles, starting with neighborhood ANP and ANA on the inside circle and working outward to Coalition forces. In addition, the Afghan government worked with UN and other security forces for weeks and months before the election to keep the potential election spoilers off balance. The counterinsurgency disposition of the Coalition Forces also played an important role in security for the elections. However, one of the most important aspects was full cooperation between top-level officials from the US, UN and Afghan

governments (including U.S. Ambassador Khalilzad, UN SRSG Jean Arnault, and President Karzai) which was essential to security and election day success.

## **Election Day Survey**

The International Republican Institute produced an election day survey (as opposed to exit polls) asking a sample of Afghans a number of questions about the future of the country. Of those polled, the responses by and large favored a positive view of the progress that is to come in Afghanistan. Mr. Parmlly reproduced four of the questions which he found particularly indicative of the Afghan post-election mood.

### **Question 1\***

*In general, do you think things in Afghanistan are moving in the...*

- a. **right direction? – 89 %**
- b. neither direction? – 9%
- c. wrong direction? – 2%

### **Question 2**

*Since the end of the Taliban government, is your living standard...*

- a. **getting better? – 84%**
- b. saying the same? – 14%
- c. getting worse? – 2%

### **Question 3**

*How would you rate today's election?*

- a. Hard major problems – 1%
- b. Some problems that effected the outcome – 2%
- c. Some problems but generally good – 15%
- d. **Free and Fair – 82%**

### **Question 4**

*In the next year, do you think things will...*

- a. **improve? – 92%**
- b. say the same? – 7%
- c. get worse? – 1%

The results of these four questions show that the Afghans have high expectations, but Mr. Parmly said that they are still realistic in their outlook. What Mr. Parmly thought was more important was that the US and international governments maintain their level of commitment, even after the first round of successful elections.

## **Conclusions**

Knowing when Afghanistan is “stable” enough for international forces to leave will be difficult to measure empirically. Building up internal security institutions, better governance and economic infrastructure will lead to more rapid stability. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have proven largely helpful for some of these activities. There was some discussion about whether PRTs were actually helping or hurting the Afghan reconstruction effort. Mr. Parmly pointed out that PRTs differ from city to city because different countries are involved in the PRT effort. Present PRTs are huge assets to local communities, helping build local capacity and confidence.

The next step in the Afghan process towards democratization is to organize the parliamentary and local elections for next year. In order for the country to continue the progress that it has been making, the Afghan Government will have to do its best to break past patterns of governance in terms of corruption, incompetence, warlordism and ethnic rivalries. The growing narcotics problem will have to be curtailed and a viable alternative economy will have to begin to replace it. If these changes can happen, then Afghanistan has the possibility of becoming one of the stronger and more legitimate countries in the region.

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Prepared by: Ambassador Robert Oakley and Ms. Bindi Patel, NDU-INSS, USA.

### **The INSS Roundtable Series on Post-Conflict Stabilization and Crisis Management**

**The INSS Roundtable Series on Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Stabilization (PCS/CM)** explores challenges to the effective utilization of U.S. diplomacy, security assistance and military power, often in concert with allies and partners, for the purposes suppressing or mitigating conflicts and achieving post-conflict stabilization and associated humanitarian objectives in war-torn countries.

#### **Previous PCS/CM Roundtables:**

**“Facing the Counter Narcotics Challenge in Afghanistan: Lessons Learned and Applications for the Future” (September 10, 2004).** This INSS roundtable featured five non-US government regional and counter narcotics experts including Dr. Barnett Rubin, Dr. Nancy

Lubin, Mr. Jon Wiant, Colonel (ret) Robert Brown, and Dr. Ayesha Siddiqa. The panelists discussed their views on the goals and strategies necessary to combat the growing narcotics problem in Afghanistan.

**“Rebuilding Afghanistan’s Security Institutions” by General Abdul Rahim Wardak, Deputy Minister of Defense, Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (July 22, 2004).**

General Abdul Rahim Wardak has been First Deputy Minister of Defense of Afghanistan since September 2003. He is responsible for the implementation of reform of the defense sector. He is a professional military Officer and former Chief of the General Staff of the Afghan Army. He also served as a Commander of Mujahedeen forces in the war of against the Soviet Union. He spoke about the current challenges facing the Afghan National Army.

**“Stability Operations – Preparing Leaders for Tomorrow’s Operational Challenges” by Major General Tim Cross, CBE, British Army, Former Deputy Director for Coalition Operations, Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance and the Coalition Provisional Authority (June 7, 2004).**

At this roundtable, Major General Cross spoke about a topic often over-looked in today’s discussions about policies and strategies -- leadership. Leadership, manifested as the synthesis of several components, is the indispensable factor in influencing others to achieve a goal. Through his own experiences and studies, Major General Cross related his views about the components of leadership that are imperative for success in today’s stability operations.

**“Afghanistan Roundtable with Minister of Internal Affairs Ali Jalali” by Mr. Ali Jalali, Minister of Interior, Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (June 4, 2004).** Mr. Jalali, a former Afghan Army officer, Mujaheddin leader, security expert, radio personality and author, was made the Interior Minister of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan in 2002. He addressed Afghanistan’s general security situation, the ongoing development of its national police, security challenges for elections and Afghanistan’s war on drugs.

**“Afghanistan: An Assessment of Current Challenges” by Mr. Ali Jalali, Minister of the Interior, Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (February 6, 2004).** Mr. Jalali, a former Afghan Army officer, Mujaheddin leader, security expert, radio personality and author, was made the Interior Minister of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan in 2002. He addressed Afghanistan’s general security situation, the ongoing development of its national police, security challenges for elections and Afghanistan’s war on drugs.

**“Meeting Iraq’s Security Requirements: Where do we go from here?” by Mr. Walter Slocombe, Former Senior Advisor for National Security & Defense, Coalition Provisional Authority (Monday, 15 December 2003).** Mr. Walter Slocombe, formerly Under Secretary of Defense for Policy from 1995-2001, served as the Coalition Provisional Authority’s Senior

Advisor for National Security and Defense from May to November, 2003. In this capacity, he was CPA's senior official responsible for assessing Iraq's future defense needs and directing the process of creating the New Iraq Army. He also was closely involved in synchronizing these efforts with on-going U.S.-led operations aimed at stabilizing the country and defeating threats to Iraq's post-Saddam recovery. For a public version of his presentation, please visit [http://www.csis.org/features/040209\\_slcombe.pdf](http://www.csis.org/features/040209_slcombe.pdf).

**“Bringing Congo Back from the Brink: A Report from the Field” by Dr. William Durch, Senior Fellow, Henry L. Stimson Center and Paul Simo, Director for Africa at the International Human Rights Law Group (Friday, 24 October 2003).** Dr. William J. Durch of the Stimson Center, together with colleague Paul Simo of the International Human Rights Law Group, discussed their recent trip to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DROC), where they observed on-going stabilization operations being conducted by the United Nations and the European Union. In particular, the EU's effort, *Operation Artemis*, has focused on security stabilization with the goal of handing the operation over to an expanded UN mission in the near future. For more information, please visit [http://www.hrlawgroup.org/country\\_programs/drc/default.asp](http://www.hrlawgroup.org/country_programs/drc/default.asp).

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\* – All survey questions and results are taken from The International Republican Institute “Afghanistan Election Day Survey,” 9 October 2004, <http://www.iri.org/10-09-04-afghanistan.asp>.