

will not improve the Afghan situation:

“You can build as many schools as you like, but no one is going to go if they’re going to be overrun by gunmen,” he said.

The Afghan justice system also needs to be developed in tandem with the police force. Overall, the Europeans and Americans have yet been unable to develop a coordinated plan for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. We need to move beyond the Post-Soviet model.

The weakness of the central government has been exacerbated by Western policies. There is a desperate need to find a funding mechanism to strengthen resources and institutions in Kabul. For instance, Ismail Khan, a local warlord, currently controls 70 percent of customs revenues. More of these revenues should be going to the central government. While strengthening the central government, a governance arrangement needs to be established whereby local and provincial governments are able to design local aid programs.

CONCERNS WITH U.S. MILITARY ACTIVITY

U.S. policies run contrary to the interests of the central government. For instance, the drug policy pursued by the U.S. was ill-conceived. Alternate training and subsistence strategies need to be developed for former opium farmers. As well, while poppy farms were destroyed as part of a strategy to curb drug production, farmers’ debts were not cancelled. Furthermore, it appeared that anti-drug efforts targeted certain ethnic groups, particularly the Pashtuns.

CONCLUSION

Reconciling the ethnic divisions is key to the future of Afghanistan. In particular, Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in the country, have been left feeling “shut out” from the Afghan political system. As well, though it is important to support women’s and children’s aid programs, we need to also strengthen the central government, particularly security and justice mechanisms. Finally, drug control efforts need to take into account the ethnic balance of the country.

POLICY OPTIONS

1. Afghanistan’s long-term security needs should be considered when formulating policy.
2. We quickly need to develop a defence and security doctrine, in addition to a clear criteria on who can serve on the police force. As well, a sustainable, long-term funding plan must be secured for the police force. Without a funding plan, we run the risk of funding factions which abuse human rights. Afghanistan could disintegrate again.