

FutureGenerations

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Success in Afghanistan Requires Alternative Models of Governance

Franklin, WV: The current debate on success in Afghanistan is limited to how to defeat al-Qaeda and end Taliban insurgency. The Taliban are not the only source of conflict. Conflicts in Afghanistan are many, complex, and often local. Escalating conflicts in communities far removed from Kabul require a fresh look at current state-building strategies.

After a century of misrule, the people of Afghanistan are in desperate search of a way to govern themselves while international efforts to fund and legitimize a centralized “security state” prolong the conflict. Country Director of Future Generations Afghanistan, Aziz Hakimi, calls for a national and international debate on alternatives to the current governance model and revised international engagement. He advocates for strengthening community self-governance and building local capacities for sustainable development. Aziz Hakimi, based in Kabul, will be in the United States from 12 May - 19 May, 2009 and available for interviews.

Previous attempts to establish a centralized state power in Afghanistan have not succeeded. Recognizing the reality of strong tribal loyalties and a tradition of self-governance among various ethnic groups, many Afghans and scholars argue that a decentralized model of governance based on consensus, devolution of power to village, district, and provincial levels, and a significant degree of local autonomy is the only way to keep the Afghan nation together. But, such options have not been openly debated and considered.

Current efforts by the government to strengthen governance at the district level are compromised by fundamental flaws in the constitutional framework. Aziz Hakimi argues that, “instead of attempting to impose a ‘one size fits all’ model of the centralized nation-state, Afghanistan needs a public debate to bring forward fresh approaches to governance. It is time,” he says, “that we looked for models of political organization, social control, and economic development that are flexible enough to accommodate the diverse needs of Afghanistan’s rural communities.”

Aziz Hakimi has bridged the realms of government, media, business, and development to bring forward the voice and will of the Afghan people. As former Director of Public Information and Civic Education for the Constitutional Commission of Afghanistan, he organized public support and involvement in the national Loya Jirga and the successful adoption of the Afghan Constitution. He also served as Deputy Director of the policy management unit in the Office of the President and as a human rights officer with the United Nations offices in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Most recently, he directed The Killid Group and expanded independent media to cover Afghanistan’s five main urban centers, forging further partnerships with 30 community radio stations. Today, he serves as Country Director for Future Generations Afghanistan, working since 2002 to build local capacity for governance and development based on local priorities.

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