

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

The Independent

## Nato is in no shape to make progress in this graveyard of empires

Patrick Cockburn

11/20/2010

If Iraq was bad, Afghanistan is going to be worse. Nothing said or done at the Lisbon conference, which is largely an exercise in self-deception, is going to make this better and it may well make it worse.

It is not just that the war is going badly, but that Nato's need to show progress has produced a number of counter-productive quick fixes likely to deepen the violence. These dangerous initiatives include setting up local militias to fight the Taliban where government forces are weak. These are often guns-for-hire provided by local warlords who prey on ordinary Afghans.

The US military has been making much of its strategy of assassinating mid-level Taliban commanders, but one study on the ground showed that many of these are men highly regarded in their communities. It concluded that killing them infuriated local people and led to many of them being recruited by the Taliban.

The US commander in Afghanistan, General David Petraeus, will tell Nato leaders today of his plan to start handing over responsibility for security in some areas to the Afghan government in 2011. This sounds like wishful thinking on the part of General Petraeus and his selection of target dates is primarily to avoid accusations that Nato has no idea when or how it will get out.

The Taliban currently controls or has influence in half of Afghanistan. While US reinforcements have been pouring into Helmand and Kandahar provinces, the Taliban have been expanding their enclaves in the north.

The whole idea of handing over security to the Afghan government is based on a rapid expansion of the Afghan army to 171,000 men and the police to 134,000. Not only are these new recruits likely to be poorly trained, but they will be drawn from the largely anti-Taliban Tajik, Uzbek and Hazara communities. The Pashtun, 42 per cent of Afghans and the community from which the Taliban is largely drawn, will feel ever more victimised.

The differences between the insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan underline that the latter is more dangerous for foreign occupiers. In Iraq the anti-US guerrillas sprang from Sunni Arabs, a community to which less than one in five Iraqis belonged. The post-Saddam government in Baghdad was supported by the Kurds and the Shia, making up four-fifths of the population. Afghans are more xenophobic than Iraqis. "Suspicion of foreigners is part of every Afghan's DNA," said a Western diplomat in Kabul.

The Nato leaders in Lisbon may want to consider two other respects in which Afghanistan may prove a more dangerous country. The Afghan government is much feebler than its equivalent in Baghdad where there is a tradition of central control and \$60bn in oil revenues. Militarily, what defeated the Soviet army in Afghanistan was not the warlike prowess of the Afghans but the 2,500km long border with Pakistan. So long as this remains open, and the insurgents have safe havens in Pakistan, Nato and the Afghan government are not going to win.