



European Security and Defence Assembly  
Assembly of Western European Union

DOCUMENT A/2036

3 June 2009

**FIFTY-SIXTH SESSION**

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The war in Afghanistan: what strategy for Europe?

**REPORT**

submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee  
by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group) and  
Françoise Hostalier (France, Federated Group), Rapporteurs



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Report transmitted to: the President of the Council of WEU; the President of the Council of the European Union; the WEU Secretary-General/EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy; the President of the European Commission; the EU Commissioner for institutional relations and communication strategy; the Presidents/Speakers and the Chairmen of the Foreign Affairs, Defence and European Affairs Committees of the 39 national parliaments represented in the Assembly; the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Baltic Assembly, the Nordic Council, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation, the CIS Parliamentary Assembly; the President of the European Parliament; the Secretaries General of the Parliamentary Assemblies of the Council of Europe, NATO and the OSCE.

*The war in Afghanistan: what strategy for Europe?*

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*submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee  
by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group) and  
Françoise Hostalier (France, Federated Group), Rapporteurs*

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MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

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<sup>1</sup> Adopted by the Committee on 6 May 2009.

## RECOMMENDATION 836<sup>2</sup>

### *on the war in Afghanistan: what strategy for Europe?*

The Assembly,

- (i) Recalling its Recommendations 780, 802 and 822 on the situation in Afghanistan;
- (ii) Noting that eight years after the fall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the political, economic and security situation in the country remains highly unstable and uncertain;
- (iii) Stressing that Afghanistan is a sovereign and independent state and is neither a protectorate nor a trust territory of the United Nations, NATO or the European Union;
- (iv) Considering therefore that assistance with security, political stabilisation and reconstruction must respect and take account of the constitution, laws and traditions, values and culture of the people of Afghanistan and its ethnic and religious components;
- (v) Noting that the Afghan and international military effort has not yet succeeded in re-establishing sustainable security in Afghanistan;
- (vi) Considering in this regard that it is important to continue providing a high level of military assistance to the Afghan Government in order to increase the size and technical capabilities of the Afghan security forces;
- (vii) Considering that the international military presence should be maintained until such time as the Afghan forces are capable of taking autonomous and independent action in Afghanistan;
- (viii) Considering that the foreign forces in Afghanistan, in particular European forces taking part in NATO's ISAF operation, should keep to their mandate of providing assistance and support to the Afghan security forces;
- (ix) Considering that the military presence plays a key role in facilitating the economic and social reconstruction process in Afghanistan;
- (x) Considering that action against terrorism and drug trafficking is necessary in order to establish security and stability which are essential conditions for the economic and social reconstruction of Afghanistan;
- (xi) Considering that in the eyes of the Government and people of Afghanistan, it is counterproductive for European forces to act autonomously, without prior consultation with Afghan national and local authorities;
- (xii) Stressing the importance of European efforts, at the national or European Union level, to contribute to the development of the national security sector, the judicial system and police force in Afghanistan;
- (xiii) Considering that, in order to show European commitment to civil development in Afghanistan, it is desirable for the military and security aid provided by the European states to be matched by an equivalent or larger amount in economic aid;
- (xiv) Considering that it is essential to coordinate the action being taken by European states in Afghanistan with that of other countries working there for peace, security and development, in particular the United States;
- (xv) Considering that it is of the utmost importance for NGOs to be able to continue providing the Afghan people with economic and social aid and desirable that NGO action should be seen as entirely distinct from NATO's military and civil action through the Provincial Reconstruction Teams;
- (xvi) Stressing the importance of assistance programmes implemented locally by European institutions, states and NGOs in the area of economic and social development;

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<sup>2</sup> Adopted by the Assembly on 3 June 2009 at the 2<sup>nd</sup> sitting.

- (xvii) Considering the need to enhance dialogue and coordination among all the relevant actors, with local and national Afghan authorities and with other Afghan interlocutors from civil society, particularly rural society and that Europe is ideally placed to discharge such a role;
- (xviii) Considering the contrasting positions of Afghan women depending on which ethnic and religious group and which environment (urban or rural) they belong to;
- (xix) Stressing that improving the economic and social status of women in Afghanistan is a necessary step in the country's economic and social development;
- (xx) Considering that education, reconstruction of the health system and economic development are key to enabling Afghan women to play a full part in society;
- (xxi) Considering that this question should be dealt with in the wider context, in consultation with national and local authorities and taking account of the needs of the whole of Afghan society, so as to avoid any suggestion that a western-style model is being imposed from without;
- (xxii) Considering that the security problems in Afghanistan should be resolved in a wider regional and international framework;
- (xxiii) Considering, in this regard, the pivotal role played by Pakistan in finding an overall solution to Afghanistan's security problems and the need to engage in an open and cooperative dialogue with this country;
- (xxiv) Stressing the need, as with Afghanistan, to take on board the interests of the Pakistani state, its constitutional, political, religious and ethnic particularities, and its legitimate concerns over regional security;
- (xxv) Considering that, as a major commercial power, the European Union can play a key role in relation to Pakistan both on the economic front and in the search for political stability;
- (xxvi) Expressing its support of European officers and soldiers engaged in Afghanistan and extending such support to their families,

**RECOMMENDS THAT THE COUNCIL INVITE THE WEU NATIONS AS MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO**

1. Ensure that the member states endeavour to coordinate their military action and their efforts in assistance with security sector reform and economic and social reconstruction in Afghanistan;
2. Seek to harmonise and improve the effectiveness of the rules of engagement (caveats) that apply to the national forces of the various European countries engaged in Afghanistan;
3. Ensure that the armed contingents deployed in Afghanistan are adequately trained and equipped to deal with the risks and threats posed by the Afghan theatre of operations;
4. Strive to define a European political, economic and security strategy for Afghanistan within the framework of a Euro-Afghan partnership;
5. Review the effectiveness of economic and social aid to Afghanistan while ensuring existing commitments, such aid being the more necessary given the severe effects of the international crisis on the country;
6. Propose an economic and political partnership with Pakistan and the establishment of a permanent political dialogue with representatives of all the national, local and tribal political forces in Pakistan;
7. Keep the Assembly informed of the military, security, political, and economic and social situation in Afghanistan and of the action taken by the European states in the framework of ISAF and the European Union in the region.

## EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

*submitted by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group) and Françoise Hostalier (France, Federated Group), Rapporteurs*

### *I. Summary*

1. 2009 is predicted to be a tough year for Afghanistan. While we have heard such official and media rhetoric before, it will nevertheless be a complex year with upcoming presidential elections on 20 August, increasing Taliban attacks and insecurity in many regions, public impatience to see progress and the impression of unfulfilled expectations and broken promises. Ever since 2006, when NATO extended its presence throughout Afghanistan and military operations were stepped up in the border areas with Pakistan, every year has been crucial, full of successes and difficulties.
2. The unresolved problems, threats and uncertainty as to how the situation will develop help create a sense of urgency about the future of the military campaign in Afghanistan, a campaign which is supposed to bring security and enable reconstruction. Here too, many conflicting statements are made. Despite the increased military commitment and intensification of operations, instability and insecurity remain high. The international coalition is now convinced that the solution is not only military but must be based on economic and social development.
3. For all the international conferences on reconstruction assistance, economic, social and cultural development plans, promised billions, plans to replace opium poppy with other crops and the commitment to crack down on producers and traffickers, poverty and malnutrition remain a persistent fact of life and nothing much has been done to help the essentially peasant population make a decent living from “legal” agricultural crops.
4. There are frequent accusations of corruption and international audits reveal that almost half of the promised financial aid goes on security, while most of the other half subsidises non-governmental organisations and pays the wages of the international regulators and experts who manage and administer the aid programmes on the ground. Even though these activities directly or indirectly serve to fuel the country’s economy, Afghans are increasingly questioning whether the astronomical sums announced are really put to effective use given that so little has actually been achieved.
5. From a security perspective, the Afghan state is, paradoxically, both strong and weak. The army and police are constantly growing in numbers and are now better trained and better equipped. In addition, armed groups with different tribal, ethnic or religious allegiances and security companies complement and sometimes replace government forces.
6. However, there are still many points to be resolved, such as motivation, fostering a spirit of public service, recognition of a central state and accepting proper coordination with NATO and United States forces in the area of logistics and intelligence, for example.
7. The police force is experiencing problems that are faced by many countries in transition – including the more developed states in the region like Pakistan and India – such as lack of motivation, low wages, lack of equipment and inconsistent levels of training depending on the countries involved, and a gap in pay and power between officers and the rank and file (a problem that is also affecting the armed forces).
8. On the other side of the coin, their opponents, though not as well-equipped or organised as a regular army, continue their long-term efforts to undermine the government. Relatively secure rear bases in Pakistan – which are regularly bombed by the United States – offer sanctuary at the same time as contributing to destabilising the host country. Afghanistan and Pakistan share two points in common here: the Pashtun question and the attempt by (various elements of) the Taliban to gain control first and foremost over the areas where this ethnic group predominates.
9. Afghanistan and Pakistan are bound together in a complex relationship. The future of both is now inextricably linked in a process involving local and external players with different aims and that are uncoordinated even when they do have shared objectives. The only long-term solution lies in a local agreement involving all parties that has been clearly sought by the people and political leaders of

Afghanistan, supported by an international presence and investment. In the meantime, however, war is the order of the day.

10. It is a war that involves the armed forces of a great many European states. Some are participating as part of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, NATO) and others are deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom led by the United States. Over 30 000 European troops are deployed in the Afghan theatre of operations.

11. This presence does not translate into political influence, however. Nor does it reflect the strategic decisions regarding Afghanistan and the wider region. European political coordination is lacking even for purely military operations: each country applies its own rules of engagement and acts according to national priorities. Although their actions are complementary and undertaken in a spirit of mutual assistance, it would appear that efforts are not always concerted, either in NATO or in the European Union.

12. It is first and foremost a matter of national decisions, which means that any short- or long-term European political, military, economic and social strategy in fact boils down to national initiatives. Even though these initiatives appear to be coordinated on the ground, we might well wonder whether there is any will for such a strategy and what its aims might be.

13. The Defence Committee has decided to examine all these questions in this report, drafted by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group) and Françoise Hostalier (France, Federated Group), with a view to submitting recommendations aimed at improving the coordination and coherence of European military and civil efforts and establishing security and sustainable development in Afghanistan so that this central Asian country can build the model of society and development that its citizens want.

## *II. Introduction*

14. Seven years after the fall of the Taliban regime, Afghanistan is still synonymous with war, insecurity and economic and social underdevelopment. And what had been a conflict contained within one country has now spread to its big neighbour to the south-east, Pakistan. The war in Afghanistan has thus acquired an internal and an external dimension, and the outcome is uncertain.

15. The spiral into violence has both endogenous and exogenous explanations. When the coalition troops intervened at the end of 2001, the defeated Taliban fighters left the towns and cities and withdrew to the villages or found refuge in Pakistan. They went into hiding and then reorganised, in particular thanks to the vast Pashtun support network that had grown during the years of war against Soviet occupation and the Afghan communist regime. What is more, the core of the Afghan Taliban political and military apparatus managed to survive and restructure in Pakistan.

16. Nevertheless the country went through a period of relative stability between 2002 and 2005 when there were persistent but controlled levels of violence. One of the priorities of reconstruction has been to restructure the security services and by the end of 2006, the Afghan National Army numbered 34 000 troops, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, under NATO command since 2003) had increased to 31 000 troops and 11 000 American soldiers were deployed in Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan (OEF-A).

17. At the beginning of 2009, the Afghan National Army has over 80 000 troops (with plans for its expansion to a minimum of 134 000 within five years), the Afghan national police force has over 80 000 officers, ISAF numbers 55 000 troops and there are 18 000 American soldiers deployed in OEF-A. These numbers will be boosted in the course of 2009 by 17 000 American combat troops and 4 000 additional troops devoted to training.

18. At NATO's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit, the European allies also pledged to send between 3 500 and 5 000 soldiers (ISAF), both combat troops and trainers, some of whom will be present only for the duration of the presidential elections in August 2009.

19. Yet to go by official statements and media reports from Europe and the United States, this armed force of almost 300 000 (Afghan and international) soldiers and police officers – at least a third

of which is trained and has access to modern capabilities and equipment – is being beaten by irregular forces consisting of just a couple of thousand or tens of thousands<sup>3</sup> of seasoned fighters who are admittedly supported by a “silent” majority of Afghan and Pakistani Pashtuns through ties of blood, tribe and religion.

20. The military situation is said to be so dangerous that the United States is preparing to practically double its troop contingent – a decision that had already been taken in 2007 by the outgoing administration of President George W. Bush using the Iraq example – and there are many who are urging European states to follow suit.

21. Meanwhile, the security situation in the Pakistani territories on the border with Afghanistan continues to deteriorate in a cycle of intermittent fighting and ceasefires and remote bombings by the United States.

22. As for the armed opposition groups (AOG) fighting the central government, NATO and the United States, not a week goes by without a press release from United States Central Command (CENTCOM is in charge of military operations in Afghanistan), NATO or (more discreetly) the Afghan Government announcing that an important leader has been killed, an attempted attack successfully foiled or fighters killed in operations or during an ambush.

23. And every week sees a succession of small-scale or large-scale AOG attacks. Teachers, doctors, Afghan security and army personnel and local NGO staff are killed or, at best, harassed and intimidated or kidnapped for ransom. Buildings and structures are destroyed, including highly symbolic ones such as embassies and government departments. In Afghanistan, violence is not residual, it is constant.

24. There are some who advocate sending in more troops and stepping up operations. Such fighting talk does not scare the AOG – there is no sign of a mass surrender as yet – but it does not go down well with the conflict-shy public in contributor countries, or with the Afghan Government which is trying to increase its authority and its own security capabilities.

25. In an effort to moderate the warlike tone of such messages, political and military leaders from Europe and America (as well as Canada and Australia, as troop-contributing countries) rediscover the virtues of economic and social reconstruction, though fail to put forward any concrete measures and are incapable of defining a long-term strategy.

26. Whilst there are detailed discussions about the number of soldiers to be deployed, an investment and infrastructure plan for Afghanistan has yet to be launched and is waiting on goodwill and voluntary contributions from states and international institutions that are caught up in a deep economic crisis that is depriving Afghanistan of major international loans.

27. Under the Afghanistan Compact adopted in London, 10 billion dollars were promised over five years (2006-2010) for a country with 32 million inhabitants (2009 figures), which represents five dollars per capita per month. At the Paris Conference in 2008, the European states, the United States and the other countries concerned, in particular Japan, pledged 21 billion over five years, in reality only a further 14 billion which represents seven dollars per capita per month.

28. At The Hague Conference in March 2009, announcements regarding further funding were carefully avoided. The American Administration, for its part, said it would put up 1.6 billion dollars “for increased economic assistance for Afghanistan, and to support additional civilian personnel, and diplomatic operations” and 1.4 billion dollars “for economic assistance for Pakistan, and to support additional civilian personnel, more secure infrastructure, and diplomatic operations”.

29. The European Union responded with a pledge of 60 million euros to support the presidential elections and rural development, a sum which comes on top of the 700 million euros already allocated for the period 2007-2010. The European states present in Afghanistan have individually pledged to maintain or increase their civil, technical and economic aid.

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<sup>3</sup> Between 10 000 and 15 000 inside the country, according to figures announced by the Interior Minister of Afghanistan, Mohammad Hanif Atmar, in 2009. Associated Press (United States), 28 February 2009.

30. Nevertheless, the funding allocated to reconstruction assistance and economic and social development pales into insignificance next to the sums devoted to military operations: 38 billion dollars in the American supplemental defence budget (out of a total of 83.4 billion dollars for Iraq and Afghanistan, 75.5 billion of which is for military and intelligence operations).

31. In addition to this, 3.6 billion dollars has been set aside to provide assistance to the Afghan national security forces (army and police), but only 400 million to boost the Pakistani army's (600 000 troops) counterinsurgency capabilities. While the "new" American strategy is based on the principle that the Afghan question and its geostrategic consequences (Pakistan) cannot be solved militarily, the majority of funding continues to be allocated to military and security resources.

32. This approach is, however, in keeping with the view expressed in the first lines of the President's letter to Congress regarding the supplemental appropriations request: "We face a security situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan that demands urgent attention. The Taliban is resurgent and al-Qa'ida threatens America from its safe haven along the Afghan-Pakistan border". In plainer terms, the situation is the same as it was back in September 2001.

33. Numerous audits and reports, including those of our Assembly, have highlighted the gap between resources and needs, and the lack of coordination among international and local authorities. The main problems they draw attention to include the Afghan administration's inexperience, corruption and the way the massive investments made in the country seem not to materialise as any concrete form of action. A further obstacle is that initiatives are scattered among NGOs, state and cooperation bodies. Let us take for example the fact that the EU and its member states have separate programmes in the same areas.

34. The Afghan people have been left disappointed by the way reconstruction has been managed. This is partly responsible for the development of opium poppy growing which provides a means of subsistence for many farmers who live in very difficult conditions. Climate problems and recurrent droughts, damage caused by the war (particularly in irrigation areas), returning refugees and a rising population are creating an explosive social situation.

35. Of course, more children attend school than in the past and the position of women has improved, at least in urban areas where, however, barely one fifth of the population lives. The situation of women – protecting them and improving their social status – is an argument often put forward in Europe to justify the action taken by Europe and its member states. The aim is to develop a modern Afghan society, respectful of human rights, and security policy which is the prerequisite for any form of development.

36. From an Afghan viewpoint, however, the matter remains controversial, given local traditions, differences between ethnic groups (which almost never intermarry), differences in social and economic status, in education and religion. And women are in the minority in the adult population (at approximately 47% of 14-65 year olds).

37. Their status has improved in urban areas, but in rural areas the situation remains problematic and much harder to control. Tradition, religious practice and strict interpretation of the precepts of Islam are factors to be taken into account, and to persist in playing down this aspect can only result in a clash of values that, in the local context, too often ends in violence.

38. One such example is the draft Shiite Personal Status Law, criticised by the United States and Europe and approved by President Karzai after a majority vote in a parliament dominated by the legal "opposition". In response to protest from abroad, and from Afghan women as well, the law was temporarily suspended, but this will give ammunition to Afghans who complain of there being too much foreign influence on the country's affairs.

39. The debate on this law within civil society is likely to engender divisions and lead to violence, as happened recently in April 2009 when a group of Afghan women demonstrating against the law were violently attacked by largely male counter-protesters (from the same Hazara Shiite community).

40. According to a description of the event in a press release issued by the American agency Associated Press, while one woman demonstrator said "I am concerned about my future with this law

(...). We want our rights. We don't want women to just be used", a woman counter-protester declared "We don't want foreigners interfering in our lives. They are the enemy of Afghanistan".<sup>4</sup>

41. This calls to mind the words of Malalai Joya in 2007. She was the youngest member of the Afghan Parliament (she was born in 1978) and was suspended by her peers in 2007 because of the stand she took against the warlords and other leaders of the Northern Alliance that hold power in Kabul. This Afghan "feminist" now lives under protection and has been the target of several assassination attempts that are not only attributable to AOG.

42. In an interview in Germany in 2007, Malalai Joya<sup>5</sup> said:

"Today we need security and liberation, but in the name of security, the foreign troops deprived us of our liberation. We need international support, but we don't want occupation. Sadly, today Afghanistan has become an occupied country, and the US Government is pursuing its regional and economic interests there (...). And the Taliban are getting stronger simply because the majority of the people do not support the present government. (...) Actually, the US (...) just needs an excuse to prolong its presence in Afghanistan to threaten Iran, China, Central Asia and other Asian powers. (...) The US occupation has even further complicated Afghanistan's crisis. They came under the name of "liberating Afghan women," but today the women's rights situation is catastrophic: every month dozens of women commit self-immolation across Afghanistan to get rid of their desolation. Afghans have a long history of fighting foreign occupation, and if the US occupation lasts longer, we may witness many mass resistance movements against it".

43. Many Afghans – both men and women – want to improve the position of women. On the other hand, as in other countries, seeking to impose rules of conduct and dictating behaviour within families without any prior attempt at education and without accompanying social measures and economic aid to raise the standard of living is bound to result in resistance and rejection from the "neglected" majority of the population – men.

44. When it comes to applying the law, the traditional Afghan system prevails. Seeking to impose a secular justice system in an environment where the Koran (Sharia) is the primary source of law is a dangerous social and political experiment. There is a shortage of courts, judges and lawyers, and even if they did exist in sufficient numbers, the plaintiffs – men and women – would not have the means to access a system that had to be paid for.

45. Meanwhile, the various tribal value systems and religious interpretation apply, particularly when it comes to matters of family and honour where women are often seen as inferior. This form of justice is nevertheless more accessible to both the urban and even more so the rural poor and, as far as lawsuits are concerned, provides the straightforward solutions that complainants expect (this is also true of criminal cases, which are resolved according to principles of punishment and compensation).

46. It should also be noted that Afghan women have between six and seven children and the average age of the population is 17 for both sexes, with a maximum life expectancy of 47. The latter figure is on the rise, thanks particularly to international health aid. However, improvements in health care also bring demographic growth which at the present time, especially in a global economic crisis, is a further cause of poverty.

47. Women also suffer from the fact that there is no public health system covering the whole country, because of a lack of infrastructure, staff and the necessary financial investment in this area – which, given the capacities of the Afghan economy, could only come from the outside. The high rates of female child mortality, maternal deaths and complications arising from repeated childbirth are a direct result of the inadequate public health services.

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<sup>4</sup> "Angry Afghans Protest Over New Marriage Law", Heidi Vogt, Associated Press, 15 April 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Malalai Joya has still not returned to parliament. She gives conferences on the situation in Afghanistan in North America, Europe and elsewhere and is regularly lauded by human and women's rights organisations. She featured in a television documentary (broadcast in the United States and Europe) in 2007: "A Woman among Warlords: Enemies of Happiness"; [www.malalaijoya.com](http://www.malalaijoya.com)

48. Another weak point in reconstruction efforts is education. Though important, it is not so much the number of schools or the number of children attending school that matters here, but the quality and type of education that is given, from elementary school through to specialised training. Schoolteachers, though willing, are not trained. Schooling for girls often ends at age 12 when they have to leave because there are no female teachers to teach them. They are then confined to the home, often as a prelude to marriage.

49. A large part of the adult population remains illiterate and, apart from an educated elite largely made up of imams and other religious leaders, those who are literate have only a very basic education.

50. As a result, most of the urban population are condemned to low-skilled, poorly paid jobs and do not earn enough to support their extended families which include several generations living under the same roof. Urban women suffer all the more as there are very few suitable jobs for them. As the victims of the fighting are mainly men, there is a large number of widows who are reduced to begging to survive – a fact that does little to improve the condition of women.

51. In the countryside, women suffer to an even greater extent from the lack of education and access to health care, and there are few jobs available outside agriculture. Moreover, cultural and religious factors also come into play which lock women into situations that are increasingly pushing them towards suicide.

52. Economic reconstruction and development are preconditions for the long-term improvement of people's living conditions which will in turn usher in a gradual change in the status of Afghan women.

53. Since 2002 and the end of the first phase of Operation Enduring Freedom, several economic programmes, including industrial and energy programmes, have been launched which, however, have soon been hampered by the lack of organisation, modern (or at least working) infrastructure and a qualified workforce in the country. Trained technicians left the country to escape the wars or forgot their skills and Afghan farmers practice subsistence rather than commercial agriculture other than at the local or regional level.

54. The volume of contraband trade with neighbouring states exceeds that of legal trade, particularly in the case of Pakistan (by a ratio of 1 to 10, according to various international sources). And while the level of insecurity was reduced in a relatively short time, it has never completely disappeared and has even increased in recent years, mainly in connection with opium poppy growing and not because of the Taliban.

55. Despite ever-increasing efforts to stamp out the opium trade, levels of poppy cultivation remain high (four billion dollars' worth per year, of which just over 100 million alone is said to fund the Taliban). Compared to opium poppy, alternative crops such as wheat or cotton are more exacting as regards climate conditions, irrigation and technical requirements (fertilisers, machinery). Moreover, yields in terms of quantity per harvest and income earned fall short of the needs of the farming population of Afghanistan.

56. To conclude this introduction, it is important to stress that Afghanistan cannot be (re)constructed without taking on board the political, economic, social, cultural, religious and ethnic dimensions of the regional environment. Apart from China, all the states bordering Afghanistan are Muslim states. There is a greater degree of religious influence in Iran and Pakistan than in the central Asian states, but the latter are also experiencing security problems as a result of radical religious opposition.

57. Regional economic and social development varies widely and there is no coordination between different countries or between international organisations, whether the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the European Union. Security interests differ and involve open and hidden agendas regarding political influence, control of energy routes and military bases.

58. Afghanistan, which by historical chance became the epicentre of the "global war on terrorism" or the "long war" of the Bush Administration only to be momentarily pushed aside in favour of Iraq in the quest to conquer the hearts and minds of the Arab-Muslim world, is now once again the focus of attention.

59. But whereas in 2001 the United States and its close allies were in a relatively favourable position, in 2009 this is no longer the case. On top of the global economic crisis come aspects of the international geostrategic situation with the return of Russia in the struggle for influence in central Asia, the role of Iran, internal dynamics in Pakistan and India and the uncertain relations between them. Afghanistan is thus gradually freeing itself of foreign tutelage, in much the same way as Pakistan managed to deal with the United States by playing its part in guaranteeing security on the border with Afghanistan and acting as a transit state for American and NATO forces' equipment and logistics.

60. What is striking about recent events – from the deployment of American reinforcements to the search for alternative routes to transport equipment, logistics and troops – is the absence of Europe as a recognised and active player working in coordination with the United States.

61. Over 30 000 European troops are deployed in Afghanistan, participating in military, security and stability, training, and economic and social reconstruction operations. The European Union has a Special Representative on the spot and is conducting a police training operation. The European Commission is providing financial and technical aid.

62. And yet aside from talk of governance, democracy and women's rights, it is hard to discern any kind of European strategy for Afghanistan, not to mention its big "brother" Pakistan.

63. For example, what part does Afghanistan play in the European Union's search for alternative energy supplies? Where does it figure in the EU's relations with Iran and Pakistan? How does it fit in as regards central Asia and EU-Russia and EU-China relations?

64. Similarly, the continuation of military operations and the definition of tactical and strategic objectives appear for the most part to stem from decisions taken first by American Central Command then passed on to NATO via the Brunssum Headquarters in the Netherlands. Thereafter each allied country acts according to its own rules of engagement, its own capabilities and its own political priorities (most often determined by internal politics).

65. Yet only the European Union is in a position to provide massive aid to all sectors, from economic and social development to security (police forces). In reality, the EU is just one player among others such as the United Nations, the World Bank and individual states (in particular Japan and India).

66. In terms of financial aid, the EU does both a lot and little: 3.4 billion euros for the 2002-2006 period, but only two billion for 2006-2010 in the framework of the London Afghanistan Compact. These figures are for the entire EU, the Commission and the 27 member states, an economic whole that represents 30% of world gross domestic product (14.7 thousand billion euros).

67. In 2009, the European Union and its member states do not seem any more inclined than in past years to become decision-making partners alongside the Afghan state and the United States. They are complementary partners, sponsors, providers of assistance and major troop contributors.

68. While the European media describe the situation as alarming, European governments are sending a limited number of troops with restricted rules of engagement, and objectives and political oversight are not clearly defined (parliamentary mandates are rather vague). Financial aid is also limited, to wit the additional 60 million euros pledged by the European Union to support the election process.

69. There is no Grand Strategy, no European Great Game for Afghanistan and central Asia. The future of the country still depends on decisions taken in the United States and above all on Afghanistan's internal dynamics (including all actors, government and opposition) and initiatives taken by Pakistan and other regional players.

70. However, a turning point is at hand. The political and military stakes appear so high that the cover of the 9 February edition of the American magazine Newsweek read: "Obama's Vietnam: How to Salvage Afghanistan". 2009 will doubtless prove to be a historical watershed for Afghanistan.

### *III. The military situation in Afghanistan*

71. The military situation in Afghanistan may appear straightforward at first glance, but local nuances reveal the complexity of this theatre of military operations that dates back to 2001. In the 1979-1989 war against the communist government and Soviet forces, the conflict spread to the whole territory. The rear bases of the armed opposition groups at the time were in Pakistan and Iran.

72. Today, twenty years on and against a very different international background, Afghanistan is still at war: a war against the foreign presence, a war against terrorism, a war between Afghans, a war of influence between various state actors, regional and others.

73. The challenges are as varied as the possible outcomes. The main challenge is to stabilise the country and for Afghanistan to regain full sovereignty over its territory, its economy, its population and chosen form of society. The major geostrategic challenge is to influence the evolving situation in central Asia, Iran, Pakistan, India and China.

74. In the Afghan theatre, the intensity of the war varies from one region to another, with some areas experiencing almost daily clashes and others enjoying relative security where reconstruction goes ahead without any significant obstacle. The urban centre and outer edges of the capital, Kabul, and the city of Kandahar are the main scenes of violence.

75. The south and east of the country are the most dangerous areas. Armed fighting also takes place in the centre and north of Afghanistan but to a lesser extent. These regions are largely inhabited by ethnic groups other than Pashtuns who make up the majority of the armed opposition forces in the southern and eastern regions.

76. In fact almost the entire Afghan-Pakistan border is the focus of military attention. The support bases of the Taliban and other AOG are spread throughout the self-governed tribal areas, above all in Waziristan, Pakistani Baluchistan, in particular the area surrounding the city of Quetta, and the North-West Frontier Province, around the cities of Malakand and Peshawar.

77. The war in Afghanistan therefore has two fronts, a domestic one and an external one in Pakistan, where only the United States intervenes, either by conducting unmanned air raids or by carrying out remote bombings with air-to-ground missiles. Ground incursions by special forces have also been reported, though not officially confirmed. Some raids using Reaper (or Predator) drones are said to have been launched from a base located in Shamsi in southwest Pakistan.

78. For military operational purposes, Afghanistan is divided into five regional commands: north (RCN), south (RCS), west (RCW), east (RCE) and capital (RCC) in Kabul. Each command is led in rotation by one of the participating states. For example, RCS is led by the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Canada, RCW by Italy and Spain, RCN by Germany and Sweden, and RCE by the United States and Poland. ISAF is responsible for Kabul and has a so-called composite structure where all participating states are represented

79. The ISAF structure is simple and consists of a strategic command in Mons (Belgium) headed by SACEUR, the American General Bantz John Craddock, an operational command (Joint Force Command, JFC) in Brunssum (the Netherlands) headed by German General Egon Ramms, and the ISAF command in Afghanistan under the responsibility of American General David McKiernan and a British deputy commander, Lieutenant General Dutton. ISAF also comprises a Headquarters and the command centres of the five operational areas.

80. ISAF is made up of forces from 41 countries, including five non-European, non-NATO states: Australia, Jordan, New Zealand, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates. In total over 56 000 troops, including 24 900 Americans, are deployed in Afghanistan within ISAF.

81. In a separate mission alongside ISAF, approximately 21 000 soldiers serve in Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan (OEF-A) led by the United States since 2001. 18 000 American troops participate in this operation which is run by US Central Command headquartered in Tampa, Florida, with field headquarters for Afghanistan based in Doha, Qatar.

82. Since June 2008, ISAF in Afghanistan and OEF-A have been under single command. General McKiernan is in command of both ISAF and all the American forces serving in Afghanistan (OEF-A), except for those forces involved directly in the fight against terrorism and those responsible for prisoners detained in the Bagram air base (in the Kabul region).

83. This arrangement, which is supposed to make the command chain for American and NATO operations in Afghanistan more efficient, de facto subjects the strategic and operational direction of international operations to American priorities: the fight against terrorism, the Taliban, al-Qa'ida and other AOG, and the fight against opium poppy production and the Afghan channels for heroin and other drugs such as cannabis.

84. General McKiernan reports to CENTCOM commander General Petraeus and JFC Brunssum commander General Ramms who in turn reports to SACEUR, General Craddock. As a result, there are three American generals in charge of a so-called international operation that is meant to represent the "international community" in support of the Afghan Government.

85. This state of affairs is not without effect on the coherence of the NATO military presence in Afghanistan where a great many participating countries, including the larger states, have imposed restrictive rules of engagement on their troops limiting their full participation in combative and high-risk missions. What is more, the countries that are involved in such missions find themselves more or less on their own and pay the price in terms of men, equipment and finances.

86. While the United States provides (at least) half of all the foreign troops in Afghanistan and has considerable critical material resources, it is inevitable that it wants to keep control of both international operations. This in turn leads to an increasing militarisation of the situation in Afghanistan, which raises concerns among certain European states that set greater store by ISAF's general mandate of assistance to the Afghan state.

87. Moreover, and as we shall see further on in this report, military operations in the south and east of Afghanistan are extending into Pakistan where, in addition to air raids, special forces have made incursions into Pakistan in search of Afghan Taliban and al-Qa'ida military leaders. Operations have also been led against the Pakistani Taliban network, though this is less well publicised.

88. The reasoning behind the intensification of military operations is that the largest possible number of enemy combatants must be eliminated, no matter what their affiliation, in order to establish separate "peace" talks with the moderate leaders of the different groups involved in the war in Afghanistan. Hence the requests made to the outgoing Bush Administration in 2008 to double the American military contingent and deploy a further 30 000 troops.

89. Here too, the reasoning of US operational commanders, Generals Petraeus, Craddock and McKiernan, which is not shared at all levels, was to show reluctant allies the way forward. It was suggested at informal meetings between the political and military leaders of NATO and in the press that their allies (Canada and European states) should stump up a further 10 000 troops.

90. The grand strategy consists in saturating the Kabul region and the south and east of the country with reinforcements, stopping the Taliban and other AOG from entering Afghan territory, restricting and controlling their movements to other Afghan provinces and Kabul, and preventing the establishment of areas outside government control. Counter-narcotics operations would come on top of these counter-terrorist operations. These stepped-up measures would of course be provisional in the hope that negotiations would soon follow with the surviving "moderate" Taliban and other AOG, barring the more radical elements.

91. This also supposes that Pakistan would do the same on its side of the border, either on its own initiative or, preferably, in cooperation with the United States, ISAF and the Afghan Government. The latter would encourage the arrival of new troops if this meant fewer air strikes which hit civilian populations hard, in terms of collateral damage, in areas more exposed to violent clashes.

92. This subject is a point of contention between the Afghan Government and international forces and is used as a significant means of pressure when accusations of incompetence and corruption are levelled at the Afghan authorities. The physical survival of these same authorities, which have been

93. The air strikes, which are mostly carried out by the US but also by European countries (the air operations control centre for OEF-A and ISAF is in an American airbase in Al Udeid, Qatar), are partly the result of the international military forces being spread throughout the Afghan territory. The total number of European and American troops deployed is not much more than 70 000, a figure which will be increased to approximately 95 000 with the arrival of American and European reinforcements in the summer of 2009.
94. Technology therefore plays a key role in compensating for the shortfall in numbers. By way of comparison, the United States still has 130 000 troops deployed in Iraq (29 million inhabitants, 438 000 km<sup>2</sup>) and NATO KFOR forces in Kosovo number 15 400 (less than two million inhabitants, 10 000 km<sup>2</sup>).
95. Afghanistan has 32 million inhabitants and a surface area of 647 000 km<sup>2</sup>, with a border of almost 2 500 km with Pakistan. ISAF and OEF-A have a total of 60 000 soldiers deployed along this border (command south and command east), which in theory gives a ratio of 24 soldiers per kilometre of border. On the other side of the border, there are more than 20 million Pashtuns and a vast reserve of forces for the Taliban and other AOG.
96. To make up for this imbalance in numbers, manned and unmanned air strikes are used on a regular basis, more often than not to relieve international and Afghan forces under attack from armed groups which can number over a hundred combatants. Artillery is also used to the same end.
97. Even if the targets have been duly identified as being occupied by enemy forces, these remote operations cause a great many civilian casualties among those who happen to be close to the target areas. The victims' relations are compensated financially or otherwise, but the emotional impact should not be underestimated in a culture based on reciprocity and revenge.
98. To make the military situation more complex, the enemy fighters killed are often seen by the local populations as Muslim martyrs and therefore examples to be followed. Here a distinction should be made between those who die in combat or in bomb raids and suicide bombers whose value as an "example" is contested from a religious viewpoint and whose use is completely alien to Afghan culture and tradition.
99. To avoid civilian casualties, ISAF and American OEF-A forces have over the years and at the request of the Afghan authorities established stricter rules for the use of air support, placing greater emphasis on gathering preliminary intelligence by air (satellites, aerial photographs, drone surveillance) and by land.
100. The increased number of reconnaissance and intelligence patrols has had an immediate impact with more ground skirmishes and ambushes. One particularly deadly ambush in the Kabul region on 18 August 2008 left 10 French troops dead and more than 20 injured.
101. Even though today it does not take long for air support to arrive – in a matter of tens of minutes depending on location and availability – the Taliban and other AOG have already factored this into their operations: they seek maximum effect in the first few minutes of an attack and disengage before air support arrives. On the whole, the air strategy has an immediate, tactical, one-off effect, but is strategically costly given the negative impact on the civilian population and for the Afghan and Pakistani governments.
102. If more troops are deployed, there will inevitably be more skirmishes and more air strikes as a result, and these in densely populated areas that have already suffered badly from this type of military action. The number of sorties, the tonnage and power of the ordnance dropped, and the number of victims increased dramatically between 2004 and 2007. 163 tonnes of munitions were dropped in 2004 and 1 956 tonnes in 2007. 2008 saw a reduction to 1 310 tonnes.
103. By way of comparison, between 1 January and 28 August 2008, the United Kingdom dropped 46 tonnes of bombs by air, fired 81 Hellfire missiles (from helicopters) and 1 256 CRV-7

multi-functional rockets (from planes and helicopters).<sup>6</sup> This information was provided by the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence on 2 September 2008 in response to a request from Dr Adam Nieman in accordance with the United Kingdom's Freedom of Information Act.

104. Mr Laurence Rowe, on the other hand, received the following reply to a request for information on the number of civilian casualties resulting from ISAF operations: "The Ministry of Defence does not hold figures on the number of civilian casualties in Afghanistan resulting directly from the actions of UK forces, or resulting directly from the actions of US or International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) forces. (...) You may wish to approach ISAF for any information they may hold".

105. An increase in the number of ground troops coupled with an offensive and proactive approach to operations is likely to produce more air strikes which, while minimising troop losses, will be to the detriment of the local civilian populations.

106. The move to widen the scope of the war is accompanied by an increased "Afghanisation" of military and security operations. Some of the solutions put forward by those in favour of stepping up military efforts include almost doubling the size of the Afghan army and police force, increasing the number of joint operations and strengthening the technological and operational capabilities of the Afghan armed forces.

107. The Afghan army is mentored and trained by ISAF and the American OEF-A forces and also takes part in bilateral cooperation programmes. The Afghan armed forces are organised in (31) operational units called "kandaks" (consisting of 600 soldiers) which are supported by the Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT) initially set up by ISAF in 2005.

108. The aim of the OMLT is to provide training and mentoring, assist Afghan officers with the planning and conduct of operations, and coordinate with ISAF and other allied forces to call in air support and carry out joint operations. There are just over 30 teams (34 in 2008) comprising 12 to 19 personnel from contributing countries.

109. In addition to these assistance and coordination efforts, the Afghan armed forces are in the process of being re-equipped, though to put things in perspective it should be noted that the national defence budget is estimated at just over 200 million dollars per year, a large percentage of which comes from international donations. The United States and other allied countries also provide the army with equipment and weapons – for the most part of Russian origin or licensed copies – including Humvees and US-made M-16 assault rifles.

110. Since 2003 an estimated 16 billion dollars (US figures) has gone into providing training and equipment, though there has been some controversy over the form and results of this assistance in particular as regards accounting for the money spent and where the equipment has ended up. According to an American audit, a third of the 242 000 weapons provided by the United States to the Afghan armed forces between 2004 and 2008 are unaccounted for. An undisclosed percentage of the 135 000 weapons made available by NATO is also missing.

111. Nevertheless Afghan soldiers are capable fighters, despite shortfalls in the organisational and command structures and despite the fact that they are not well paid enough to maintain motivation and keep them from deserting or declaring truces with Taliban and other AOG fighters.

112. Human intelligence is one area where the Afghan army is irreplaceable, yet for all the politically correct language of NATO press releases, there is less cooperation in this field than the Afghans would like. Regardless of the risk of leaks, including the Afghan security forces in the ISAF intelligence process could help further reduce the number of civilian casualties during joint operations when air support is called in.

113. The Afghan air force is also being reborn. Equipped with AN-32 tactical transport aircraft and Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters (of which the Czech Republic provided six of each type), with defence and attack capabilities, the air force has already carried out several successful missions, including troop and equipment transport, medical evacuation and air escort.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.whatdotheyknow.com](http://www.whatdotheyknow.com)

114. However, it is not capable of providing tactical attack support to Afghan forces and even less so to ISAF or American forces because of a lack of resources and lack of control over its US-dominated airspace.

115. Set against this national and international military presence are the Taliban and other AOG which, in spite of having different and sometimes conflicting aims, are all driven by a common objective: to oust the foreign forces and topple the government and administration of President Hamid Karzai.

116. The hard core of these groups is represented by Mullah Mohammed Omar, head of the original Taliban movement that took power in Afghanistan (with the exception of the northern regions bordering Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) in 1996. When they were overthrown by American and allied forces and the Northern Alliance in 2001, the Taliban that remained with Mullah Omar took refuge in Pakistan where they initially came from in 1994 to conquer Afghanistan.

117. They have fought ceaselessly since 2001, locked in an uneven struggle that has become significantly more intense since 2004. As in the past, Mullah Omar's Taliban are based in the Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan. Some of these refugees arrived during the war against the Soviet Union and we are now seeing the second generation, while others fled military operations against the Taliban in 2001. Pashtuns are also fleeing the current bombings and insecurity.

118. The total number of refugees remains unknown. According to official figures from Pakistan and the relevant UN agencies, there are approximately two million (registered) refugees in Pakistan and just under a million in Iran. However, with children being born in the camps, the Afghan refugee population is still growing, and to these figures must be added the unregistered (illegal) refugees whose numbers are estimated at several hundred thousand.

119. This population is concentrated in the north-east border region, in the tribal areas and in Baluchistan. Mullah Omar and his headquarters, or what might be called the Taliban council, is sometimes based in Waziristan and sometimes in Baluchistan (Quetta). The Pakistani authorities claim that they are quite simply in Afghanistan itself.

120. Mullah Omar's Taliban protect the leaders of al-Qa'ida who are based in unknown locations in these regions. Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden have family ties (through the marriage of their respective children) and the Pashtun code of honour calls for hospitality and protection in such circumstances.

121. The Taliban of Mullah Omar also have ties with Pakistan which in turn affords them protection. The different strands of the Pakistani Taliban movement support the Afghan Taliban even though their interests are not always quite the same. What really unites them is the fact that they belong to the wider Pashtun community that is bound more by nationalist ties than religious ones. The Afghan and Pakistani Taliban have merely become the spokesmen of an emergent Pashtunistan, which calls to mind the historical unresolved conflicts from the time of the creation of the so-called "Durand Line" of 1896 to when Afghanistan broke off diplomatic relations with Pakistan in the 1960s.

122. Other groups involved in the armed struggle have sided with the movement of Mullah Omar. Some have sworn allegiance to him, while others have allied themselves for the sake of convenience to serve clan or tribal rather than national interests. These include movements such as Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hezb-i-Islami, which fought the Soviets and Afghan communists as well as the Taliban before taking up the fight against Hamid Karzai's government and the international military presence, and the Mujahedeen of Herat, whose leader, Ghulam Yahya Akbari, was killed recently in an air strike in the Herat region (west of Afghanistan on the border with Iran).

123. Ghulam Yahya Akbari's career is a good illustration of the complexity of the situation inside Afghanistan. When the Taliban took power, he was an official in Herat and fought with the Northern Alliance (he was a Tajik) against the Taliban. He was minister of public works in the Herat region until 2008 when he was dismissed by the Kabul Government with which he had been in conflict ever since. A follower of strict Islamism, according to some sources he had links with Hezb-i-Islami and later the Taliban, an accusation he always denied however.

124. As this example shows, the AOG are far from being a coherent and centralised force, commanded and structured from Pakistan where their military operations are planned. In addition to the “political” armed groups, there are those involved in opium poppy cultivation and trafficking as well as criminal gangs (engaged in ransom kidnappings and protection rackets).

125. Another source of confusion is the formation of local self-defence groups, either spontaneous or sponsored as some American military leaders tend to think, which sometimes clash with members of the international forces who in turn assume they are under attack from the Taliban.

126. There is also a hard core of fighters affiliated with al-Qa’ida who either act autonomously or fight in the ranks of the Taliban or alongside armed groups from Pakistan. The latter can be divided into two main groups: one that operates against India, fighting for the cause of Muslim Kashmir and the situation of Muslims in India; and the other that advocates the establishment of a strict Islamic regime in the tribal areas and the north-west border region and whose recruits come mainly from the Pashtun tribes.

127. The only thing uniting this mixed bag of irregular armed groups is an array of causes that have arisen from a process of regional destabilisation whose origins are extremely wide-ranging and some of which date back a very long time. Some of these causes, among other local and international factors, include: the Hindu-Muslim conflict, the partition of Britain’s Indian Empire, civil wars in Afghanistan and foreign interference (Soviet, American, European, Chinese, Pakistani, Iranian), the global war on terrorism, nuclear proliferation (in Pakistan and India), large numbers of refugees (in the millions), a rise in religion in the absence of economic and social prospects, ethnic conflict and conflict between Sunnis and Shiites.

128. What unites the armed opposition in Afghanistan today is religion, Pashtun nationalism and the rejection of a permanent foreign presence and its influence on the way their society is organised, their hierarchy and values. The AOG have been fighting for over seven years for this fairly rudimentary cause. They lose leaders and fighters who are replaced in the short and medium term, but they carry on with their long-haul task of destabilising the region because they are here for the long term and are part of the regional landscape.

129. Mullah Omar has called on the Taliban, Afghan and Pakistani AOG to unite in order to step up operations in Afghanistan and in particular to attack the now growing American forces. In a statement published in the Pakistani press on 24 February 2009, he also called for the Pakistani Taliban to halt attacks on the Pakistani security forces and Government: “If anybody really wants to wage Jihad, he must fight the occupation forces inside Afghanistan (...). Attacks on the Pakistani security forces and killing of fellow Muslims by the militants in the tribal areas and elsewhere in Pakistan is bringing a bad name to Mujahedeen and harming the war against the US and NATO forces in Afghanistan (...). Our aim is to liberate Afghanistan from the occupation forces and death and destruction inside neighbouring Pakistan has never been our goal”.

130. The Pakistani Taliban have heeded his call and established a modus vivendi with Pakistan’s security forces, along the same lines as the agreement reached in February 2009 in the Swat Valley of Pakistan’s North-West Frontier Province. As a result, the war in Afghanistan will intensify in keeping with the Taliban’s usual practice.

131. Their combat methods include infiltration, ambush, suicide attacks (though compared to Iraq these are few in number), destruction of infrastructure and the targeted assassination of Afghan police and soldiers, government representatives, local allies and those who are seen as collaborating with the foreign forces.

132. According to visual records, photographs and video reports produced either by themselves for propaganda purposes or sometimes by Pakistani or European and American journalists, they move about on foot, in small cars, on motorbikes, bicycles or donkeys. They are armed with very basic equipment: AK-47 assault rifles, hunting rifles, sniper rifles or anti-vehicle rifles, and grenade and rocket launchers (from the Russian RPG series, in particular RPG-7). They communicate with mobile phones and military radios of various origins.

133. The fact that they do not have any heavier weaponry in their inventory, in particular portable anti-aircraft or anti-tank guns and armoured vehicles, shows how difficult it is for them to acquire such weapons. This is the result of international efforts deployed since 2001 to curb, control and eradicate the unofficial or illegal trade in arms and weapon systems. It is also revealing of the fact that the Taliban and other AOG are isolated from regional state actors, both those in the immediate neighbourhood, such as Pakistan or Iran, and in other countries that might have a stake in the country's destabilisation.

134. Another tactic that proved its worth in Iraq and that initially had a certain amount of success in Afghanistan is the use of mines and improvised explosive devices. However, the protection and detection systems of the vehicles used by American and ISAF forces have since been reinforced and improved, thus reducing losses or at least injuries. More soldiers are now killed or injured during foot patrols rather than in attacks against vehicles.

135. The AOG fighters, who are highly mobile and can rely on sympathisers who support their action as well as family and tribal links in the local population for staging posts, seek out the weaknesses of the American, ISAF and Afghan forces. Operation reports indicate that fighters concentrate with the strategy of attacking a precise target, inflict human and material damage and pull back quickly.

136. Such AOG action does little to undermine the international military presence, but serves above all to show the local populations that they are present and as a means of propaganda and recruitment.

137. Examples of these kind of attacks include one in July 2008 against a US Marine outpost (nine killed, 15 injured), the ambush on French forces in August 2008 (10 killed, more than 20 injured) and the multi-site attacks in Kabul in February 2009 (several dozen killed and injured), an action similar to though not as sophisticated and well-coordinated as the attacks in Mumbai, India, that took place from 26 to 29 November 2008.

138. In a population that includes millions of young men (of an average age of 17 to 19 years old) who are poor and have few social prospects, candidates for recruitment are drawn to these various decentralised groups with their differing aims and motives because they guarantee a regular income and material protection for the families of "martyr" fighters.

139. Their military weakness, lack of equipment and organisation are compensated by their belief in their cause and by the support they get from numerous local actors, some of whom have government connections, in particular among the security services in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They cannot win, but it is unrealistic to think they can be defeated by physically removing them or in the hope of thus exhausting their reserve of forces.

140. Some states and organisations involved in Afghanistan, including NATO, have realised this and use a combined strategy of military action and effective reconstruction, an approach that was suggested by the Assembly in a first report on the conflict in Afghanistan in 2006.<sup>7</sup> "With no security, there will be no reconstruction; without economic and social progress, there will be no security".

141. However, while the main international players involved (apart from the United Nations which does not have any forces on the ground) say they do not want to solve the Afghan problem by military means alone, the call for military action is becoming more and more insistent and the question of reconstruction is still being put off until after "the victory".

#### ***IV. Afghanistan and reconstruction on hold***

142. "State-building on the cheap": this phrase coined by Mr Ashraf Ghani, Afghan finance minister from 2001 to 2004 and Chancellor of Kabul University, is often quoted in the many reports on Afghanistan and reconstruction and is still relevant today.

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<sup>7</sup> See Assembly Document 1930 adopted on 20 June 2006: "European forces in Afghanistan: learning lessons" submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group), Rapporteur.

143. Mr Ashraf Ghani, a controversial figure in Afghanistan who was approached in 2007 to take over from Mr Paul Wolfowitz at the head of the World Bank (he has dual Afghan and American nationality), is today chairman of a think tank on reconstruction based in the United States, the Institute for State Effectiveness. He is credited with devising the National Solidarity Programme (NSP, 2003), a development plan for Afghanistan that focuses on the needs of local communities.

144. The programme is based on the simple principle of giving grants to rural communities (representing two thirds of the Afghan population) which are managed by elected councils that determine priorities and allocate resources with almost complete autonomy. Sources indicate that over 22 000 villages benefit from this programme which is partly funded through international aid.

145. Donors include the World Bank, the European Union, nine European states (eight of which are EU members), the United States, Canada, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. There are four stages to the programme: election of a Community Development Council (CDC), training of CDC members (in decision-making, accountancy, identification and formulation of needs, procurement), grant allocation and management for approved projects, establishing links with the government authorities in charge of the NSP and with international donors.

146. From 2003 to 2010 an estimated total of no more than a billion euros will have been spent on this programme. Grants are calculated at approximately 200 US dollars per family, with a maximum of 60 000 dollars per community and an average grant of 27 000 dollars. Of the 40 000 projects financed (as at January 2009), the top five project sectors are transport (9 785), water supply and sanitation (9 749), irrigation (6 696), power (electricity, 5 704) and education (5 358), followed by livelihood (2 329) and rural development (1 083).

147. The advantage of this type of initiative is that it empowers local actors to identify the needs of the Afghan population and come up with solutions in the short term. And time is of the essence. Yet audits and official reports, NGOs and press articles often deplore the failures of “state-building on the cheap”.

148. Of course, it is also a question of mobilising states and international organisations to continue helping the Afghan state. The underlying idea is that if this state can bring stability and economic development, its armed opponents will lose support among the population. It is a good idea, but has been a source of controversy in its application to date, in particular between the Kabul Government and some donors.

149. Part of the problem lies in the erroneous and dogmatic idea that because of the devastation caused by more than 30 years of war and the dire conditions of the population in Afghanistan, only a small amount of money would be needed for a quick fix. The other – inappropriate – approach came from the American resolve for reconstruction to be funded by private firms brought into Afghanistan. These firms would end up subcontracting their government-paid contracts to other, predominantly Indian and Chinese, companies in the region.

150. American and European technical assistance, whereby support and advice is provided by experts in various disciplines whose capabilities are not called into question, is another source of discord with the Afghan authorities which refuse continued supervision. Moreover, the cost of such assistance is paid out of international aid money.

151. Together with security costs for these experts, over 40% of aid money goes on financing their presence on Afghan territory (including travelling expenses, secure accommodation, all-terrain vehicles and other mod cons for personnel transferred to Afghanistan). According to various sources, contracts paid for with international aid money have cost the donor countries an estimated total of five billion euros or more (since 2002).

152. The Afghan Government and international press have reported several complaints about how financial aid is distributed and used by the donors. The government in Kabul admitted that it could not account for four billion dollars of aid money. Afghan entrepreneurs, quoted in an article in the British newspaper *The Guardian* on 19 February 2009, even report bribes being paid to foreign companies in order to secure subcontracts.

153. Corruption, for which the country is much criticised, is not only an Afghan phenomenon and it is socially acceptable in Afghanistan and the wider region (in China, for instance) to seal a contract or commercial exchange with additional perks (gifts, cash, favours).

154. In a country where wages are not high enough to support a large family, where there is no social welfare (the European social model is not included in the EU's governance advice) and where violence is all around, it is only natural that the desire to get rich quick (a source of power, protection as well as funds in case of forced exile) outweighs any sense of civic responsibility.

155. Another problem with reconstruction is the imposition of models and experiences that do not fit into the framework of Afghan traditions, culture and values. It is a rural country, consisting of several different ethnic groups, where the tribe is the basic unit. The climate is not the same throughout the land and resources in water, minerals and agricultural land are not evenly distributed. Its geography includes mountains, deserts and fertile or arid valleys.

156. Over 50% of the population is under 21 (on average 17 years old). Child mortality remains high (25% of children die before the age of five). Women do not live as long as men and have an average life expectancy of 45 to 47 years. The country has extreme climate conditions with floods, intense cold and droughts. Such phenomena cause population displacement, epidemics and famine.

157. In February 2009, an estimated 280 000 people were affected by famine in the north of Afghanistan, a relatively calm area. Drought is one of the main causes of poor crops. This type of situation also illustrates the problem of the credibility of the Afghan authorities and the international military presence.

158. An Afghan living in the Balkh region is quoted in a Reuters article as saying "We haven't had any government assistance. They promised us they were going to give us food but they didn't". On international military assistance, he says "international soldiers are rarely seen (...) and then only to inquire about security".

159. This latter remark highlights another problem with reconstruction in Afghanistan, namely that continued warfare and the militarisation of reconstruction, in particular through the American and ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), have blurred the distinction between civil and military efforts and made large swathes of Afghanistan inaccessible to international, official and non-governmental civilian organisations.

160. ISAF's 26 PRT are as much about winning the hearts and minds of the people as fulfilling a military need to cover the whole territory, monitor the population and gather intelligence. The regular presence of the PRT forces provides protection and reassurance but also attracts the attention of the various AOG that are spread throughout the Afghan territory.

161. Communities that benefit from the infrastructure and healthcare projects provided by the PRT are sometimes singled out and made an example of by the armed groups which want to assert their authority and control over a territory. The PRT, which consist of about a hundred soldiers and a few civilian experts and advisors, do not have sufficient personnel or resources to provide permanent protection in the areas where they operate.

162. The material means available to assist the local populations are also limited and vary from one lead nation to another. In general, the priority is to identify immediate needs so that action may be taken at a later date with the help of the Afghan authorities, as the PRT are also tasked with helping to establish the presence and authority of the Afghan Government throughout the territory.

163. The AOG are also happy to invest in assisting the local population, especially those communities, in particular in Pashtun territory, that are more receptive to their vision of society and their values. These communities are in turn "overlooked" either by the state or by the international forces as they are considered unreliable given their "sympathies" and because they live in areas that are problematic from a security perspective.

164. In order to compensate for the involuntary or voluntary negligence of the Afghan Government and the international forces, many Afghan communities have turned to alternative activities such as

smuggling and, what is more worrying for the United States and some European countries, opium poppy production.

165. The scope of this report does not allow us to go any further into this question, but it should be remembered that opium poppy production yields an estimated annual profit of 2.5 billion dollars of which just over 100 million (4%) is said to finance the Taliban and other AOG. The United States, ISAF and the Afghan Government have a clear strategy to combat opium poppy production, its processing into heroin and transport to its final destinations, in particular to Iran, Russia and Europe.

166. A recent report (2009) by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) provides some useful information on developments in opium poppy growing and the motives of poppy growers:

“(…) opium cultivation is down, at least when measured in physical terms (hectares and tonnes). The 18 provinces that were opium-free in 2008 are likely to remain that way in 2009, and four others could join them with timely poppy elimination this spring. This will deepen the trend of the past few years that showed opium cultivation overwhelmingly concentrated in the seven most unstable provinces in the south and south west. Even in major poppy growing provinces like Helmand, UNODC expects some decrease in opium cultivation in 2009.

In the north, centre, and east of the country, pressure from government authorities, scarcity of food grains, an effective pre-planting information campaign as well as higher prices for licit crops seem to have contributed to the decline. To consolidate these gains – particularly during these times of food shortages and economic hardship – provinces and districts that have rid themselves of opium deserve more support (…).

In the south and south-west, reduced opium cultivation is due to high wheat prices, low opium prices, and low availability of water due to severe drought (...); development assistance and the engagement of all stakeholders can turn drug zones into “Food Zones” (…).

Despite the anticipated reduction in the opium crop, prices continue to fall (by around 20%). This can be attributed to the massive glut on the opium market due to major overproduction during the past three years”.

167. This positive take on developments does however include implicit warnings that the progress made might well be reversible. Drought affects poppy cultivation, but to a lesser extent than it affects wheat or cotton or pomegranate (an alternative crop recently promoted by the United Kingdom).

168. Food crop prices fluctuate and Afghans, both farmers and government, have no control over them. Moreover, agricultural produce is a global commodity, the price of which depends on criteria other than production or consumption in Afghanistan.

169. The drop in opium and heroin prices is due to surplus production in Afghanistan. But once stocks are exhausted and given the growing consumer market (which is stable in Europe but increasing in Russia, Iran and central Asia, and even spreading to China and India), interest in poppy cultivation could well pick up again. The fight against poppy growing in Afghanistan also involves curbing demand.

170. The country is going through a difficult and critical period and the emphasis that the UNODC report puts on development assistance is more pertinent than ever. As poppy is not grown in the Balkh region – mentioned above in connection with the famine – farmers there have nothing to fall back on in case of adverse climatic or geological conditions. By way of comparison, the population of Helmand Province, one of the main poppy-growing regions, received an estimated 400 dollars per inhabitant in American aid in 2007-2008, while Balkh was given just 150 dollars per inhabitant. If we add on the income from poppy, it is understandable that Helmand is the one of the richest provinces in Afghanistan today and has the highest number of registered vehicles.

171. The poppy problem also has a direct impact on security. Poppy cultivation provides a source of funding for AOG and criminal drug gangs and is synonymous with corruption – an accusation that is frequently levelled against members of the government, local authorities and those close to President Hamid Karzai. It is nevertheless a regular and lucrative source of income for hundreds of thousands – if not millions should we count their families too – of rural Afghans.

172. Against this socio-economic background, stepping up the war against the Taliban and “political” AOG by extending it to include poppy cultivation is a risky gambit that could undo the progress made in reconstruction in those areas where poppy growing is the main source of subsistence and income. Moreover, the UNODC report cites the need to overcome poverty as the reason for growing opium poppies (30% of farmers surveyed; the price of poppy is the main reason given by 53% of respondents).

173. Among the solutions put forward to deal with the matter of poppy cultivation – and without having recourse to a dangerous war whose outcome is controversial even in environments that are more propitious for American policy such as Colombia and Mexico – the option of buying up the Afghan crop is regularly put forward.

174. This position is advocated by the former Senlis Council, now the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS) – a non-governmental organisation based in the United Kingdom and Afghanistan – and is supported by the Assembly which, in two recommendations in 2006 and 2007, recommended that its own Council invite the WEU member states to:

“Call on the international community to raise such funds as are necessary annually to purchase the entire poppy crop from Afghan farmers and thereafter, through an appropriate organisation to destroy such crop, save for that portion deemed necessary for medical research and use” (Recommendation 780, June 2006); and

“Envisage, put forward proposals for and (...) implement alternative solutions to opium poppy cultivation that will be effective in the short term” (Recommendation 802, June 2007).

175. To date, the proposals of ICOS and those of the Assembly have not been taken up by any European government. In general, the allied European states are anxious not to confront the United States on this extremely delicate area of American internal security policy.

#### *V. The geostrategy of the war in Afghanistan*

176. Afghanistan is a landlocked country in central Asia surrounded by mountains and desert. The three main Afghan ethnic groups – Pashtuns (around 50% of the population), Tajik-Persians (28%) and Uzbeks (9%) – are concentrated in areas bordering on other countries with similar ethnic groups, such as Pakistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

177. The Pashtuns have always played a dominant role (the king was a Pashtun) throughout the history of Afghanistan, but the different ethnic groups – concentrated in clearly defined areas – have lived in pragmatic coexistence and the monarchy developed a sense of Afghan nationalism and patriotism, which enabled the country to withstand outside pressure from Pakistan, the USSR and Iran.

178. The king reigned, there was a government, a parliament, representatives of the central power in the provinces and local power centres that managed themselves without much interference from the central authority. The different ethnic and religious groups lived by their own values and traditions, in multicultural coexistence though without any interethnic mix.

179. Today, Afghanistan is at the heart of a major struggle for influence which extends far beyond the global war on terrorism initiated by the Bush Administration. There is a geostrategic dimension that comes on top of the war against the Taliban and al-Qa’ida and that encompasses central Asia, the energy routes, China and Russia, as well as Iran, Pakistan and India.

180. It is the Great Game of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, with the United States, NATO and (to a lesser extent) the European Union in the role played by the United Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The other major player is Russia, though it is no longer the empire it was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and must now take account of other players, partners and local competitors. Only the Pashtun remain faithful to their warlike role and refuse outside interference.

181. The future of Afghanistan is being decided at local and global level and is of major international geostrategic importance. At the regional level, there are three main crosscurrents that meet in Afghanistan: the struggle for influence between Pakistan and India; central Asia and the Shanghai

Cooperation Organisation; and Iran and its relations with the United States and Europe (NATO and the EU).

182. At the global level, the state of relations between Russia and the United States, NATO and the EU has an immediate impact on Afghanistan: the question of alternative transit routes for transporting American and ISAF troops and military equipment to the Afghan theatre of operations.

183. This question, which merits detailed analysis, has already been broached in a previous report on Afghanistan by the Defence Committee in 2006:<sup>8</sup>

“Similarly, the resumption of political and economic activity by Russia, China (...) in Central Asia strengthens uncertainty in Afghanistan. Russian and Chinese opposition to the permanent American armed presence in the region to fight the Taliban and al-Qa’ida has not developed into support for armed action to destabilise Afghanistan (...). However, this situation may change, depending on how relations between these two countries and the United States develop”.

184. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan allowed the United States to use military air bases in their countries between 2001 and 2005 for the needs of the United States and its other allies, such as France and Germany, for example. These bases were intended to serve as a logistics platform for transporting soldiers and military equipment other than weapons and munitions, parking tanker aircraft and a number of military aircraft for aerial surveillance.

185. In terms of overall military needs in Afghanistan, these bases play a key logistics role, but from an operational point of view they are by no means essential. The shortcut they provide between Europe and Afghanistan means transport and logistics costs can be reduced, a compelling argument for the European states involved in Afghanistan. For the United States, however, these bases are of major geostrategic importance in so far as they ensure a permanent military presence in central Asia.

186. As long as Russia deemed these bases to be providing a temporary means of military transit, it did not put up any opposition to the arrangement. But between 2003 and 2005 when the so-called “colour” revolutions took place in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004) and Kyrgyzstan (2005), Russia’s “benevolence” turned into open opposition to the idea of a long-term American military presence in central Asia. The failed attempt to overthrow the government in place in Uzbekistan in May 2005 brought this episode to a close.

187. The United States and the European Union, which had supported the attempt to change the regime as they had in the other “colour” revolutions, lost their influence in Uzbekistan and the Uzbek authorities decided to put an end to the American military presence on the Khanabad base. Germany, however, managed to keep the right to continue using the Termez base for the transit of its armed forces and non-offensive equipment (i.e. neither weapons nor munitions) to Afghanistan. Other allied European states share this facility, but the base can be used solely for transit purposes.

188. The American withdrawal from Uzbekistan has not had a significant impact on continuing American and ISAF military operations in Afghanistan, due to the fact that over 80% of military supplies reach Kandahar and Kabul by way of Pakistan, coming from the port of Karachi and overland through the tribal areas. Logistics from Europe is handled by direct flights using C-17 transport aircraft or long-range Antonov jumbos.

189. Transit via central Asia is practical on the one hand because it is reputed to be safer than Pakistan where attacks have targeted transport convoys and equipment stores for American and ISAF forces, and on the other hand because of the land and rail links (via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) to the Afghan border. In addition, the points of entry into the north of Afghanistan are more secure than those in the south and east of the country.

190. When American forces left Khanabad, the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan – where the government that came to power after the “Tulip Revolution” was deemed more open to American and European influence – took on an increased importance for the United States. However, neither the United States

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<sup>8</sup> See Assembly Document 1930 adopted on 20 June 2006: “European forces in Afghanistan: learning lessons” submitted on behalf of the Defence Committee by Jean-Pierre Kucheida (France, Socialist Group), Rapporteur.

nor the European Union fulfilled the Kyrgyz authorities' expectations of economic assistance and investment. What is more, the new regime is also criticised for its poor record on human rights and governance.

191. Russia, which has not lost its influence in the country, has exploited this disenchantment, particularly in light of the recurrent economic problems which have been aggravated by the international financial crisis. The failure of support "on the cheap" for democracy in Kyrgyzstan – a state that, unlike its neighbours, has no energy (oil and gas) resources – resulted in its denouncing in February 2009 the agreement for the United States to use the Manas air base with 180 days' notice.

192. Loss of access to Manas will not have a major impact on military operations, but will make them more complex in terms of logistical support, as the base was also used to park the tanker aircraft that refuel patrolling fighter planes. However, from a geostrategic perspective, the end of a permanent American military presence is in keeping with the interests of Russia and China to maintain their influence on developments in central Asia so that the countries in the region cannot be used for geostrategic and particularly energy purposes that run counter to the national priorities of these two states.

193. Russia is also negotiating transit routes through its territory to Afghanistan with the United States and NATO. Other possible routes include via the Caspian Sea, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, as well as Iran and China.

194. There are many different scenarios, but the fact remains that all routes through central Asia are under Russian control and therefore dependent on how relations between Russia and the United States, NATO and the European Union develop.

195. The only route that escapes Russian "oversight" – which now Georgia is also subject to – is through Pakistan whose role was originally meant to be limited. Pakistan thus remains highly important to the United States and NATO. Yet they no longer have any control over internal developments in Pakistan and their influence is waning when, paradoxically, the country is governed by a civilian president they favoured to replace General Musharraf.

196. Pakistan had been identified as key to developments in Afghanistan in Assembly reports on the situation there drafted in 2007 and 2008. This is particularly the case given that American strategy in Afghanistan is based on cooperation with Pakistan in order to defeat the Taliban. Caught between American, ISAF and Afghan forces on the one hand and the Pakistani army on the other, Afghan AOG would be in an untenable position from an operational and logistical point of view.

197. Such a scenario has never been realised, neither in the time of President General Musharraf nor under the current civilian President, Asif Ali Zardari. The reasons for this, which are numerous, are largely due to Pakistan's internal politics. Taliban power in Afghanistan before 2001 was supported by Pakistan which sees its neighbour as being part of its sphere of influence. This must be understood in the light of the conflictual relations between Pakistan and India.

198. Afghanistan gives Pakistan more room for strategic withdrawal. The Afghanistan of the Taliban, with its training grounds for Islamic fighters of different origins, also allowed Pakistan to deny any direct involvement with the armed groups fighting the Indian authorities in Kashmir. But in 2001 American pressure forced Pakistan to leave the Taliban regime to its own fate and defeat. Though Pakistan turned its back on the Taliban regime, Afghan Taliban leaders and fighters still had supporters in some Pakistani military and political circles.

199. This balancing act between national interests and American pressure allowed the Taliban AOG to regroup, recover and resume their guerrilla war against the American, ISAF and Afghan government forces. For Pakistan these groups are simply a means of pressure on Afghanistan even if in reality they are beyond its control and authority.

200. The continuing war in Afghanistan, with the open intervention of the United States against Taliban and al-Qa'ida targets in Pakistan, has aroused feelings of tribal or even nationalist solidarity among Afghan and Pakistani Taliban who are for the most part Pashtun. However, neither group poses an existential danger for Pakistan. The Pashtuns (16%) and the Taliban, who are far fewer in number

(at most a few tens of thousands of fighters of extremely varying abilities), are a minority out of a population of 170 million or more (150 million in 2000).

201. They are concentrated in the tribal areas and the North-West Frontier Province, home to just 17% of the population (less than 30 million inhabitants). However, the Pashtuns have the highest demographic growth rate. Their political parties, which are religion-based, were defeated in the 2009 elections and they have no national base; at most they have sympathisers in other traditional Pakistani parties.

202. The heart of Pakistani stability is in the Punjab (82 million inhabitants; capital: Lahore) and also partly in the province of Sindh (50 million inhabitants, half of whom are Sindhis; capital: Karachi). The Pashtuns and the Taliban do not contest the country's territorial integrity or its borders and make no secessionist demands (unlike some Baloch movements). They demand respect for the autonomy of the tribal areas and the North-West Frontier Province and the right to live according to their values and, depending on the tribes, a strict interpretation of Islam.

203. Their relations with the Pakistani authorities oscillate between dialogue and violence. In the Bajaur region (one of the tribal areas), the army fought the Pakistani Taliban groups and other foreign elements (Afghans and Egyptians, for example) between 2008 and 2009 and, according to official figures, killed 1 500 fighters. With 900 000 inhabitants in the region, the army could rely on getting support from some tribes against others.

204. When the fighting ended in late February 2009, local chiefs undertook to no longer tolerate the presence of armed (non-tribal) Taliban fighters and arrest or neutralise any foreign militants (Uzbeks had been targeted in the past). In exchange, the authorities let the tribes live in accordance with their customs, provide financial assistance and pardon insurgents that are captured or handed over by cooperative tribes.

205. In the North-West Frontier Province's Swat valley, however, the Pakistani army was unable to defeat the Pakistani Taliban groups militarily and an agreement was reached with the local religious leader, Maulana Sufi Muhammad. The nine-point agreement provides for the withdrawal of Pakistani forces from public buildings, for the fighting to stop, for the Taliban fighters to remove their road blocks and cease armed operations.

206. Compensation is to be paid to the victims and the family of the victims of military operations. Schools will be reopened, including girls' schools on condition that pupils observe "purdah" and wear the veil (a veil for children that leaves the face uncovered). "Sharia" will be applied more widely than in the past (which is already authorised under Pakistani law). The agreement has been much criticised by American and European officials but is largely welcomed by the press and commentators within Pakistan. In April 2009, under pressure from parliament – the majority of which voted in favour, President Zardari signed the agreement into law.

207. While criticised by the United States and the European Union – which nevertheless say they want to negotiate with the Taliban (with the exception of Mullah Omar) – the agreement has been favourably received by the Pakistani public and, above all, by the security forces which can now concentrate on their main mission, dealing with India.

208. The fact is that the Pakistani armed and security forces have no intention or desire to embark on a civil war that would give rise to terrorist attacks and displaced populations and upset the political balance between the provinces that ensures stability in Pakistan. The counterinsurgency assistance with which the United States provided Pakistan has been diverted from its original purpose and is being used to strengthen the capabilities of the Pakistani forces stationed at the border with India.

209. India is Pakistan's main potential adversary. Given that relations between the two countries have been tense since the attacks in Mumbai and Lahore (against the Sri Lankan cricket team), the Pakistani military and political authorities do not want to open an internal front and engage in an uncertain battle which would be sure to create an instability that India could exploit.

210. Pakistani military leaders also know that opening a domestic front would create the conditions for greater American involvement in Pakistan and give the United States the chance to fulfil its

ultimate aim – often alluded to in the American and European press – of controlling Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

211. Feuding among key figures<sup>9</sup> and the political and economic crisis in Pakistan make it impossible for a hard line to be taken against the Taliban and Pashtuns. And given the strategic imbalance between Pakistan and India, particularly on the military and economic level, for the United States and Europe to secure military cooperation they need to enhance Pakistan’s defence capabilities (air, navy, army and surveillance networks, for example).

212. By ratifying the Swat Valley agreement, the Pakistani Government has also sent an implicit message to the United States and European allies to the effect that more economic assistance is needed to stabilise the country. It is a response to the announcement of “social” assistance programmes that were far from meeting financial needs and were accompanied by conditions deemed unacceptable by the majority of the population and political forces.

213. Neither the United States – which under the Bush Administration had dubbed India a “strategic partner” – nor the European Union or the individual European states seem prepared or able to engage in a strategic rebalancing between Pakistan (an Islamic state) and India (seen as an emerging power of the 21<sup>st</sup> century). This again begs the question of whether Europe really has a strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan.

214. In 2001, it was in dribs and drabs that the European states became engaged in Afghanistan alongside the Americans. The British Government under Tony Blair, foremost among their loyal allies, sent in troops to support the United States as early as 7 October 2001, the day the campaign in Afghanistan began.

215. France, Germany and other European states followed suit in November, after hard negotiations to ensure their transit through central Asia to reach Afghanistan. It was the creation of ISAF following the Bonn Agreement of 5 December 2001 that increased the European military presence.

216. In the beginning ISAF was a mostly European force under British command. The first operational commander was Major General John McColl from December 2001 to June 2002. He was succeeded by a Turkish general and a German general and in July 2003 NATO took over direct command of ISAF.

217. In the area of reconstruction, the European Union provides economic assistance and promotes good governance alongside the United Nations, non-governmental organisations of various origins (including South Korean missionaries who had to leave the country after Afghans protested and hostages were taken), the World Bank and other state contributors, in particular Japan and India.

218. The European Commission set out its approach to Afghanistan in two Country Strategy Papers, the first drafted in 2002 for the period 2002-2006 and the second in 2006 for 2007-2013. The papers include a list of priority actions to be undertaken as a complement to the Afghanistan Compact (2006) for which the European Commission undertakes to provide financial and technical assistance.

219. These documents provide a useful source of information on Afghanistan and European and international aid but do not formulate a European political and economic strategy on Afghanistan. According to the European Commission, it has provided 1.4 billion euros in financial aid since 2002 out of a total of 3.7 billion euros including contributions from the member states.

220. Six areas of cooperation have been identified for Commission action: governance, rural development and health (the three main focal areas), social protection, mine action and regional cooperation.

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<sup>9</sup> Involving, in order of importance: Asif Ali Zardari, President, Sindh; Yousaf Raza Gillani, Prime Minister, Sindh; Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, leader of the opposition, Punjab; Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, Chief of Army Staff, Punjab; Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Baluchistan. All of these people are in more or less open conflict with each other.

221. A Multiannual Indicative Programme (MIP) has been in place since 2007 which aims to better target the Commission's activities and measure the effects over time. The first MIP covers the period 2007-2010 and has been allocated a budget of 610 million euros (including 40% for governance, 30% for agriculture and 20% for health). The second, in preparation for 2010-2013, has a projected budget of 420 million euros.

222. In the intergovernmental area of ESDP, the Council of the European Union decided in 2007 to launch a training programme for the Afghan national police, EUPOL Afghanistan. This three-year mission now covers the whole territory, though with a reduced presence in the south (17 people) and the east (three people in Bamyan).

223. Headed by Police Commissioner Kai Vittrup of Denmark, EUPOL Afghanistan has a staff of 216 (in the first half of 2009), 15 of whom come from non-EU members (Canada, Croatia, Norway and New Zealand). The Council decision had planned for a staff of 400 police officers, but it has proved difficult to recruit volunteers. The first head of the mission was German General Jürgen Scholz.

224. Through EUPOL, the Afghan police receive wide-ranging support with training also being provided by the United States, France, Germany and Russia (which trains Afghan squads dealing with drug trafficking) and other bilateral contributions. Yet official statements, which are reported in the press, regularly criticise the police for inefficiency and corruption.

225. At the political level, the European Union has a Special Representative in Kabul. The present incumbent is an Italian diplomat, Mr Ettore Francesco Sequi, previously ambassador of Italy in Kabul. The first Special Representative for Afghanistan was Francesc Vendrell, a Spanish diplomat, from 2002 to 2008.

226. The European Union is thus actively participating in economic and social reconstruction, political support and security sector reform. In addition, EU member states provide about half of ISAF troops. And yet it cannot be said that the EU and its member states have any decision-making power in Afghanistan alongside the United States.

227. Whether it concerns military or political decisions, the United States – irrespective of who the president is – holds the keys to strategic developments in Afghanistan. And without a European counterweight, it is likely to be a decision in favour of war that is made, at least at first, inside Afghanistan and towards Pakistan.

228. The choices made by the Obama Administration determine Europe's options. However there is some resistance – uncoordinated and motivated by different reasons – to sending additional troops for anything other than support for the upcoming Afghan presidential elections in August 2009. Between 3 500 and 5 000 troops were pledged at NATO's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary summit in April 2009.

229. The three main European contributors – the United Kingdom, Germany and France – have stated repeatedly and at the highest level that they cannot significantly increase troop numbers in the Afghan theatre. Canada and Poland are also reluctant to increase their contingents. The number of soldiers deployed also depends on the different rules of engagement applied, with some countries unwilling to take on too offensive a role.

230. The European states have tied Afghanistan and Pakistan together in an approach that in principle appears appealing (and simplistic) but that in fact covers different geopolitical and geostrategic realities. Following the example of the United States, they decided to appoint a special representative to both countries.

231. As a result, Afghanistan and Pakistan must have the greatest number of special representatives of any country: Germany (Bernd Mützelburg), the United States (Richard Holbrooke, Special Envoy), France (Pierre Lellouche), the United Nations (Kai Eide, Norway), the United Kingdom (Sherard Cowper-Coles) and the European Union (Ettore Francesco Sequi).

232. It should be added that the European Union also has a Special Representative for central Asia, Pierre Morel (France) and a High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, Javier Solana. However, the American Special Envoy, Richard Holbrooke, has one major advantage in that

he has negotiating powers and answers directly to President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

233. Between NATO, the EU and the member states, Europeans appear divided next to the United States and in the eyes of the Afghans and Pakistanis. Certain key figures, in particular Hamid Karzai, and the Taliban will not hesitate to exploit the differences in style, form and content of their proposals.

234. This uncoordinated approach is also evident in dealings with other countries concerned, such as Iran and Russia. On the one hand, dialogue is encouraged in order to gain passage for non-offensive military supplies or find an international solution to the situation in Afghanistan, and on the other hand there is the threat of sanctions and extreme measures or plans are made for the geopolitical enlargement of spheres of influence or for new energy routes to bypass old ones, all of which creates points of conflict with the states in question.

235. Thus Afghanistan could provide a point of convergence, dialogue and multilateral cooperation on questions such as terrorism, drug trafficking, economic and social development and the position of women in the societies of the region.

236. Or, on the contrary, it could be used as a pawn in a 21<sup>st</sup> century geostrategic chess game, the aim of which is to control the energy routes in central Asia and contain Pakistan and Iran (should the latter one day manage to acquire a military nuclear capability).

237. Europe, embodied in the European Union, has a role to play in this area. But for now, the distinction between European and American strategy is blurred. And unless the form and especially the content of European strategy do not change, it will conflict with that of the other regional actors, Russia, Pakistan and Iran. As for Afghanistan, it is the Afghans themselves who will find a solution, preferably with the generous assistance of Europe and the United States, but without heavy-handed interference and without the massive presence of foreign troops.

238. On the contrary, Afghan capabilities should be strengthened and it should be accepted that it is a decentralised state with some areas showing economic and social progress and others being less developed. There needs to be a real long-term economic development programme, based on agriculture, hydraulic resources and the free movement of goods between Pakistan, Iran and the Caspian Sea, and to central Asia and India.

239. If it is so willing, the European Union has the resources and the capacity to turn Afghanistan into a stable, safe, free and prosperous state. But in the meantime, 2009 will be a tough year.