



RESEARCH PAPER

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Research Paper

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Editorial: NATO in the Rim Lands

During the Anciens' Seminar, Dr. Eric Chevalier addressed the changes that had taken place in the Balkans over the last ten years, emphasizing the important role played by the international community in curbing hatred and ethnic divisions in the region. At the same time, regardless of whether the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) does in fact emerge as a model for the region after the upcoming elections, the outlook for Kosovo will largely depend on the understanding reached between Belgrade and Pristina. And, although the incidents in March did succeed in catching the attention of the international community, it was only to remind the latter that Kosovo's destiny would depend on the sharing of structures and responsibilities within the entire region. In this context, it should be noted that Serbia Montenegro continues to be of key importance for regional stability and that Albania cannot be dismissed of any prospective integration. While Slovenia is acting as a model for Croatia's complete integration into Europe, Bosnia-Herzegovina's immediate future will depend on a number of factors, not least the leadership role played by the local EU representative. The hand-over of NATO's mission to the EU in Bosnia-Herzegovina later this year will be a clear sign of the larger international community's involvement in post-conflict management. All things considered, any post-conflict situation has to be handled with humility, determination and pragmatism.

With regard to Afghanistan, Dr. Samina Ahmed foresaw that the longer it takes to count the votes, the earlier they are likely to be contested by those who are defeated at the polls. Strangely enough, it would seem that the protests are likely to die down as quickly as they are raised, which leads one to think, as Dr. Ahmed does, that any further postponement of the parliamentary elections will remain the core issue in engineering democracy for Afghanistan. Nevertheless, as one of President Karzai's challengers put it, nine million votes cast in the ballot box are not to be disdained. Given the facts, these elections may reasonably be claimed to mark the fulfillment of a twentieth-century promise at the beginning of the twenty-first century, namely, the compelling nature of democracy. Despite the difficulties that lie ahead, the ball is now rolling and there is no way of stopping it. No legitimacy concerns or structural pessimism can now obscure the likelihood of a high turnout at these late elections or the fact that Pashtuns, Tadjiks, Uzbeks and Hazara seem to have put aside their differences and lined up together towards the polling stations for the very first time in this country's battered history. That being said, and against a backdrop of rampant drug or other criminal trafficking, it must be emphasized that although the ethnic card does seem to have dropped out of the pack, there are still plenty of other cards left, such as those of irredentism, ineradicable warlordism and the spread of radical fundamentalism, that would put Afghanistan where it was before. These cards have not yet dropped out of the sleeve but they will do eventually. It will all depend on whether the players can be found to play them. Neither NATO nor the international community can afford to see trickery or failure in Afghanistan ...

André BANDEIRA, Research Advisor

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Comme chaque année à la mi-septembre, le Collège de Défense de l'OTAN accueille le séminaire des Anciens qui réunit toutes les promotions passées du Cours principal. Cette année, le thème général du séminaire portait sur le rôle de l'OTAN "à la périphérie". Les deux réflexions qui vous sont proposées ci-après émanent de praticiens des régions où l'OTAN

intervient actuellement, les Balkans et l'Afghanistan. Tous deux tentent de tirer les leçons de plusieurs années de travail de la communauté internationale en matière de reconstruction d'Etats défaits et énoncent les principes généraux et les précautions indispensables pour de futures interventions dans les zones de crise aujourd'hui.

Laurence AMMOUR, Assistante de publication

L'OTAN et les Balkans: pistes pour une question qui se rappelle à nous

Eric CHEVALLIER¹

Parler des Balkans en cette fin d'année 2004, c'est peut-être commencer par un regard rétrospectif sur ces dix dernières années au cours desquelles la communauté internationale s'est investie pour refroidir la crise aiguë apparue au début des années 90, lors de la dislocation de la fédération yougoslave.

1- De ces années de crise balkanique, on peut dégager quelques leçons majeures qu'il convient de méditer aujourd'hui et d'inclure dans notre panorama stratégique :

- Une intervention internationale, y compris ayant recours à l'emploi de la force, s'avère parfois nécessaire et elle est d'autant plus utile qu'elle est précoce. Dans les Balkans, le nombre des victimes est inversement proportionnel à la précocité du recours à la force: plusieurs centaines de milliers en Bosnie Herzégovine, quelques milliers au Kosovo, quelques centaines en Macédoine. Même si bien sûr ces situations ne sont pas parfaitement comparables, et que l'avenir reste incertain, ces chiffres sont tout de même très significatifs.
- L'intervention internationale est d'autant plus efficace que les acteurs sont unis, que ce soit notamment à l'intérieur et de chaque côté de l'Atlantique, ou entre les organisations impliquées (ONU, OTAN, UE, OSCE,...).
- Dans la période qui suit le conflit, la sécurité s'avère être le facteur clé sans lequel rien n'est

possible ; elle dépend notamment du volume de la force engagée et de la mobilisation de tous les acteurs locaux (responsables politiques, anciens combattants, police, justice ...).

- La réconciliation des parties et la démocratisation sont des processus qui s'inscrivent dans le temps long. Il faut en reconnaître la complexité et le caractère nécessairement incertain et erratique. Quant au développement économique, il constitue le moteur de la stabilisation sur le long terme.
- Dans tous ces domaines, on observe un écart considérable entre les attentes de la population et des acteurs engagés dans la crise, et la réalité du terrain. Cet écart engendre de multiples frustrations qui ont elles-mêmes un impact négatif sur le processus. Il faut prendre garde à ne pas trop promettre mais en même temps il faut mobiliser les forces avec des projets ambitieux.

La crise dans les Balkans s'inscrit dans un continuum de tensions qui interagissent et qu'on ne peut aisément dissocier.

2 - En cette fin d'année 2004, on note un retour de la question des Balkans au premier plan des préoccupations internationales. L'illusion se dissipe d'un gel durable des tensions dans la région.

Le réveil de la question kosovare à la mi-mars, les rendez-vous à venir concernant la statut final, l'échéance d'élections à court terme au Kosovo et dans la zone pourraient modifier profondément la

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donne régionale et les fragiles équilibres actuels, comme le montre un rapide tour d'horizon de la région.

- Au Kosovo, la lecture des événements de mars dernier suggère quelques pistes pour la stratégie de la communauté internationale. Le statu quo n'est pas tenable et les communautés qui y vivent aspirent maintenant à pouvoir se projeter dans l'avenir, quel qu'il soit. La stabilité dépend de perspectives dressées pour le futur, que ce soit au plan politique comme au plan économique. La question de la sécurité des minorités dépend de la réactivité de la KFOR et de la MINUK, y compris la police, de la mobilisation de leur leadership, et de leur volonté et capacité à travailler ensemble – les récentes accusations réciproques à propos des événements de mars est stérile et déstabilisante. Elle dépend aussi fondamentalement de l'engagement personnel et immédiat des leaders locaux. Quant à la question du statut du Kosovo, elle doit reposer largement sur le dialogue entre Belgrade et Pristina mais la solution qui pourrait en émerger doit tenir compte des équilibres régionaux. Il faut également garder à l'esprit que toutes les communautés serbes vivant au Kosovo n'ont pas exactement les mêmes intérêts dans ce domaine ; celles vivant au Nord de l'Ibar étant beaucoup moins rétive à l'idée d'une partition qui les rattacherait officiellement à Belgrade.
- Le devenir de la Serbie-Montenegro est au cœur de la stabilité régionale. La transition démocratique en cours ne suit pas la trajectoire idéale comme l'ont montré les récentes élections municipales et législatives. Mais on ne peut pas promouvoir la démocratie et en contester les résultats. La nécessaire coopération avec le TPIY doit se poursuivre mais en tentant de minimiser les risques de cristalliser une résistance nationaliste. La réforme du secteur de la sécurité est majeure.
- La Croatie suit un schéma slovène dont on peut se féliciter en prenant le chemin d'une intégration européenne rapide et complète.
- En Bosnie-Herzégovine, trois facteurs retiennent l'attention. Tout d'abord l'importance du facteur humain incarnée par le leadership qu'exerce Paddy Ashdown. Dans les zones en crise, certes le terrain compte mais plus encore la qualité des responsables. Ensuite, la relève de l'OTAN par l'UE qui aura lieu à la fin de l'année et qui engage ces deux structures dans une dynamique de réussite car le bilan que l'on tirera de l'action de la

communauté internationale sera global. La réflexion sur l'après Dayton reste embryonnaire, elle est pourtant nécessaire.

- En Macédoine, le référendum prévu au mois de novembre sera déterminant pour la poursuite d'un processus que la communauté internationale n'est pas infondée à qualifier de « success-story » jusqu'à aujourd'hui. Si l'histoire se poursuit, ce pays constituera une forme d'exemple réussi d'arrangements politiques conclus à temps et de réduction en douceur de fractures réelles. Mais la période qui s'ouvre sera cruciale, et doit conduire à ne ménager aucun effort, sous peine de voir s'effondrer les acquis.
- L'Albanie parfois oubliée dans le dynamique régionale peut pourtant y jouer rôle utile, à condition de l'y encourager tout en maintenant un dialogue politique exigeant.

3 - Que peut-on en conclure pour le devenir des Balkans? La nouvelle question balkanique posée par la dislocation du cadre yougoslave il y a plus de dix ans doit continuer à être l'objet des soins attentifs de la communauté internationale. Cette dernière doit continuer à y déployer d'importants efforts pour réussir la sortie d'une crise qui aura marqué l'histoire européenne.

Dans cette perspective, des questions cruciales se dégagent qui conditionnent l'avenir de l'ensemble des Balkans:

- Du traitement de la question kosovare dépend l'équilibre général de la région ; l'évaluation des standards requis relèvera essentiellement d'une appréciation politique et non de pas de l'état d'achèvement des critères techniques. Le principe de réalité doit s'appliquer au Kosovo.
- C'est d'une réflexion sur la dimension régionale de la sécurité et de la stabilité dans les Balkans que la communauté internationale a besoin désormais, réflexion qui intègre une vision globale de la réforme du secteur de la sécurité et du renforcement de l'état de droit dans tous les pays concernés.
- A cet égard le rôle pacificateur et normalisateur du Partenariat pour la Paix est important et la perspective de leur insertion dans l'Europe est essentielle; ils ouvrent la voie à une évolution des Etats balkaniques sur le partage des souverainetés et la mise en commun des intérêts et des responsabilités régionales. Mais pour être efficaces, ces perspectives doivent être plus concrètes.
- Le développement économique de la région reste une condition sine qua non de sa sécurité à

terme. Elle est nécessaire à la lutte contre l'économie grise qui alimente les filières criminelles organisées.

La gestion des situations post-conflits est difficile et exigeante. Il faut l'aborder avec humilité, détermination et pragmatisme, et en reconnaissant les tensions dialectiques entre légitimité et légalité, entre efficacité immédiate et viabilité à long terme. La communauté internationale a beaucoup appris

dans les Balkans et est désormais mieux armée pour agir avec plus d'efficacité dans cette zone comme ailleurs. Encore faut-il tenir compte des enseignements que nous en avons conjointement tiré, et notamment du plus déterminant d'entre eux: les résultats obtenus, qui dépendent beaucoup du contexte local ainsi que du cadre et de la démarche choisis, montrent que l'implication des populations locales et le dialogue entre les parties, doivent toujours être au cœur de la démarche.

NATO in Afghanistan: The Challenges of Political Reconstruction

Samina AHMED¹

NATO/ISAF's presence in Afghanistan is particularly significant as the country approaches yet another landmark of the Bonn process, presidential elections on 9 October, in just a little over two weeks' time. The challenges the mission entails are obviously linked to the directions that security policy is likely to take in a country that has yet to emerge from conflict. Keeping the peace in such an environment is hazardous at best but NATO, as successive Secretary Generals have repeatedly stated, cannot afford to fail in its first out-of-area mission.

The security environment in which NATO has to fulfil its mandate is shaped collectively by the challenges of political reconstruction and legitimacy, ethnic tensions, the threats posed by spoilers, including warlordism and factional infighting, the resurgence of the Taliban, the presence of al Qaeda, narcotics trafficking and economic reconstruction. And it is on this security environment that this presentation will focus.

Political Reconstruction and Legitimacy: Presidential Elections and After

Elections and the transfer of power to an elected representative government from a semi-representative set-up was meant to be the final step in the Bonn process. Yet it was decided to hold only half an election, to the executive, and to postpone

elections to the legislature. The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) overseeing the election process and composed of UNAMA representatives and President Karzai's nominees decided to postpone parliamentary elections until April 2005, but to hold presidential elections in October. The formal justification for postponing the parliamentary elections, as cited in the UN Secretary General's 12 August report, focuses on the difficulty of allocating parliamentary seats or, in other words, the problem of defining district boundaries in the absence of a credible census. UN and Afghan government officials also cite another justification, namely, the importance of effective DDR to ensure that the parliamentary polls, which could be more prone to intimidation than the presidential ones, are held in a free and fair manner.

Yet the postponement of the parliamentary polls has raised suspicions in some Afghan political quarters of a deliberate attempt to centralize all power in the office of the president, who will continue to rule without any checks and balances. As an opposition presidential candidate told ICG, he had little faith in the JEMB's impartiality and rejected the basis for postponing the polls. After all, he insisted, the presidential polls were also being held in the absence of a credible census or DDR. Given these suspicions, it is essential that presidential polls are held in as free and fair a manner as possible under

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the present circumstances, and that every attempt is made to hold parliamentary polls in accordance with their scheduled, albeit postponed, date. Care must also be taken to ensure that all candidates have equal opportunities and access to government resources for conducting their presidential campaigns. The legitimacy of the polls will, after all, determine the legitimacy of the future government and its ability to strengthen governmental institutions and extend its authority. And, with the assistance of the international community, the United Nations must help the Afghan government to fix the flaws in the process.

Priority areas must include measures to ensure the security of ballots, voters, polling stations, and the overall security environment. Primary responsibility for the security of ballots, voters and polling stations will not lie with ISAF or OEF but with the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army. Yet the ANA's ability to provide comprehensive security is hampered by its limited numbers. Some observers also believe that a hastily trained police force might not be adequate for the task. While an expanded ISAF/OEF presence during the presidential elections is certainly a step forward, ISAF cannot play a hands-on role in ensuring the security of the ballot. The presence of international and domestic monitors is therefore essential. Domestic observers will mainly be drawn from the newly formed, and US AID-funded, Fair and Free Elections Foundation for Afghanistan (FEFA). However, it appears that there might be only some 1500 observers who could, at best, cover less than a quarter of the 25000 polling sites and the 5000 polling stations. And international observers from the European Union and the OSCE could number far less than a hundred.

Moreover, given the insecure environment, domestic observers might be limited to towns and cities and possibly also safe areas of the countryside. Security precautions for the international observers will also restrict their movement. It will also take time for the votes to be counted after they have been transferred to the counting centres and prior to the results being announced. The longer the delay in announcing the results the more likely they are to be contested by those who lose out at the ballot box.

Even then, it appears that the opposition might be dissuaded from disrupting the post-election process if parliamentary elections are on the horizon. Political bargaining will then focus on the possibility of participating in the parliamentary polls. There are some disturbing signs, however, that a decision

might be taken to postpone the parliamentary polls once again, possibly until the fall of 2005. As yet, the JEMB is paying little attention to preparations for the parliamentary polls. While the international community has yet to pledge the necessary funds for the polls, the UN could and should begin an urgent fund-raising campaign. The JEMB and the UNAMA must also begin urgent preparations for a census and the training of election staff as well as staff for the future parliament. The longer the delay the easier it will be for spoilers to exploit domestic, particularly regional and ethnic, grievances.

Ethnic Tensions and the Role of Spoilers

Emerging as it is out of a decade-old civil war, fought mainly along regional and ethnic lines, Afghanistan could either stabilize politically or once again splinter along ethnic and regional lines. The ethnic divide is well known. With a majority Pashtun population, followed by the Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara communities, the major power brokers in Afghanistan, the state and the sub-state, represent their ethnic kin, as do their nascent political parties. Karzai, who represents, by ethnic origin, his Pashtun kin, is in a particular bind. Given that the Taliban owed their support far more to their ethnic identity than to any ideological leanings, Coalition operations have been conducted mainly in the Pashtun majority south and east. Pashtun alienation has resulted in increased support for a resurgent Taliban in provinces such as Zabol, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Paktika and Nargarhar. In recent weeks and months, a resurgent Taliban and other spoilers, including elements of Gubaddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami, have joined forces to disrupt the electoral process and indeed the political and economic reconstruction of the state itself. Attacks on NGOs, such as the MSF, are forcing local and international NGOs to reduce their presence or even, as in the case of the MSF, to temporarily end their operations in Afghanistan. Attacks on Afghans associated with the government, including election workers, bode ill for the elections unless this threat is contained. And attacks on the OEF have also escalated, claiming casualties and further destabilizing the Pashtun belt that borders on Pakistan.

Should the Taliban successfully disrupt elections in the southeast, there could be a lower than expected turnout in these regions, disenfranchising a significant segment of the Pashtuns. Domestic spoilers could then claim that the Pashtuns were deliberately excluded to ensure that they did not have a voice and a say in the making of the new central government. President Karzai's links to the

Northern Alliance, that have served him well in the past, have also served him ill since he was perceived to have given inordinate power to the Tajiks, particularly the Panjshiris. Domestic observers will be watching to see how the present rift between Karzai and his former Northern Alliance partners plays out, in the form of the emergence of a strong presidential rival in Yunis Qanuni, the Education (and formerly Interior) Minister. If the Panjshiri Tajiks have jumped on the bandwagon, with Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah and Marshal Fahim joining forces with Qanuni, to retain and expand their influence in the centre, all the other actors, including Karzai, are also playing the ethnic card. Perhaps in a bid to divide the Tajiks, Karzai appointed Ahmad Zia Masood, Ahmed Shah Masood's brother and son-in-law of Tajik leader and former president Rabbani, as his Vice-Presidential running mate. Karzai might also perhaps intend to undermine the standing of another ethnic rival and former minister, Mohaqqueq, by appointing a Hazara, Khalili, as his other running Vice-Presidential running mate.

If Karzai or any other candidate fails to win 51% of the vote, there will be a second round, further delaying the formation of the government and the parliamentary polls. The Northern Alliance's internal divisions could make Karzai's task easier at the polls. Taking no chances, however, Karzai is also attempting to strike a deal with Northern Alliance leaders by offering senior posts in return for support in the presidential polls. Should this bargaining bear fruit, Qanuni and Abdullah Abdullah could retain their present cabinet posts and Fahim could be given yet another post, perhaps in the upper house of parliament. Yet this strategy could also backfire. Backdoor deals will inevitably strengthen the bargaining position of the Northern Alliance leadership, as they did during the Emergency Loya Jirga and the Constitutional Loya Jirga. DDR could also be further delayed as concessions are made to major and minor warlords. Moreover, Karzai's attempts to simultaneously consolidate his Pashtun constituency, which includes alliances with some very undesirable Pashtun warlords and Islamic extremists, such as Sayyaf, and even elements of the Hizb-I-Islami, will only serve to undermine the standing of the more moderate and democratic segments of Afghan political opinion.

Warlordism, Factional Infighting and Insurgency

In recent weeks and months, Karzai has repeatedly stressed that warlordism and factional infighting is more of a threat to the security and political reconstruction of Afghanistan than the Taliban's

insurgency and the presence of al Qaeda. Factional infighting does indeed pose a threat to stability in even previously peaceful regions in the north and the west. The international community appears to agree with this analysis. The removal of Herat strongman Ismail Khan represents the first step towards defeating the warlords, with a strong possibility of General Dostum being divested of his fighting machine next. According to UNAMA, it is now intended to fast-track the implementation of DDR. A long list of units has been identified for downsizing. Yet downsizing might not help if it is not accompanied by progress in the decommissioning of units and their commanders. In fact, great care must be taken to ensure that DDR covers commanders not just at the regional but also at the local levels. It is after all the local commanders who pose the greatest threat to the security of the average Afghan citizen and who are even cited by some Afghan observers as the reason for growing Pashtun support for the Taliban.

Care should also be taken to ensure that DDR does not reinforce perceptions among non-Pashtuns that the international community is deliberately helping to recreate a centralized Pashtun state under Karzai's leadership. It is in this context that the positive step of Ismail Khan's removal could perhaps have been better timed so as not to make it look like part of a conspiracy to target a particular community. And care should also be taken to ensure that Dostum's removal, when it comes, is also not seen as a move to undermine the Uzbeks' military strength, which, in Afghanistan's current context, translates into political clout.

Because, as mentioned earlier, the Taliban threat could also assume even greater proportions as the elections draw near, so that a very slim ANA could be stretched beyond its capacity by the current focus on disarming powerful warlords, local and regional, during a period of particular political sensitivity. The presence of additional ISAF and Coalition, mainly US, troops to shore up security for the elections will deter the spoilers. But it appears that ISAF expansion to the second phase, to the west, has temporarily hit a hitch. If there is to be a robust ISAF presence in all of Afghanistan, it will require a show of greater national will and urgency on the part of the NATO member states. It is these concerns that are frequently voiced to the ICG by ISAF personnel on the ground in Afghanistan.

Moreover, disarming even the most prominent of warlords might not be enough to promote security and stability in Afghanistan. Increasing the capacity

of the ANA and the Afghan national police is one way of addressing this particular threat. However, in the absence of Pakistani cooperation, even a robust Afghan security apparatus will continue to face a war of attrition. Therefore, it goes without saying that Pakistan will have to translate its rhetoric into action. Although the Musharraf government insists that it is already doing more than the international community itself to contain and neutralize the Taliban threat, the Taliban continue to use Pakistani territory as a sanctuary, a source of recruitment and an operational base. While more international, particularly US, pressure is needed to make the Pakistanis live up to their words, this pressure may not materialize because of the present thrust on eliminating al Qaeda's regional presence.

Warlordism and Narco-Trafficking

The UN and other important actors, including the EU and the US, are concerned, as they should be, about the links between the narcotics trade in Afghanistan and Taliban and al Qaeda funding. The Afghan government is also concerned about the revenues obtained by domestic spoilers, including the warlords, from the opium and heroin trade. Given the huge stakes, everything, including DDR, will depend on containing the drug trade since everyone is involved, including senior government officials, according to many accounts, and all variations of warlords, including mid-level and local commanders. International concern is being translated into action. While ISAF as yet has not intervened, the rules of engagement for OEF are changing, and might also change for ISAF, to active interdiction, not just interdiction on the basis of opportunity. Yet the success of any such policy will depend on a number of factors. These include the OEF distancing itself from commanders who have stakes in the drugs trade but are currently playing a role in anti-Taliban operations; Kabul's willingness to distance itself from some equally undesirable regional allies; an internal cleaning of the stables in Kabul; and, above all, international willingness to adopt and encourage an approach that covers all aspects and in the following order: interdiction, law enforcement, alternative livelihoods and eradication.

If, as it currently appears, the focus is restricted mainly to the eradication of the crop that will be harvested next spring, an anti-narcotics strategy

could rebound by hurting farmers, increasing the price of the harvest, and encouraging replanting of the opium poppy and the reprocessing of heroin from opium in safer areas, perhaps even across the border in Pakistan as in the past. The destruction of laboratories is already occurring, conducted by Afghanistan's small anti-narcotics special forces. The destruction of laboratories by OEF PRTs or ISAF PRTs, should the latter occur, would be welcomed by most Afghans but the eradication of poppy crops in the absence of a sufficiently well-funded alternative livelihood strategy will only play into the hands of spoilers and drugs traffickers, often one and the same in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, the political reconstruction of Afghanistan (including a credible election process) will continue to depend on security. The extension of governmental authority, including constitutional functioning and even anti-narcotics efforts, will also depend on the recreation and strengthening of institutions, including an independent judiciary and a functioning legislature, and not just on the executive. And until security is restored, economic reconstruction will remain far behind target in an environment in which neither Afghan nor foreign NGOs can operate at will.

The purpose of this presentation was not to present a picture of gloom. Since the downfall of the Taliban, Afghanistan has progressed immensely in all respects, including in the rebuilding of the institutions of governance and security. The international community's political and fiscal support and its military presence, as represented by the NATO/ISAF mission, demonstrate an international consensus to stay in this conflict-ridden country for the long haul.

The vast majority of Afghans have welcomed that presence. Yet the dangers along the road to political reconstruction and military security must be recognized and tracked to ensure that the country does not become, once again, a haven for domestic and international terrorists. And a credible democratic process, with the support of the international community, would go a long way to ensure that the progress that has been made is sustained and not reversed.

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