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**BACKGROUND 2009-11**

**AFGHANISTAN'S UNCERTAIN FUTURE**

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## AFGHANISTAN'S UNCERTAIN FUTURE

On August 30 General McChrystal handed over his eagerly awaited 'Commander's Initial Assessment' on Afghanistan to his superiors.<sup>1</sup> It had been finished earlier, but the general was advised by Secretary of Defence Gates to hand it over only after the Afghan presidential election had taken place (August 20). The assessment seeks to answer three questions: can ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) achieve the mission, how should ISAF go about achieving the mission, what is required to achieve the mission? Which resources will be needed to achieve the military campaign would be declared at a later date by McChrystal. He did state, however, that not sending extra troops to Afghanistan would likely lose the war within a year.

Immediately after the leaking of McChrystal's strategy review and recommendations a huge debate for and against broke out. Star reporter Bob Woodward discussed the assessment in some detail, if only because it was in his newspaper that McChrystal's 'Initial Assessment' was made public.<sup>2</sup> McChrystal did not regret the subsequent outburst of publicity. On the contrary; he added some fuel to the fire by stating, for instance, that there still exist connections between Pakistan's secret service and the Taliban.<sup>3</sup> Since nobody has the right answers concerning future American policy in and towards Afghanistan, by allowing the whole Afghan strategy debate to become a public affair some pressure 'to deliver' has been taken off the military – only to shift to US politicians and the international coalition.

As the Obama-administration started to revise its Afghanistan-strategy, a political crisis rapidly developed in Afghanistan after increasing and undeniable evidence showed that there had been large-scale fraud in the first round of the presidential election on August 20, necessitating a second round. The planned runoff on 7 November provided the Obama administration with some extra weeks to determine what the new US strategy toward Afghanistan should be and, in its wake, decide on sending more troops, and how many. Thus, both processes in Washington and Kabul got narrowly intertwined. At least two critical conditions must be fulfilled to enable a continued US and international effort in Afghanistan; good governance and the rapid development of an effective Afghan security force. In this respect, there exist no differences of opinion between the US military leadership, broadly supporting the McChrystal assessment and his troop request, and the political leadership.

But they do fundamentally differ on the desired order of implementation. The military immediately want to send extra troops to 'regain the initiative', the politicians first want to develop a new viable strategy to

determine the future course of events. To that end, the Obama-administration urgently needed a credible electoral process and a reliable Afghan president in Kabul.

### **The McChrystal assessment**

In his assessment, General McChrystal nominates a number of 'imperative' themes:

- protect the Afghan population from a resilient insurgency, or: 'focus on the population';
- alter the current crisis in confidence among Afghans in both their government and the international coalition;
- the fact that the short-term fight will be decisive (developments in the next twelve months), or: focus resources to most threatened critical areas; improve the unity of effort and command of ISAF;
- increase the size and growth of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF, consisting of the Afghan Police Force or APF and the Afghan National Army or ANA).

To achieve these goals, a number of far-reaching changes have to be made, especially concerning the International Security Assistance Force or ISAF, numbering over 100.000 in November 2009.

ISAF must restore confidence in the near-term through renewed commitment, intellectual energy and visible progress. How? Well, ISAF must improve execution and the understanding of the basics of the present Counter Insurgency (COIN).<sup>4</sup> In particular, ISAF must change its operational culture in order to better protect the Afghan people, understand their environment and build relationships with them. Also, a more coherent unity of command within ISAF must be established. ISAF's new approach will be nested within an integrated and properly-resourced civilian-military counterinsurgency strategy. Therefore, ISAF must use existing assets in innovative and unconventional ways. McChrystal warns that this will be enormously difficult.

Poor unity of effort among ISAF, UNAMA (United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan), and the rest of the international community undermines their collective effectiveness. Problematic contracting processes and insufficient oversight also reinforce the perception of corruption within ISAF and the international community. The establishment of an intermediate operational headquarters will synchronize operational activities and local civil-military coordination, and ensure a shared understanding of the mission throughout the force.

ISAF troops are 'inexperienced' in local languages and culture. Why communities choose to resist, support or allow insurgent (Taliban) influence has not been properly understood by ISAF (nor by the Karzai-

government, it is stated). ISAF has not sufficiently studied Afghanistan's peoples, whose needs, identities and grievances vary from valley to valley. Afghan social, political, economic and cultural affairs are complex. This country's environment is challenging to understand, particularly for foreigners. ISAF military and civilian personnel alike must acquire a far better understanding of Afghanistan and its people.

Over-reliance on firepower and pre-occupation with protection of its own force has severely damaged ISAF's legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people. ISAF cannot expect unarmed Afghans to feel secure before heavily armed ISAF forces do. As a consequence, it distanced itself physically and psychologically from the Afghan people. To alter this a new operational culture must be adopted, enabling ISAF to relate intimately to the Afghan people. McChrystal wants ISAF forces to spend as little time as possible in armoured vehicles or behind the walls of forward operating bases. ISAF must show respect for local cultures and customs and demonstrate intellectual curiosity about the people of Afghanistan, and build personal relationships with its Afghan partners.

### **ISAF: failure and future**

This may all sound alluringly optimistic and determined - and naïve. Unfortunately, 'getting personal' will certainly result in more deadly victims among foreign troops, especially in the south and east of the country where the Pashtuns live, and the Taliban among them. A case in point are developments in the southern province of Helmand, where this new approach is tested since July. As recent as on Tuesday October 27, eight US soldiers were killed there in bomb attacks.<sup>5</sup> Afghans and Westerners fraternizing while drinking lots of tea and eating piles of goat together requires voluntary invitation, not an occupation.

ISAF will become radically more integrated and partnered with the ANSF (Afghan national Security Forces). Neither the ANA (Afghan national Army) nor the APF (Afghan Police Force) is sufficiently effective. This is another point of great concern, as the ANSF is supposed to take over the main tasks from ISAF within 12 to 24 months from September 2009. To this end, the ANA must accelerate growth, from its present target strength of 134.000 at the end of 2010 to a new target ceiling of 240.000. Thus far, both ANA and APF have been under-sourced, short of trainers, equipment and mentoring, and poorly paid.<sup>6</sup>

Several key aspects are not mentioned in the assessment on this subject. One: regrettably, the new Afghan National Army will be primarily built to fight against a considerable part of its own people, in spite of the fact that al Qaeda supposedly is the main adversary. This does hardly help to lure young Afghans into the

army, no matter how poverty-stricken they may be. Two: how to balance the ethnic diversity of the country within the armed forces without jeopardizing ANA's operational capabilities? Today, of all its officers, 70 percent are ethnic Tajiks; Pashtun recruits, the majority, do not respect their Tajik commanders.<sup>7</sup> Three: who will command the ANA? After all, considering the outcome of the election, no meaningful civilian superstructure of national government will be in place in the foreseeable future.

Lastly, ISAF must work with UNAMA and the international community to build public finance mechanisms. It must pay particular attention to how development projects are contracted, and to whom.<sup>8</sup> This should primarily be a civilian task, not a security force one. .

### **More US troops?**

Throughout his assessment, McChrystal severely criticises the ISAF effort. Since an international military force supposedly still will be the major instrument in achieving 'success' in Afghanistan, it is well worth carefully considering its shortcomings. They are certainly numerous, and serious. Surprisingly, this important aspect of the assessment has hardly been noticed in the ensuing storm of publicity and commentaries, which mainly focused on the sending of tens of thousands of additional troops.

If McChrystal sought to disqualify the ISAF efforts, he certainly succeeded. He uttered equally devastating criticisms about the performance of the Afghan government composed and led by president Karzai. However, if the General sought to plead in favour of sending more troops, he failed. Unless a veritable army of civilian experts (anthropologists, development specialists, political scientists, economists etc.) will be sent to Afghanistan, all admittedly august goals McChrystal wishes to achieve are illusive. (It is equally unlikely that a 'civilian army' will succeed where the military fail.) At the same time, his assessment does provide numerous valid and valuable elements which all have to be carefully attended to; but primarily by civilian specialists, not by military personnel. As McChrystal thoroughly disqualifies the present ISAF forces, more of the same will not do the trick. In this respect, this assessment is self-defeating.

Ever since this assessment was made public on 20 September the public debate about sending extra US troops to Afghanistan, and how many, has caught most attention. The advisers to president Obama turned out to be deeply divided among themselves. Obviously, whatever will be the outcome of the current strategy debate, there will always be a considerable group of disgruntled advisers around. The president himself announced that 'There are no perfect answers'. Consequently, every decision taken will thus be a choice

between 'least evils' – the main question being 'To who?'

Repeatedly, the president has been issuing statements that his administration would not be rushed into a decision. It was not; after a number of prolonged meetings at the White House in October, over two months after its delivery still no decision has been taken on the assessment.

### **Washington: Dumping the 'AfPak' approach**

On March 27, 2009, President Obama initiated a new policy approach of both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Ever since, this 'new' strategy has stirred numerous debates in all quarters and countries involved. The very name of that new strategy, 'AfPak', implies a crucial acknowledgement; the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan virtually does not exist.<sup>9</sup> Another inescapable consequence was, that the ongoing struggle in Afghanistan readily was termed 'Obama's War', in spite of the fact that it started back in October 2001. Surely, it never became 'Bush's War'.

Other popular qualifications of the struggle in and on Afghanistan are a 'war of necessity' and, history revisited, a 'graveyard of empires'. No wonder. Despite eight years of protracted warfare, the presence of a civil government in Kabul led by Hamid Karzai, the spending of 250 billion dollar on military and civil assistance by successive American administrations alone, the development of a huge armed international contingent of troops (40 nations have by now sent a total of over 100.000 troops to Afghanistan) and the steady growth of a national Afghan army (ANA, numbering 90.000 in September 2009), the Taliban nowadays are stronger than they have been since they were ousted from power in the fall of 2001. Another familiar Afghan development is taking place, equally unwelcome but seemingly irrepressible; 'warlordism'.<sup>10</sup>

Deciding anew on what has already been qualified as the 'least bad' strategy to implement in Afghanistan proves to be rather complicated. The whole process certainly has the appearance of desperately trying to avoid ending up in a lose-lose situation. At the same time, president Obama's so-called 'AfPak' strategy, as announced by him only on March 27 this year, seems to have been abandoned. Although the US still seeks to 'disrupt, dismantle and defeat' al Qaeda, all questions and problems raised in the ongoing debate thus far exclusively focus on Afghanistan. Nevertheless, back in March, Obama proclaimed Afghanistan to be of central strategic importance, if only because that country harbours numerous Muslim extremists that are seeking to take over Pakistan, as well.<sup>11</sup> Since Pakistan possesses nuclear weapons, that prospect terrifies governments and public opinions alike in many countries.<sup>12</sup>

## **Kabul: Political knock-out**

In the meantime, the Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC) of Afghanistan had decided to declare invalid close to a million of all 5.6 million votes cast on August 20. This diminished Karzai's initial share of the vote from 54.8 percent to approximately 48. His main opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, gained some percentages, to end on 31.5.<sup>13</sup> However, Karzai felt that he was being denied victory and defended the outcome of the election as valid. One of his aides stated that the runoff was a political decision, caused by heavy international meddling.<sup>14</sup>

Suspiciously little attention was paid to the preferred approach of the electoral outcome by UN-official Mr. Kai Eide, who apparently wanted to limit the Afghan election to one round, Mr. Karzai initially being declared the winner. The number two official of the UN in Afghanistan, Mr. Galbraith, was fired, since he refused to downplay the scale of electoral fraud.<sup>15</sup> In the process, the reputation of the UN mission was considerably damaged. It took a few days of tough negotiating and intense pressure by US senator John Kerry in Kabul to make Karzai change his mind and to accept a runoff with Mr. Abdullah.<sup>16</sup>

## **Abdullah steps out**

The runoff which was to be held on November 7 was described by a number of politicians and analysts alike as an opportunity for the Afghan political system to recover from the severe damage done by the massive fraud that had tainted the first election on 20 August, and as a second chance to provide much needed legitimacy to the candidate that would have been chosen.

Mr. Abdullah Abdullah decided otherwise. After incumbent President Hamid Karzai had repeatedly rejected demands made by Mr. Abdullah, the latter announced on November 1 that he would not participate in the runoff. Abdullah cited his serious doubts about the fairness and credibility of the upcoming runoff, arguing that there was no reason to assume that this time there would be no fraud.

Abdullah had asked for the immediate sacking of four ministers, plus the head of the Independent Election Committee Mr. Azizullah Ludin, who according to him had lost all credibility. These measures would help to heighten transparency of the upcoming election. Of course, Abdullah's attempt to wrest political concessions even before the election was held was received with suspicion. After all, Karzai was expected to win. By stepping out of the contest, Mr. Abdullah granted a second presidential term to Hamid Karzai. At the same time, the much sought-after broadening of political legitimacy of the next Afghan president and

government evaporated as well.

Many Afghans, especially those few million people (2,283,907) who voted for Mr. Karzai in the first round, considered the runoff as the result of international pressure anyway, seeking to defame their preferred candidate. It remained to be seen if they had been willing to once more defy Taliban threats and cast their vote.<sup>17</sup> Since most of Mr. Abdullah's largely Tajik following originates from less Taliban-infested regions, they might well have come out in his support, once more. Ultimately, the outcome of the runoff would have been heavily influenced by the preferences of those 450.000 Afghans (10,46%)<sup>18</sup> who in the first round had voted for Mr. Ramazan Bashardost, an ethnic Hazara.

Although Secretary of State Mrs. Clinton had publicly but prematurely declared, before the decision to hold a runoff was even arrived at, that she expected Karzai to be the Afghan president for another five years<sup>19</sup>, this did not unduly impress most Afghans. In 2004, close to 80 percent of all enfranchised Afghans voted. On August 20, 2009, their number was halved (38,7 percent), the total number of votes being 4.823.000. This huge loss of popular interest in choosing a president cannot be solely ascribed to increased Taliban threats; it also serves to illustrate the disappointing performance of both the Karzai-government and the international community.

It is only too well-known in Afghanistan how Karzai was able to 'win' on August 20; by forging alliances with a number of notorious warlords, mostly non-Pashtun, and by massive electoral fraud. Almost a third of all votes cast for Karzai was nullified. There are no reasons to believe that president Karzai in his second term may abandon his political allies. Unfortunately, from this perspective as well, there is little reason to assume that a next Afghan government led by Mr. Karzai will do a better job. It is likely that the crisis of political legitimacy, severely restricting the authority of the national Afghan government, will continue, and deepen.

### **Ban Ki-Moon steps in**

Secretary-general of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon unexpectedly flew into Afghanistan to come to the rescue. After talks with both Mr. Abdullah and Mr. Karzai, on 2 November the Independent Election Commission led by Mr. Azizullah Ludin declared Mr. Karzai to be the winner of the election, and consequently the next president of Afghanistan, after all. Mr. Ludin mentioned 'security reasons' and 'financial costs' for the decision.

Mr. Abdullah's decision to step out may well have prevented the fiasco of a low turn-out, or the

murdering of many voters by the Taliban movement. As before, stern 'warnings' – death threats, rather - were issued by Taliban spokesmen and commanders to all those taking part in the upcoming election. The movement underlined the seriousness of its threats with a number of recent bomb attacks, targeting UN personnel in Kabul, among others.

Sufficiently safeguarding and controlling the whole electoral process would have been impossible, as before. At the same time, political and ethnic contradictions between Mr. Abdullah's followers and those of Mr. Karzai are likely to escalate. To this end, Mr. Abdullah urged his followers, many of whom were angered and disappointed, 'not to go to the streets, not to demonstrate'.<sup>20</sup>

The re-installment of Karzai may not raise hopes of most Afghans for a better future, but it will be highly rewarding to his political allies, many of whom may now look forward to keep on receiving a considerable part of all international aid and holding on to lucrative positions, or even get better ones. Karzai will need them more than ever. At the same time, the broadly expected arrival of extra contingents of foreign troops will not lead to enhanced national security. (Which will only start to arrive in April or May 2010 anyway, even if the Obama-administration would decide in November to send them.)

The apparently well-organized Taliban have proven that they are here to stay. The movement has succeeded in regaining and considerably enhancing its strength despite the increased presence of foreign troops, by now numbering over a 100.000. After the announcement of Mr. Ludin, the Taliban immediately claimed 'success'. At the same time the Taliban statement held that "the cancellation of the second round of elections has shown that the decisions about Afghanistan are made in Washington and London"<sup>21</sup> This does not bode well for the renewed attempt made by Mr. Karzai to 'bring home' his Taliban brothers.

### **Washington: Contours of a new strategy emerge**

In the course of November president Obama is expected to announce both a new strategy and his decision about the McChrystal troop request. After many weeks of fierce debates and numerous meetings, a number of characteristics of that new strategy can be distinguished.

In accordance with McChrystal's recommendations, the ISAF and American troops will primarily seek to protect the Afghan population. To this end, a number of urban centers and agricultural key areas have been designated. Development funding and the number of civilian experts, especially those who support agricultural and infrastructural developments, will be raised. Instead of hiring foreign and central government contractors

to carry out developmental projects local contractors will be sought for. The extra troops that will be sent will mainly be used for accelerating the growth and training of the ANA.

At the end of October president Obama requested senior US officials to investigate the possibility of cooperating with local leaders and militias province-by-province. Since the authority of the Karzai-government is limited, and is increasingly losing its legitimacy as well, this may be a rewarding approach. Conversely, empowering local leaders requires tight control; also, it should not do further damage to a weakening central authority.<sup>22</sup> Lest we forget, it must be noted that central authority in Afghanistan has traditionally been weak – and so was its national army. Ethnic and tribal loyalties historically did and in general still do today, override loyalty towards the central government.

At the same time, president Obama wanted his national security aides and the State Department to come up with a number of clear targets to be presented to president Karzai. He should reach out to his political opponents; remove the most notoriously corrupt governors and ministers from their posts; try to lure the least committed of the Taliban away.<sup>23</sup>

Although Karzai will continue in office, presumably for another five year term (nothing is guaranteed in this respect), president Obama seems determined to make him change his ways. Congratulating Karzai during a phone call, he at the same time emphasized the need to start writing “a new chapter based on improved governance, a much more serious effort to eradicate corruption, joint efforts to accelerate the training of Afghan security forces so that the Afghan people can provide for their own security”<sup>24</sup>. To combat corruption, an anticorruption commission should be installed by Karzai and his government, in order to establish strict accountability for government officials at the national and provincial levels.<sup>25</sup>

After the election fiasco, president Karzai finds himself in a precarious position. Every move he decides to make will stir up determined opposition. Even if Karzai, prodded by Washington, is willing to seek reconciliation with his most powerful but unyielding foe, the Taliban movement, a number of his closest political allies like Fahim and Khalili, his vice-presidents, will oppose him. Throughout the ages, the ‘graveyard of empires’ has always been equally mortal for its own leaders as well; Hamid Karzai seems poised to become the next Afghan leader to be savagely devoured.

Amsterdam, November 10, 2009

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 'Commander's Initial Assessment', 30 August 2009, Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan

<sup>2</sup> Bob Woodward, 'McChrystal: More Forces or 'Mission Failure'', in: The Washington Post, Monday, September 21, 2009

<sup>3</sup> 'Pakistan, Iran aiding Afghan Taliban: US', in: Dawn, Tuesday, 22 September, 2009. Richard Holbrooke, Special US Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, is of the same opinion.

<sup>4</sup> Counter-insurgency or COIN: generally, the term covers the armed conflict between military forces of a recognised government and an opposing armed force that seeks to remove and replace it. The latter group or organization is labelled 'insurgents'. Counter-insurgency primarily aims at armed suppression of a rebellion, but also implies divide and rule tactics. Among others, it serves to weaken or fraction links between the insurgents and the population. One of the main difficulties in suppressing an insurgency; it is difficult or even impossible to distinguish between insurgents and the population they mingle with. This certainly applies to Afghan conditions

<sup>5</sup> 'Eight more US troops killed in Afghan attacks', in: The News International, Wednesday, October 28, 2009

<sup>6</sup> After eight years of building and training an Afghan army, at the beginning of November 2009 it has a force of over 90.000. But the number of forces that can sustain themselves in combat is just over 50.000. See: David E. Sanger, 'With Karzai, U.S. Faces Weak Partner in Time of War', in: The New York Times, November 2, 2009

<sup>7</sup> Arnaud de Borchgrave, 'Obama Muddling Through', in: Atlantic Council ([www.acus.org](http://www.acus.org)), September 29, 2009

<sup>8</sup> A staggering percentage of US and international assistance is pocketed by private contractors and corrupt officials. 75% of over 38 billion US dollars given since 2002 has thus disappeared; of all international assistance, 60% never reached Afghan projects and people. Karin von Hippel, 'Combatting corruption in Afghanistan', in: The Afpak Channel ([www.foreignpolicy.com/afpak](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/afpak)), Wednesday September 30, 2009

<sup>9</sup> The agreement on the Durand line, concluded in 1893 and signed by the Emir of Afghanistan as well, was concluded for a period of hundred years. Consequently, in 1993 it expired. Thus far, it has not been formally renegotiated

<sup>10</sup> It is estimated that a total of some 120.000 Afghans belong to about 5.000 private militias. Many of them receive massive payments by US and NATO commanders, in exchange for securing international troops, roads and convoys. General McChrystal is well aware of this. Gareth Porter, 'NATO forces turn to warlords', in: Asia Times Online, October 30, 2009

<sup>11</sup> 'White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan', Washington, March 27, 2009. Obama: "The core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan".

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps it is for that reason that hardly a week has gone by since March, 2009, that US officials and politicians solemnly stated that 'Pakistan's nuclear weapons are safe'. But are they? On October 11, on the eve of a huge offensive by the Pakistani Armed forces against the bulwark of militancy in South Waziristan, a mere handful of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) members succeeded in occupying the heavily guarded military headquarters in Rawalpindi. The attackers demanded the release of over 100 fellow militants. After some 22 hours commandos stormed the building and succeeded in retaking it. Taliban spokesman Azam Tariq claimed responsibility for the attack by phoning a reporter as usual, and ominously added that 'We have the capability to strike at any place in Pakistan'. Unfortunately, in this respect it is easier to believe

Azam Tariq then president Obama and his team – although it must be readily admitted (and hoped for) that safeguarding nukes is quite another matter than protecting military headquarters

<sup>13</sup> ‘Karzai not clear winner in Afghan elections: ECC’, in: Dawn, Tuesday, 20 October, 2009

<sup>14</sup> One of two Afghans on the five-member UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission, Maulavi Mustafa Barakzai, resigned. He did so because ‘the three foreigners on the panel were making all decisions on their own’. ‘Afghan rivals spar over poll probe’, in: Al Jazeera (Aljazeera.net), Tuesday, October 13, 2009. It should be noted that Mr. Barakzai was widely considered to favour Mr. Karzai

<sup>15</sup> James Joyner, ‘Galbraith Fired, Refused to Hide Afghanistan Election Fraud’, in: Atlantic Council, ([www.acus.org](http://www.acus.org)), October 1, 2009

<sup>16</sup> Kerry: “What began as a fact-finding trip did end with several days of talks with president Karzai to resolve a dispute over the Afghan elections. You may have read that it takes three cups of tea to make a deal in Afghanistan. Well, let me tell you, it took a lot more than that for us, but we got there.” Transcript of ‘Afghanistan: Defining the Possibilities’, Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, October 26, 2009. Meeting with John Kerry and David Sanger

<sup>17</sup> Tribal leaders in Southern Afghanistan, Karzai’s main vote bank, announced that they would boycott a runoff. ‘Next Afghan government faces daunting ‘to do’ list’, in: Dawn, Thursday, 15 October, 2009

<sup>18</sup> Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan ([www.iec.org.af](http://www.iec.org.af)), Final Certified Presidential Results, 21 October, 2009

<sup>19</sup> Helene Cooper and Mark Landler, ‘White House Believes Karzai Will Be Re-elected’, in: The New York Times, September 27, 2009

<sup>20</sup> Heidi Vogt and Rahim Faiez, ‘Afghan challenger drops out of runoff election’, in: The Washington Post, November 1, 2009

<sup>21</sup> ‘Karzai vows ‘inclusive’ government’, in: Al Jazeera, November 3, 2009

<sup>22</sup> On October 28, president Obama signed into law permission for US commanders in Afghanistan to pay Taliban that are willing to change sides. ‘US plans to woo Taliban fighters’, in: Al Jazeera, October 28, 2009

<sup>23</sup> David E. Sanger, ‘With Karzai, U.S. Faces Weak Partner in Time of War’, in: The New York Times, November 2, 2009

<sup>24</sup> Scott Wilson and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, ‘Karzai is wild card for U.S. strategy’, in: The Washington Post, November 3, 2009

<sup>25</sup> Alissa J. Rubin and Helene Cooper, ‘Karzai Is Vague on Confronting Corruption in Afghanistan’, in: The New York Times, November 3, 2009

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