

He pointed out that with terrorist activities in the region and with drug production in Afghanistan reaching record levels, the security and law enforcement forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in the past four decades, have been constantly engaged in combating terrorism and drug smuggling along its 900 km border with Afghanistan and have suffered casualties in their efforts to close off this route for drugs reaching the West.

Throughout this period Iran has also hosted millions of Afghan refugees, estimated to have peaked at 4 million, accommodating and providing them with health and educational services on a par with that afforded to its own population, including Covid-19 vaccinations. This has been a heavy burden on Iran given the fact that, contrary to other refugee host nations, the country has received little or no assistance from the international community.

With the recent developments in Afghanistan, an

influx of new refugees from that country, expected to reach half a million, is already taking place, and Iran, with its ability to help new arrivals hampered by the heaviest sanctions under the U.S. maximum pressure campaign, is doing all it can to help its Afghan brethren, while cooperating with the UN agencies to help address the problems facing the people of Afghanistan.

In one important move, the Supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, with due regard to the importance of providing education for Afghan refugee children, called on the Iranian authorities to register, free of charge, Afghan children at Iranian schools alongside their Iranian brothers and sisters.

Finally, the Islamic Republic of Iran considers the active involvement of all Afghanistan's neighbors paramount in any moves towards addressing these issues and is willing to continue to play a positive role in the efforts to achieve goals desired and shared by all Afghans.

Selections from the Discussion Session

This is an edited transcript of the discussion session at the seminar co-sponsored by the Schiller Institute and the Copenhagen bureau of EIR, "Afghanistan: What Now? Peace Through Economic Development," held in Copenhagen, Denmark on October 11, 2021. The seminar was moderated by Tom Gillesberg.

Real Economic Development Can Defeat Terrorism

Q 1: Regarding terrorism and stability, many would say that you need stability first in order to start economic development, but you say that you have to start building in order to fight terrorism. How can economic development be a tool to fight terrorism?

Hussein Askary: The ability of terrorists and the separatist groups to be active and recruit people is dependent on the fact that there are frustrated people in that community. It's not that they're only frustrated because of political repression; they're frustrated because their government is not offering them anything. Therefore, the so-called war on terrorism has been a failure because it does not address the real needs of those societies by, for example, building infrastructure, providing health care, education, work for people.

We have now the whole sub-Saharan Africa region. NATO, France, the United Nations have hundreds of military operations in sub-Saharan Africa. The problem is that the regular armies of these nations—like in Mali, Niger—in those countries, first of all they were devastated by what happened in Libya. Because there were massive amounts of weapons and militants moved from Libya into their countries. But the other thing is, those nations are not capable of paying their own security forces and soldiers, because the economies are in such bad shape. So, Boko Haram, for example, has more resources than the government to finance fighters and recruit young people who are angry and frustrated. They get lots of resources from the smuggling of cocaine to Europe, or they have sponsors in certain countries.

The ability of a nation to fight terrorism is actually very much dependent on its ability to sustain its economy and build a strong military and security response. But you cannot—in some cases, it's not the military and security forces who will defeat the terrorists. It is, if the population is on your side, which can help you defeat it. If the population is against you, then everything you do in terms of military or security will not work. We have many cases, like Iraq and other countries where the population starts supporting these groups instead of the

government, because they are so frustrated with the government and the government is destroying their livelihood.

That should be a lesson from now on that in order to be able to solve the problem with terrorism, if you have a legitimate government in that country, you have to support that government with economic aid, not only military and security aid.

Pino Arlacchi: Sometimes, they ask me, what is your recipe to fight terrorism? I played some role in fighting the Mafia in my country. “Well, what is your recipe to fight terrorism?” Simply, don’t bomb countries! Stop bombing, and you will see how terrorism is decreased.

Tom Gilleberg: I just want to say on that note, that Denmark has been the subject of terrorist attacks, for the very specific reason that Denmark since 2001 has been under Anders Fogh Rasmussen. Before he went to be head of NATO, he was Prime Minister of Denmark, and he started it by having as the state policy this militaristic foreign policy, that if there is a war where bombs are being thrown, then, especially in the Middle East, Denmark, of course, should be in there throwing bombs. So, we have been bombing in Libya, we have been bombing in Syria, we have been bombing away. So, Denmark is the exception to this peaceful policy.

Denmark is a very homogeneous country, so there’s been a point of view that there’s been some successful attacks, and some that have been stopped for this reason. And therefore, that could just be saying what you said. It should be obvious. In Denmark, there is now this process of trying to discuss what should be the policy forward for Denmark. The first thing I think everybody should agree on is this militaristic foreign policy, this idea of intervention with military means has to stop. Peacekeeping troops like Denmark, like other Scandinavian countries used to do in Cyprus and many different places, that’s very good. Peacekeeping troops. But that’s a totally different matter. That is to prevent war.

A Role for the UN?

Q 2: There is no family in Afghanistan which has not had a member attacked or killed in a bombing. Why do we not see the UN playing a role in establishing peace?

Arlacchi: The UN is unfortunately out of the picture. That was the decision Kofi Annan took. When Af-

ghanistan was invaded, there was a big discussion at the top of the UN of what to do. Kofi and a group of others decided that we should stay away. The argument was: they invaded the country; they will take care of the country. They should not drop to us the issue, like they used to do. When they have difficulties, they drop it to the UN. We should not play this game. They take care of the country.

My position: I did not agree. The UN should be on the ground to avoid the occupation that at that time was very popular. At the first moment of the Afghanistan invasion, there was a very large consensus all over the world on that. But we were afraid that as any occupation of a foreign country ends up the same way—badly, so, just to prevent what really happened afterwards, we had to *be* on the ground with a *big* force. We also planned to strengthen our presence in Afghanistan with a special UN force. At that time, we could also get the support of the member states. But Kofi and the others insisted on us playing a minimal role, staying away. They prevailed—the Secretary-General prevails all the time—and nothing happened.

Now would be the moment, could be the moment for the UN to step in. This is a question that we should raise with the Secretary-General. The UN could play a big role in reconstructing Afghanistan and talking to the Taliban, who were always in contact with us. We never lost contact with the Taliban. Why not be at the forefront of that?

H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Farooq: As you had mentioned in your comments, the UN is also like an association of states. So, its policies, its agenda is state-driven, and within those states, there are certain states that have to take the lead, which includes the U.S., the permanent members of the Security Council. Also, when it comes to the development side, the European Union. Unless they take the lead, because they’re the ones who are going to foot the bill; the money has to come from somewhere. Unless they take the lead, the UN on its own cannot move. It doesn’t have the resources.

Askary: There was a shift in the 1990s to replace the United Nations with what we have now. It has evolved to what people in the West call “rules-based order” that has nothing to do with the United Nations Charter or international law. These are rules created by powerful institutions and military-industrial complexes and think tanks in the West.

Prime Minister Tony Blair in 1997 started that process with his speech at the University of Chicago where he said the era of the peace of Westphalia, which established the fact that nations are sovereign and independent, is over. He said, that's an obsolete principle, because we, the civilized world, the democratic free world, should have the right to determine if a dictator is legitimate or not. If he's oppressing his people, we should have the right to intervene with military means to change that leader or that government.

Then we had the whole series of the post 9/11 wars, Afghanistan, and then the worst case was Iraq, because the United Nations was against it. But then the Americans and the British said, well, we will go our own way, then. So, in that sense, they wanted to demolish the United Nations Charter, the role of the United Nations not as a world government, but as a forum where nations can meet and agree on very important issues as independent sovereign nations, and prevent war and establish peace.

Now, there is a move by China and Russia, I think it's called the Friends of United Nations Charter. They say we should go back to the United Nations Charter, which has actually its roots in the Peace of Westphalia Treaty—that nations are independent and sovereign; that nations should work together to establish peace and prosperity everywhere.

So, you don't need to re-invent the wheel; we just need to go back to the UN Charter and international law established on that basis. This is what these people who have launched all these wars and the economic and financial interests behind them—they want perpetual war; just like the perpetual revolution, where there are no rules, except the rules they set according to their interests and desires. And that is very, very dangerous. And therefore, going back to the UN, not as a world government, but the UN Charter and the principles which were established after World War II; that would guarantee [peace].

Even the question our friends [from Iran] raised, the question of sanctions—indiscriminate economic sanctions should be forbidden internationally, because in *every single case*, they both created massive suffering for the population, and they did not force these governments to change their policies. I come from Iraq; in the 1990s, we had criminal sanctions where we lost 500,000 children. And Secretary of State Madeleine Albright said well, that's a reasonable price to control Saddam Hussein.

Well, you didn't change Saddam Hussein's behav-

ior. He was changed with a military invasion which removed him by force. But the sanctions did not make the Iraqi government change its policy; it's the people who suffered. We have a generation of young people whose development is stunted; who are easily manipulated. They can very easily join terrorist groups and militias and so on. So, using economic sanctions against nations should also stop, not only launching wars on a fake basis.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Q 3 [To H.E. Ambassador Farooq]: How do you see the role of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (part of the Belt and Road Initiative) being extended into Afghanistan, and what would that mean?

H.E. Amb. Farooq: I think as far as China and Pakistan are concerned, once there is peace in Afghanistan, the corridor could be expanded to Afghanistan. It would have significant peace dividends for the regional countries. But the primary issue here is that you need a government in Afghanistan that is recognized internationally. Unless that happens, you cannot expect international investment to start pouring into that country.

As I mentioned in my comments, for us and China, China is obviously the country that has launched this Belt and Road Initiative, so they see the future of their economic progress in regional integration. We also, as I highlighted, our Prime Minister has come up with this vision of geo-economics. That is based on regional connectivity. Within that, Afghanistan is in the middle of everything. As Hussein [Askary] mentioned, this gas pipeline that was planned from Turkmenistan and then on to India, cannot be built if there is no peace in Afghanistan.

So, similarly, the prospects are there, but we need to have a set of conditions on the ground that allow that to happen. Pakistan sees it as part of our future growth that we integrate regionally through Afghanistan with countries in Central Asia.

Arlacchi: Really Winning the Peace

Q 4 [to Prof. Arlacchi]: Exactly which UN organizations should get funded for the drug eradication program and also addict rehabilitation?

Arlacchi: It's very simple. You have the UN program for drug control, which has 40 years' experience in alternative development and drug eradication. We accumulated this experience in all parts of the world, so we know what works and what does not work.

In the case of Afghanistan, a comprehensive program today cannot be done like 30 years ago. Full involvement of the government is absolutely indispensable. My proposal is to create a special national agency, an Afghanistan national agency, that uses experts coming from the UN, coming from the donor countries, in order that ownership of the eradication program and alternative development is belonging to the government. We cannot work like 20-30 years ago, when we did everything. We just told the government what to do; not only in Afghanistan, but other governments. In many cases, we abused our credibility. We had to have still huge credibility outside the West. But we used to—sometimes—abuse it.

In this case, I see no contraindication in creating a special agency—not diluting the issue of narcotics into a general program of agricultural development. Having always a particular pocket in order to not lose the target, which is basically a Western target. People believe that when you land in Afghanistan, you see poppies here, poppies there, with this brilliant color everywhere, and so on. Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan is very difficult to see in a map. I had always a problem for that. It's so small, it's 0.5% of arable land. It is so small, you cannot see it in a map.

It's not like we believe that all countries plant poppies and so on; it's not that way. It is cultivated in particular areas, very frequently not easily accessible. More and more remote areas. Even in areas like Helmand province, where you have almost 50% of the production, it's not easy to see poppy cultivation. It's very small *vis-à-vis* the rest of the agriculture.

The main interest on narcotics is *our* interest, because the drugs come from there. So, if you want to close it up on drugs, natural drugs in Europe, you have to be there and do what is necessary to do, with the goal of elimination.

Because there are also other proposals, sometimes quite bizarre. There was a proposal years ago to permit opium cultivation and use all opium cultivation in Afghanistan for legal medical purposes. Which sounds fine. The problem is that all the legal demand for opium is always satisfied by three countries which are authorized by the UN, heavily controlled by the UN, and have enough to supply all the codeine that is necessary for the medical needs all over the world. There's no shortage. You have already Australia, India, and Turkey, who produce—under UN authorization—all legal opium derivatives that are necessary.

Every year, the countries send a questionnaire to the International Narcotics Control Board, which is a special narcotics board of the UN, quoting their demands for their hospitals, for treatment of terminal patients, and so on. This body elaborates all this demand and assigns to these countries a certain quantity of legal codeine, the main derivative. And that is it. If there is an increase, they immediately authorize areas in the Tasmania area in Australia, where most of it is produced, Turkey, other countries, to increase production, which is done in a way that works perfectly. There is no diversion to the illegal market. Today also, opium technology improved a lot, it is extracted directly from the plant. So, the system works.

So, first, why transform the drug cultivation of Afghanistan into a supply of unnecessary drugs to bodies that do not require them? Second, how do you control that? A production of a couple hundred thousand hectares scattered as I told you in little pieces. Controlling it would cost ten times the production of opium poppy. So, this is an idea that was floated for a while, because some prominent intellectuals advanced it a couple of years ago, then it died.

Other wrong ideas? To buy the product from the peasants. The Americans tried to do it in Southeast Asia 30 years ago. It simply encouraged cultivation. If you pay the peasant to cultivate, the following year, there will be two peasants cultivating. Because, they start from the evaluation that it is very cheap to buy opium cultivation at the source. The original idea is not wrong. It's so cheap that instead of paying billions of dollars against organized crime, in paying for treatment of addicts in the countries of destination, it's of course \$200-\$300 million at the source, and pop! You finish it. It never worked, because it was never seriously applied, because it was not possible to apply.

Today for me, it is possible with a very modest investment. But avoiding the mistakes of the past. We learned a lot, because sometimes we supported the wrong ideas, like also to fund the peasants, not controlling the diversion to legal crops. There were many errors. Now we develop this idea of integral development. We are not obliged to do crop substitution. If you have a good industry that can transport other materials, why don't you? Afghanistan, for example, has plenty of opportunities in this area. If there is an area where there is a mineral, why insist on funding alternative development crops? Why crops? You can also have many other alternatives to crop substitution.

Michelle Rasmussen: The second question was, what should the role of the Western countries be now?

Arlacchi: Look, talk with the Taliban, treating them as winners, as they are. They are *winners*. Well, you read, “Ah, yes, today they have to come here and then....” No, it is not that way. You cannot treat them as losers; they won an independence war against the biggest army in the world with nothing in their hands. And they know that.

They have to be treated as winners. Then, with humility and with respect, first, which is, in my opinion, the most important of all. If you treat them with the respect they deserve, you will get from them whatever is necessary to get; starting with women. But if we treat them as primitive, as sewage, that they just are there because who knows what, as bloodthirsty primitive people, you will get nothing from them. They will immediately close and say “Who you are to tell us how to treat our women, how to treat our country? Who you are?”

This is the reaction you will get. This is the most important thing to deal with the Taliban. They won, and they are legitimate winners. So, start to treat them this way. Why do you have to tell them how they should do their government? “The government should be inclusive.” What does it mean, “inclusive”? What does it mean? You should establish how many Azeris, how many Tajik, and minorities should be in the government? This is difficult to do even in the West. You should start from really respecting the ethnic composition of countries; it’s very difficult.

No! The Taliban shouldered it since the beginning. It must irritate them a lot. They will, because they won also the cooperation of the northern Pashtun. There are also many Azeris and others who are in the coalition with the Taliban. But it is up to them; it is an internal issue that you cannot establish from outside how much inclusion should there be in the new government.

When we won the Second World War, we had big problems in establishing governments all over Europe. And the Taliban showed a degree of responsibility that is absolutely admirable. They did not do vengeance killings all over Afghanistan, which I expected to see. After the Second World War, Nazi collaborators, Fascist collaborators in Europe got killed 10-15 years after the war. In Italy, we had an extension of vengeance killings related to the war that ended in the 1950s; hundreds of killings. Things were also complicated during the war; innocent people were also killed, and so on. But the immediate accusation that you were a collabo-

rator of the Nazis or the Fascists, condemned you to death. And we still have cases, after 70 years, about it.

So, a civil war with that ferocity has consequences that can last very long. They did an amnesty; they did not do vengeance against anybody. They did not punish state employees who were working with the former government. There was no blood around. They gave amnesty for all of them. These are things that show a degree of responsibility.

Then, I told you, they are not normal people. They are radical extremists with a very strange mentality that you have to understand and respect. But they are also flexible, they are not stupid at all. They are flexible. If you put on the table the right thing, with the right attitude—this is the first thing, the right attitude—you can get from them whatever you think is necessary, starting with the women. They were always very flexible. That newspaper you see, that girl, or that school in that part of Afghanistan is closed to women, and so on. This is not fair.

They were raised with the problem to control their movement and also their country. When I was there, we had almost everyday problems with the Taliban extremists crazy destroying TV sets and so on. But this was not absolutely a widespread phenomenon. There were phenomena of intolerance of women, and so on. But you cannot really generalize from one or two cases, make a big fuss.

You have to measure the underground with a different attitude, and you will get results. Their main interest is to survive, and to govern the country. There is no state structure; they have no money; there is no tax-collecting, they don’t know how to order taxes. [That] they don’t know [these things], is their main problem. They have a humanitarian emergency and so on. In my opinion, if you go with them, talking to them as human beings, and also winners of a long war and respect them; then you can get from them what is necessary. Why not? They should be crazy to not accept a serious proposal. But no one does it! The EU started in a good way: [Josep] Borrell and the others saying that we are to talk to them, and so on. Then, they stopped. You have to talk to them, but with a proposal in mind; with the right attitude, treating them as they deserve, and you will get what you want from them. They are the heirs of the Mujahideen. They are not Communist, they are nothing, they are just nationalist, religious people, with a degree also of internal tolerance and contradiction, like us Catholics and so on, that is remarkable. Go and do this!

Public opinion in my country was paralyzed for

three months: talking or not talking to the Taliban. It's the most stupid thing. You must talk with them.

Gillesberg: The idea of doing politics through military means has clearly failed. That means that diplomacy has to take over, and the key idea of diplomacy has always been to put yourself in the place of the other; see things from the way they see it. If you do that, and you simply talk together, history has shown that there is hardly anything that cannot be solved.

But it also means that exactly doing this is not something that in a certain sense is decided on the ground in Afghanistan. This is especially the question of shifting this paradigm, this way of thinking, in the Western world. In countries like here in Denmark, which has been part of the problem for quite some time. Despite its tradition, it suddenly jumped into this: "Yes, we'll do this militaristic foreign policy, and we're doing humanity a great favor." That has been totally disproven.

The question is exactly having the shift in the Western world, and saying "That failed; now, let's be responsible; let's do the other thing." I think this call that

Helga [Zepp-LaRouche] set for a day of action on Thursday, is exactly this. How do you show that you now will respect Taliban as a country, not as subjects, not as some subjects you can tell what to do? But say, "OK, you have your country. You run your country. We collaborate with you."

The first thing of course is to recognize it as a country, and give them the rights to actually deal with their deposits and whatever; even a country like Denmark. The problem is war, the problem is food. Is there something we can do to help in these things? The cost is enormous. Europe has enormous skills. The U.S. Army, of course, has enormous skills, but I don't know if that's the best thing to go into that.

Arlacchi: Recognizing the government, first of all, recognition. They won; they control the country. Europe was first to recognize Mr. [Juan] Guaidó in Venezuela, who had not the support even of his wife; but was recognized by 50 countries, like this. A person who controls nothing. We should be more coherent and serious in what we do in foreign policy. Respect basic rules; who controls the population must be recognized, period.

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