

# Transition in Afghanistan

NAC position paper adopted by the Annual Congress in Oslo, 28 May 2011.

In November 2010, the NATO summit in Lisbon decided to initiate a gradual transition – transfer of the security responsibility from international forces to Afghan forces in 2011. Simultaneously, ISAFs combat forces will gradually withdraw, and the goal is a complete withdrawal by 2014. The planned exit is conditioned on the ability of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to maintain security in Afghanistan. The following expresses NAC's position on some of the major implications of the military withdrawal.

## Position on the withdrawal

- NAC supports a complete withdrawal of foreign soldiers from Afghanistan. There is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan. NATO must immediately start to effectuate the planned withdrawal.
  
- *AiN støtter en fullstendig tilbaketrekning av utenlandske soldater fra Afghanistan. Det finnes ingen militær løsning på konflikten i Afghanistan. NATO må umiddelbart starte iverksettelsen av den varslede tilbaketrekningen.*

Aid agencies and political analysts alike have raised vocal concerns about the seeming lack of consistent planning for a responsible exit and a sustainable Afghanistan beyond the withdrawal of military forces. Arne Strand at Christian Michelsens Institute in Bergen has outlined three potential scenarios for what the military withdrawal might look like:

1. Rapid military withdrawal from 2011, followed by decrease/termination in external funding – "leaving it all to the Afghans"
2. Gradual US military withdrawal from 2011, (almost) all NATO troops out by 2014 (US elections) – time for strategic planning of longer term development and governance interventions
3. Planned military withdrawal, transfer to UN peacekeeping force, strategic longterm development planning and funding guarantees<sup>1</sup>

NAC believes that the worst case scenario is a rapid military withdrawal from followed by a decrease or termination of external funding. There is a fear that NATO members will effectuate a hasty withdrawal without regard to the consequences of the last ten years of international operations in the country. Almost all major aid donors to Afghanistan are also part of the military presence in the country. As the military exit proceeds, there is a clear danger that funding will be scaled down accordingly. In fact, aid agencies are already facing funding cuts. At the same time, Afghanistan is second last on UN Human Development Index. Afghanistan's main problem is poverty, exacerbated by years of war, and assistance should be

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<sup>1</sup> Arne Strand, When breaking up is hard to do: Exploring exit strategies, CMI, 2010, <http://www.cmi.no/publications/publication/?3833=when-breaking-up-is-hard-to-do>

targeted towards long term poverty eradication. Subsequently, there are no rational reasons to scale down the humanitarian assistance after a military withdrawal.

### **Position on aid assistance**

- Aid assistance to Afghanistan must not be scaled down as part of the military exit strategy. Aid assistance levels must be linked to global poverty reduction and development objectives, not national security objectives of the donor countries.
- *Bistand til Afghanistan må ikke reduseres som ledd i den militære tilbaketrekningen. Bistandsnivået må knyttes til globale mål for fattigdomsbekjempelse og utvikling, ikke donorlandenes militære og sikkerhetsmessige mål.*
- Aid assistance to Afghanistan must be distributed geographically based on needs, and not according to political and security considerations.
- *Bistand til Afghanistan må fordeles geografisk etter behov, og ikke på grunnlag av politiske og sikkerhetsmessige vurderinger.*
- Aid assistance to Afghanistan must be holistic with an aim to promote an independent Afghanistan with a sustainable agricultural and business sector.
- *Bistand til Afghanistan må ses i et helhetlig perspektiv. Målet med utviklingshjelpen må være et selvstendig Afghanistan med et bærekraftig jordbruk og næringsliv.*

NAC recognizes the dilemma caused by the fact that Kabul only managed to disburse 42 per cent of its budget in 2010. This, combined with high levels of corruption, is also a main reason why the donors will divert aid money away from Afghanistan in the coming months. However, donors need to find alternative mechanisms to ensure disbursement to the provincial level, rather than scaling down aid.

Since 2004 over 70 per cent of OECD assistance has been spent either in the capital, Kabul, or in three (of 34) provinces central to major NATO and Afghan troops' counter-insurgency operations: Kandahar, Herat and Helmand. This creates the impression among the population that insecure areas were "rewarded".<sup>2</sup>

Communities that are denied their fair share of the aid budget or who are forgotten entirely will quickly support insurgents who promise them recognition and a rightful share of development. Some communities are doing this already as a deliberate means of increasing their share of the aid budget. So long as the Karzai regime distributes aid on the basis of halting and reversing support for the Taliban then there will never be a fair, needs-based distribution of aid in Afghanistan and the seeds of future conflict will have been well and truly sown.

### **Position on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)**

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<sup>2</sup>Kai Eide, *Høyt spill i Afghanistan*, Cappelen Damm, Oslo: 2010, p. 52-53.

- The PRTs must immediately start working to integrate their civilian activities in relevant Afghan structures. Any sustainable results from aid activities within the PRTs must be consolidated.
- *Som ledd i tilbaketrekningen må PRT-ene umiddelbart starte arbeidet med å overføre sine sivile aktiviteter til afghanske strukturer slik at eventuelle bærekraftige resultater av bistanden innenfor PRT-ene kan videreføres.*

ISAF's activities outside Kabul are organized around the PRTs, through which "ISAF supports the Afghan Government in the provision of good governance and reconstruction and development (R&D) in Afghanistan."<sup>3</sup> A PRT is a joint civil-military unit mandated with tasks to improve security, to extend the authority of the Afghan central government, and finally to facilitate reconstruction.

While the PRTs were intended to be temporary, they have gradually evolved into more permanent structure that competed with and hampered the development of Afghan structures. A large part of aid to Afghanistan has been channeled through the PRTs, contributing to an increased militarization of aid. This particularly applies to the American led PRTs.<sup>4</sup>

For example, aid projects initiated by the PRTs have generally focused on Quick impact projects aim to "deliver rapid, highly visible results to win 'hearts and minds' for military forces and political legitimacy for allied governments."<sup>5</sup> Dubbed by critics "quick impact – quick collapse", these projects are likely to collapse just as quickly due to the lack of Afghan ownership.<sup>6</sup> That is not to say that the PRTs have achieved nothing. Whatever successful projects they have initiated need to be integrated in Afghan structures.

### **Position on integrated approaches**

- Aid assistance can contribute to solving the problem of poverty in Afghanistan. This is a goal in and of itself. Aid should be motivated by basic human rights and seen as a tool to reach the UN Millennium Goals and other international standard for poverty alleviation and development, not as a tool to achieve diplomatic, military or security issues.
- *Bistand kan bidra til å løse Afghanistans fattigdomsproblem. Dette er et mål i seg selv. Bistand bør være motivert av grunnleggende menneskerettigheter og ses som et virkemiddel for å nå FN's tusenårs mål og andre internasjonale mål for fattigdomsbekjempelse og utvikling, ikke som et verktøy for å oppnå diplomatiske, militære eller sikkerhetsmessige mål.*
- Afghanistan's internal security problems can only be solved through an internal reconciliation process, not by external intervention or by military means. This process must be broad and inclusive with meaningful representation of women and civil society organisations.

<sup>3</sup> ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan, NATO, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics\\_69366.htm?](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69366.htm?)

<sup>4</sup> Eide, *Høyt spill*, p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> "Whose Aid is it Anyway? Politicizing aid in conflicts and crises", 145 Oxfam Briefing Paper, 10 February 2011?" p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Eide, *Høyt spill*, p. 53-54.

- *Afghanistans interne sikkerhetsproblemer kan bare løses gjennom en intern forsoningsprosess, ikke gjennom en ekstern intervensjon eller militære virkemidler. Denne prosessen må være bred og inkluderende med meningsfull representasjon av kvinner og sivilsamfunnsorganisasjoner.*

The international community in Afghanistan bases its activities on a so-called integrated approach. Integrated responses fit political, military and civilian activities into a single strategy and appear to promise a virtuous circle between four objectives: security, state-building, satisfying humanitarian needs and combating poverty.<sup>7</sup> NAC, however questions the basic foundation of the integrated approach.

When aid is employed for military purposes, it inevitably affects the nature and quality of aid projects. Quick Impact projects designed to win hearts and minds are not necessarily compatible with long term development goals. Dubbed by critics “quick impact – quick collapse”, these projects are likely to collapse just as quickly due to the lack of Afghan ownership.<sup>8</sup> Similar effects come from trying to achieve diplomatic successes on behalf of either ISAF or the central government. For instance, Oxfam has pointed out that Quick Impact projects tend to focus on the needs of politically significant communities. This may even serve to marginalize the needs of less powerful parts of the community, including women and children.<sup>9</sup>

Aid projects need to be tailored according to the local political situation, local structures that are already in place, taking in mind local conflicts. This should happen in cooperation with district and provincial governments. That said, there is little reason to believe that Afghan political considerations will not take heed to building and maintaining alliances. Donors should challenge the government to make sure that it pursues a need based approach to development.

Finally, while poverty is an important conflict driver in Afghanistan, other main drivers are political, such as frustration over corruption, dissatisfaction with the sitting regime, disillusionment with the international community in the country and questions related to identity and ideology.<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, one should not assume that alleviating poverty will in and of itself lead to a stable political and security situation.

## **Position on the UN**

- UNAMA should work actively to push donors to have their PRTs hand over aid activities to the provincial government and to maintain aid assistance beyond the military withdrawal.
- *UNAMA bør aktivt oppfordre donorlandene til å sørge for at deres PRT-er overleverer bistandsaktiviteter til provinsregjeringene, og at de opprettholder bistanden etter den militære tilbaketrekningen.*

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<sup>7</sup> “Whose Aid is it Anyway?” p. 18

<sup>8</sup> Eide, *Høyt spill*, p. 53-54.

<sup>9</sup> “Whose Aid is it Anyway?”, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> Geert Gompelman, "Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between the Aid and Security in Afghanistan's Faryab Province," Feinstein International Center, January 2011, <https://wikis.uit.tufts.edu/confluence/pages/viewpage.action?pageId=42009162>, p. 23-29.

- NAC questions the role of the UN in Afghanistan. UNAMA should reevaluate their approach with an aim to depoliticize humanitarian aid and base development aid in Afghan national targets, not international diplomatic and political concerns.
- *AiN stiller seg spørrende til FNs rolle i Afghanistan. UNAMA bør revurdere sin tilnærming med sikte på å avpolitisere nødhjelpen og basere utviklingshjelpen på nasjonale afghanske mål, ikke internasjonale diplomatiske og politiske hensyn.*

The overall UN presence in Afghanistan is led by the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was established on an invitation by the Afghan government. UN specialized agencies were already present in the country. Among UNAMA's core tasks is to lead the international civilian support to the Afghan Government, with a particular focus on strengthening coordination between international programs in development and governance assistance, as well as between civilian and military operations. The integrated approach has weakened the credibility of the UN.<sup>11</sup> Nonetheless, the UN has an important role to play during and beyond the transition. We support UN efforts to convince donors not to scale down aid assistance and to demilitarize aid assistance.

### **Position on NATO and Enduring Partnership**

- NATO members must carefully plan their exit strategy carefully and in close cooperation with Afghan provincial governments and the central government with regard to the consequences of the last ten years of international operations in the country.
- *NATO-landene må planlegge tilbaketrekningen nøye og i tett samarbeid med afghanske myndigheter sentral og på provinsnivå. Planene må ta hensyn til hvilke konsekvenser ti år med internasjonale operasjoner har påført landet*
- NAC is critical to Enduring Partnership. NATO has low credibility among large parts of the population and may in itself contribute to undermining security for the Afghan population.
- *AiN er kritiske til Enduring Partnership. NATO har lav troverdighet blant store deler av befolkningen, og kan i seg selv bidra til å undergrave sikkerheten for befolkningen.*
- If the Afghan government seeks a future role for NATO in the country, its engagement must be strictly confined to military activities based on Afghan national defense needs with the aim of preventing infringements on Afghan independence and sovereignty.
- *Dersom den afghanske regjeringen ønsker å la NATO spille en rolle i landet, må engasjementet være strengt begrenset til militære aktiviteter basert på afghanske*

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<sup>11</sup> Antonio Donini, "Afghanistan: Humanitarianism Unraveled?," Briefing Paper Feinstein international Center, Tufts University, May 2010, p. 4-5, 7.

*nasjonale forsvarsbehov og ha som mål å forhindre angrep på afghansk uavhengighet og suverenitet.*

The military withdrawal does not mean that NATO pulls out of Afghanistan. On 20 November 2010, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan signed a Declaration on an Enduring Partnership at the NATO summit in Lisbon. Enduring Partnership will serve as a framework for a long-term NATO supporting and political role in Afghanistan. The goal is to provide “sustained practical support to Afghanistan as it assumes full responsibility for its own security and rebuilds its security institutions through the Transition process and beyond 2014.”<sup>12</sup>

At the time of writing, the first set of activities for 2011 and 2012 has been endorsed by NATO’s foreign ministers. Activities include capacity building, anti-corruption, good governance, normalisation of the aviation system sector and training in civil emergency planning and disaster preparedness, as well as enhanced public diplomacy efforts.

However, NATO’s planned activities in Afghanistan are to a large extent of a civilian nature. NAC believes that these should be coordinated by Afghan institutions with support from UN specialized agencies, and not by NATO, which is a military defence alliance.

NAC is critical towards a future NATO presence in Afghanistan. The low credibility of NATO among large swaths of the Afghan population makes a NATO presence a potential destabilising factor in itself. NAC recognizes, however, that Afghanistan has external security concerns along its borders to Pakistan, India, Iran and several Central-Asian republics. It is for Afghans to decide which strategies they pursue in order to ensure its security in the region.

### **Position on Norway’s engagement in Afghanistan**

- Norway must maintain a high level of assistance to Afghanistan based on UN Millennium Goal indicators and basic human rights, irrespective of what the rest of the international community might choose to do.
  
- *Norge må opprettholde et høyt bistandsnivå til Afghanistan basert på FNs tusenårs mål og grunnleggende menneskerettigheter. Dette må skje uavhengig av hva det internasjonale samfunnet ellers gjør.*
  
- Norway must continue its strategy of not letting military actors implement aid projects. The government should, however, reconsider its commitment to integrated approaches.
  
- *Norge må opprettholde det strategiske valget om ikke å la militære aktører iverksette bistandsprosjekter. Regjeringen bør i tillegg revurdere sin tilslutning til såkalte “integrated approaches (integrerte tilnærminger).*

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<sup>12</sup> Afghanistan and NATO’s Enduring Partnership, ISAF Media Backgrounder, [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2011\\_04/20110414\\_110414-AfghanPartnership.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2011_04/20110414_110414-AfghanPartnership.pdf), “Afghanistan and NATO put theory into practice in their Enduring Partnership”, NATO homepage, Newsroom, [http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news\\_72547.htm](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_72547.htm)

Norway has funded aid projects in Afghanistan since the 1980s. Norwegian aid to Afghanistan is disbursed through the Afghan government, the UN, the World Bank and Norwegian and international NGOs. In 2001, Norway engaged military in Afghanistan through Operation Enduring Freedom, and later to ISAF. Following Norway's military contribution, aid assistance has increased sharply, and is mainly focused in Faryab province, where Norway has been responsible for a Provincial Reconstruction Team since 2005.<sup>13</sup>

Unlike the majority of PRTs in Afghanistan, the Norwegian PRT does not implement aid projects. Rather, aid is distributed by the embassy to national programs or international NGOs. This is due to a decision by the Norwegian Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs after a series of negative experiences with military aid projects in the period prior to June 2007.<sup>14</sup> However, this distinction of the roles is not enough, so long as it is a political goal for the civilian effort to reinforce the military effort. In Gahr Støre's words, "the purpose of our engagement in Afghanistan is to help prevent the country once more becoming a safe haven from which terrorists can plan and conduct large scale operations. As previously stated, aid should be tied to poverty reduction goals, not to political and security objectives.

In his Afghanistan speech to the Norwegian parliament on 26 February 2001,<sup>15</sup> Norwegian Foreign Minister Gahr Støre refers to Enduring Partnership, stating that it is too early to tell what NATO's engagement in Afghanistan will look like in two, four or six years". Gahr Støre also said that it is too early to tell what level of aid assistance Norway will contribute after the military withdrawal. However, "the Government presumes that we will continue to be engaged in the areas of development and humanitarian assistance for many years to come, beyond the transfer of military responsibility in 2014", Gahr Støre said.

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<sup>13</sup> Norsk bistand, [http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/kampanjer/bistand\\_afghanistan/bistand.html?id=573478](http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/ud/kampanjer/bistand_afghanistan/bistand.html?id=573478)

<sup>14</sup> Compelman, "Winning Hearts and Minds", p. 36.

<sup>15</sup> Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre's address to the Storting on the situation in Afghanistan and Norway's civilian and military engagement, 26 April 2011, [http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/speeches\\_foreign/2011/address\\_afghanistan110426.html](http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/ud/Whats-new/Speeches-and-articles/speeches_foreign/2011/address_afghanistan110426.html)

## NAC Positions

<b>Position on the withdrawal</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NATO members must carefully plan their exit strategy carefully. There is no military solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.</li> <li>➤ NATO must immediately start to effectuate the planned withdrawal from Afghanistan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>AiN støtter en fullstendig tilbaketrekning av utenlandske soldater fra Afghanistan. Det finnes ingen militær løsning på konflikten i Afghanistan.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>NATO må umiddelbart starte iverksettelsen av den varslede tilbaketrekningen fra Afghanistan.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Position on aid assistance</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Aid assistance to Afghanistan must not be scaled down as part of the military exit strategy. Aid assistance levels must be linked to global poverty reduction and development objectives, not national security objectives of the donor countries.</li> <li>➤ Aid assistance to Afghanistan must be distributed geographically based on needs, and not according to political and security considerations.</li> <li>➤ Aid assistance to Afghanistan must be holistic with an aim to promote an independent Afghanistan with a sustainable agricultural and business sector.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Bistand til Afghanistan må ikke reduseres som ledd i den militære tilbaketrekningen. Bistandsnivået må knyttes til globale mål for fattigdomsbekjempelse og utvikling, ikke donorlandenes militære og sikkerhetsmessige mål.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Bistand til Afghanistan må fordeles geografisk etter behov, og ikke på grunnlag av politiske og sikkerhetsmessige vurderinger.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Bistand til Afghanistan må ses i et helhetlig perspektiv. Målet med utviklingshjelpen må være et selvstendig Afghanistan med et bærekraftig jordbruk og næringsliv.</i></li> </ul>
<b>Position on the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The PRTs must immediately start working to integrate their civilian activities in relevant Afghan structures. Any sustainable results from aid activities within the PRTs must be consolidated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Som ledd i tilbaketrekningen må PRT-ene umiddelbart starte arbeidet med å overføre sine sivile aktiviteter til afghanske strukturer slik at eventuelle bærekraftige resultater av bistanden innenfor PRT-ene kan videreføres.</i></li> </ul>
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<b>Position on the UN</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ UNAMA should work actively to push</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>UNAMA bør aktivt oppfordre donorlandene til å</i></li> </ul>

<p>donors to have their PRTs hand over aid activities to the provincial government and to maintain aid assistance beyond the military withdrawal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NAC questions the role of the UN in Afghanistan. UNAMA should reevaluate their approach with an aim to depoliticize humanitarian aid and base development aid in Afghan national targets, not international diplomatic and political concerns.</li> </ul>	<p><i>sørge for at deres PRT-er overleverer bistandsaktiviteter til provinsregjeringene, og at de opprettholder bistanden etter den militære tilbaketrekningen.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>AiN stiller seg spørrende til FNs rolle i Afghanistan. UNAMA bør revurdere sin tilnærming med sikte på å avpolitisere nødhjelpen og basere utviklingshjelpen på nasjonale afghanske mål, ikke internasjonale diplomatiske og politiske hensyn.</i></li> </ul>
<p><b>Position on NATO and Enduring Partnership</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ NATO members must carefully plan their exit strategy carefully and in close cooperation with Afghan provincial governments and the central government with regard to the consequences of the last ten years of international operations in the country.</li> <li>➤ NAC is critical to Enduring Partnership. NATO has low credibility among large parts of the population and may in itself contribute to undermining security for the Afghan population.</li> <li>➤ If the Afghan government seeks a future role for NATO in the country, its engagement must be strictly confined to military activities based on Afghan national defense needs with the aim of preventing infringements on Afghan independence and sovereignty.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>NATO-landene må planlegge tilbaketrekningen nøye og i tett samarbeid med afghanske myndigheter sentral og på provinsnivå. Planene må ta hensyn til hvilke konsekvenser ti år med internasjonale operasjoner har påført landet</i></li> <li>➤ <i>AiN er kritiske til Enduring Partnership. NATO har lav troverdighet blant store deler av befolkningen, og kan i seg selv bidra til å undergrave sikkerheten for befolkningen.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Dersom den afghanske regjeringen ønsker å la NATO spille en rolle i landet, må engasjementet være strengt begrenset til militære aktiviteter basert på afghanske nasjonale forsvarsbehov og ha som mål å forhindre angrep på afghansk uavhengighet og suverenitet.</i></li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Norway must maintain a high level of assistance to Afghanistan based on UN Millennium Goal indicators and basic human rights, irrespective of what the rest of the international community might choose to do.</li> <li>➤ Norway must continue its strategy of not letting military actors implement aid projects. The government should, however, reconsider its commitment to integrated approaches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ <i>Norge må opprettholde et høyt bistandsnivå til Afghanistan basert på FNs tusenårsmål og grunnleggende menneskerettigheter. Dette må skje uavhengig av hva det internasjonale samfunnet ellers gjør.</i></li> <li>➤ <i>Norge må opprettholde det strategiske valget om ikke å la militære aktører iverksette bistandsprosjekter. Regjeringen bør i tillegg revurdere sin tilslutning til såkalte "integrated approaches (integreerte tilnærminge).</i></li> </ul>