



Afghanistan: The Life after Bonn[‡]

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Executive Summary

The Bonn Agreement, signed in December of 2001, marked the step towards the end of the Taliban era and the Parliamentary election of September 18th, 2005 marked the end of the Bonn process. The Bonn agreement outlined the necessary phases for a post-Taliban government: the first step being the creation of a Temporary Authority, followed by the Transitory Authority, and later the first democratic government of the country. The year 2004 started with the proclamation of the Constitution approved by the Grand Assembly *Loya Jirga* and ended with the Parliamentary election.

The post-war reconstruction has been progressing at a disturbingly slow pace. Life conditions reflect a woeful situation: 70% of population lives on less than 2 dollars per day, 20% of children die before reaching the age of 5, the Gross Domestic Production head tax is \$190, and every 30 minutes a woman dies due to childbirth complications. For all these reasons, the end of Bonn process should not be considered the final triumph of the rehabilitation process, but rather as a middle passage of a long and difficult development.

The Bonn Agreement was born as an answer to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 putting itself in the middle of the fight against terrorism. According to this policy, the Bonn Agreement opened the government's doors to different groups of people, among which we find various ambiguous individuals with obscure pasts in regards to human rights. Bonn supported the *Warlords'* membership to the Northern Alliance that is close to Washington in its fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

ELECTIONS

September 18th of 2005 will be remembered as a fundamental date in Afghan's democratic process. This day ended a political campaign started one month earlier in which there were 2,760 candidates (male and female) for the *Wolesi Jirga* (Lower Assembly) and another 3,016 for the Provincial Councils, while the *Meshrano Jirga* (High Assembly) won't be constituted directly from popular votes. Both assemblies --

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the Wolesi Jirga and the Meshrano Jirga-- will constitute the National Assembly, the legislative body of Afghanistan.

The elections were organized without the existence of strong, fixed political parties, since the general population has a strong distrust and low opinion of them, believing them to be corrupt. As a consequence, each candidate presented himself/herself individually, funding their campaign by their own means. Nevertheless, most were sustained by various political parties, *Warlords*, governments, or other institutions, contributing to the wide variety of male and female candidates.

The list of candidates in the ballot paper included teachers, merchants, NGO workers, *Warlords*, ex-Talibans, ex-Communists, and so forth. A few days before the elections, the Human Rights Watch announced that among the list were also some men accused of war crimes.

INSECURITY

Attacks against candidates, suicide attacks, and the kidnapping of humanitarian workers not only exist, but are increasing. As a consequence of the Taliban's guerrilla warfare, the south-west of Afghanistan has become a high-risk area.

The fact that Afghanistan is one of the most strategic sites in the "global fight against terrorism", could lead us to think that efforts to establish peace and security for population are as strong as possible. Unfortunately, however, this is not the reality. Afghanistan is the country with the lowest number of international troops applied in the most recent international conflicts, both per square kilometer (1 per 20 km²) and per person (1 per 935).

The Coalition and the ISAF (the other international force in Afghanistan, with the duty to keep peace and security) on one side, and the population on the other, have different very different concepts of "security" and "peace". The Coalition -who is fighting in the southeast of the country, where the violence is more frequent-- aims to defeat Al Qaeda at any cost, even if this means exposing the population to dangers and insecurity. ISAF's aim is keeping security and peace, but its role, unfortunately, has been limited for a too long period to Kabul. The new born Afghan military force and police force are still too weak to protect people as is required in its mandate. All these facts make Afghanistan an unsafe country.

TALIBAN GUERRILLA

During this time the Taliban had the possibility of reorganizing their fighting forces. Although they aren't the leading group anymore, they transformed themselves into an "Islamic guerrilla movement". Even their strategy has changed: rather than direct fights, they now prefer acting through fearful attacks and hiding among local population. Their aim is clearly to obstruct the reconstruction process.

WARLORDS

Neo-Talibans and other local movements can survive thanks to external support coming both from bordering countries and far countries. The international community must tackle this problem in a stronger and more evident manner if it truly wants Afghanistan to become a peaceful and safe country.

DRUG-TRAFFIC THREAT

According to the Afghan President, Hamid Karzai, drug trafficking is the biggest menace that Afghanistan has to face. During year 2004, illegal economic benefits coming from opium's cultivation had been equivalent to 60% of the legal Gross Domestic Production. Afghanistan produces 87% of the total opium produced in the world. Afghan policy against drug trafficking aimed to destroy opium cultivation in Afghanistan rather than to break up the international network that allows for the existence of the opium economy.

According to Barnett R. Rubin¹, the Afghan conflict is running the risk of transforming itself into a Colombia-style conflict as *Warlords* and *Taliban guerrilla warfare* could find drug trafficking to be a profitable and stable source of funding.

LOW INTERNATIONAL CONTRIBUTION

International economic contribution to the reconstruction process has been very low. James Dobbins, ex Bush Administration's Special Envoy, stated that the reconstruction project in Afghanistan has been the worst funded project in American history's reconstruction plans.

Low international contributions, together with high drug profits, are a real danger for the development of a peaceful Afghanistan: between the years 2002 and 2004, drug profits (\$6.820 millions) were more than double international contributions (\$ 3.337 millions).

CONCLUSIONS: LIFE AFTER BONN

Karzai's Government can't survive without international support. Given the pending threats and the geopolitical importance of Afghanistan, the international community should not abandon the country, as it promised in Berlin Declaration (April, 2004). The UN, present in Afghanistan through UNAMA, should remain in the country as well. A meeting of the UN to discuss Afghanistan's future and the support of the Afghan Government is scheduled for January of 2006.

There is also the possibility that the Coalition will leave the country; the Bush Administration affirmed that it would join the Coalition together with ISAF as the only military force remaining in Afghanistan under the umbrella of NATO.

The end of the Bonn process should not be considered the triumph of reconstruction: it represents only an intermediate step in a very long course. The population's poverty and global insecurity are only two of the consequences that a failed government could lead to, as past history has proven. For this reason, the international community has the duty to aid Afghanistan in its reconstruction process.

¹ Rubin, Barnett R., Omar Zakhilwal. A war on Drugs, or a War on Farmers? Wall Street Journal, January 11, 2005. pg. A20.