

Managing Enteqal: Milestones for Transition in Afghanistan 2012 – 2014

Prior to the International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn on December 5, 2011, the Center for International Peace Operations (ZIF) invited 30 Afghan and international experts in order to generate recommendations for the transition process between 2012 and 2014. There are numerous challenges to a successful security, political and economic transition in Afghanistan. What shape should the Afghan and international commitment take in the next three years? What measures need to be taken to safeguard the transition, enhance Afghan ownership and promote a peaceful settlement? Who should implement them? In short: How to manage *enteqal*?

The following catalogue sums up practical recommendations in six key areas for national and international actors engaged in Afghanistan: security; reconciliation and reintegration/political settlement; economy and private sector; basic services; rule of law and justice; civil society and media. Rather than creating another abstract “wish list”, the measures proposed here aim to be SMART – Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic and Timed.

Security

1. The current size of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is financially unsustainable; security forces should be gradually reduced through the creation of reserve forces.

ISAF and the Afghan Government should assess the costs associated with fielding a reduced number of security forces. Transferring a significant number to reserve forces would reduce costs. Providing targeted benefits for those troops who move to reserves (veterans and their families) would prevent a destabilizing effect of demobilizing armed and trained men into Afghan society with no secure income.

2. NATO partners should focus on building capabilities within the Afghan security forces until 2014 and beyond. The NATO Training

Mission Afghanistan (NTM-A) should continue its training efforts parallel to the efforts of regional partners. Other NATO forces should accelerate the transition to Afghan security leadership, shift their focus from combating the insurgency, and redeploy towards advising and assisting Afghan forces.

3. The Afghan Local Police (ALP) should be dissolved and their functions progressively replaced by the ANSF. Support for local security initiatives such as the ALP are driven by narrow short-term security goals that are unsustainable in the long term and inconsistent with Afghan and international interests. Increased proliferation of security actors risks sparking factional and ethnic tensions and enhances the potential for relapse into violent conflict.

Reconciliation and Reintegration – Political Settlement

1. An independent international mediator should be appointed to facilitate a political process aiming at building regional consensus towards building a stable Afghanistan. Given the varied interests of regional and other actors, the mediator will need the support of the Afghan Government, neighboring countries and the United Nations (UN) as well as other international organizations, e.g. the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. This person should enjoy international and local respect and have a thorough grounding in the principles of Islam.

2. The processes and underlying assumptions of the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) should be reconsidered. The focus heretofore has been on providing monetary incentives for reintegration, which is not a major insurgent grievance and has created further competition and tension. Addressing the reconciliation process at the local level and facilitating social inclusion of the reintegrees, especially through job creation, are critical steps. Furthermore, the practice of channeling former combatants into the ALP program is dangerous because of the concerns related to the ALP mentioned above.

3. The Taliban and other insurgents groups should be encouraged to establish a representative office outside of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This could help to reduce Pakistani influence on these groups and open more doors for negotiation and mediation initiatives.

Economy and Private Sector

1. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit-Trade Agreement (APTTA) should be fully implemented as a two-way trading agreement and supported by third party guarantees. These should include additional credit incentives from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for demonstrated compliance with the principles of the agreement. The Afghan Government should create a negotiating unit within the Ministry of Customs

and Borders focussing on building government capacity to mediate disputes and improve customs oversight and revenue collection results.

2. Business should be promoted through the coordinated efforts of major donor nations, the Afghan Government and civil society institutions, such as chambers of commerce and trade unions. Based on the World Bank indicators for doing business, the Afghan tariff and tax system should be reassessed to ensure encouragement of business development; legislation that reinforces support for the growth of businesses should be passed by parliament and implemented by the government; and subsistence agriculture should be prioritized and boosted with vocational training.

3. A do-no-harm contracting and procurement system should be developed by international working groups to review the system of procurement and spending aid. The impact of contracting needs to be analyzed in order to combat the criminalization of the economy.

4. A mapping exercise of the existing legal framework for investments should be conducted with the participation of the Afghan Chamber of Commerce, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Mines, civil society watchdog groups and others. The aim is to provide investors with a comprehensive overview of relevant legal provisions and to identify gaps and shortcomings that should in a second step be filled through the development, amendment and adoption of new laws and regulations.

Basic Services

1. The Afghan Government in cooperation with the donors should develop strategies for the provision of basic services for different regions and target groups and gradually incorporate aid into the Afghan budget (i.e. through the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund). In turning over donor programs to the Afghan Government, both sides should ensure state-led, equitable, inclusive, realistic and sustainable basic services, taking into account regional



differences and demands. Aid distribution should be decoupled from military objectives in order to avoid the accrual of a “conflict dividend” in high-risk areas and the discrimination against relatively peaceful regions in the country.

2. The Afghan Government and donors should decentralize budgeting and delivery of basic services. Centralized decision-making slows down and often prevents effective planning and implementation of critical projects and programs at provincial and district levels. Transferring authority to local institutions in combination with prioritizing professional development training for public officials at provincial and district levels effectively results in better service delivery.

3. Community based monitoring systems for the implementation of basic services projects need to be established. Civil society groups as watchdogs should encourage the government to be more transparent and accountable on public sector service delivery. At the same time, civil society should work on its own transparency and accountability while implementing its activities.

4. To ensure sustainability, participation and capacity building, development workers should focus on training and mentoring Afghan employees. International organizations should systematically train Afghans in developing and managing economic, health, education and infrastructure projects since they will gradually have to take over all management responsibilities. International donors should commit to subsidizing the salaries of trained Afghans over a three-year-period.

Rule of Law and Justice

1. The International Criminal Court should investigate violations of International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law committed during the Afghan conflict. Afghanistan is a signatory to the Rome statute enacted in 2002. Therefore, the worst perpetrators should be prosecuted with the aim of seeking

redress for victims, to end the culture of impunity and to increase the Afghan people’s confidence in the political settlement.

2. Qualified and independent commissioners should be appointed immediately to the Independent Election Commission (IEC); also the Elections Complaints Commission (ECC) should be re-established to ensure a peaceful political transition following the presidential and provincial council elections in 2014 and parliamentary elections in 2015. The IEC commissioners should initiate electoral reforms based on lessons learned from the 2009/2010 elections, including a comprehensive overhaul of the voter registry. The National Assembly should begin discussing election reform now. Immediate steps should be taken to schedule the electoral calendar to safeguard against ambiguity over the constitutional term limits of the presidency and provide for continuity of government during the campaign and electoral season.

3. The Afghan President should nominate a new Chief Justice of the Supreme Court as well as two other Supreme Court judges. The constitutionally mandated term for the current appointees has already expired. In addition to the constitutional criteria for appointment, candidates should also have a clear understanding of Afghanistan’s international commitments. Candidates should be selected based on a demonstrated commitment to judicial independence and reform of the legal system.

4. The Presidential Advisory Panel for Senior Appointments as designated in the Peace, Reconciliation and Justice Action Plan should be strengthened. The Afghan Government should set up a vetting mechanism for police and other governmental officials that would bar people with bad records from serving in an official capacity, focussing on chiefs of police at provincial and district level. Additionally it should work with the IEC and the ECC to establish a vetting mechanism for candidate nominations for the elections and clearly communicate this policy.



Civil Society and Media

1. Afghan civil society organizations should focus on local participation. Rather than concentrating on the availability of donor money, actual needs of civil society should be identified in order to move from “donorship” to ownership. Civil society actors should respect the principles of inclusiveness, accountability and transparency (also see Basic Services #3).

2. Afghan media outlets should undertake mutual service partnership agreements with international media companies seeking to fill gaps in their in-country reporting capacity and increase access to content. Anticipating the news vacuum created by the withdrawal of international journalists in the coming years, such partnerships will provide a sustainable source of income for Afghan media, improve the quality of their content and provide news from Afghanistan to international media.

3. To promote regional cooperation, joint publications by quality journalists from across South/Central Asia (Silk Route) should be initiated by regional media actors. Regular regional outlets can promote economic exchange, encourage cross-cultural activities and foster cross-border perspective.

4. A self-regulating national media association should be established to ensure compliance with media standards and enhance journalist education. Membership in the association should be drawn from existing and emerging Afghan media entities. Linkages should be formed with similar internationally recognized media associations in order to facilitate professional exchanges of knowledge and experience.

Additional Comments

Since **donor support will progressively decrease, aid effectiveness and efficiency is an imperative** in all areas. Decline in aid should be gradual and predictable. The investment in

Afghans responsible for the transition through **education, professional skills training** and improvement of their knowledge should be given priority, in other words: **putting Afghans first**. Despite the decrease in aid, the budget for capacity development should be increased.

The Afghan government and the international community should actively and **honestly communicate the achievements and challenges in the transition phase** and use lessons from one sector to leverage change in other sectors. Furthermore, rather than creating new and/or more institutions to solve the issues addressed above, the ones already in place need to be strengthened in their respective areas of responsibility.

Not all crucial or urgent topics could be included in the recommendations. There were several “open issues” such as drug trafficking, a framework for the work of private security actors, and exploitation of natural resources that remain open to further discussion.

The Authors

ZIF’s workshop *Managing Enteqal: Milestones for Transition in Afghanistan 2012-2014* took place in Berlin from November 10-11, 2011. The Afghan and international participants had different professional backgrounds and origins, their expertise in the field of transition and strategic planning contributed to an interdisciplinary and in-depth analysis of the topic.

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