

## AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY – AN ASSESSMENT OF PROMISES & DANGERS

*Lieutenant Colonel Raza Ali Khan*

*“We can help train an army, we can help equip an army, we can help build facilities for the army, but only the Afghan people can breathe a soul into the army.”*

*(Lt. Gen. Karl Eikenberry, former commanding General, CFC-Afghanistan)<sup>1</sup>*

*“Today’s problems are the result of yesterday’s solutions”.<sup>2</sup>  
(President John F. Kennedy)*

### **Introduction**

Throughout modern Afghan history, the Afghan National Army (ANA) has been the backbone of Afghan security. Although it was mostly devoted to the government, it dealt mainly with revolts and major crises. Since its inception in the early 1900s, the ANA was considered a national institution. When the Mujahideen took over Kabul in 1992, their first move was to dismantle the ANA for their own private militias. The Mujahideen were under the impression that their forces would fill the vacuum of state power, but that was not the case. Instead of providing security to the Afghans, various militias started to fight with one another, and many cities were turned into ruins.<sup>3</sup>

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is a service branch of the [Military of Afghanistan](#) currently being trained by the [coalition forces](#) to ultimately take the lead in [land-based military operations](#) in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's Army was officially established in the 1880s when the nation was ruled by [Emir Abdur Rahman Khan](#).<sup>4</sup> Prior to that the Army was mostly a combination of tribesmen and [militia](#) forces, as well as a special army force under the ruler of the country.<sup>5</sup> It was one of the key national institutions that Afghanistan lost during its prolonged civil war. Over a decade-long Mujahideen

resistance (1979-1992) against successive communist governments in Kabul took a heavy toll on the state resources and the internal cohesion of the Afghan Army. With the Soviet withdrawal in 1988-1989, the Afghan Army, which was largely trained, mentored, equipped, and financed by the Soviet Union, suffered from lack of resources and unity. The once highly professional Afghan army finally withered away with the fall of Najibullah's government in 1992. The Mujahideen government in Kabul (1992-1996) and the Taliban regime (1996-2001) both relied on their militias for internal security.<sup>6</sup> Combating the Taliban has been difficult because of weaknesses in the Afghan Army and police but also because the indigenous intelligence services have not traditionally been used to infiltrate and learn about dissident groups such as the Taliban.<sup>7</sup> After the fall of the Taliban regime in late 2001, the US-led coalition began to work towards creating a new Afghan National Army (ANA). It is believed that the method of establishing a small ANA garrison, building it up slowly, and having its personnel develop relationships with militia forces provides yet another mechanism of progress.<sup>8</sup>

To Afghanistan's misfortune, the United States shifted the central front of its war on terror to Iraq before stabilizing Afghanistan. This had a crippling effect on the Bonn process which sought to build permanent institutions of governance in Afghanistan and undermined the efforts aimed at developing an indigenous Afghan security apparatus. The Afghan Army, which was supposed to add force to the authority of Kabul, instead remains beset with numerous external and internal challenges like less pay and ethnic diversity raising questions of allegiance. Kabul's frustration over the lack of a well-trained and well-equipped national army seems to be growing as the West vacillates under the Taliban pressure.<sup>9</sup>

### **Aim**

The article aims at bringing contemporary Afghan National Army under the sharp focus with a view to carryout an incisive appraisal of the promises and dangers in order to draw some relevant inferences.

## Scope

The article will unfold as under:-

- Part – I - Existing status of ANA
- Part – II - Analysis / Assessment–promises & dangers

### **PART – I EXISTING STATUS OF ANA**

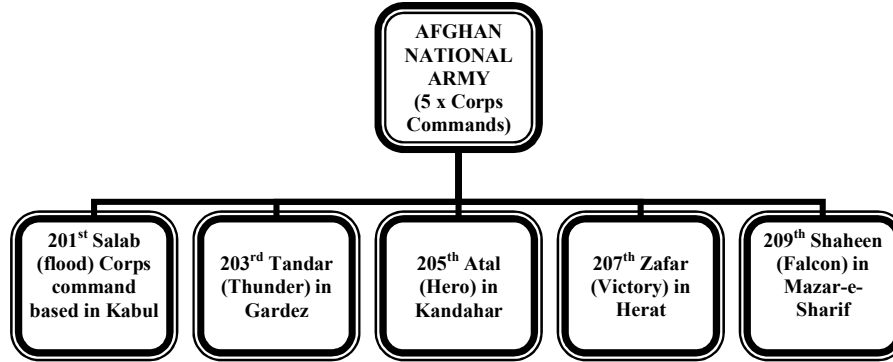
#### **The President’s Decree or “Petersburg’s Decree”<sup>10</sup>**

Hamid Karazai, the President of the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), on December 2, 2002, during a meeting with representatives from the UN and the donor countries at Petersburg in Bonn, issued a decree for the establishment of the ANA.<sup>11</sup> The decree declared the United States as the designated lead nation for ANA restructuring’ under the overall command of the ‘legitimate Afghan civilian authorities’. It also designated the United Nations with Japan as the lead donor nation for preparing a comprehensive programme for the Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR) of various militia groups to augment the process of establishing the ANA. The decree envisaged a multi-ethnic and an all-volunteer national army of 70,000<sup>12</sup> by 2009<sup>13</sup>. In fact, the US Green Berets had already started training the first batch of Afghan soldiers by May 2002. Interestingly, according to the official website of the ANA, the ANA has been ‘active’ from the 1880s to the present.<sup>14</sup> However, according to analysts like Ali Ahmed Jalali, this was the fourth time in the last 150 years that the Afghan military was being recreated.<sup>15</sup> The current goal of the [Afghan Ministry of Defense](#) is to expand the Afghan National Army to about 134,000 troops. However, American President [Barack Obama](#) has called for an expansion of almost 260,000 Afghan troops in the next five years at a cost of \$20 billion.<sup>16</sup> All costs of expansion of the army, including pay and new modern equipment, would be paid for by the American government.<sup>17</sup>

## **Nature and Composition of ANA**

**Composition.** The ANA is to be a voluntary, non-partisan army dependent on a civil command structure. The ANA is said to comprise five ground manoeuvre corps and one air corps. The basic unit in the ANA is the Kandak (Battalion), consisting of 600 troops. Although the vast majority is infantry, at least one mechanized and one tank Battalion have been formed; more may be planned. An elite special force unit modeled on the [U.S. Army Rangers](#) is also being formed.<sup>18</sup> The plans are to include 3,900 men in six battalions under French and U.S. tutelage.<sup>19</sup> The ANA is supposed to have '76 battalions or Kandaks organized into 13 light infantry brigades, a mechanized brigade, a commando brigade, enabling units and the initial operation of an air corps by the end of fiscal year 2009'. It is said to 'primarily a light infantry based army equipped with towed artillery and mortars'.<sup>20</sup>

The ANA has five regional corps commands: 201<sup>st</sup> Salab (flood) Corps command based in Kabul (of which the 3rd Brigade, at Pol-e-Chakri, is to be a mechanised formation including M-113s and Soviet-built main battle tanks)<sup>21</sup>; 203<sup>rd</sup> Tandar (Thunder) in Gardez, 205<sup>th</sup> Atal (Hero) in Kandahar; 207<sup>th</sup> Zafar (Victory) in Herat; and the 209<sup>th</sup> Shaheen (Falcon) in Mazar-e-Sharif. The first corps command headquarters outside Kabul was established in Kandahar on September 19, 2004. The other three original commands were soon established in late 2004 and early 2005. The sixth Corps is the "[National Air Corps](#)", which is the old [Afghan Air Force](#). Plans exist to separate this Corps again and reclaim the old Afghan Air Force role as a separate branch of the Afghan military.<sup>22</sup> The Afghan National Air Corps of the ANA was re-established in January 2005 and it comprises a few old Russian helicopters and transport planes.<sup>23</sup> The organisational chart of ANA is given below:-



**Personal Strength.** As of May 2008, total manpower is over 90,000 personnel with 100,000 expected by August of 2009.<sup>24</sup> Facilities and capacity planning efforts are rapidly adjusting to the significant increases in national recruiting efforts to meet manpower needs. A further proposal for expansion to 134,000 was announced in October 2008.<sup>25</sup> This was modified to a five year goal of 260,000 Afghan troops by President Obama and is supported by the Afghan Defense Ministry. According to Reuters, the strength of the ANA stood at 57,000 as of December 2, 2007.<sup>26</sup> By the middle of 2008, the ANA was expected to reach its targeted strength of 70,000.<sup>27</sup> However, according to the Afghan Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Waradak, an Afghan Army of 150,000-200,000 soldiers would be needed to secure the country.<sup>28</sup> In January 2008, it was announced by the Afghan Ministry of Defence (MoD) that the strength of the ANA would be increased to 86,000 by the end of 2008.<sup>29</sup> The figure has again been revised to 134,000 by 2014. As per the new US plan, about 10,000 troops would be trained each year for four years beginning in 2010.<sup>30</sup>

**Ethnic Composition.** The ethnic composition of the ANA remains a tricky issue. The ANA is envisioned by the Karazai government and others to serve as a unifying influence that will assist in overcoming significant internal centrifugal forces such as “deep ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, tribal, racial and regional cleavages and Qawm identity, emphasizing the local over higher-order formations. Striking the right ethnic balance at various levels in the army has been a great challenge, as it remains a key factor shaping people’s perception and faith in the ANA as a national

institution. Though the ANA is said to be multi-ethnic in nature. In terms of the overall ethnic composition the army is relatively balanced, with an over-representation of Tajiks, a more or less fair share of Pashtuns (the largest ethnic group in the country) and an under-representation of Hazaras and Uzbeks. The officer corps, however, is predominantly Tajik, particularly the combat units.<sup>31</sup> According to a report, nearly 70 per cent of the battalion commanders are Tajiks.<sup>32</sup> Any ethnic imbalance in the ANA has the potential to trigger centrifugal tendencies within the army in times to come. The problem is not just the ethnic balance of the officer corps, per se, but the fact that as some senior Pashtun officers allege, the majority of these Tajik officers are networked around the Chief of Staff, Gen. Bismillah Khan, who through his influence and the ability to appoint officers is the majority share holder of the army. Defence Minister Rahim Wardak, a Pashtun loyal to President Karzai, only controls a small network of former comrade-in-arms of the 1980s jihad, and cannot even remotely compete with Bismillah Khan in terms of influence.<sup>33</sup>

**Perks and Privileges.** Soldiers in the new army initially received \$30 a month during training and \$50 a month upon graduation, though pay for a trained soldier has since risen to \$120. Some recruits were under 18 years of age and many could not read or write. Recruits who spoke only Pashto experienced difficulty because instruction was given through interpreters who spoke Farsi. Growth continued, however, and the ANA had expanded to 5,000 trained soldiers by July of 2003. That month, approximately 1,000 ANA soldiers were deployed in the US-led Operation Warrior Sweep, marking the first major combat operation for Afghan troops. The table below gives a vivid picture of Afghan Soldier's deployment from March 2003 – August 2009:-

<b>Serial</b>	<b>Troops Level (Soldiers)</b>	<b>As of</b>
1.	1,750	March 2003
2.	6,000	September 29, 2003
3.	6,000	January 22, 2004
4.	7,000	February 2004
5.	8,300, plus 2,500 in training	April 30, 2004
6.	12,360	June 29, 2004

7.	13,000	August 2004
8.	13,500, plus 3,000 in training	September 13, 2004
9.	13,000	December 2004
10.	17,800, plus 3,400 in training	January 10, 2005
11.	26,000, plus 4,000 in training	September 16, 2005
12.	26,900	January 31, 2006
13.	36,000	January 10-22, 2007
14.	46,177	April 12, 2007
15.	50,000	June 6, 2007
16.	57,000	December 2, 2007
17.	76,600	May 14, 2008
18.	80,000	October 14, 2008
19.	90,000	May 19, 2009
20.	100,000	August 2009

**Source:** The official web site of ANA <http://www.mod.gov.af/> and [http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan National Army](http://en.Wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghan_National_Army). Accessed on 13 January 2010.

With an expanded ANA, the Afghan government has forged a power-projection too to take advantage of the expanded Coalition presence throughout the country. ANA garrisons now exist in most urban areas.<sup>34</sup>

### **Training and Mentoring Institutions for the ANA**

Members of the [coalition forces in Afghanistan](#) have undertaken different responsibilities in the creation of the ANA. All these efforts are managed on the Coalition side by Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan (CSTC-A), a two-star level multi-national command headquartered in downtown [Kabul](#).<sup>35</sup> The UN Forces are partnered with the ANA to mentor and support formal training through Task Force Phoenix (TF Phoenix). This program was formalized in April of 2003, based near the Kabul Military Training Center coordinating collective and individual training, mentoring, and Coalition Force support. Each ANA HQ above battalion level has an embedded [Operational Mentor and Liaison Team](#) (OMLT) of NATO trainers and mentors acting as liaisons between ANA and [ISAF](#). The OMLTs co-ordinate

operational planning and ensure that the ANA units receive enabling support.<sup>36</sup> The CJTF Phoenix has undergone six rotations in the last five years and has played a key role in establishing the ANA's five corps.<sup>37</sup>

Camp Black Horse, located on the outskirts of Kabul, which hosts the Canadian Afghan National Training Centre detachment, is providing training and mentorship to the ANA.<sup>38</sup> A French army advisory team oversees the training of officers for staff and platoon or company command in a combined commissioning/infantry officer training unit called the Officer Training Brigade (OTB), also located at Kabul Military Training Center. OTB candidates in the Platoon and Company Command courses are usually older former militia and Mujahideen 'officers' with various levels of military experience.<sup>39</sup> The British forces are tasked with the training of Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) of the ANA; Canadians conduct a two-week training programme in squad and platoon level tactics; French forces assist in training the ANA officers; German Forces provide trainers and mentors for the ANA Armours (tanks); Romanian forces are responsible for the ANA Advanced Individual Training (AIT); Mongolian forces provide instructors for the ANA Field Artillery; and Croatian, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, Slovenian, Swedish, and Polish forces provide OMLTs. US forces are responsible for the overall mentoring and training of the ANA from Ministry of defence (MoD) to the company level.<sup>40</sup> The US Special Forces are training the ANA commando battalions at Camp Morehead in the south of Kabul. In July 2007 the Afghan army graduated its first battalion of **commandos**. The commandos underwent a three month course being trained by American Special Forces. They received training in advanced infantry skills as well as training in first aid and tactical driving. They are fully equipped with US equipment and have received US style training. The new Afghan commandos are the most elite branch of the rising Afghan Army. By the end of 2008 the six ANA commando battalions were expected to be stationed in the southern region of Afghanistan assisting the Canadian forces (which could not be ascertained).<sup>41</sup>

On the ANA side, all training and education is managed and implemented by the newly formed ANA Training Command



(ANTACT). All training centers and military schools are under ANTACT.<sup>42</sup> The Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTC) also comes under ANTATC-HQ. Formal education and professional development courses for the senior ANA officers are conducted by US and Turkish military instructors at the newly established National Military Academy of Afghanistan (NMAA). The Command and General Staff College (CGSC), built by France in early 2004, prepares mid-level ANA officers to serve on brigade and corps staffs. The basic infantry training course for ANA troops was initially ten weeks, which later varied from eight to 14 weeks.

Headquarters at Camp Eggers, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), established in April 2006 and operating directly under US CENTCOM,<sup>43</sup> coordinates all programmes relating to training and mentoring of the ANA. It is ‘a joint service, coalition organization with military personnel from the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Poland, Albania, Germany, France and Romania, as well as contracted civilian advisors, mentors and trainers.’<sup>44</sup> To boost the ANA’s regional commands, an Afghan regional Security Integration Command (ARSIC) is attached to it. The objective is to carry forward the mission of the CSTC-A at the regional command level, ‘to plan, program and implement structural, organizational, institutional and management reforms of the Afghanistan National Security Forces’. Each ARSIC comprises a regional Corps Advisory Command (RCAC) responsible for planning, training and mentoring at the level of regional corps and below. Within each RCAC are a number of US-led Embedded Training (ETTs) whose functions range from ‘daily mission planning and preparation to safety, unit training and moral and ethical training’ for the ANA.<sup>45</sup>

### **Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR)**

The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of armed groups was initiated in 2003 through the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP). This programme has had a main focus on former soldiers of the Afghan National Forces.<sup>46</sup> DDR deals with transforming “combatants, whether they are organized in formal national security forces,

paramilitary units, or private militias, into non-combatants.” The DDR process has three steps. First, create a viable and seamless strategy that dismantles command and control structure and collocates soldiers to communities. Second, limit the circulation and individual possession of weapons and small arms. Third, provide employment, educational opportunities, and community reintegration programs. Dismantling the factional militias was the key to stabilization. It entailed curbing the ability and desire of former combatants to renew violence and creating a national capacity to transform the war-instigated structures into peace-building institutions. This process involved replacing the war machines with a credible legal and political system, re-establishing public confidence in state institutions, and shifting from a culture of violent opposition to a peaceful competition for power and influence.<sup>47</sup> In areas where DDR program was implemented and warlords were disarmed, ISAF units have been hiring these same warlords as private contractors.<sup>48</sup> DDR is now used as a verb: to “DDR” a militia formation is to incrementally demobilize it and canton the weapons. DDR may be employed bluntly as a threat while at the same time DDR is an ongoing process throughout the country.<sup>49</sup>

**PART – II**  
**ANALYSIS / ASSESSMENT**

**Innumerable Advisers**

Too many mentors are making the issue of ANA's training little complex. Often these advisers have overlapping responsibilities and jurisdiction. For instance, the above-mentioned but confusing training and mentoring entities carry a host of responsibilities, remaining from fighting the war on terror to supporting various humanitarian and reconstruction programmes, apart from building up the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Their main focus, however, has largely been on the militaristic agenda of the war on terror. With the induction and expansion of the ISAF under a separate NATO command, the Western coalition has become more diverse in terms of military doctrines and policy approaches.

Actually, most of the countries involved have no experience or the necessary expertise in counter-insurgency, and counter-guerrilla warfare. They are largely trained and oriented for conventional warfare. Trainers and mentors, especially from the former Warsaw Pact countries and from Mongolia, have largely retained their Soviet orientation, whereas the West European forces are largely modelled along the US military structures. This leads to disconnection among the entities involved in training and mentoring of the ANA. This not only is impediment in the standardization of training but it also serves as a hindrance to the evolution of the ANA as a unified force. The officer corps of the ANA is a mix of veterans of the Soviet-trained national army of the 1970 and 80s, veterans of the anti-Soviet resistance (including deserters from the old national army), former Mujahideen commanders, and more veterans of the anti-Taliban resistance. They are often at odds with US/NATO-trained young Afghan officers due to the wide gap in their orientation and military cultures.

## **The Language / Dialectical Barricade**

Afghanistan is a multi-lingual country where often people are not bi-lingual. The existing language barrier further complicates the training and mentoring process for lack of Dari and Pashto interpreters and translators.

Another issue detrimental to the quality of training remains illiteracy amongst the soldiers and officer corps. For instance, in one of the corps, approximately 80 per cent of the soldiers and 50 percent of the officers in are illiterate. Only 20 per cent of soldiers have had a professional knowledge of how to serve in an army, while the rest are former militia fighters or young recruits. A comprehensive educational programme would be required to address this issue.

## **The ANA'S Never-ending Miseries**

**Domestic Factors.** The strong tribal-ethnic character of Afghanistan, where people's loyalties as well as priorities to one's clan, tribe, and faction often supersede national considerations, makes the task of building national/state institutions a complex issue. The long-standing tribal/ethnic feuds, conflicts and competing ideologies are further hindrance to it. At the socio-political level, the relations between the centre and the province, between state and the people, have suffered badly. The ANA is far from being capable of carrying out operations against the Taliban without support from the Western coalition. It is also not in a position to disarm the militia group active in parts of the country and extend the writ of the central government. The Western coalition depended on the Mujahideen militias in their fight against the Al Qaeda and Taliban elements. The reluctance of the NATO to spare ground troops had, thus, made both NATO and the coalition forces dependent on them. Furthermore, the problems of desertion and difficult recruitment are recurring problems.

**Problems Faced by Japan-led DDR Programme.** A UN and Japan-led DDR Programme was launched in October 2003 with a three-year mandate to disband the militias comprising AMF. The

\$141 million programme was part of the wider Security Sector Reforms (SSRs). The pilot phase DDR began in the northern Kunduz province in October 2003. The remaining four pilot projects were conducted in Gradez, Kabul, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kandahar (where some Pashtun commander were active). The DDR had set a target of disarming 100,000 militiamen in three years. At the end of the programme, it was claimed that around 63,380 militiamen of the AMF were disarmed, resulting in the collection of 36,500 small and light weapons and 12,000 heavy weapons. The weapons recovered so far were reported to be old, rusted and often unusable. Therefore it is logical to conclude that many of the functional weapons are hidden and hoarded by the militia groups across the country. Unlike DDR, the DIAG Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme was launched in January 2005 had the support of the ISAF, the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A), and the European Union. According to DIAG assessments, there could be up to 120,000 persons, operating in over 1,800 IAGs. Since its inception, the DIAG is said to have fully or partially disbanded over 285 main IAGs that covers about 750-900 sub-groups. Reluctance to disarm grows when the post conflict government is politically clout and coercive capacity has to be enhanced through integrating or rebuilding the national military establishment to ensure a balanced representation of diverse ethnic, regional, and political factions.

**Logistical Inadequacies.** The ANA continues to suffer from logistical deficiencies at multiple levels. A June 2006 report by a retired US General had described the ANA as “miserably under-resourced”. He quoted Afghan Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak to reiterate that the ANA had “shoddy small arms, much worse than what Wardak had as a Mujahideen fighting the Soviets twenty years ago”.<sup>50</sup> Waradak went on to record several times that the ANA was suffering from a lack of air mobility, tactical ground mobility, fire power, and other logistics and did not have enough instructors and trainers. The report also acknowledged that the Afghan police were in a bad state.<sup>51</sup> The growing Taliban insurgency and the resultant risk to the life of an average ANA soldier given the logistical shortcomings are also believed to be major factors behind a roughly thirty percent desertion rate.

## **Western Resilience and Predicaments**

As the situation in Iraq worsened and the Taliban resurgence came to be publicly recognized in 2006-2007, the urgency of increasing the pace of development of the ANA was also realized. Given the rising cost of the Afghan war for the United State and NATO, both in terms of funding and casualties, the salary of an ANA is increasingly being regarded as a more economical option. According to an estimate, the salary of an ANA soldiers is about \$70 a month, whereas it costs \$4,000 per day to maintain a NATO soldiers in Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> The stalemate between the US and its NATO allies on how to tackle a resurgent Taliban has also enhanced the need to raise the ANA at the earliest. However, the larger question of creating an effective, well-trained, well-led and well-equipped ANA is being compromised in the process. The emphasis is apparently more on raising the ANA's numerical strength, rather than on the quality of soldiering, given the looming threat of growing violence and high rate of desertion in the ANA.<sup>53</sup> In case the quality is compromised on quantity as it appears the case to be, the attainment of envisaged objectives will be doubtful.

## **Renewed Focus**

Since 2006, the United States and NATO have renewed their efforts to raise the ANA. Efforts are being made to establish more regional training centres to augment the ANS's recruitment programmes.<sup>54</sup> In July 2006, the United States announced the decision to provide \$2 billion worth of military weapons and vehicles to the ANA, just before the ISAF entered southern Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup> On February 1, 2007, anticipating the spring offensive of the Taliban, the United States further provided 800 military vehicles and 12,000 heavy and light arms to the ANA.<sup>56</sup> In December 2007, the United States announced its decision to supply 60,000 M-16 rifles to the ANA during 2008.<sup>57</sup> On January 15, 2008, the Pentagon announced a one-time deployment of an additional 3, 2000 marines for a period of seven months beginning in March, some of whom would be engaged in the training of the ANA and ANP.<sup>58</sup> The US Special Forces are also said to be building up 4,000 strong six commando battalions for the ANA, each comprising 640

commandoes. The NATO member states too have joined the United States in reinforcing the ANA. Turkey,<sup>59</sup> Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Portugal, and Australia<sup>60</sup> have either supplied weapons, equipment, or helped in the process of training ANA forces since the beginning of 2007. Effort is also on to augment the Air Corps of the ANA. The United States is said to be spending \$20 million for the maintenance of the existing infrastructure.<sup>61</sup>

### **Role of Asian/Regional Countries**

There is also a view gaining currency among the Western countries that the role of regional countries and mechanisms has to be augmented in the ongoing efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. The regional/Asian countries have so far avoided any direct involvement either in the training and mentoring of the ANA or in assisting the Western forces by way of contributing troops due to the prevailing regional dynamics and power policies in Asia. However, countries like India, China, and Iran have been involved in training the Afghan police. Some of the Asian countries have also been providing non-lethal military equipment and other logistical aid to the ANA.

As a sign of US-NATO-Russia cooperation on Afghanistan, Russia agreed to extend transit facilities for non-lethal cargoes for NATO forces during the NATO Summit at Bucharest from April 2-4, 2008.<sup>62</sup> It is to be noted that ISAF and US coalition forces are heavily dependent on logistics transported via Pakistan because of the only viable route for logistics. However, despite her logistics related support and her consistent offers for participation in the rehabilitation process in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been totally ignored. Pakistan's inconsistent foreign policy towards Afghanistan and her role in ongoing War against Terror are considered to be the major contributing factors along with Indian growing influence in Afghanistan.

Russia had earlier contributed to ANA development especially from 2002-2005, and its military-technical assistance to Afghanistan reportedly totalled more than \$200 million. It also assisted the repairing of helicopters and transport planes and

‘delivered airport maintenance equipment, a missile defence system to protect the Kabul airport, communication equipment, truck, repair equipment, spare parts and manuals’.<sup>63</sup> In October 2005, Russia reportedly agreed to supply four helicopters and dozens of vehicles as well as communications and other equipments worth \$30 million,<sup>64</sup> but later suspended its military assistance to avoid ‘duplication’ of US military aid.<sup>65</sup>

Chinese assistance to the Afghan security picked up after the visit by a high level delegation from the Afghan defence ministry in October 2005. China agreed to provide military equipment worth \$2 million, and to train Afghan defence ministry officials.<sup>66</sup> In June 2006, China and Afghanistan signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) whereby China agreed to provide training to about 30,000 ANA soldiers by 2010 and allocated \$3 million for the training.<sup>67</sup> There have been reports of the United States, NATO, and the European Union expecting India to do more in ensuring the stability of Afghanistan by way of deploying its forces and training the Afghan military. Quoting the Indian daily Deccan Chronicle, a June 2006 report of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (UK) stated that the United States has been keen on Indian forces contributing to the security of areas in and around Kabul.<sup>68</sup>

The Indian Ministry of External Affairs stated that. ‘defence establishments in India hold training programmes from time to time for military personnel from other countries, including Afghanistan. However, there is no proposal to send Indian Army personnel to Afghanistan for training the Afghan Army’.<sup>69</sup> Even during the week-long visit of Afghan Defence Minister Wardak in April 2008, the Indian defence Minister A.K. Antony made it clear that India would continue with its efforts to rebuild Afghanistan but ‘there will not be any military involvement there’.<sup>70</sup> It is interesting to note that NATO has also been negotiating with the Arab countries to provide team of military instructors and trainers for the ANA.<sup>71</sup> There are already troops from four Muslim countries in the ISAF.<sup>72</sup> In addition, it was reported in march 2007 that Jordan was providing commando training to nearly 100 ANA soldiers at its military facilities in Jordan.<sup>73</sup> The contribution by Muslim countries is likely to impact positively on the approach of Afghans. There might be



improvement in the willingness to assume responsibility by Afghans in an earlier timeframe.

### **The Hitch**

There is a realization that the establishment of an effective Afghan security apparatus will take time for the ANA to develop into a self-sustaining force. Various alternative proposals have been made from time to time in view of the pressing need and somehow contain the Taliban guerrillas and bring down the level of violence in Afghanistan. There are many proposals under considerations. It ranges from arming/re-arming of the tribes in troubled areas for defence against the Taliban guerrillas; to cutting deals with the Taliban (now even US is considering rapprochements with Talibans); to use regional mechanisms to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan.<sup>74</sup>

Ironically, the differing perceptions in the trans-Atlantic alliance reinforce as well as undermine the development of the ANA as a force and as an institution. While the consensus on the need to train, equip, and strengthen the ANA is there, the urgency of checking the spiralling violence and militancy by adopting short-term measures such as cutting deals with local Taliban or creating tribal militia undermines this consensus and weakens the prospects of the development of the ANA. There is now a big question mark on the ANA's credibility and its perception among the Afghan people, which may accelerate the rate of desertion from the ANA. If the proposed arming or re-arming of the tribal militias, whether lashkars goes through and the Afghan situation worsens further, then joining these militias will be better option for these trained soldiers than staying within the ranks of a weak and inefficient ANA. The formation of informal entities like the Afghanistan national Auxiliary Police (ANAP) as an emergency measure to tackle the problem of local policing also takes the attention and resources away from the ANA and the ANP.<sup>75</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Afghanistan has made a remarkable recovery in five years from a war-convulsed, strewn, and shell-shocked post conflict

trauma case an economically emerging democracy. Afghans have voted from president, elected a parliament, and embraced a new constitution. Parliament has flexed its muscles, too, refusing to be intimidated by executive prerogatives.<sup>76</sup> History shows that in modern state-building an army is a necessary part of the security solution. Therefore, the development of new credible defense forces in Afghanistan is a necessary and appropriate step that the U.S. has failed to comprehend. While the goal is to create professional security institutions that will provide for the individual and collective security of Afghans, the magnitude of the challenges to accomplish this goal was underestimated. The challenges confronting the ANA are both immense in proportion and diverse in nature and include ethnic and tribal diversity; recruitment and retention issues; Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR); the presence of spoilers; and acceptance by the people as legitimate armed forces. A strong element of political uncertainty and unpredictability that characterizes the war in Afghanistan makes the task of assessing the further prospects of the ANA quite daunting. Even six years after its creation, the ANA is far from playing any significant role in containing or fighting the Taliban offensive. The whole effort aimed at firming up the ANA is caught in the competing agendas of various forces and entities, both domestic and external, involved in the Afghan war. A whole range of elements are arrayed against its development as a unifying national force with an identity of its own.

In Afghanistan, ANA can emerge as symbols of nationalism, modernization, and professionalism. The challenges highlighted in this article are complex, and the product of long histories but not impossible given the time, commitment, and resources of the U.S. and its coalition partners. The ideal handling of the challenges presented by ethnic and tribal diversity, recruitment and retention issues, the DDR process, coupled with the presence of spoilers all hinge on several factors coming together. First U.S. and coalition partners must stay the course and see through what has been started in both countries. Second is the accomplishment of the DDR process. Third, ANA must address ethnic imbalances, alter values of the senior leadership to represent the values of their society, understand their subordination to civil authority, come to appreciate

their service as a matter of patriotism, and finally win the respect of the people. Fourth and last, and foremost is the adoption of an Afghan democratic government that is committed to developing proper civil-military relations.

Thus far, the path to reconstruction, though rocky, has been navigable, but not every hairpin turn can be anticipated, and there are still bandits on the road. The country being dealt with is not Vietnam, not Colombia, nor is Bosnia. It is Afghanistan, and it needs to be seen in its own light.<sup>77</sup>

***“All you need to know is that there was a before 9/11 and an after 9/11. After 9/11 the gloves came off.”***  
– ***Cofer Black, CIA***<sup>78</sup>

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