

Afghanistan: Crises and Opportunities

Reflecting on Afghanistan's Development, Elections and Possible Path to Peace



UN Photo- Work for Food Project Workers

This article features two interviews concerning development and peace in Afghanistan.

The interviewees were asked to reflect on their experiences working with various development projects in Afghanistan, the recent elections, international cooperation, the “War on Terrorism,” President Obama’s Foreign Policy and possible solutions for peace in the region.

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and

Fukhruddin Azizi: Former head of United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) Operations in Afghanistan, Former Programme Officer for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood Unit in Afghanistan and Current UPEACE Master’s Candidate in Responsible Management and Sustainable Economic Development

Interviews Conducted by Nicole Loschke

**Challenge for Outsiders- External
Western Perspective- John Maresca**

Q: Knowing what you know about the development of Afghanistan and reflecting back on the political climate after the cold war, compared to now; how to you see Afghanistan developing?

A: I think the essential things are still the same, meaning it's a country which is isolated, which is ethnically divided, always has been; and has always been a real challenge for outsiders.

In the 19th century both the Russians, from their empire in the North and the British from their empire in the South wanted to build railroads to Kabul. But there is not a single kilometer of railroad anywhere in Afghanistan. The railheads come up to the border in the South and in the North and then they stop.

I think this demonstrates the challenges for outsiders to have any real impact in the country. The hostility toward outsiders has always been very strong.

In that sense it really hasn't changed very much, there is this hostility towards outsiders, whoever they may be. The Russians learned the same lesson, when they went in 30 years ago and had to withdraw.

There are also the ethnic divisions between the Pashtun, the Tajiks, the Uzbeks and so forth; that hasn't changed either, it's a very basic element and

**Efforts for International Cooperation-
Internal Afghan Perspective-
Fukhruddin Azizi**

Q: Can you reflect on the development process for Afghanistan? How can Karzai effectively lead the country into a more peaceful state?

A: We have a big security problem with the Taliban, and military action is not the solution for peace in Afghanistan, because it didn't work.

The Russians came to Afghanistan; they were trying to stabilize Afghanistan, but in 10 years they failed to do it. Then the civil war started and the mujahidin groups were fighting amongst each other; none of those parties were able to take the power independently and run the country

Then Taliban took over, they were using their own power; that was also not the solution. Then the interim government came in.

To me, as a development worker and now a University student--I am 100% confident that the use of power is not going to work here.

In terms of mediation, I can see the role of Karzai; he may be in a position to play a positive role with the Taliban. And he may encourage actors to sit around the table with the Taliban and reach a solution to have a stable government in the future in Afghanistan.

many experts argue that it's illogical as a country. Afghanistan was created by the British, they lumped together three major ethnic groups and a couple other smaller ethnic groups to form a very artificial nation, and it hasn't ever really worked very well. There's always just as much fighting among them as there is towards outsiders. None of that has changed.

Furthermore, it has this element of religious extremism, which is now represented by the Taliban. That, too, has always been there. The treatment of women has always been more oppressive in Afghanistan than right next door in Iran, for example. So, these things remain the same, and I don't see anything in the situation right now that would lead me to think that it's going to change. If the West really wants to have some affect on these fundamental factors, we would have to stay there for 50 years or more.

Q: You're saying that the Western countries should have an affect on these fundamental factors, but what affect could there be? What change could we be making?

A: The ideal situation in Afghanistan, and I think this is the most optimistic thing one could hope for there; would be an evolution toward a moderate form of Islam.

If there could be, in some fashion, an evolution, of the extreme form of Islam that is present in the Taliban for example, to something that is more moderate and tolerant; then that would be a huge change. And probably would make everything possible, in Afghanistan, bearing in mind it's at a

Q: So, Karzai has been relatively cooperative with the U.S, would you say? Cooperative in the sense that diplomatic relations exist?

A: He is trying to be supportive and cooperative with all countries. He has good relations with the rest of the European countries, like America, UK, Germany, France, and he's trying to have good relations even with the neighboring countries as well.

Q: But, this is the most fragile part of it, because Karzai cannot be so cooperative with the U.S...

A: No, I mean, if you look at the back two years, he had a lot of discussion with the U.S.; he was not angry with some of the actions taken by NATO forces, by American military forces. He had an exchange of words with a lot of military people and he was not happy with the bombardment that was happening in Afghanistan, on the civilians. He was very tough on the civilian casualties; I don't think he was 100% flexible against Americans.

Q: Afghanistan is this fragile state in the middle of this "War on Terrorism" and it is the focus for "The War on Terrorism" because of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. How can Afghanistan develop for Afghanistan, regardless of these two outside influences?

A: I think Karzai is trying to have a stable government in the second round, he is trying his level best and convincing both sides to agree on certain conditions; agreeing on power sharing with the Taliban. I think America will not be against what Karzai is proposing.

very basic level of development, it needs all kinds of economic development too.

The economic development is really not possible as long as you have this extremism of the Taliban there, so that would be the basic thing. But, how can it happen? No one knows how to do it.

And all the efforts that have been made so far have basically failed.

Unfortunately, I think the Islamic world is not really facing up to this challenge either. They could help. But, for various cultural reasons it's not easy for them to exercise this kind of leadership towards moderation.

How can a culture as alien to the Taliban and to Afghanistan as American culture hope to bring about a gradual evolution? It's just too different, it's very different, so that's the challenge.

Q: International trade and development is a delicate balance of profit and providing sustainable development for the community. Can you reflect on your previous experiences?

What we were talking about, at the time, was a huge pipeline; a meter in diameter, buried under two meters of earth, crossing the country from Turkmenistan, where the gas sources was, to Pakistan, where it was going to be used. There's a huge natural gas deposit in that corner of Turkmenistan, its called Dauletabad gas field, it isn't really used right now, it's just sitting there, but it's known. At the time and I think still, the Paks needed that pass, because they generate electricity. They have a whole series of electrical generation plants for generating electricity for their grid.

What I was hearing back during the past couple weeks; the American politicians and even senior officials, they are also trying. Some of the Taliban are liberal and they want a peaceful Afghanistan, they want to be part of the government. I think this a good approach and it may be the only solution for internal peace in Afghanistan.

As I mentioned earlier, the Taliban have been fighting during the past seven years; neither the Karzai government, nor the international community were able to defeat them.

As I mentioned again, I'm insisting on it, Russians were thousands of soldiers in Afghanistan. They were using their power, but they failed to do it. In Afghanistan, the use of power (to me as an Afghan) this is not the solution for internal peace; unless there is negotiation and an agreement on certain conditions so both sides can benefit and the people are not affected.

Q: OK, so let's talk about NATO in Afghanistan. How have you seen the NATO influence helping or hindering the peaceful development of Afghanistan?

A: I see the role of NATO positively, they have provincial reconstruction teams and they are heavily involved in the reconstruction process in different regions, in different provinces. Each country is leading a certain Provincial Reconstruction Team or PRT. For example, Germany is heavily involved in the North province like Kunduz. These PRT's are moving from province to province and are playing a crucial role in the development process in Afghanistan.

The way they were fueling those plants at the time, and still largely, was with coal. Coal was brought, imported by barges from Africa, around Mozambique; on barges, up the rivers into Pakistan, to Multan, which is a city you can find, that's a big electrical generation plant and a few other places where they would use the coal. They would burn the coal in order to generate electricity; it was very polluting, it was very costly, it was very vulnerable; because sometimes the barges would sink. It was really a terrible kind of way, very totally inefficient way to produce electricity; so they needed it.

So, the theory, the idea, was that this gas would be taken across Afghanistan delivered there, and the Paks were ready to convert their electrical generation plants to use of gas; which would have been cleaner, cheaper, all kinds of good things.

But, right in the middle of course was Afghanistan where there was a war going on. There was a civil war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance; both absolutely horrible groups.

The Taliban, we know all about the Taliban, but the Northern alliance was just as bad.

Here were these warlords keeping 12 year-old concubines as slaves, fighting among themselves, just killing people; they were just as bad. But, there was a war going on, so what were we supposed to do?

And they are supporting the local communities and several societal organizations and development organizations. They are supportive.

NATO is present in Afghanistan during the past couple of years, and so far I haven't seen a negative impact of the presence of NATO in Afghanistan. We are just focusing on the development side of it, not the military side of it. I see a positive impact on the development perspective.

Q: What is your opinion of the ability of outside influence in Afghanistan? Some groups like the Taliban or other extremists hinder international cooperation. But, on the other hand, you have the argument that because of Afghanistan's control and because they have been able to prevent the influence of outsiders, they have protected their sovereignty, more than other Middle Eastern countries; what is your opinion on this?

A: I agree that there are some people who are really trying to create problems or tension with the current government and the international community. There are people within the government, in the past and I am sure there will be in the next government as well, who do this because they have power and they do whatever they want. These people are always trying to keep the country as it is. That is why they are trying to create problems, so they will see their presence in the government by creating this tension between the current government and the Western societies.

The other factor in this kind of a situation, which you should understand, is that nobody has cash to build a two billion dollar pipeline; everybody thinks the oil companies are so rich, but nobody has that kind of money.

But, the main factor here was that there wasn't a government that was in control of the region. To get a loan from the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank, or any other bank for that matter, one of the requirements is that you have to have a government which is recognized, key word-recognized, by the member states of the World Bank, which includes the United States. With the United States, they will not recognize a government, unless they're convinced that it respects human rights, and this and this and this.

For example, in my testimony, my much maligned testimony before congress, I said we couldn't possibly build a pipeline until there was a single recognized government in Afghanistan.

That was the specific language that they use in the World Bank, and what it means is that it has to be recognized also for the way it deals with human rights, that's the way the United States recognizes a government. So the language actually meant, we cant' do it, until there is a government that is respecting human rights which is constitutionally based, stable and so-forth; we just cant do it, there's a war going on.

No oil company is going out advocating that sort of thing; these companies are not that stupid.

Q: The U.S. just deployed more troops there. What is the general perspective of U.S. military presence for Afghans?

A: For Afghans, they don't consider only the presence of Americans; they consider Americans as part of the international security forces, not only as Americans. I don't think they perceive the presence of Americans as a negative action or a negative component; rather they see U.S. forces as a part of NATO international security forces.

Q: Do you think the general perspective is that these forces are needed to protect them?

A: Based on my experience so far, though I have not been out to the provinces to see the real situation [...] I didn't see more military involvement of American forces, of NATO forces against Taliban. If they are involved in a military action, of course there is a need for more forces, because the Taliban needs to be defeated. If we have a smaller number of military forces of course they cannot stand against Taliban. There is a need for more forces to effectively defeat the rivals.

UNOCAL has operations all over the world; they're constantly negotiating with governments. The idea that we would be advocating an invasion of Afghanistan is totally looney. But these are the kind of conspiracy theories that you have out there; but we just couldn't go ahead with it because of this.

I believe, I still believe now, that if we had been able to build such a pipeline, it would have been a history changing kind of thing. Why? Well, because we would have provided power, in passing, as a side-effect, to Kabul and Kandahar—two of the major cities.

Elections and Development- *External Western Perspective- John Maresca*

Q: So now, with results of the last “elections,” can you reflect on the possible progress of Afghanistan. As you said, there’s really no option unless the Islamic community pulls together to ‘disperse’ of the Taliban...

A: I would call it less dispersal than bringing about an intellectual, cultural evolution; that is what is really needed. For sure it will take a long time; it can’t be brought about in a matter of a few years. We’re talking in terms of generations here. That moderation, I think, is what is needed; in the treatment of women, in the acceptance of economic development, for example.

Even now, just last week, I was told that there was a shipment of generic medicines, which had been shipped out there, donated by generic medicine companies. And it was being held at the airport in Kabul, waiting for an 8,000 dollar fee. Taxing incoming medicines that were to be distributed free, that had been donated, delivered to be distributed free, and they were going to be taxed. So you just throw up your hands.

These are minor reflections of the general antipathy toward any kind of economic assistance, or aid, or development; all of these things have to be changed, but they can’t be changed over night, it takes generations.

Elections and Development- *Internal Afghan Perspective- Fukhruddin Azizi*

Q: Afghanistan is probably the “hottest” topic right now, I think. Your “elections” just happened, so Abdullah Abdullah dropped out because of supposed fraud from the Karzai government. What are your opinions on this, with a development perspective? If these elections still are not completely free and fair elections, or even if they are, but if they are still being accused of being fraudulent, how does this help or hinder development?

A: Though I was not in the country during that time, during the election process, but apparently when I was in touch with my colleagues back in Afghanistan, and regularly monitoring the media and press releases; Karzai got 54% of the votes and Abdullah was less than 30%. Karzai was accusing Abdullah and Abdullah was accusing Karzai for not being transparent in the election process.

To me as an Afghan, what I heard from my colleagues back in Afghanistan; both sides played a negative role. Karzai got the majority votes. Why he [Abdullah] decided not to stand for the second round of the election-- He knew that there were 40 candidates and majority of those 40 candidates were willing to vote for Karzai. Abdullah knew his position, even if he went for the second round of elections; he was not in a position to get elected. That’s why he decided not to go for the second round of elections.

From a development perspective, yes they’re all concerned with the local communities; the people and the international community.

But, I myself, as a UN worker, though there were accusations of fraud; as I mentioned I was not there. I heard there were 7,000 observers from the UN and the international community; they were observing the process properly. I don't think that accusation of not being transparent was that much, as it's flying around the world in the media.

Karzai, being as one of the candidates amongst 40; if you go down into the communities, he was the candidate that everyone expected to be back in power, but not Abdullah.

Abdullah was of course supported by minority groups, by specific group of people; because he is relatively young and he's immature; and he was not the right person for the country to lead the process.

**Struggle for Power: The War on Terrorism and the Taliban-
External Western Perspective-
John Maresca**

Q: The conflicts involving Afghanistan involve modernization and development versus traditionalism. If development could happen, yes, maybe poverty levels would reduce and the economy could improve; but at the same time, they don't want it to improve, because then they're becoming "Western" and that's the last thing...

A: The Taliban are against economic development for sure. Yes.

Q: With this in mind, can you comment on the War on Terrorism, particularly within Afghanistan?

A: The theory, it's not necessarily so, but the theory is that, if we were to leave, you would have, of course the Taliban are already there, but you would have Al Qaeda coming in too; being protected by the Taliban, reestablishing themselves and becoming a threat again, that's the theory. Whether it's true or not, I don't know, maybe not.

This is why I think; trying to think of it logically, which isn't always the most relevant way to think about it, but if you think about it logically; one of the few elements in the world that really could help, if they wanted to would be the moderate Islam groups or tendency, but who among them? It's difficult to see any that could really step up to this kind of a challenge. Most of them are under some kind of challenge themselves; from more radical elements.

**Struggle for Power: The Karzai Government and the Taliban-
Internal Afghan Perspective-
Fukhruddin Azizi**

Q: Why are the government and the Taliban still divided? They both want the power, that's obvious, but what is it that's really the difference in the way that they want to approach this power. Why hasn't this negotiation already happened?

A: Actually, so far I don't remember if there was a discussion or negotiation between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan. People were expecting in 2008 that there would be a negotiation with the Taliban and Saudi Arabia would mediate between Taliban and the government of Karzai. But, it didn't happen. Of course the Taliban has their own options and the government of Karzai, they have their own options; but there is a need for mediation, for a third party to bring these two parties around the table and agree on certain conditions and reach a final decision on this.

Q: They both want power over the country. What is the difference in Karzai's power, which he is implementing, versus the power the Taliban wants to implement?

A: Well, the Taliban wants pure Islamic rules in the country. Karzai, of course he also wants Islam, but with a more liberal way of democracy being implemented in Afghanistan. That, I see is the biggest difference.

The Taliban, they do not want the presence of the international community in Afghanistan and Karzai is supporting the presence of the international

So, it's very difficult to see how you could do it; I don't have any real answers.

One of the areas which we have not really pursued is a better relationship with moderate Islam. This is something that we do lip-service to, but we're really not doing much. It's difficult, because, this incident the other day, at Ft. Hood, Texas is a good indicator of how difficult it is, and controversial.

I think another element in the picture is Iran, which could be very helpful there. Half of Afghanistan is, in any case is Persian, by history and culture. So, the Iranians could be helpful, but right now we're not engaged with the Iranians in any process; nobody knows how to do that either.

The Paks, on the other side, are in a defensive mode, they're not in a position, I don't think, to really be working to establish something in Afghanistan, because they're under fire themselves. They should be, they have the most natural relationship, and in many ways created the Taliban.

community. So, there are some differences in their expectations.

Q: But the cycle will not stop, as I can see, because as long as traditional extremists exist- they don't want to be Western in any way, they don't want this moderate Islamic model, they don't want this international cooperation. Because they see these factors as developing Afghanistan into a "Western" type of nation. What can Afghanistan do by itself to appease both parties?

A: I think both sides and the international community should approach the people of Afghanistan. They should look at the opinion or perception of the Afghan people. They should be empowered to choose the way of life that they want. That is one way of human development, to empower people to choose the way they want: freedom of speech, freedom of voice; let the people of Afghanistan choose the way they want, whether they support Karzai or whether they support Taliban. The door should be open for the people of Afghanistan to choose the way they want.

Q: In your opinion, neither the Taliban nor the Karzai government has really invested enough time to talk with the Afghan people?

A: I didn't have access to Taliban media and I was not listening to the radio, but I was hearing on a regular basis from Karzai's spokesman, I was in close contact with his colleagues and office. They were trying and the door was open from Karzai's side, to reach a certain condition and to agree on certain conditions that were acceptable to the

people of Afghanistan and to have a broad-based government where there are representatives of the Taliban amongst representative from the government.

Karzai openly announced this, he asked Mullah Omar (Taliban leader) and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (Founder of Hezb-e-Islami) and everybody; the door is open if you are interested to come and join the government. That is why every time Karzai was open in his speech and he preferred to have negotiations with the Taliban. But, most of the times it was rejected by the Taliban. Because the first condition that they were proposing is that we don't want the international community to be present, the military presence of international society here in Afghanistan.

The Media's Role- External Western Perspective- John Maresca

Q: For me, the biggest factor here, is media, especially with the technology advancing to where it is; globalization. Media, for me, is the key to peace in the 22nd century, because every conflict is so blown out of proportion; all the leaders are so disconnected from the actual problems, and I see the media as the tool that's doing that. The media grabs on to these things, but nobody knows why and nobody knows the real roots and the real reasons.

A: I've been a mediator in conflicts in a lot of places; you can find also on the web, for example, if you're interested, another testimony by me in front of the CSE commission, about a war that I was a mediator on, trying to find the solution; accounting the very difficult ways, we were trying to piece together a cease fire, this was in the Caucasus.

My conclusion on these conflicts, I've said this hundreds of times when you're talking about conflict in general; when you're the mediator, you're the only one who wants to find a solution, the only one; because the other sides have vested interest in the conflict; if the conflict stops, they lose all of their influence, all of their power. Further down the line it's even more the case; because the people who are actually the combatants, they have no other skills, so if the war stops, what are they going to do?

This is a big obstacle when you're trying to find a solution. The Taliban, I think are like that; for now two or three

The Media's Role- Internal Afghan Perspective- Fukhruddin Azizi

Q: So what is your opinion on the media influence of this negative campaign?

A: The media was supporting both sides, because the media was not neutral, to be honest, I am sorry to say this. Because every side had their own group and everybody was supporting their own leader.

Certain people were supporting Abdullah Abdullah for being a legitimate candidate and because his process was transparent and some people were willing to support him.

On the other hand, there were a group of people, the majority; they were supporting Karzai for being transparent. Everybody was willing to support Karzai; he's the strong candidate, he's mature, he's an experienced person and he is the right person at this time and at this moment in the situation.

The media were supporting both sides, and of course criticizing both sides as well.

Q: Do you think the media is a major factor hindering stability?

A: No, I don't think the media was playing a negative role in the instability of Afghanistan. They were always trying to broadcast what is the reality and they played a positive role.

Q: You mentioned earlier that there is the Taliban media and then the mainstream media. Does the normal

generations, these young men, especially young men have learned no skill except carrying that gun; they've grown old carrying guns, so what are they supposed to do?

This is one of the reasons why we thought naïveté, on a very small scale, okay; but nonetheless we thought, the thing that makes more sense here is to offer basic skills training: how you put together mortar and brick; how you cut wood to build rafters in a house; how you install electrical wiring; paint, skills like that, because they literally didn't know how to do that.

It wasn't a matter of knowing how to read Shakespeare; they didn't know how to do these elementary things. Because at the age of about 12, or even younger sometimes, they're snatched up by some military unit and then after that, forget it; they learn how to recite the Koran and they learn how to work a Kalashnikov, and that's it. So, what do you do with people like that? I don't know, so...

Q: In these cases, you said the mediator is the only party wanting a solution, but with globalization, international conflict, the world scale that we're on now- the media, are essentially the mediators. But most often, most media systems don't want a solution.

A: No, because news sells newspapers or attracts the viewers on TV. That's why the media doesn't help a conflict, that's for sure; they inflame it, because they want the sensations; they don't say it, they probably don't even believe it; but I think that's a big element for sure.

I would make a difference between the responsible media. The New York

Afghan population look at the Taliban media?

A: I am not sure, I live in the center of Kabul; I live in a society where most of my colleagues, my neighbors, my relatives, they are working either for the government or the UN and they don't care about the Taliban media. Everybody is watching the local TV stations, BBC, CNN and the local media that are present in Afghanistan. Of course there might be some people in the rural area who listen to the Taliban radio and they may check their websites, there might be of course.

I was looking back at the CNN television, Hillary Clinton already mentioned before going for the second round of elections, that even if there is a second round of elections, Karzai is the winner. So what is the legitimate part of it? If we, the international community are announcing before the second round, Karzai is the winner; why again are we spending hundred millions of dollars and where is this money going?

What happened to those more than 100 million dollars and what's our response to the communities, to the people who don't have the least piece of bread to survive? We don't have schools in the villages, we don't have safe drinking water, we don't have health services.

Still people from Afghanistan, they go for medication either to Pakistan or India or Tajikistan, this is one part of it.

Secondly, there were 7,000 observers. Why didn't the international community properly monitor the process of the election? Third, I didn't see the practical

Times, if you read an article by them, they're pretty rational and other newspapers of that quality. But, then you have the other extreme.

side of the second round of the elections, because from geographical locations, if you see like Bamyan and the central highlands; in some of the provinces people face problems because of the snowfall, the roads are closing, they don't have access to the big centers and cities. How could they expect people to go again and vote again for the second round?

Lastly, people were already disappointed. How were they expecting people to go again and vote and for what? Everybody knew that Karzai was the winner.

**Advising Obama:
Opportunities for Solutions
External Western Perspective-
John Maresca**

Q: How would you advise U.S. President Obama concerning development issues in Afghanistan?

A: I think Obama is faced with an almost impossible choice, because if he decides to stay, as I said earlier, it's a 50 year challenge. Does the U.S. really have the stomach to undertake that challenge? Every year we'll be bleeding soldiers. So that's one choice. The other choice is gradually lowering the level of commitments, and then to get out. But then you will throw the country back into the hands of terrorists of the worst kind. Granted, the Karzai government and the elections are imperfect, but they're the only thing we have. It's a very weak reed. I just think that he's faced with an impossible choice. Probably, that's why he's taking time with it. Nobody knows what to do there.

What would I do for development in Afghanistan? You know, the NGO I established in Geneva in 1999 – the Business Humanitarian Forum (BHF) -- tried so many different humanitarian projects there. I could tell you so many stories.

At one point the BHF wanted to modernize the grain milling system. The growing of grain, and the milling of grain into flour, has always been an essential element in the economic situation, but the flour mills are decrepit; they haven't been modernized in years.

What happened as soon as the U.S. went in was that the United States started

**Advising Obama:
Opportunities for Solutions-
Internal Afghan Perspective-
Fukhruddin Azizi**

Q: How would you advise Obama concerning the U.S. influence in Afghanistan?

A: My advice for the government of the U.S., first they need to support the government of Afghanistan. During the past couple of years, all international communities are focusing on capacity building, capacity building, capacity building. But where can we see this capacity building? When will it happen? Millions of dollars have been spent on capacity building; hundreds of advisors were assigned to different ministries. But, how can we measure this capacity building and where? Nobody sees this progress, where has this money gone that is spent on capacity building? That is the first.

Transparency and accountability. Corruption has increased and it's increasing day by day. That is the big concern at the country level. And local governance; there is a clear disconnect between the central government and some of the provinces; they don't respect what the central government is trying to implement in the provinces. They do whatever they want.

So these are the main concerns that I have noted. And of course the presence of some people within the government and those who are in power in different provinces; they do whatever they want. I see this as a real challenge for the government of Afghanistan.

The next point is what I was observing

shipping all kinds of aid to Afghanistan. One of the things the U.S. always ships when it goes into an aid situation like that is surplus wheat; which in this particular case was ground into flour in India so that it arrived in big flour sacks. You can see pictures of this, it says "USAID" and it's a big sack of ground flour, free.

In a very short time, that just killed the grain growing efforts in Afghanistan. Every farmer who was growing grain couldn't sell it, because the place was flooded with free American grain, already ground into flour. So all those farmers, what did they do? They started raising poppies. The reason they became the world champion growers of poppies is that we flooded the market in Afghanistan with our surplus flour, for free. Did we somehow expect that those grain farmers could then survive by growing wheat?

There were things like that going on, I can't tell you how many things like that were going on. How can you make it work if you're operating like that? It was total chaos. Now, we're struggling to overcome the poppy growing efforts that are going on. But what do you expect farmers to do? It's very arid land; there are only so many things they can grow in this kind of a climate.

Q: this recent attack on the hotel where the UN delegates were staying, has that been done in such an extreme way before in Afghanistan? Regardless, what does it mean now for the UN and their cooperation?

A: To answer you second question first, I don't think it will have much affect on

during the past cabinet, the last years; people were selected not based on merit, but rather on ethnic base; not based on merit, not based on education or experience, but rather on an ethnic basis. Of course if Karzai is going to choose somebody from Uzbek or Turkmen minorities he must identify or appoint someone who is really capable of delivering.

I was looking back with the utilizing of the annual budget; I have seen some of the ministers were not able to spend 40% of the budget in the year, because they did not have the capacity to implement. These are the main factors that I can see.

Q: Do you think sending more American troops can help the peace process at all? Your solution, you said before, was not to defeat the Taliban, but instead have more cooperation.

A. If, in case they are trying to go for military options then this will be the solution. Of course they cannot do it by fighting the Taliban with 30,000 soldiers or 50,000 soldiers, they cannot. There has to be more strong support from the Western societies to take concrete action. That was from the military perspective or use of power.

My personal idea was that they have to get together and agree on a certain condition. Because they were already defeated in 2002 and when I was in Islamabad at that time, we had a meeting on a regular basis. I raised this issue before NATO and American forces- even they were not in Afghanistan- and we were discussing. I suggested at the embassy of Germany that Kabul should be a neutral place and NATO should

the U.N., they will have to have tighter security; it's much the same type of episode that they went through in Iraq. They then went back in, gradually, with a lot more security, keeping a lot of the key personnel in Jordan, but they went back. They will have to go through the same cycle here; I don't think that will have any long-term affects.

And the incident, I think, is just the latest in a lot of terrorist attacks. Granted it is the first one that was directed against the U.N. Maybe the U.N. thinks that somehow they're safe and somehow represent every people in the world, but they are not viewed that way by the Taliban; just as they weren't in Iraq. That they would be targeted, I think, is a pretty obvious thing. But, other than that, it's no different from other attacks that have gone on every week. So, I don't think it's a major shift in that sense; it's just part of a continuing terrorism that's been going on.

Another possibility, at least a theoretical possibility, is somehow dividing the Taliban; the moderates versus the violent extremists, because, as in any movement, there are moderate voices.

block the entrance of Kabul. Kabul should be neutral province where everybody can come freely and the Taliban or any other warlord groups should not be allowed to come into Kabul city with their weapons, but it didn't happen. They promoted them, they got senior positions within the government and they got promotions and slowly; slowly Taliban also came back from the mountains, to the villages, to the districts, and now they have reached the provinces. Had it been considered a top priority in 2002 and 2003, they would have not faced this problem at the initial stages. But they left the Taliban and the warlords to grow up again and again and again, so that is why again this is emerging as a big threat to the instability of the country.

Q: Do you see any difference in Bush's foreign policy in Afghanistan versus Obama's?

A: So far, I didn't see the clear difference of what Obama is trying. But, I think he is trying to first do a thorough assessment of the situation. He is going very slowly, step-by-step, considering everything deeply; which is real action and that is really needed.

I was looking back at the Brooking Institute, they were having a round table discussion on the security and it was followed by the elections. It was a good approach; there were a series of consultations with the top politicians and academics.

I was really impressed with the CNN interview and they were interviewing people like different professors of Universities. So the people of Afghanistan are now expecting the

government of the U.S., especially the Obama administration, to have a new policy on Afghanistan, and of course Pakistan should also be considered as the main, main player in this dilemma.

Short Biography of Interviewees:

John J. Maresca

John J. Maresca has been Rector of the University for Peace (UPEACE), a worldwide, UN mandated graduate school based in Costa Rica, since 9 August 2007. Maresca previously founded and led the Business-Humanitarian Forum, a non-profit association based in Geneva which encourages private sector support for humanitarian work. From 1996-2000 he was Vice President for International Relations of Union Oil of California, a major world-wide energy company based in Los Angeles and Houston. Previously, he was President of the private successor to the research institute of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, in Prague. He was also a Guest Scholar at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington.

During his diplomatic career, Maresca served as an Ambassador under three Presidents. He was the United States representative to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the special mediator for conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh and Cyprus, and the chief American negotiator for Military Confidence and Security-Building Measures. He served as deputy head of the US delegation which negotiated the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, and as Chairman of the US delegation which negotiated the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe and the Joint Declaration of Twenty-Two States, the two documents that formally ended the Cold War and converted the OSCE to a post-Cold War role. After the break-up of the USSR, Maresca was named as the Special Envoy to open U.S. relations with the newly independent states from the former Soviet Union. Maresca was also Deputy

Fakhruddin Azizi

Fakhruddin Azizi is currently a student at the University for Peace in the Responsible Management and Sustainable Economic Development programme. He has earned his EMBA in General Management from Islamabad University and his BSC in Engineering from the University of Kabul.

Furthermore, Azizi has been the Head of UNIDO Operations in Afghanistan since 2008. With this position Azizi was a member of the UN Country Security Management Team and part of the UN Country Team in Afghanistan. Over the years Azizi has contributed to various development project concepts and proposals. With his participation as a committee member in the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) Azizi was able to experience several coordination projects. During his service with UNIDO Azizi established many partnerships with other UN agencies including UNDP, FAO, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. With these partnerships Azizi helped design joint programme projects concerning food security, child nutrition and alternative livelihoods.

For five years Azizi was the Programme Officer and acting Assistant Country Director for the Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood Unit with UNDP. With this position Azizi supported the Civil Service Commission, the first Presidential Election, meteorology, the Mine Action/Transition and Capacity Building Programme, the National Human Development Report, the Center for Policy and Human Development and the

Director of the Office of two Secretary Generals of NATO, Director of Western European Affairs in the State Department, and an Assistant Secretary of Defense.

Maresca has also been a Trustee of the American University of Paris, a member of the Board of the National Bureau of Asian Research and the International Research and Exchanges (IREX) organization, and a visiting lecturer at Georgetown, Stanford, and other major universities.

He has published numerous books, chapters and articles, and has lectured in over 30 countries. His book, "To Helsinki," is considered the definitive history of the negotiation of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975. He was born in Italy, grew up in the United States, and was educated at Yale University and the London School of Economics. He has lived in Switzerland for the last 12 years.

Millennium Development Goals for Afghanistan. As part of UNDP Azizi also established a new Policy Unit at Kabul University call the Center for Policy and Human Development.

Additional positions Azizi has held includes the Operations Manager/Deputy Director of the Organization for Mine clearance and Afghan Rehabilitation (OMAR) as well as the Administrative and Logistics Manager/Deputy Regional Director and officer in-charge for the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan.

Azizi has also been a member of several professional societies and civic organizations including: the National Human Development Report Advisory Panel for 2009-2010; a Founding Member of the Center for Policy and Human Development at Kabul University; Member of the Board of Directors for "Serrana Magazine"; Chairperson of UNDP/UNFPA Staff Association; a member of the Steering Committee of Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR); a member of the Steering Committee of Afghan Campaign to Ban Landmines (ACBL); and a member of the Management Board of the Mahmood Tarzi Cultural Foundation.