

Part III

Transition to Transformation

In November 2010, the member states of NATO meeting in Lisbon announced that the process of transition to full Afghan responsibility and leadership in some provinces and districts in Afghanistan was on track to begin in early 2011.* This period of transition would see Afghanistan take charge of its own security throughout the country.

At the end of 2011, representatives of the international community and the Afghanistan Government assembled in Bonn where they made mutual commitments to work together to make the transition a success. They understood that the process of transition currently underway would come to a close by the end of 2014 and usher in the 'Decade of Transformation'.**

In this part of the report, the committee recognises that, with the assistance of donor countries such as Australia, Afghanistan has made considerable progress in lifting the living standards of its people and stabilising its government. The country, however, remains in need of substantial and continuing aid to help it transition toward self-reliance. There are no doubts that the challenges facing Afghanistan as it moves toward security and economic self-reliance are daunting. In the following chapters, the committee looks at what needs to be done to help Afghanistan ensure that the gains made to date are not lost and that they provide a firm footing on which to secure continuing improvement. It considers the effectiveness of Australia's aid program in light of the anticipated security and fiscal challenges facing Afghanistan in the coming years.

* North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Lisbon Summit Declaration, 20 November 2010.

** The International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, 'Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade', 5 December 2011.

Chapter 10

Security

10.1 Despite poverty, ill health, food shortages and poor education, Afghans cite the lack of security as their 'greatest problem'.¹ Afghanistan's vision is to have a stable Islamic constitutional democracy at peace with itself and its neighbours.² Indeed, the Government of Afghanistan places security as a priority goal and has added 'enhance security' as its ninth global Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in recognition of its critical role in achieving its other objectives.³

10.2 In this chapter, the committee considers the security situation in Afghanistan and its implications for social and economic development as the country continues on its path toward self-reliance.

Transition to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)

10.3 In Lisbon in November 2010, the nations contributing to ISAF announced the phased transition of security responsibility from ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).⁴ The following year in Bonn, the international community recognised the need for it to mobilise and maintain its support for a sustainable ANSF after 2014. Participants pledged to support the training, equipping, and financing of the ANSF and the development of its capabilities beyond the transition period. They registered their intention to continue funding on the understanding that over the coming years their contribution would gradually decline in a manner commensurate with Afghanistan's needs and its increasing capacity to generate domestic revenue. The international community saw a need for a defined, clear vision and for an appropriately funded plan for the ANSF.⁵

10.4 At the Chicago Summit in May 2012, NATO expressed confidence that, as agreed in Lisbon, the phased transition of security responsibility from ISAF to the

1 See UNDP, 'Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan', http://www.undp.org.af/demo/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=68 (accessed 30 August 2012) and Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy 1387–1391 (2008–2013)*, p. 5.

2 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy 1387–1391 (2008–2013)*, p. i.

3 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Millennium Development Goals 2010 Report*, October 2010, p. 12. See also UNDP, Millennium Development Goals in Afghanistan—Afghanistan MDGs Overview, http://www.undp.org.af/undp/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=62&Itemid=68 (accessed 2 January 2013).

4 North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, Lisbon Summit Declaration, 20 November 2010.

5 The International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, 'Afghanistan and the International Community: From Transition to the Transformation Decade', 5 December 2011, paragraph 13.

ANSF was on track and would be completed by the end of 2014.⁶ The objective was to secure substantial international financial funding in order to sustain strong Afghan defence and police forces. The international community agreed to contribute \$4.1 billion per year from 2015 to ensure Afghan security forces would have the resources required to assume full responsibility for the country's security.⁷ This pledge forms the revenue anchor which secures Afghanistan's long-term stability. Australia gave its support.⁸

Australia's contribution to Afghanistan's national security

10.5 Defence stated that Australia's fundamental goal in Afghanistan is to prevent the country from 'again being used by terrorists to plan and train for attacks on innocent civilians, including Australians, in our region and beyond'. It explained that to achieve that objective, Australia, along with its ISAF partners, was helping to stabilise the security situation in Afghanistan and working with the ANSF so that it could take over responsibility for the country's security by the end of 2014.⁹

10.6 Australia is the largest non-NATO contributor to the ISAF mission and has already contributed substantial funds to the transition of the security forces.¹⁰ In 2009, Australia pledged \$200 million dollars to the Afghan National Army Trust Fund and announced in May 2012 that it would contribute \$100 million annually for three years to help sustain the ANSF after 2014 following the international troop withdrawal.¹¹

10.7 In October 2012, the Prime Minister informed Parliament that beyond 2014, Australia would continue to have a national interest in denying international terrorism a safe haven in Afghanistan. It would still be in the national interest to remain part of the broad international effort to support Afghanistan and to ensure the Afghan Government remained an active partner.¹² The Prime Minister reported that there would be a new NATO-led mission after 2014—not for combat, but to train, advise and assist the ANSF. According to the Prime Minister, Australia would make a

6 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Chicago Summit Declaration on Afghanistan, 21 May 2012.

7 Ms Jennifer Rawson, *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 3.

8 Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012, <http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/statement-house-representatives-%E2%80%9Cprogress-transition-preparation-future%E2%80%9D> (accessed 1 November 2012).

9 *Submission 17*, p. [1].

10 Ms Jennifer Rawson, *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 3.

11 *Submission 20*, p. 4; and Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012.

12 Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012.

contribution to this mission including through the Afghan National Army Officer Academy'.¹³ This contribution is not eligible to be classified as ODA.

Progress toward the transformation decade

10.8 By June 2012, the third tranche of the transition was underway with all provincial capitals involved in the process. Eleven provinces had entered the phased handover of security responsibilities in their entirety and 75 per cent of the population were living in areas undergoing transition.¹⁴ NATO expected that during 2013, the Afghan forces would be in the lead for combat operations across the country. It stated:

As the Afghan forces step up, our own forces will step back into a supporting role. This will allow us to gradually and responsibly draw down our troops. But we will remain combat-ready until we have completed our ISAF mission at the end of 2014.¹⁵

10.9 At the beginning of 2013, President Karzai and President Obama expected that the full transition of security responsibility to the ANSF would be brought forward to the beginning of the northern spring, a few months earlier than anticipated at the Chicago conference.¹⁶

Transition in Uruzgan

10.10 The transition in Uruzgan started formally in July 2012 with the expectation that it would be completed in 12 to 18 months.¹⁷ Defence informed the committee that as Uruzgan province proceeded through transition, and Australia's commitment became more nationally focused, it was likely the proportion of Defence assistance would shift increasingly to financial contributions to the development of the ANSF.¹⁸

10.11 On 18 October 2012, the ADF assumed command of the Combined Team Uruzgan, which had been under the command of the United States, with the responsibility for operations within the province until 31 December 2014 or until

13 Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012. See also DFAT answer to written question on notice no. 1.

14 United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, A/66/855-S/2012/462, Report of the Secretary-General, 20 June 2012, paragraph 13.

15 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Press Conference, 21 May 2012.

16 The Hon Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence, Transcript, Press Conference, 'Minister for Defence—Press Conference—Perth', 15 January 2013, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2013/01/15/minister-for-defence-press-conference-perth-4/> (accessed 16 January 2013).

17 *Submission 17*, p. [1] and The Hon Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence, Press Release, 'Minister for Defence—Uruzgan province begins transition', 17 July 2012, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2012/07/17/minister-for-defence-uruzgan-province-begins-transition/> (accessed 16 January 2013).

18 *Submission 17*, p. [1].

decided otherwise by ISAF.¹⁹ In the Defence Minister's assessment, it was the appropriate time for Australia to take the leadership role in Uruzgan to help ensure that the transition in the province would be 'effected in a seamless way'.²⁰

10.12 In its new leadership capacity, Australia is largely responsible for assisting the ANA's 4th brigade to assume full control and security responsibility for the province. Defence informed the committee that Australia's Mentoring Task Force and Special Operations Task Group were working with ISAF and the Afghan security forces to accomplish this task within the short 12-18 month period.²¹

10.13 By the end of 2012, all four of the ANSF 4th Kandaks in Uruzgan were operating independently. This development allowed Australian forces to return from patrol activities and mentoring and training in forward operating bases to Australia's main multi-national base in Tarin Kowt. At the beginning of 2013, all advice, assessment and analysis indicated that the transition would be complete in Uruzgan Province by the end of 2013. According to the minister, Australia's status or modus operandi in Uruzgan had changed from mentoring and training to advising.²²

Security in Afghanistan

10.14 Even as the transition period got underway, military hostilities remained one of Afghanistan's most serious concerns and a major constraint on development. The UNHCR noted that despite measures pursued by international and national bodies to promote security and stability, the political situation in Afghanistan continued to be in flux. It described the state of affairs in Afghanistan as 'volatile, with continuing conflict and random violence causing further internal displacement'.²³

10.15 Indeed, armed conflict in Afghanistan incurred a greater human cost in 2011 than in previous years and marked the fifth consecutive year in which UNAMA had recorded an increase in civilian casualties. It documented 3,021 civilian deaths in 2011 in Afghanistan, an increase of eight per cent over 2010 (2,790 civilian deaths) and a 25 per cent increase from 2009 (2,412 civilian deaths). Since 2007 and as at the

19 Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012.

20 Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence, Media Release, 'Minister for Defence Stephen Smith—Australia ready to lead ISAF Combined Team—Uruzgan (CTU)', 11 September 2012, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2012/09/11/minister-for-defence-stephen-smith-australia-ready-to-lead-isaf-combined-team-%e2%80%93-uruzgan-ctu/> (accessed 18 September 2012).

21 *Submission 17*, pp. [1–2]; *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, pp. 48–49; *Submission 20*, p. [3].

22 The Hon Stephen Smith, Minister for Defence, Transcript, Press Conference, 'Minister for Defence—Press Conference—Perth', 15 January 2013, <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/2013/01/15/minister-for-defence-press-conference-perth-4/> (accessed 16 January 2013).

23 UNHCR, '2012 UNHCR country operations profile—Afghanistan', <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486eb6> (accessed 18 September 2012).

beginning of 2012, 11,864 civilians had been killed in the conflict.²⁴ In February 2012, UNAMA reported:

The record loss of the lives of Afghan children, women and men resulted from changes in the tactics of Anti-Government Elements and changes in the effects of tactics of parties to the conflict. Anti-Government Elements used improvised explosive devices more frequently and more widely across the country, conducted deadlier suicide attacks yielding greater numbers of victims, and increased the unlawful and targeted killing of civilians. Civilian deaths from aerial attacks by Pro-Government Forces increased in 2011, in spite of a decrease in the number of aerial attacks and an overall decline in civilian deaths attributed to Pro-Government Forces.²⁵

10.16 Although there was a reduction in civilian casualties from armed conflict in 2012, the human cost remained high at 7,559 civilian casualties causing the deaths of 2,754 civilians. The overall figure of civilian casualties included 1,302 children—814 injured and 488 killed.²⁶ UNAMA documented the following breakdown of civilian deaths in Afghanistan in 2011 and 2012:

Date	Number of civilian deaths	By anti-government elements	By pro-government forces	Not attributed
2011	3,021	2,332	410	279
2012	2,754	2,179	316	259

10.17 According to the UN mission, in 2011 conflict and insecurity displaced 185,632 Afghans, an increase of 45 per cent from 2010. It stated further:

Thousands more Afghans lost their livelihoods and property, were denied access to justice, had their right to freedom of movement restricted or taken away, and had their access to food, health care and education compromised. The unremitting toll of civilian casualties coupled with pervasive intimidation affected many civilians directly, and many more indirectly, by fuelling uncertainty, tension and fear.²⁷

24 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2011, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2012, p. 1.

25 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2011, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2012, p. 2.

26 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2012, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2013, pp. 1 and 10.

27 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2011, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2012, p. 7.

In 2012, the number of Afghan civilians newly displaced as a result of the armed conflict reached 94,299.²⁸

10.18 Looking ahead, some Afghan experts and Afghans themselves have raised doubts about the capacity of the ANSF to provide security and stability, including the potential for members of the ANSF to shift alliances and the danger of the Afghan Army fragmenting.²⁹ The ADB was of the view that security had been and would continue to be a major issue in Afghanistan:

It is unlikely to improve quickly or greatly and could significantly worsen after most of the foreign troops in the country complete their scheduled withdrawal in 2014.³⁰

10.19 The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit thought it improbable that conflict would end in the next few years. It noted that the Taliban were entrenched and had demonstrated their capacity to endure.³¹ The UN Secretary-General made a similar observation in September 2012:

Little has changed in the underlying dynamics to mitigate a deep-seated cycle of conflict. Furthermore, a diminished international presence will have a significant financial impact in many areas that, at least in the short term, may even exacerbate predatory behaviour with a reduced flow of money encouraging criminality.³²

10.20 The UNHCR concluded likewise:

Insecurity, political instability and economic and social problems are likely to continue in 2012 and may increase as international forces transfer security responsibilities to national partners.³³

10.21 In 2013, the UNHCR continued to report that the security situation in Afghanistan was 'volatile' and obtaining humanitarian access to many areas remained impossible.³⁴

28 United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Annual Report 2012, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, February 2013, p. 13.

29 *Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace, 'Laying the Foundations for an Inclusive Peace Process'*, December 2011, p. 5. See also Professor Gordon, London School of Economics, Oral Evidence taken before the International Development Select Committee, 3 July 2012.

30 ADB, *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Country Assistance Program Evaluation, Independent Evaluation CE-28, 2012-2013*, paragraphs 36, 38 and 92.

31 Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, *Afghanistan Looking Ahead: Challenges for Governance and Community Welfare*, Research briefs for the 2011 Bonn Conference, p. 18.

32 United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, A/67/354-S/2012/703, 13 September 2012, paragraph 62.

33 UNHCR, '2012 UNHCR country operations profile—Afghanistan', <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486eb6> (accessed 18 September 2012). See also ADB, *Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Country Assistance Program Evaluation, Independent Evaluation CE-28, 2012-2013*, paragraph 10. The evaluation observed that armed conflict continued and concerns existed that 'security conditions could worsen with the slated departure of the international military force'.

10.22 Even now with the presence of ISAF forces, parts of Afghanistan are beyond the reach of development activities because of poor security.³⁵ For example, in Uruzgan province where Australia has command of the Combined Team Uruzgan, the Taliban remain active.

Security in Uruzgan

10.23 The 2012 TLO Provincial Profile on Uruzgan noted that although the Taliban may have been weakened and displaced from long-held areas, they were by no means defeated in the province. It recorded that for some time the insurgency had relied on the 'use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), targeted ambushes and assassinations over face-to-face combat'. Such tactics had proven successful for the insurgents and remain an ever-present threat.³⁶ The TLO report cited four main sources of insecurity in the province:

- Taliban operations that target ANSF, especially the ANP, with IEDs as the weapon of choice for the insurgency. They also man shadow checkpoints on major roads, conduct ambushes or targeted assassinations of pro-government leaders, and occasionally destroy government buildings, including schools and telecommunication infrastructure. The insurgents' soft warfare repertoire includes threatening night letters and house visits to prominent elders.
- Taliban requests for food and shelter. Communities often give in begrudgingly out of fear, only to be targeted by the ANSF and the international military forces (IMF) who interpret such acts as active rather than coerced assistance to the insurgents.³⁷
- In-fighting amongst the local communities themselves, either along tribal/sub-tribal lines or in the form of blood feuds between families—inter-tribal divisions are often exploited, splitting tribes into pro-government and pro-insurgency camps. Leadership competitions can easily morph into a broader competition between Taliban and ANSF/IMF.³⁸
- Uruzgan is a relatively isolated province with comparatively little strategic importance to either the insurgency or the IMF. ANSF and IMF continue to make advances in Uruzgan but it is unlikely that they will be able to secure the entire province until contested areas in neighbouring provinces, especially

34 UNHCR, '2013 UNHCR country operations profile—Afghanistan', <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e486eb6> (accessed 6 March 2013).

35 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. x.

36 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 115. It cited the destruction of the AWCC cell tower and the new Etisalat transmitter in Shah Mansur village and in July the RTA building, p. 46.

37 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 115.

38 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, pp. xiii and 116.

northern Helmand, the southern districts of Ghazni, and northern Kandahar are brought under government control. The terrain in Uruzgan is simply too difficult to hold the province against insurgents moving in from other areas.³⁹

10.24 The report concluded that as eventful as the last 18 months were, '2012 and beyond will likely be even more eventful as powerbrokers and the insurgency position themselves for the pending withdrawal of IMF in Uruzgan'.⁴⁰

Post 2014

10.25 A number of witnesses to the inquiry voiced similar concerns about the security situation once the international troops withdraw. A particular worry was that the government's control over more remote areas would shrink and that the security situation in some provinces such as Uruzgan would deteriorate and become 'no-go territories'.⁴¹ Caritas noted:

Withdrawal of troops in Afghanistan will have an impact on security; ex-combatants must be reintegrated, women's rights protected and the accountability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is yet to be seen. The International Community at present works on the assumption that the government in Kabul will remain in place in one form or another, either through power sharing or peace agreements. The fact that the former Taliban regime is welcomed in some areas of the country needs to be considered from a security perspective.⁴²

10.26 Care Australia likewise held reservations about continuing conflict in Afghanistan:

...as the security situation in Afghanistan becomes more uncertain, gains made over the past decade are in jeopardy. The withdrawal of international forces, handover of security responsibilities to Afghan forces, and manoeuvring of power-holders ahead of the presidential elections in 2014 generate challenges to security and stability. Aid agency staff and the communities we work with fear that increasing and new forms of conflict and instability will emerge.⁴³

10.27 Professor Maley suggested that if the April 2014 elections were tainted by the same kind of fraud that afflicted the 2009 election, the volatile environment produced by the withdrawal of ISAF could 'well lead to a complete collapse within the country'.⁴⁴ He observed:

39 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 116.

40 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 125.

41 See for example, Professor Howes and Jonathon Pryke, *Submission 14*, p. 3 and answer to written question on notice, no. 2.

42 *Submission 10*, p. 4.

43 *Submission 15*, p. 2.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 1.

The year 2014 is not only the culmination point for the so-called transition process in the security sphere, but it is also the scheduled year for the next Afghan presidential election. This combination of uncertainty in the security environment and intense political competition means that the next phase in Afghanistan's life will be highly combustible.⁴⁵

10.28 He stated further that were the political process to unravel in Afghanistan because of the fraudulent election then there was every risk that the Taliban would come surging back.⁴⁶

10.29 Despite the continuing armed conflict, and the foreseeable worsening of security conditions with the departure of international military forces, DFAT assessed that Afghanistan would 'not regress to the terrible conditions of the recent past.' In part this situation could be attributed to 'the tangible and positive impact of international—including Australian—development assistance'.⁴⁷ It recognised that the political, security and development environment was complex and evolving and would remain so past 2014 and further that forming judgements on what may happen post 2014 was challenging.⁴⁸ According to DFAT, Afghanistan will be 'beset by security, governance and development challenges for decades to come'.⁴⁹

10.30 Defence informed the committee that it expected the ANSF to be 'a confident and capable force to provide security for the Afghan people'.⁵⁰ Even so, it quoted from the Prime Minister's statement to Parliament in October 2012:

...we know that as Afghan forces increasingly take the lead through 2013, the Taliban will seek to test them. We know that not every valley or village in Uruzgan or Afghanistan will be peaceful or free from insurgency.⁵¹

10.31 The Prime Minister referred to the difficult days ahead.⁵²

Conclusion

10.32 Australian government agencies working in Afghanistan recognise that the Afghan Government and the international community face significant obstacles and challenges to restoring peace.⁵³ They accept the likelihood of continuing insecurity,

45 *Submission 4*, p. [5].

46 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 12.

47 *Submission 22*, p. 1.

48 DFAT, answer to written question on notice no. 1.

49 *Submission 22*, p. 1.

50 Answer to written question on notice no. 11.

51 Answer to written question on notice no. 11.

52 Answer to written question on notice no. 11 and Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, Statement to the House of Representatives—'Progress in transition, preparation for the future', 31 October 2012, <http://www.pm.gov.au/press-office/statement-house-representatives-%E2%80%9Cprogress-transition-preparation-future%E2%80%9D> (accessed 1 November 2012).

53 See also DIAC, *Submission 9*, p. 3.

political instability and economic and social problems in Afghanistan during the transition and into the transformation decade.⁵⁴ While views differ on the future security situation in Afghanistan, all agree that it is unpredictable and that the legacy of Afghanistan's long and destructive history of political turbulence and of civil and military upheavals will continue to present enormous difficulties for Afghans.

54 See also DIAC, *Submission 9*, p. 3.