



Background Paper
Jointly-Sponsored
National Defense University - Near East South Asia Center
and
Afghan American Chamber of Commerce (AACC)
Symposium
in
Room 101, Industrial College of the Armed Forces (ICAF)
Fort McNair, Washington DC
on
***Role of the Private Sector in Stabilization:
Providing Sustainable Employment in Afghanistan***
Wednesday, June 10, 2009

Since U.S. military forces entered Afghanistan and Iraq to subdue rogue regimes and the terrorists they harbored, they have adopted “smart power” strategies that extend their traditional war fighting and peace-keeping mission and also engage in “nation-building” activities along with the U.S. Department of State, USAID and other agencies. To support the military’s new-found role, the NDU has held a series of seminars and other conferences on peace and stability operations, counter-insurgency and related topics. Such seminars have acknowledged that the lack of economic opportunity for the indigenous peoples is a major contributing cause to on-going violence. Similarly, the State Department has held sessions, such as its *Economic Empowerment in Strategic Regions Conference* in March 2007, to explore creative approaches to stimulating economic development in conflict-affected States.

While there have been frequent references to mobilizing the “private sector,” panel speakers and attendees at most such conferences are largely U.S. government military and civilian officials, representatives of NGOs and academics. Their presentations primarily focus on how government can best deal with the problems, inter-agency cooperation, etc., with far too little perspective provided by private sector business people with on-the-ground presence in the conflict-affected countries.

This joint NDU-NESA and AACC Symposium seeks to address stability issues by starting out with, and building upon *the economy, the private sector, enterprise creation, investment and employment*. The aim is to recognize this “bottom-up” commercial approach as a high priority and to bring it into the larger public policy debate over Afghanistan, as a means of fostering a prosperous, legitimate agricultural economy and building sustainable economic capacity in the Af-Pak border region.

Drawing on the membership and on-the-ground knowledge and expertise of the AACC and its businessmen and women colleagues inside Afghanistan, the sponsors plan a full-day of presentations and panel discussions involving individuals who can create private enterprises and the goods, services and sustainable employment that result there from.



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Leading Afghan and American businesspeople and officials will present opportunities and challenges in that country, particularly in agriculture and agribusiness and the Af-Pak border areas from a business and market economy perspective. Knowledgeable experts will discuss the realities of promoting lasting employment and economic development and how the local private sector can be more effectively mobilized towards peace and stability so that U.S. forces can better achieve success in their military mission.

This Symposium is one the few, perhaps the first, that addresses these important issues explicitly and is expected to expand the thinking of policy-makers as they grapple with seemingly intractable problems in conflict-affected States. Hopefully, a fuller consideration of private sector perspectives and approaches will lead to new and creative solutions.