

Russia's Policy Will Determine The Path to Peace in Afghanistan

The following is excerpted, with permission, from a report by the Institute for Demography, Migration and Regional Development and the Development Movement, Moscow 2008, titled, "The Path to Peace and Concord in Afghanistan Will Be Determined by the Position Russia Takes." It was prepared by researchers Yuri Krupnov (project leader), Ilnur Batyrshin, Andranik Derenikian, Boris Krupnov, and Serafim Melentiev. The full report is available online at http://afghan.idmrr.ru/afghan.idmrr.ru_eng.pdf.

The main goal of this report is to propose theses for discussion in order to elaborate a new policy on Afghanistan for Russia.

This report incorporates the results of discussions with Russian and Afghan experts, representing differ-

ent opinions on the situation in Afghanistan. It is also based on data obtained from Afghan, Russian, and foreign experts, the Regional Studies Center of Afghanistan (Kabul), analytical surveys done by the Modern Afghanistan Studies Center (Moscow), as well as the publications of Russian and foreign nongovernmental organizations and mass media.

The Problem of Afghanistan for Russia and the World

The ongoing civil war in Afghanistan, and the essential inability or unwillingness of a number of foreign states and their military contingents to bring peace and concord to the people of Afghanistan are the source of fundamental challenges, threats, and aggression for Russia and other countries, namely:

MAIN ROUTES OF HEROIN TRAFFICKING FROM AFGHANISTAN TO RUSSIA



- the drug threat and drug aggression, as a result of which, the majority of Russian drug addicts are taking Afghan opiates and heroin, while the overall number of people addicted to these most dangerous drugs is steadily increasing; furthermore, over the past five years we have observed a drastic growth in the export of cannabis group drugs from Afghanistan to Russia;

- the threat from transnational criminal groups, closely connected to the drug business and drug traf-

ficking from Afghanistan to Russia via the Middle (Central) Asian republics, gaining strength in Middle Asia;¹

- the threat from the presence of U.S. and NATO armed forces in Afghanistan and its neighbors in the

1. The authors have chosen the terms “Middle Asia” and “New Central East” for the English edition of their study, in preference to the traditional imperial “Central Asia.”

form of a network of “military super-bases.”

In general, due to the ongoing military actions and foreign interference in its affairs, Afghanistan has become a source of growing threats and aggression which affect the Russian Federation directly, as well as through the Middle Asian states, and increase general instability, undermining Russia’s overall capacities and strength.

At the same time, Russia, at present, does not possess proven methods and technologies to protect the country from the threats and aggression mentioned above. This has to do with the fundamentally new situation existing in Afghanistan, in which routine economic and military approaches and solutions are destined to be ineffective.

Analysis shows that only realistic way of eliminating the above-mentioned threats and aggression is the intensified development of the state in Afghanistan, transforming this country into a strong and self-sufficient nation. This challenge, in turn, requires the elaboration and implementation of totally new approaches, which will be comprehensive and relevant in the humanitarian, political-anthropological, and socio-economic spheres, contributing to building a strong and prosperous Afghan state.

There need to be new approaches and development methods, which, in their totality, would allow Afghanistan to gain its independence; build up and strengthen its statehood; carry out an intensified transition from a ruined society and economy with an expanding drug business, accounting for over half of the country’s GDP, to a prosperous, stable and consolidated society, ensuring a worthy life for every single Afghan citizen and ethnic group.

A Comprehensive Afghanistan Development Plan²

The establishment of a strong, united and independent state in Afghanistan is impossible without reconstruction of the basic conditions for its people’s life and activities.

In a situation where real unemployment is close to 80% and more than half of the GDP is formed by cultivation, production and illegal trafficking of drugs, the main task for the Afghan government and the international community is to set up life-support infrastructure, able to provide no less than 1 kWh of electricity,

2. The following excerpts are from Chapters 7-11 of the report.

one liter of drinking water and 10 liters of process water per day for each citizen of Afghanistan.

At present, all the proposed so-called “development plans” for Afghanistan have at least one important defect: lack of a strategic horizon. These plans for the most part cover the issues of rendering foreign donor help to Afghanistan, ignoring the issues of promoting the country’s economic self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Afghanistan needs a Comprehensive Development Plan built on new principles and approaches.

The method of intense improvement and recovery of the basic conditions for life and human activity requires a combination of elements for accelerated industrialization—advanced development of the means of production and of the real economy, i.e., economic development planning centered on estimated minimum and additional consumption, as well as on practically oriented fundamental science.

A transition from the present state to the one required will be impossible without the creation of strategic life-support infrastructure and full-scale productive forces. The latter should be based on practically oriented fundamental science, with the development of education and innovational advanced industry, which would be set up in Afghanistan through cooperation involving other countries.

Development of the energy sector, especially of the electric power industry, is a high priority for the economic development of Afghanistan. It can give an impetus to the development of the entire productive sector and dramatically raise the level and quality of life for the Afghan people. There is a great need for an Afghanistan State Electrification Plan, similar to the early 20th-Century GOELRO (State Plan for the Electrification of Russia), which provided the impulse for the Russian and Soviet industrialization. In particular, full cascades of power plants must be built on the rivers of Afghanistan, primarily on the Kunduz, Kokcha, Kabul, Helmand, and Hari Rivers. Furthermore, it is necessary to build or modernize the electric power lines from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to Afghanistan to provide additional electricity for the country’s needs.

Efforts must also be focused on solving the problem of providing Afghanistan with adequate drinking and process water. This is a crucial factor in overcoming the imbalance between population growth and the reduction of overall land under cultivation and agricultural output.

One of the strategic objectives must be the construction of a railway line on the route Mashhad (Iran)-Herat-Kandahar-Quetta (Pakistan), which would integrate Afghanistan into the global railway network and goods circulation system. This line must become the backbone of the Afghan Development Corridor, which would be a place of concentrated implementation of development projects and would make Afghanistan a strong and economically self-sufficient state, able to take care of its further development and prosperity independently.

It would be appropriate to examine and approve the Comprehensive Afghanistan Development Plan at an International Conference on Peace and Prosperity for Afghanistan, to be held in Kabul.

Exporting Development

In the present circumstances in and around Afghanistan, Russia has a unique opportunity not only to develop a new policy on Afghanistan, but to take that as an opportunity to elaborate new principles for its entire foreign policy.

Russia cannot continue to maintain its own existence as a world power (*mirovaya derzhava*) by further resigning itself to isolationism and provincialism. Russia has always existed and will exist with its full identity only as a world power, i.e., as a state entity which takes responsibility for formulating and working to solve world problems.

Implementation of the *mirovaya derzhava* doctrine requires countering the export of democracy, which currently dominates the world, with the export of development, i.e., the transfer of methods and technologies for the comprehensive development of countries, regions and spheres of activities. Only by exporting development to other countries will Russia be able to deal with civilizational, political, and economic challenges, while simultaneously maintaining its own development.

The export of democracy has revealed not only its forcible and violent nature, but also a plain failure to be effective. Moreover, in practice it has turned out to mean the export of financial and economic crisis and military conflict, i.e., the guaranteed export of instability.

Russia has a unique opportunity to turn its traditional role of helping other countries to develop, into a major principle of its foreign policy. Unfortunately, indiscriminate criticism of the Soviet past and an imagi-

nary intrinsic imperial character of Russia have disavowed and virtually wiped from public memory this central direction of Russian international activity, historically: its fruitful and devoted efforts to train development elites for other countries, providing them with scientific, educational and industrial-technological support.

Today, we must not only set the historical record straight, but also develop this hereditary feature of our nation into a principle of joint development, or co-development, which means the export of development as the targeted transfer of the full-set development capabilities to partner countries, enabling them to make qualitative breakthroughs.

The key idea of exporting development is to create full-fledged productive forces in the country under development, which would comprise three elements: developing education, fundamental practically oriented science, and innovational industry. In this sense, the export of development may be counterposed to the export of democracy, which implies the imposition of alien state organizational and social standards on the country which is a recipient of "democracy." Russia's mission in Afghanistan is to create full-scale production forces, appropriate for the goals which are set.

The necessary preconditions exist for adopting such a doctrine at the government level. *Inter alia*, it is significant that at the meeting of the Council of Heads of Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization on October 30, 2008 in Astana, Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin said that "values and models of development are becoming the subject of competition. We have to join our efforts to promptly complete the transformation of the global and regional security and development architecture by adjusting it to the new conditions of the 21st Century, when stability and prosperity are becoming inseparable concepts."

Russia needs a strong, safe, and friendly Afghanistan. Therefore, a Russian doctrine of exporting development can become the foundation for solving the current problems of this country. The export of development to Afghanistan would bring peace and prosperity to Central Asia, strengthen economic and political ties between the Middle Asian states and Russia and also would set an example to other great powers.

As a first step, the Russian Federation could propose to Afghanistan and other interested countries the elaboration of a Comprehensive Afghanistan Development Plan, and cover the initial expenses.



Afghanistan Development Projects

One of the main causes of the ongoing war in Afghanistan is that it lacks the economic conditions for its people to lead a decent and comfortable life. Many of those engaged in military actions do so because, in the present socio-economic situation, they are unable to support their families by their own labor.

Therefore, in order to stop the war in Afghanistan and restore peace in the country, a solution to the eco-

nomics and social problems of the country must be found, above all. The recovery of Afghanistan's ruined economy requires the elaboration of comprehensive development plans and projects, along with a mobilization of the forces and joint labor of all Afghan citizens.

The rural way and pattern of life are traditional for the Afghan people, and the country's development system must preserve and rely on this unique asset.

That is why progressive agriculture, organized in an exemplary way, should become the basis of Afghanistan's economy. A farmer confidently looking forward, providing for his family and leading a decent life based on his honest and highly skilled labor could become the symbol of Afghanistan as soon as ten years from now.

On the whole, the development of agriculture must involve not only the cultivation of crops, but also the creation of a processing industry for the types of crops being grown. The southern provinces of Afghanistan are famous for their fruit. Thus, cultivation and processing of fruit would be the most promising area of agriculture industry there.

During 30 years of the civil war, the culture of farming has been almost completely forgotten, such that today many people do not know how to till the soil and cultivate crops. The creation of a nationwide network of agricultural educational institutions, whose graduates will be able to organize highly efficient agriculture, must be one of the major projects. It will become prestigious to study at these universities and colleges, and their graduates will be respected in society as people working for the benefit of the entire Afghan population.

High-quality agricultural machinery is crucial for developing successful agriculture. Therefore, every international conference on Afghanistan's development should focus on issues of arranging deliveries of agricultural machinery to the country, providing maintenance service for the equipment, and sending specialists to the country to teach people how to use the machinery. The international community and donor countries should help, first and foremost, by providing special machinery, equipment, and qualified specialists, as well as by providing a guaranteed market for Afghanistan's agricultural products. This is preferable to monetary grants, most of which do not enrich the Afghan people, but rather line the pockets of intermediary organizations.

It would be reasonable to begin pilot projects in one or two provinces, which would later become models for the organization of development in a specific area. Comprehensive development of these experimental provinces would include agricultural, industrial, infrastructure, and energy projects, as well as road construction, organization of water supplies, etc.

We would propose Nangarhar and Helmand as the model provinces. It would be appropriate to establish

special administrative bodies responsible for the suggested projects.

Nangarhar development projects:

1. Reconstruction of the Jalalabad irrigation canal.
2. Reconstruction and construction of a complete cascade of power plants on the Kabul River (Naglu HPP, etc.) and construction of reservoirs along the river.
3. Establishment of sugar-cane plantations and construction of a sugar factory.
4. Revival of olive plantations and construction of an olive oil factory.
5. Setting up rose plantations and a rose essence and perfume production plant.
6. Reconstruction of the vegetable canning factory.
7. Revival of citrus farming for cultivation of lemons, oranges, tangerines, and grapefruits.

Helmand development projects:

1. Setting up pomegranate farms and factories for producing pomegranate juice. Afghan pomegranates are of higher quality than the African ones, making this project very promising for the southern provinces.
2. Establishment of sunflower plantations and factories for producing sunflower oil (this project could also be implemented in Badakhshan).
3. Establishment of saffron plantations. A kilogram of saffron sells for around \$2,500 on the world market. There is huge demand for it, making this a very profitable project.
4. Establishment of red pepper plantations.
5. Establishment of production and packaging of dried fruits.
6. Establishment of cotton plantations, as well as launching of clothing and textile production.
7. Establishment of vegetable storage facilities with refrigeration.

The Helmand development projects can also be implemented in other southern provinces, such as Oruzgan and Kandahar. In general, an individual list of development projects should be prepared for each province. The projects must be capable of palpably helping a province and creating jobs for its population. For instance, sugar beet plantations and sugar factories should be established in Baghlan: Afghanistan consumes around 800,000 tons of sugar per year, so there is strong demand for this product.

Such projects would give an impetus to the economic development of the provinces and create jobs for thousands of people.

A national oil and gas company should be established to exploit the Afghan oil and gas fields and organize oil extraction in Lowgar and Paktika, as well as gas extraction in Sar-e Pol and other places. Afghanistan has enough gas for its own needs, but this gas needs to be extracted. Russia's Gazprom could become a partner and supplier of gas transportation and extraction technologies.

Gold mining at the four largest gold deposits of the country, which are now being plundered, should be placed under firm state control.

It is necessary to restore industry rapidly according to a special plan: build a cement plant, a clothing factory, and chemical fertilizer factories in Mazari Sharif and other provinces, reconstruct the Jangalak factory in Kabul, etc. This requires giving up the free-market model in favor of establishing and supporting a class of Afghan industrialists. It is also necessary to restore and organize development of Soviet-built facilities. Afghanistan's development projects must not be limited to economic ones. Socio-cultural projects are also of great importance.

For example, there is a need to solve the problem of providing higher education opportunities for graduates of Afghan schools. There are around 5 million pupils in Afghan schools now, meaning that 300,000-450,000 children graduate each year. At present, the universities can accept only around 15,000 entrants, so there is a great gap between the total number of secondary school graduates and how many are able to receive a higher education. The number of university entrants should be increased up 60,000 people per year in the next ten years, while the overall number of university students should be increased from 45,000 to 250,000. This requires convening an international conference on the development of higher education in Afghanistan.

Cooperation with Neighbors for Development

A lasting peace in Afghanistan depends on two factors.

First, it is unacceptable to regard Afghanistan as an area for testing geopolitical projects. Thus, a timetable for the withdrawal of foreign military forces must be set, and any activity by a global or regional power in its own interests, at the expense of Afghanistan, must be prohibited.

Second, a gigantic resource for the stabilization and development of Afghanistan lies in the implemen-

tation by neighboring countries of a unified, coordinated Afghan development policy. Peace in Afghanistan can be achieved much sooner, if its neighbors combine their efforts to ensure security and stability in the country.

That is why Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China, India, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan must be broadly represented at the International Conference on Peace and Prosperity for Afghanistan, in Kabul, and participate in decision-making on securing peace in the country.

Cooperation with neighboring countries is also necessary for launching the development of Afghanistan. For example, construction of the Afghan Development Corridor Mashhad (Iran)-Herat-Kandahar-Quetta (Pakistan) will be impossible without the involvement of Iran and Pakistan, with the active participation of Russia as coordinator of the international efforts.

Afghanistan needs neighborly cooperation to rebuild itself as a united, sovereign, and economically effective state, which would not only put an end to the export of instability, drugs, and terrorism, but also serve as an example of accelerated industrialization and development.

Afghanistan's neighbors must help it achieve this goal in order to ensure firm cooperative security and stability. This would also help in forming a united, peaceful macro-region, the Novy Sredny Vostok (New Central East). Consequently, Afghanistan's neutral status needs to be guaranteed. This could become one of the key issues on the agenda of the International Conference on Peace and Prosperity for Afghanistan, where all countries of the Novy Sredny Vostok region should be represented.

The SCO Factor

Deepening of strategic partnership between the neighboring countries, aimed at solution of the Afghanistan problem, would be most productive within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The leading role of this organization in defining and solving key problems of the Eurasian region is widely recognized at the present time. It is also very important that all of Afghanistan's neighbors are either members of the SCO or have observer status, which creates unique conditions for elaborating and mutually agreeing upon a new strategy and plans for supporting the establishment of a strong and independent Afghan state.