

UK policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan: the way forward

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Foreword by the Prime Minister



The four great challenges of our time – the global financial crisis, climate change, global poverty and global security – are alike in requiring an appreciation of their scale, a commitment to work together, and an acceptance of the need for action both now and for the long term. I am determined that in each case Britain will play a leading role, living up to our global responsibilities while protecting our national interest.

So I am pleased to publish this comprehensive strategy setting out our approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan – building on the strategy for Afghanistan I announced in December 2007, and the consistent support we have given to Pakistan in recent years. In previous decades the international community has not always shown the long-term vision that is so badly needed. It is vital that we maintain our commitment, alongside regional partners and in close coordination with the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, across the full range of action set out in this strategy.

I am proud of Britain's contribution to this international effort – the hard work and achievements of our civilian experts, and above all the dedication, skill and courage of our armed forces, over fifty of whom lost their lives last year. This strategy reaffirms our position as the second largest troop contributor to Afghanistan, the third largest donor to Afghanistan, and one of the top five donors to Pakistan. We will see through the commitments we have made.

There has been significant progress in some areas, as is set out here. But we must recognise the scale of the challenge that remains: two very different countries at different stages of development but with shared problems of insurgency, terrorism, violent extremism and the drugs trade. I believe that through working together to a clear, realistic, and coordinated strategy, we can and must succeed – we cannot allow this region to be a base for exporting terrorism to Britain's streets.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gordon Brown".

Gordon Brown
Prime Minister

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Part A: Context

1 Why Afghanistan and Pakistan matter

Afghanistan and Pakistan are of critical strategic importance to the UK and the international community as a whole. Instability and insecurity in both countries have a direct impact on our national security and the safety of our citizens. Of the six major sources of threat set out in the UK's National Security Strategy, Afghanistan and Pakistan are relevant to at least four:

- **terrorism** – Afghanistan was the base for Al Qaida's terrorist activity, including the largest ever terrorist atrocity of 11 September 2001; Al Qaida's senior leadership is currently located in the border areas of Pakistan, and three quarters of the most serious plots investigated in the UK have links back to Pakistan;
- **conflict** – the insurgency in Afghanistan and insecurity in Pakistan have an impact on regional instability which affects the UK's interests, not least given our deep connections with the region and the large British Pakistani community;
- **transnational crime** – Afghanistan is the source of 90% of the heroin in the UK, and we estimate that roughly half is smuggled via Pakistan;
- **weapons of mass destruction** – Pakistan is a nuclear-armed state. Its proper control of its weapons and nuclear material, and the prevention of proliferation to other countries or non-state actors, is vital to our interests.

The international community is committed to helping Afghanistan and Pakistan. Around fifty countries are involved on a bilateral basis, as well as the United Nations (UN), the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the World Bank, the European Union (EU) and other organisations. Different countries and organisations play a variety of roles, but all are demonstrating their shared commitment to helping Afghanistan and Pakistan deal with the severe challenges they face. These include tackling violent extremism and ensuring their own security and stability; building stable and legitimate governance; tackling poverty and encouraging economic growth.

These challenges are a test for both countries and for the international community. The UK remains committed to playing a major role in this broader effort. This is consistent with one of the key principles of our foreign policy, reiterated in the National Security Strategy: that of tackling threats to the UK's security early and at source. It is also consistent with our approach to international terrorism, which remains the major security threat to the UK and to our interests, as set out in our updated counter-terrorism strategy, CONTEST, in March 2009; and with our commitment to reducing poverty in Afghanistan and Pakistan as an objective in its own right, as well as for its contribution to stability. We are the second largest troop contributor in Afghanistan; the third largest donor to Afghanistan (behind the US and the Asia Development Bank); and one of the top five donors to Pakistan. We have our largest Embassy in Afghanistan and our second largest in Pakistan.

Afghanistan and Pakistan are very different countries; but they require complementary policies. A stable Pakistan is strategically important to British interests and to the region; but it requires high-level political, diplomatic and official engagement more than directly deployed resources. While both countries require assistance to deal with violent extremism, Afghanistan's security forces are at an early stage of development, so international forces are playing a front line role there, at the invitation of the Afghan government and under a UN mandate, as well as working on basic training. Pakistan has a large and well-funded army, and the efforts of the international community, including the UK, are rightly focused on working with the army and the police to improve their capability; and working with the Pakistani leadership to encourage a greater focus on violent extremism relative to other priorities. Similarly, while both countries require assistance in development, and in both countries we work with the government and with local actors, capacity in Afghanistan is at a much earlier stage of development after three decades of conflict, and so we need more deployed staff.

Despite these significant differences, we need to ensure our support to the two countries is coherent – as many of the challenges are interlinked. We have reformed our structures and policies to ensure we are addressing these challenges in a coordinated and consistent manner, and we are encouraging other international actors to do the same.

The UK is also – along with the US, the UN and NATO – encouraging the governments of both countries to work more closely together. Strong co-operation between them is vital for regional stability – and in their own interests. Pakistan's and Afghanistan's stability and prosperity are interlinked. That is especially true along their border, which cuts across tribal groupings and has historically been hard to control; and which, in recent years, has sheltered terrorists (including Al Qaida) and other militant groups and networks, with rival militant leaders working with, or supplanting, traditional tribal structures.

The border region covers a large area. On the Pakistani side, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and Baluchistan together cover an area approximately twice the size of Great Britain. Like the border areas of southern and eastern Afghanistan, the border areas of Pakistan are extremely hostile environments, with relatively weak rule of law. This presents a major challenge to the Pakistani government in countering militant, terrorist or criminal groups, and to the international community in offering support for security, governance or development. The border areas cannot simply be overlooked – especially in today's globalised world, when instability can spread more quickly and the terrorist threat emanating from these regions can reach more easily across the world.

Clearly these are difficult and complex challenges. The UK is determined to play its part in the international community's effort to meet them with the right level and type of resources; with a willingness to learn and adapt in the face of experience, and a commitment to work with the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan in so doing.

2 Afghanistan – recent history

Afghanistan has endured three decades of instability and violence. After the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, followed by civil war in the 1990s, the Taliban seized control. Their short time in power was characterised by extreme religious intolerance, disregard for human rights (in particular oppression of women), neglect of economic development and basic services like health and education, tolerance of the drugs trade (other than a short period before 2001), and tolerance of (or tacit support for) terrorism, including Al Qaida. The attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, planned in Afghanistan, led the US, Britain and other allies, with the support of irregular Afghan forces, to remove the Taliban.

Since then, the international community, under a UN mandate, has supported Afghanistan in maintaining security, building legitimate governance and promoting economic development – from the Bonn agreement and the establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in December 2001, to a series of Loya Jirgas, the first democratic elections in 2004, and the Afghan Compact and Afghan National Development Strategy. Britain has played a full part in this process throughout.

International forces remained in Afghanistan to maintain security, train Afghan forces and address the threat posed by Al Qaida. From 2001 to 2003, ISAF concentrated on Kabul and a US-led coalition focused on counter-terrorism. In 2003, ISAF began the process of extending security throughout the country – moving first into the north, then in 2005 to the west, and in 2006 to the south and east – working wherever possible with the Afghan army and police. At the same time, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), sponsored by different countries, were established across Afghanistan. From 2001 to 2006, the UK contributed military forces to ISAF in Kabul, and a PRT to Mazar-i-Sharif in the north. In 2006, as ISAF expanded into the more difficult south and east, the Taliban heartland and the centre of the drugs trade, the UK took on a key role in the south, including lead responsibility within ISAF for Helmand province.

The UK also played a leading role in the effort to establish a legitimate, accountable state and to develop the economy, at all levels – national, provincial, district and village. We provided early support to the newly established Afghan Administration in 2002 and helped establish the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and the reconstruction agency, which began urgent programmes on health, education, transport and employment; the National Solidarity Program which has provided grants to 23,000 villages; and the design of the telecoms system. The UK also provided early and critical support to the Afghan National Army, through the leadership of General McColl, the first ISAF commander.

Throughout this period there has been steady progress on the economy (with annual growth rates in the legal economy of 10-15%, and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per head up by over 70% since 2002); on building governance (including democratic elections at national and local level); and on improving the delivery of basic services (for example, 4.7 million more children attended school in 2007 than in 2001, including 2 million girls who had been denied education under the Taliban; the percentage of the population with access to basic health services increased from 9% in 2003 to 82% in 2006; and child mortality has fallen by a quarter).

The security situation has remained difficult because of the changing nature of the insurgency – combining the Taliban and a range of other armed and terrorist groups, some linked to drug networks and criminal gangs, who stand to lose from the spread of the rule of law. This complex insurgency responded more aggressively than expected to the move by ISAF and the Afghan government into the south and east of the country. The insurgent groups failed in their initial strategy of attempting to attack international and Afghan government forces directly; but have proved resilient, not least in switching to predominantly asymmetric (guerrilla and terrorist) tactics including roadside bombs and suicide attacks, which also target Afghan civilians. They continue to exploit havens across the border in Pakistan. Corruption and other shortcomings in Afghan governance and the rule of law have discouraged ordinary Afghans from actively helping the Afghan government to oppose them.

Helmand illustrates this recent history. Before 2006, neither the international community nor the Afghan government had a sizeable presence there. As a result, the Taliban were able to regroup and the drugs trade grew. The UK initially deployed around 3,500 troops to Helmand in spring 2006, equipped to deal with insurgency but hoping to embark quickly on supporting governance and reconstruction. British forces were rapidly caught up in a fierce fight against insurgents, who redoubled their efforts in a direct attempt to overthrow the Governor. At the Afghan government's request, British forces were deployed to shore up the government's authority across a wider area than initially planned. The insurgents' attacks were defeated. But there was little Afghan capacity to exploit this, and to make progress on security, governance and reconstruction. Building that capacity, far from the centre of government in Kabul, has proved a bigger challenge than originally expected. The situation was similar in neighbouring Kandahar province (where Canadian forces were in the lead) and in eastern Afghanistan (where US forces were in the lead).

The UK responded by increasing our military forces in Afghanistan to 5,500 in autumn 2006, to around 7,800 in summer 2007, and to around 8,100 in summer 2008; and by reforming our civilian and military structures to focus on delivering improvements in governance and development in conditions that remained insecure. In December 2007, these changes were brought together in a new strategy for the UK in Afghanistan, including a 'Road map' of delivery for Helmand. This emphasised 'Afghanisation' (the importance of developing Afghan institutions and supporting them in taking the lead); 'civilianisation' (the importance of a joint civilian-military approach to counter-insurgency and reconstruction in an insecure environment); 'localisation' (the importance of local and tribal issues, including district governance, local shuras or community councils, and local initiatives on security); and reconciliation (the importance of offering a route back into mainstream politics and society for insurgents willing to renounce violence and embrace the Afghan constitution). It also emphasised our commitment to encouraging international allies to share the burden of effort in Afghanistan (which has seen ISAF forces increase to 58,000 (up from 19,500 in mid 2006), including contributions from all 28 NATO countries and 14 others¹).

The cost of UK military operations in Afghanistan increased from £750m in 2006-07, to £1.5bn in 2007-08, and to £2.6bn in 2008-09. At the same time, development and stabilisation spending increased from £154m in 2006-07, to £166m in 2007-08, and to £207m in 2008-09.

¹ More detail can be found at: www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf

3 Afghanistan – the current situation

Eight years on from 2001, and five years from the first democratic Presidential elections in 2004, there has not been as much progress as either the international community or the Afghans themselves would have hoped.

While the security situation remains difficult across Afghanistan, violence is primarily centred in the south and east. The solution remains political; insecurity will not be resolved by military means alone. The insurgents continue to be defeated in any attempts to take on international or Afghan forces directly, or to take control of any key population centres. But they retain the ability to mount asymmetric attacks and intimidate the population. Policing and the rule of law remain weak. The insurgency continues to exploit havens in the border areas of Pakistan.

The drugs trade retains a strong hold in some areas. The international community's counter-narcotics strategy is achieving some success – with an increasing number of provinces (now over half) no longer growing poppy. However, in those areas where security and the rule of law is fragile, including in parts of Helmand, the drugs trade continues to flourish – providing heroin which reaches the streets of the UK; undermining governance and reinforcing insecurity in Afghanistan; and increasingly funding the insurgency and terrorism through alliances of convenience.

Economic growth has also slowed. Afghanistan remains one of the poorest, least developed countries in the world. It will not meet its Millennium Development Goal targets, even on an extended time frame. Unemployment is currently around 30%. Over half the population lives in poverty, a third lacks enough to eat, and 40% of Afghan children are underweight. Two out of every ten children born in a rural area will die before their fifth birthday. Nearly seven out of ten people do not have regular access to clean drinking water. Life expectancy is just 43 years. Over 90% of Afghans do not have access to reliable electricity. Recent drought has increased the risk of humanitarian crisis. These indicators have improved substantially since 2001, especially in those areas under Afghan government control, but they remain inadequate.

Governance is beset by corruption and lack of capacity, which is compounded by the lack of security. The combination of insecurity, poverty, lack of good governance and social and economic development, and perception of widespread corruption, deepens the challenge of persuading the people to back their government over the Taliban. In a recent poll², only 4% of Afghans said they favoured the return of the Taliban; but too many remain ambivalent, waiting to see which side gains the upper hand. As a result of all these factors, the insurgency has not been delivered a decisive blow.

These challenges, while very significant, are balanced by important opportunities. Presidential and provincial council elections in 2009, and parliamentary and district elections in 2010, offer a chance to reinvigorate the political process and reengage the population by providing a more convincing vision of a future the Afghan people can believe in and support. The Afghan government has a National Development Strategy endorsed by the international community at the Paris Conference in June 2008, which provides a framework for international development assistance. NATO, at its 60th

² Poll carried out by Afghan Centre for Social and Opinion Research (30 December 2008 - 12 January 2009), commissioned by BBC, ABC News of America and ARD of Germany

anniversary Summit in April 2009, unanimously agreed that supporting Afghanistan to improve security and build a stronger democratic state was its most important immediate operational priority and long-term commitment. The additional investment and focus of the new US Administration, backed by NATO and strongly supported by the UK, offers the chance to tip the balance against the insurgency.

4 Pakistan – recent history

Pakistan faces grave security challenges, including a major insurgency along its border with Afghanistan and a growing threat of violent extremism there and in many other parts of the country.

An independent country for over 60 years, Pakistan has oscillated between periods of military rule and the elected governments of two family dynasties: the Bhuttos, who lead the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Sharifs, who lead the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N). It has long been of vital importance: a frontline state in the Cold War; a nuclear power; and more latterly a key ally against terrorism. Throughout its history its foreign policy has been largely defined by its tense relationship with India.

5 Pakistan – the current situation

After the turmoil of 2007, which witnessed the siege of the Red Mosque in Islamabad and the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, 2008 saw a peaceful transition to democratic civilian government from the military regime of former President Musharraf. Throughout this transition, the UK has supported democratic institutions and engaged with Pakistani leaders from across the political spectrum, consistently pressing them to work together to address Pakistan's security, political and economic problems.

Pakistan's civilian government faces severe challenges. Its most serious internal political crisis came to a head in March 2009, threatening to destabilise the government and provoke violence on the streets. The UK and other international partners remained in close contact with Pakistan's political leaders during this period, urging the parties to resolve their differences peacefully and democratically. A violent outcome was averted and a process of political reconciliation has restored a measure of stability, but political and constitutional reforms promised by the PPP and PML-N in 2006 must now be implemented to strengthen Pakistan's democratic institutions.

Pakistan's economic situation deteriorated sharply in 2008. Insecurity, political transition and global oil and food inflation contributed to a sharp fall in growth forecasts, 25% inflation, ballooning budget and trade deficits and dwindling foreign exchange reserves. In November 2008 the Pakistani government signed a \$7.6 billion loan agreement with the IMF. Since then, foreign exchange reserves have started to recover, inflation has fallen and the Government has initiated a number of structural economic reforms. But the economic situation remains fragile and potentially vulnerable to further external shocks. Growth in GDP is expected to have reduced from 6.8% in 2006-07 to 2.5% in 2008-09.

Pakistan's economic difficulties mean it is unlikely to meet the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. At least 36 million people (out of a population of 160 million) live in poverty. Half the adult population is illiterate, including two thirds of women; and one in ten children die before their fifth birthday. The UK continues to support Pakistan with a large programme of development assistance, the details of which are set out in Part B.

In November 2008 terrorists attacked Mumbai, leaving 170 dead (including three British nationals). Evidence that the attack was carried out by militants based in Pakistan gave rise to a rapid escalation in tension between India and Pakistan. The UK played a leading role in an intensive international diplomatic effort to reverse this escalation and urge the Pakistani government to bring those responsible for the attacks to justice and to dismantle terrorist groups operating from Pakistan's territory. In February 2009 the Pakistani government announced its intention to prosecute those suspected of involvement in the attacks.

This shocking event reflected the wider problems Pakistan faces with violent extremism and terrorism. Al Qaida continues to operate in the FATA, from where it recruits and trains terrorists (including vulnerable people from the UK), and plans attacks against Western targets. Three quarters of the most serious plots investigated in the UK have links back to Pakistan. In some cases, terrorist cells received tasking, direction and training from Pakistan-based groups; and in attempted operations in the UK, some of the conspirators travelled to Pakistan during their preparations. Afghan groups also train and plan attacks on international and Afghan targets in Afghanistan from the FATA.

Terrorism deeply affects Pakistan: over 2,000 civilians and security force personnel were killed in 2008 in terrorist attacks; and levels of violence remain high in 2009. Suicide attacks are increasing, from 7 in 2006 to 63 in 2008. The threat is not confined to Pakistan's border areas; increasingly terrorist networks are carrying out attacks elsewhere in the country. Moreover, the attacks on Mumbai in November 2008, led by Pakistani-based militant group Lashkar-e-Toyiba, underlined the wider threat to the international community from violent extremism in Pakistan, and put the stability of the region at risk.

A number of localised, tribally based militant groups in the FATA either tolerate or support Al Qaida, as well as supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. Levels of violence and challenge to the rule of law are increasing. Militant groups control a growing area, and often impose their own interpretation of Sharia law. Deals between the Pakistani state and militant groups in the FATA have proved unenforceable, have prevented serious action to tackle violent extremists and represent a risk to lasting peace. The Pakistani government has insufficient means to impose the terms of those deals when the militants violate them.

There is also a separatist insurgency continuing in the province of Baluchistan, based on demands that the region should keep a greater share of its own resources. Although that insurgency is less potent than in the FATA, the region borders Helmand province in Afghanistan and is a vital supply route for international forces in southern Afghanistan. It is also a primary route for opiates smuggled to the UK. Insurgent groups in Baluchistan are carrying out systematic attacks against state institutions and infrastructure there, and tolerating or supporting Afghan groups training and planning attacks on international and Afghan targets in Afghanistan.

We recognise the significant efforts Pakistan has made, at considerable loss of life, to bring greater security and stability to its border areas. So far, however, there are no signs that terrorism or violent extremism in Pakistan are decreasing.

But, as with Afghanistan, these challenges are balanced by opportunities – not least the strong and growing support of the international community. Working together with Pakistan, we can help change this situation. The UK is committed to its long-term strategic partnership with Pakistan. This is grounded in shared principles and a desire to work closely together to tackle our common challenges, and by continuing to strengthen it through frequent, high-level dialogue and close co-ordination, we will make progress. It is only through such strong relationships and a truly collaborative effort that we can together tackle the challenges Pakistan faces.

6 Next steps

The challenges facing Afghanistan and Pakistan are substantial and complex. They require a multi-stranded approach, covering security, building more effective and accountable governance, and promoting development in an often insecure environment. They also require a complementary approach, especially in relation to the border areas. The effort must be led by the Afghan and Pakistani governments themselves, with the international community's support.

The UK will continue to play a leading role in this international effort. The complex nature of the challenges demands a strategy that is sophisticated, clear and realistic. Part B of this document sets out that strategy, starting with the UK's strategic objectives in the region and the principles that guide our approach, followed by a high-level description of the key strands of activity we are undertaking to pursue those strategic objectives.

Part B: A comprehensive UK strategy

The UK's strategic objectives

Reflecting our national interest in reducing the threat to the UK's security, and our national interest (as well as international obligations) in building stability in the region, the UK's strategic objectives are set out below. We will assess the success or failure of our approach against them. They build on the strategic objectives set out in the UK's strategy for Afghanistan announced by the Prime Minister to Parliament on 12 December 2007, and the discussions we have had with allies, including the US and NATO, over recent months.

In the wider region:

- improving regional stability.

In both Afghanistan and Pakistan:

- ensuring Al Qaida does not return to Afghanistan, and is defeated or incapacitated in Pakistan's border areas;
- reducing the insurgencies on both sides of the Afghanistan and Pakistan border to a level that poses no significant threat to progress in either country;
- supporting both states in tackling terrorism and violent extremism, and in building capacity to address and contain the threat within their borders;
- helping both states contain and reduce the drugs trade, and divide it from insurgency;
- building stronger security forces, better governance, and economic development, so that progress is sustainable.

In Pakistan:

- helping Pakistan achieve its vision of becoming a stable, economically and socially developed democracy and meet its poverty reduction targets;
- encouraging constructive Pakistani engagement on nuclear security and non-proliferation.

In Afghanistan:

- helping Afghanistan become an effective and accountable state, increasingly able to handle its security and deliver basic services to its people;
- providing long-term sustainable support for the Afghan National Development Strategy, particularly on governance, rule of law, human rights and poverty reduction.

Guiding principles

The following principles will govern our activity in pursuit of those objectives:

- an **international approach**: living up to our international obligations, working closely with the international community to leverage the UK's resources and ensure proper burden sharing;
- a **regional approach**: promoting peaceful relations between all countries in the region, focused on countering the threat of violent extremism;
- a **joint civilian-military approach**: recognising that military force alone will not solve the region's problems;
- a **better coordinated** approach: within each country; across the two countries, especially on the border areas; and across the different lines of activity, from counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency and counter-narcotics, to governance and development;
- a **long-term approach** focused on **developing capacity in both countries**, including moving to a transition process for Afghan security forces to take over responsibility in Afghanistan, with international forces moving to a training and support role;
- a **political approach** encouraging **reconciliation** in both countries so that militants renounce violence in favour of legitimate political processes;
- an approach that combines **respect for sovereignty and local values with respect for international standards** of democracy, legitimate and accountable government, and human rights;
- a **hard-headed approach**: setting clear and realistic objectives with clear metrics of success.

The remainder of this document sets out a high-level description of the key strands of activity that the UK is undertaking to pursue our strategic objectives. More detail on some of these activities can be found in related announcements by the Ministry of Defence (MOD) on detailed plans for future military deployment and activity, and by the Department for International Development (DFID) on its Country Assistance Plan for Afghanistan.

1 Afghanistan and Pakistan: promoting coordinated international and regional engagement

The UK is committed to working with allies to ensure better coordinated international support for Afghanistan and Pakistan. That will involve better integration of our activity – military and civilian – including on counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, counter-narcotics, governance, development, trade and access to markets. It will involve closer working between NATO, the UN, the EU and the World Bank. The involvement of so many countries and international institutions is a positive sign of international commitment, but it makes co-ordination more challenging. Effective co-ordination is, however, essential to success.

There have already been some recent improvements to coordination in Afghanistan. NATO's Commander is now 'double-hatted' as the Commander of US Forces in Afghanistan, so that all international forces come under a single command. NATO and the US recognise the need for improved co-ordination between countries, and NATO has offered to coordinate training for the Afghan army and police. All parties recognise the need for closer integration between military and civilian effort; since March 2008 the UK in Helmand has operated an integrated civilian-military mission, under a civilian lead.

But there is still much to do. The international development effort needs to be better coordinated, better targeted, and better managed. The Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, led by the World Bank, is a good mechanism for pooling donor resources for Afghan policies and programmes. The UK will continue to lobby other countries to follow our example of channelling a larger proportion of aid through the Afghan government; and to help strengthen Afghan systems. We will also urge the Afghan government to improve the implementation of programmes that will benefit the counter-insurgency effort, including in Helmand and elsewhere in the south and east.

We welcome the increase in resources for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): it has a central role to play in maintaining international support for security and stability in Afghanistan; in helping deliver Presidential elections in 2009; and in promoting reconciliation and the rule of law.

In Pakistan, we are working closely with the US to coordinate our support for Pakistani security forces. We are working with our EU partners to increase the EU's engagement in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, we welcome the EU's commitments on election monitoring. We are encouraging the EU to: expand its efforts on the rule of law; improve the targeting and coordination of its development assistance; increase capacity-building for the police and democratic institutions; improve support for progress on development, human rights and economic reform; and deliver an EU-Pakistan Summit focused on improving Pakistan's trade access to EU markets.

But we believe international support to the region must be truly global. We welcome the growing involvement of the Gulf countries, Japan and China, as well as neighbouring countries in the region. The UK played a leading role in establishing the 'Friends of Democratic Pakistan' group in 2008, which co-ordinates international political support in areas outside the scope of traditional donor mechanisms. The Friends are helping Pakistan to develop comprehensive strategies to: promote stability in the border areas; tackle violent extremism; and support sustainable democratic and economic development. At the Ministerial meeting of the Friends on 17 April 2009, President Zardari reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to defeating terrorism and militancy. We remain keen to help Pakistan establish a trust fund for reconstruction and development in Pakistan's border areas, which would be administered by the World Bank. We stand ready to contribute to such a fund when the Pakistani government and the World Bank have established what and how it will deliver.

2 Afghanistan and Pakistan: supporting a comprehensive approach for the border areas

Security in Afghanistan is undermined by the ability of insurgents to exploit havens in Pakistan. Pakistan's own security problems are at their most acute in the border areas with Afghanistan – where local, tribally based militant groups tolerate and support the Afghan insurgency and terrorists planning attacks in Pakistan and the West. The border areas lack legitimate governance, rule of law and economic development. As argued in Part A, they cannot be overlooked, as, without progress in this border region, there cannot be stability, security and prosperity for either Afghanistan or Pakistan; nor will the terrorist threat to the rest of the world be defeated or contained.

The UK supports the US initiative to establish a Tri-Lateral Commission, bringing together senior political figures from Afghanistan and Pakistan, with a focus on border issues. That will reinforce existing Turkish and Canadian work, and build on the US-led tripartite commission for military co-operation on border security, in which the commander of ISAF forces regularly meets Afghan and Pakistani senior commanders. At the operational level, ISAF is establishing six border coordination centres, co-locating Afghan, Pakistani and international forces, to help improve information sharing and operational co-ordination. The UK also supports work by the Afghan and Pakistani governments to take forward people-to-people contact through the jirga process, which has brought together a range of community leaders to address some of the key issues facing the border region.

ISAF is increasing the resources applied to border security inside Afghanistan, and Pakistan is doing the same on its side of the border. Alongside the US, we are working with the Pakistani military and security forces. The Security Development Plan (SDP) aims to provide training to improve the capacity of the Pakistani Frontier Corps (including on counter-insurgency), which is key to improving effectiveness in FATA, NWFP and Baluchistan (where training will be led by the UK). This will help the Pakistani government and security forces tackle not only the insurgent and terrorist groups threatening security throughout their country, but also the connections between those local militant groups and terrorists planning attacks outside Pakistan, including in the UK.

In support of these security initiatives, the UK is encouraging and advising the Pakistani government to adopt an integrated, comprehensive and coordinated approach in the border areas. In Baluchistan, that involves dialogue towards a political settlement with Baluch nationalists; security capacity-building; economic aid; and governance reform. In FATA and NWFP, it combines military action against militants and extremists with a plan for reconstruction, development and political reform. Political reform includes taking close account of the views of the local population and integrating FATA more fully into the Pakistani state. We will offer support to the Pakistani government in consulting local people, including through funding independent opinion polling.

We are adapting our development assistance to Pakistan to help deliver this strategic approach, at the same time as continuing to further our objectives on poverty reduction. We are one of the five largest bilateral donors to Pakistan, spending an increasing proportion of this aid in the border areas – recognising the inherent challenge in delivering development

in an effective and transparent way in areas of insecurity and weak governance. Among other initiatives in the border areas, we will:

- fund new education programmes, at primary and secondary level, and youth skills training (£30m in 2009);
- help improve the delivery of health, water and sanitation services and fund microfinance schemes (£40m in 2009);
- support legitimate local governance – building capacity of the provincial governments in Balochistan, NWFP and FATA, to help manage resources, plan and monitor delivery;
- continue to provide humanitarian funding for those displaced by conflict (£10m so far in 2009-10).

We will also encourage the Afghan and Pakistani governments to work closely together on plans for development, trade, and political processes in the border areas. We will encourage the World Bank to play a stronger role in coordinating long-term international development and capacity-building efforts.

3 Afghanistan: helping the Afghan government and security forces tackle the insurgency and establish lasting security

As outlined in Part A, the security situation in Afghanistan remains serious, particularly in the south and east. Insurgents are unable to defeat international forces directly, or Afghan forces where they have international support. But the insurgents' switch to asymmetric attacks (against which international and Afghan forces can only provide the population with a certain degree of protection); their access to havens across the border in Pakistan; and the combination of poverty, lack of good governance, weak rule of law, lack of progress on reconciliation and social and economic development, and perception of widespread corruption, mean that the insurgency has not been delivered a decisive blow. The local population therefore lacks sufficient confidence actively to back the legitimate government against the insurgency. Without an improvement in security, particularly in the south and east, sustainable progress in Afghanistan will remain difficult; and what progress there has been so far will be put at risk – as will wider regional stability, and our own national security.

At the NATO Summit in April 2009, allies reiterated their commitment to support Afghanistan in building security: both in the short term, through the crucial election period; and in the long term, with the focus of this support shifting towards strengthening Afghan security forces to take responsibility for security themselves. Many allies also agreed to provide additional support at the NATO Summit, including Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Poland, Turkey and Croatia.

The UK will remain the second largest troop contributor to ISAF. UK force levels have more than doubled since our initial deployment to the south in spring 2006. They will rise again in 2009, as we deploy additional troops (temporarily raising the overall level to a maximum of 9,000) to provide extra security during the Presidential election period, alongside other

NATO allies who will be doing the same. Force levels will return to an enduring maximum of 8,300 in 2010, which will include additional troops dedicated to ensuring UK forces are properly protected, including from the threat of roadside bombs.

We remain fully committed to providing UK forces with the equipment they need to do their jobs as safely and effectively as possible, as well as the medical and other support they need while in Afghanistan and in the UK.

Our priorities for equipment support include upgrading and increasing patrol vehicles, helicopters, surveillance, and personal equipment including improved body armour. With patrol vehicles, there is a balance to be struck between protection and other factors, including mobility; but as the nature of the threat has changed we have shifted the balance towards better protected vehicles, and provided the necessary funding – over £1bn in Urgent Operational Requirements for vehicles in the last three years. Since 2006 we have procured 280 ‘Mastiff’ mine-protected vehicles, among the best-protected patrol vehicles in the world, with the first delivered to theatre in record time – and have now ordered an additional 150 of the smaller ‘Ridgback’ version. We have also procured over 200 highly mobile, heavily armed ‘Jackal’ patrol vehicles. Helicopters are a critical asset. We have increased flying hours and helicopter numbers in Afghanistan by 60% over the last two years. We participate in a NATO commercial contract for helicopter transport which frees up military helicopters for priority tasks. For the longer term, as part of our wider efforts on burden-sharing, we have established with France a €25m helicopter fund to upgrade NATO helicopters and crews to deploy in Afghanistan.

The majority of British forces will continue to be concentrated in Helmand, where they have lead ISAF responsibility for security, working alongside other ISAF forces and Afghan security forces. They also work in close coordination with British civilians and Afghan Provincial and District Governors, to ensure full coordination between our activity on security and development.

The UK-led military effort in Helmand, which currently includes around 5,500 British, 3,100 American, 700 Danish and 130 Estonian forces, has established and maintained a level of security in six major population centres, covering a large proportion of Helmand’s population: the provincial capital Lashkar Gah, and the district centres of Garmsir, Gereshk, Musa Qaleh, Sangin, and Nad-e-Ali. British forces have also carried out operations further afield to keep the insurgency on the back foot, including security and reconnaissance operations such as those in the ‘Green Zone’ of the Helmand River Valley in summer 2008, and in the area around Garmsir and southern Helmand in March 2009. They also retain the ability to pursue more specific large-scale operations, like that to transport the turbine to the Kajaki Dam in autumn 2008.

The insurgents remain a significant security threat, and a hindrance to progress on development. Recognising that levels of security are not sufficient for a standard development approach, the UK has adapted. We deploy civilian experts specially trained and equipped to work in a semi-secure environment, with the support of the UK military. Their main objective is to build local capacity to stabilise Helmand and generate sustainable development. Among the significant development projects which have been enabled in this way are: the establishment of basic governance structures in the six key population centres; the ongoing refurbishment of the major power plant at Kajaki; the road and bridge in

Garmsir; the development of Bost airfield; a major wheat-seed distribution programme to promote alternatives to poppy cultivation; and rural development programmes across the districts.

During 2009, several thousand additional US troops are expected to deploy to Helmand and the surrounding area. These additional military resources are welcome and necessary, but will not provide complete coverage of southern and eastern Afghanistan. Indeed that is not ISAF's strategy, which focuses on: backing the Afghan government; maintaining a basic level of security in the major population centres by deepening and consolidating security in those centres before expanding further; keeping the insurgency on the back foot; and building the capacity of the Afghan security forces so they can take the lead in the future.

In September 2008, the Afghan government and the UN agreed to increase the total strength of the Afghan National Army (ANA), which currently numbers 82,000, to 134,000 by late 2011. Even that may not be enough. Recruitment and training plans are largely on track to deliver the increased strength on current plans. The international community, led by the US, has set out plans for additional, sustainable funding. (Several countries, including the UK, made commitments to additional funding at NATO's April conference.) The ANA's effectiveness continues to improve. In Helmand in October 2008 the ANA played a major role, supported by ISAF intelligence, surveillance, air support and command and control, in defeating the insurgent attacks on Lashkar Gah. Significant challenges remain, including improving ANA retention rates to develop a cadre of experienced personnel, and ensuring ANA units are deployed to priority areas.

The UK currently has one battalion in Helmand dedicated to providing 'Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams' working closely with ANA units, which deploy on the ground with their Afghan counterparts. The UK Battalion Commander provides support to the Afghan Brigade Commander, and the British teams connect the ANA units to ISAF air, artillery, intelligence, logistics and casualty evacuation capabilities.

Over time we intend to shift the balance of our military effort away from front line combat tasks towards increased training and mentoring for the ANA. We welcome the recent US announcement of an additional 4,000 troops dedicated to ANA mentoring, and the agreement at NATO's April Summit to establish a NATO Training Mission (Afghanistan) on training, mentoring and long-term capacity-building for both the ANA and Afghan National Police (ANP).

An effective, accountable police force free from endemic corruption is a vital part of a stable future for Afghanistan. Although there are positive signs in some districts and there has been some progress in developing specialised units (particularly in counter-narcotics), there are still significant challenges to tackle across the ANP. The level of effectiveness and public trust remains low. Many Afghan police are both courageous and committed, and casualty rates run well above those of the ANA. But there is also poor leadership, corruption (exacerbated by difficulties in distributing wages), drug abuse, illiteracy and incompetence. The UK is contributing to the international community's reform effort by supporting: reform at the Ministry of the Interior; technical training; district-by-district police training (taking units out of the line for intensive training); and embedded mentoring. In Helmand, British and EU police mentors are working with the military to target police training where it can be most effective and sustainable, as part of the wider security and capacity-building approach.

The aim of the international community is, over time, to transfer lead responsibility for security from international to Afghan forces, with international forces moving increasingly to a training and support role. This will progress as the Afghan security forces, and the army in particular, increase in size and effectiveness. The transition process will be overseen by NATO. Initial proposals will be submitted to the next NATO Defence Ministers' meeting. The process will take time; our current assessment is that the Afghan security forces will remain dependent on international support until at least 2015, with exact timings dependent on conditions in each area and on progress in related activity including governance and development. Responsibility for security has already been transferred in Kabul, where ISAF's mission began.

4 Afghanistan: promoting a durable and inclusive political settlement

We are working to ensure successful Presidential elections in 2009. As well as the increase in force levels set out in Part B, Section 3, we are also providing £16.5m support for voter registration and the wider electoral process.

We have always said there will be no purely military solution to the problems of insecurity, insurgency and terrorism in Afghanistan. Durable stability will only be secured through an Afghan-led political process that aims to reconcile and reintegrate all those who want to rejoin Afghan society, in concert with appropriate military pressure on both sides of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, backed by clear, long-term international commitment. The UK supports the establishment of national and local mechanisms to take such a process forward. In Helmand, for example, we are supporting outreach shuras across the province. The Presidential election provides a platform for whoever wins to renew and take forward this agenda.

5 Afghanistan: building governance and the rule of law

The international community is committed to helping the Afghan government build better governance and strengthen the rule of law. That is vital if Afghanistan is to emerge from three decades of violence towards a long-term stable and prosperous future. It is also vital in the short term to give the Afghan population a convincing reason to back the Afghan government against the insurgency.

Through £20m of programmes, being implemented between 2008 and 2010, we are providing expert assistance to the Afghan government on revenue-raising, financial management, tackling corruption and providing basic services to the population. We are also lobbying the rest of the international community to increase the proportion of aid they channel through Afghan institutions. At the same time we are helping those institutions to become more effective, accountable and responsive through our support for civil society, local councils, political groups and an independent media; and encouraging the Afghan government to focus programmes in areas of most need, including those under most pressure from insurgency.

We will increase our efforts to build the capacity of Provincial and District Governors and their offices to reach out to ordinary people, through our support to the Afghan Independent Directorate for Local Governance and other programmes developing sub-national governance. We will allocate at least £20m to this over the next four years.

We are helping to strengthen the formal justice sector at national level, through the World Bank's Justice Sector Reform Project. The Criminal Justice Task Force is increasing its efforts to prosecute narcotics-related crime, focusing on high value operators. These efforts are supported by UK mentors.

The joint civilian-military team in Helmand now numbers 165, of which approximately 80 are civilian experts, a two-fold increase in the last year. The civilian-military mission in Helmand is based in Lashkar Gah, and has outposts in the other five districts (described in Part B, Section 3, page 18), each with a civilian-military stabilisation team of around 10 staff, co-located with the relevant Battlegroup HQ. These teams focus on a wide range of projects, including training Afghan security forces, and working to strengthen counter-narcotics initiatives, governance and the rule of law.

We are also rolling out cross-cutting shuras (community councils) in all six of the key population centres. These aim to build a bridge between the lowest level of formal governance (District Governors) and the enduring grass-roots tribal system, by creating councils that take charge of local development, empowering 'local solutions to local problems'. They have been established in Nad-e-Ali, Garmsir and Gereshk, with Musa Qaleh and Sangin to follow during the summer of 2009. We are providing capacity-building support to the provincial offices of key national line ministries, the office of the Provincial Governor and the Lashkar Gah Municipality. As outlined in Part B, Section 4, we are also supporting Afghan-led efforts to promote reconciliation at a local level, in line with the national approach to encourage insurgents to reconcile to local legitimate government, and to renounce violence.

We are helping to establish informal justice shuras and commissions to provide traditional, accessible dispute resolution by local elders, under the overall tutelage of District Governors. These shuras are a legitimate, working alternative at the grass-roots to 'Taleban justice', while also being linked to the formal justice system. They have been established in Lashkar Gah, Garmsir and Gereshk, and a separate prisoner review shura has been established in Musa Qaleh. As part of our wider efforts in support of the formal justice system, we are also assisting with the construction of a new prison in Helmand province, with training support from a team of four HM Prison Officers.

We are looking to share the lessons we have learned in Helmand more widely across southern Afghanistan.

6 Afghanistan: helping the Afghan government deliver basic services, promote economic growth, employment and economic opportunity

Economic growth, employment opportunities and the more effective delivery of basic services like health and education, are also critical to putting Afghanistan on a path towards stability and prosperity, and to ensuring that the Afghan people back their government against the insurgency as offering the best vision for the future.

As outlined in Part A, the Afghan economy has made some progress since 2002 in beginning to recover from 30 years of conflict, helped by international aid and improved economic management by the government.

But Afghanistan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Its economy is dominated by informal, subsistence agriculture with insecurity, corruption and the drugs trade continuing to limit growth. We need to accelerate progress. Afghanistan cannot wait until security reaches an ideal state before tackling this challenge. It needs to find innovative ways, with international support, to promote economic growth and deliver basic services in insecure or semi-secure conditions. We need to encourage and support the Afghan government to identify the sectors that will drive the legitimate economy; and to plan investment and build institutions to support that, including market-building, and credit, risk and insurance initiatives.

We will support the Afghan government by investing in stronger markets that will promote an entrepreneurial business culture. To assist the vast majority of Afghans who live in rural areas, we will increase our support to agriculture and rural development, including transport to market, and support for access to international markets for agricultural exports. In particular, Helmand province, with its abundant natural resources, has the potential to be a centre of agricultural production and growth for Afghanistan. To help realise this potential, we will invest £68m over the next four years in agriculture, rural enterprise development and infrastructure. Current projects include: a major road-building programme linking Lashkar Gah to Garmsir, Nad-e-Ali and Gereshk; the refurbishment of the Gereshk hydropower plant (as part of a wider programme to double electricity production in 2009-10); and agri-business infrastructure in Lashkar Gah (funded by the US).

The UK-led Afghanistan Investment Climate Facility will continue to help tackle barriers to investment, including red tape, across Afghanistan. And we are supporting the government in improving access to credit for fledgling Afghan enterprises.

We will also continue to support the Afghan government to deliver basic services, such as health and education, by providing direct support to pay the salaries of teachers and other key workers. In parallel, we will build the government's capacity to collect taxes so that, over the longer term, it can begin to reduce its reliance on international support.

7 Afghanistan and Pakistan: building local capacity to tackle the drugs trade, divide it from the insurgency and prevent it from undermining security, governance and economic growth

The narcotics trade is one of the most important barriers to sustainable progress in Afghanistan itself. It undermines governance and the rule of law, fuels corruption and funds the insurgency.

The UK has been the Afghan government's nominated partner for counter-narcotics since 2001. At a national level, we have focused on building Afghan interdiction capability and helping Afghan law enforcement institutions to target the top end of the drugs trade, especially those supporting the insurgency. At the April 2009 NATO Summit, allies – at the request of the Afghan government – agreed to increase operations in pursuit of ISAF's Counter-Narcotics Operational Plan. The UK is also providing targeted assistance to catalyse and sustain economic and rural development in those provinces which have the potential to remain "poppy-free". This includes a major new programme in 2009 – the Comprehensive Agricultural Rural Development Facility – which aims to provide support to specific rural areas to help them become economic hubs.

Helmand has been at the heart of Afghan poppy cultivation since the mid 1990s. Our comprehensive counter-narcotics strategy, which contributes to improving security and counter-insurgency, combines: support for alternative livelihoods through the promotion of wheat and other legal crops (including the wheat-seed distribution programme described in Part B, Section 3, and the wider initiatives described in Part B, Section 6); targeted eradication of poppy, focused on the key players not ordinary farmers; and interdiction of narco-networks, through a combination of mentoring the Afghan counter-narcotics police, and military operations against key players linked to the insurgents. There are early signs of progress in areas under Afghan government control. But, given the complexity of the problem, this will be a long-term project.

A substantial proportion of the opiates that reach the UK from Afghanistan comes through Pakistan. The trade poses a threat to Pakistan's security and development and undermines progress in the border areas by helping to finance and support violent extremist groups. We will encourage the Pakistani government to commit to tackling this. We will encourage greater co-ordination between Afghanistan, Pakistan and other regional partners (including Iran), especially in border management, to tackle this shared problem. We will also look to address precursor chemical smuggling and money laundering, the key enablers for the drugs trade.

8 Pakistan: helping the Pakistani government and security forces deal with terrorism and violent extremism

Part A set out the challenge of extremism and terrorism in Pakistan. International terrorist networks, including Al Qaida, train and plan attacks against Western targets from the FATA, supported, or at least tolerated, by local militant groups. Terrorism also increasingly threatens Pakistan itself.

The UK's counter-terrorism strategy – CONTEST – sets out our overall approach to counter-terrorism, covering activity overseas, including cooperation and capacity-building with security forces in Pakistan.

The UK supports the Pakistani government in its counter-terrorism strategy based on dialogue, development and deterrence, and recognises the commitment of Pakistan's security forces, who have suffered significant casualties in the last five years. As Part A made clear, despite these efforts, the threats from terrorism and violent extremism remain.

Pakistan needs to take stronger ownership of the problems of terrorism and violent extremism, giving them a higher priority relative to other security threats – with increased support from the UK and the wider international community.

Our cooperation is designed to help the Pakistani government deal with the challenge it faces from local terrorist and insurgent groups, and the international terrorist networks that are linked with, and supported by, those groups. That encompasses: strategic alignment, including through this strategy; operational cooperation; capacity-building; and the sharing of good practice. Although the terrorist threats facing Pakistan and the UK are different, and reflect local differences, they are also connected. The UK and Pakistan have much on which we need to cooperate, and much to learn from each other.

Operational cooperation is vital. The UK and Pakistan have worked together in tackling numerous important terrorist plots which could affect either of our countries, or both, or third countries as well. This has enabled law enforcement agencies in each country to take action to help save lives. We have also had to work together in cases where lives have been lost. For example, the Metropolitan Police carried out, at the request of the Pakistani government, an investigation into the precise cause of death of the late Benazir Bhutto, who was murdered in 2008.

In December 2008, we announced our largest bilateral programme of counter-terrorism support and capacity-building, worth £10m. This will include: developing the skills of the Pakistani police and other law enforcement agencies to bring violent extremists to justice; training and assistance in evidence collection; and training in countering improvised explosive devices, forensics, bomb scene management, protecting key infrastructure and tackling terrorist financing. It is managed through a high-level Joint Working Group, tackling issues of mutual concern on counter-terrorism and serious organised crime. As those responsible for counter-terrorism policy and law enforcement in the UK and Pakistan increasingly work together, we will be able to share best practice and learn from each other's experience. We are working to build increasingly close connections between police

forces in the UK with specialist expertise on counter-terrorism, and the Federal Investigation Agency and police forces in Pakistan.

Preventing violent extremism (the 'Prevent' workstream of CONTEST) is an important part of our work in Pakistan. Our efforts on a political process, governance, and development in the border areas (see Part B, Section 2), are an important part of the longer term plan for countering extremism in this part of the country. We are also working with the Pakistani government, media, civil society and others to build resilience to violent extremism and tackle the grievances that drive radicalisation; and we are deepening our understanding of the links between counter-radicalisation in Pakistan and in Pakistani communities in the UK.

9 Pakistan: promoting a stable economy, good governance and effective development, and reducing poverty

Section 2 set out our commitment to supporting progress on governance and development in the border areas of Pakistan, as part of our efforts to maintain security and stability and tackle terrorism and violent extremism in those areas. But we also have a wider programme focused on those objectives throughout Pakistan, as well as on achieving the long-term goal of tackling poverty.

Pakistan's democracy needs to be strong enough to withstand shocks – such as the internal political crisis that threatened to destabilise the government in March 2009. Stability has been restored, but political and constitutional reforms must be implemented to strengthen the country's democratic institutions and consolidate that stability.

We are committed to a long-term programme of support for Pakistan. In 2006, the UK and Pakistani Prime Ministers signed a 10-year development partnership. The latest stage in delivering that partnership is a programme of £665m in development assistance to Pakistan in the four-year period 2009-2013, our second largest development programme worldwide. It is focused on improved education, healthcare, governance, and support for economic growth; and work to alleviate the impact of the current economic situation on the poorest. In return, Pakistan has made commitments on poverty reduction, good financial management, and human rights. We will provide advice and support to the government as they carry out crucial economic reforms.

As in Afghanistan and elsewhere, we will channel a significant element of our development assistance through the Pakistani government, at the same time working to build its effectiveness and accountability. We will provide £60m of support to the government to help Pakistan weather the worst of the economic storm. Substantial external financing will be needed in the medium term, which we will be encouraging other partners to provide. At the Tokyo Donors Conference, held alongside the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Ministerial in Tokyo on 17 April 2009, \$5bn was pledged in support of economic reform for the next two Pakistani Financial Years (July 2009 to June 2011). Pakistan's reform programme has been endorsed by the International Monetary Fund, and the UK has pledged to disburse £350m over 2009 – 2010/11.

10 Afghanistan and Pakistan: improving strategic communications to secure greater support in the region and at home for international efforts to build peace and stability

Progress towards our objectives is only possible with the support of the local populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This support can only be maintained through effective communication, led primarily by the two governments. But they face significant challenges. Afghanistan has a very poor communications infrastructure throughout the country, and Pakistan suffers similar problems in the FATA and Baluchistan. We are working with both governments to improve access to basic communications, to encourage development of an independent media sector, and to encourage government departments to communicate more to the public.

In Afghanistan, we are encouraging ISAF to improve the speed, quality and transparency of its strategic communications, including on civilian casualties.

In the UK, we are committed to giving a full and clear account of our activity in Afghanistan, including our place in the wider international effort, and the place of military activity in the broader strategy. Understandably, the media focus is often on the military effort, and rightly on the courage and commitment of British forces serving their country. But a full appreciation of these efforts depends on the wider context, what the mission is aiming to achieve, the progress that is being made, and the challenges that remain. We are working with international partners, and with the UK media, to encourage a more balanced, holistic picture.

We are also committed to improving awareness of the broad range of the UK's support for security, governance, development and poverty reduction in Pakistan, especially in the Pakistani community in the UK.

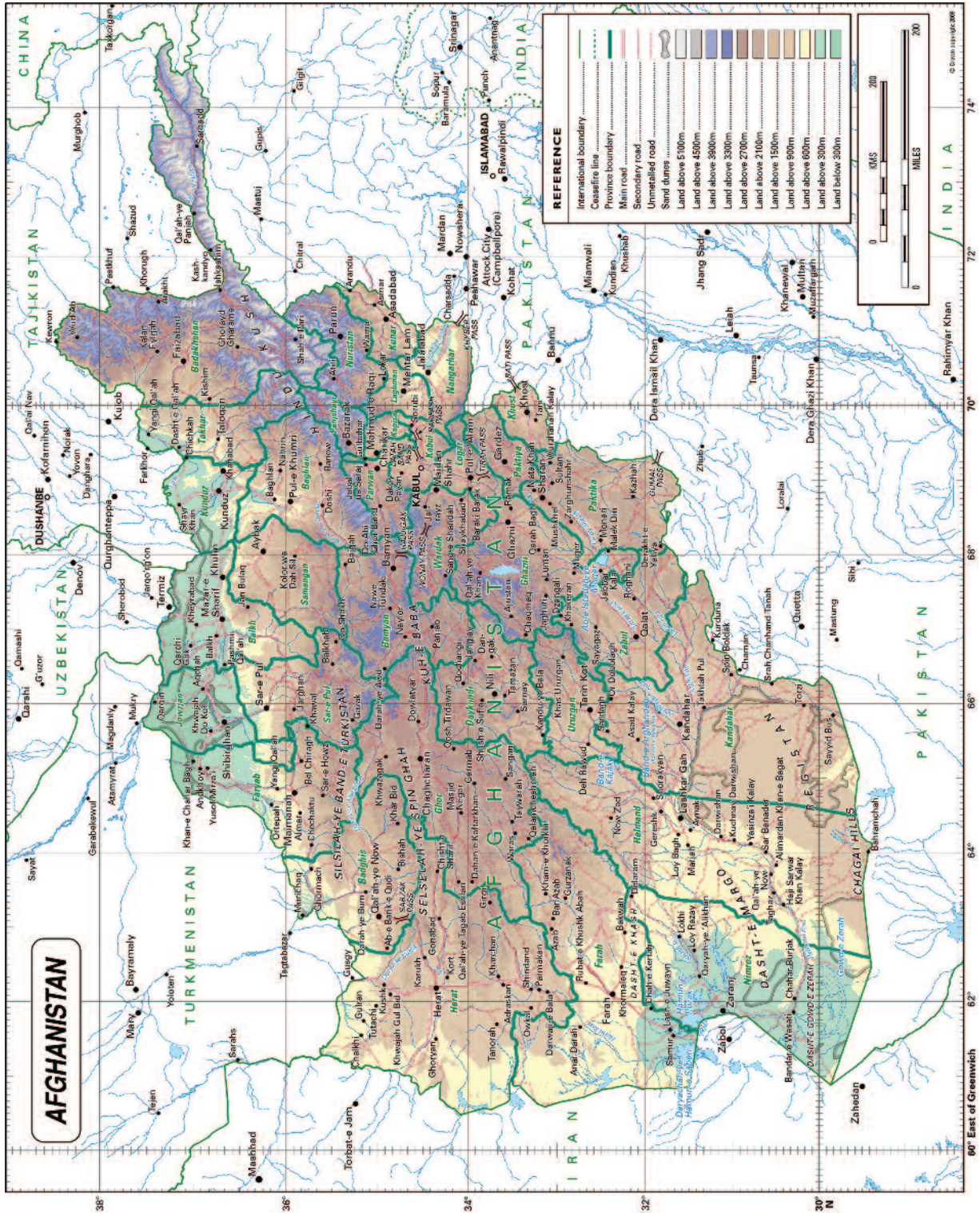
Conclusion

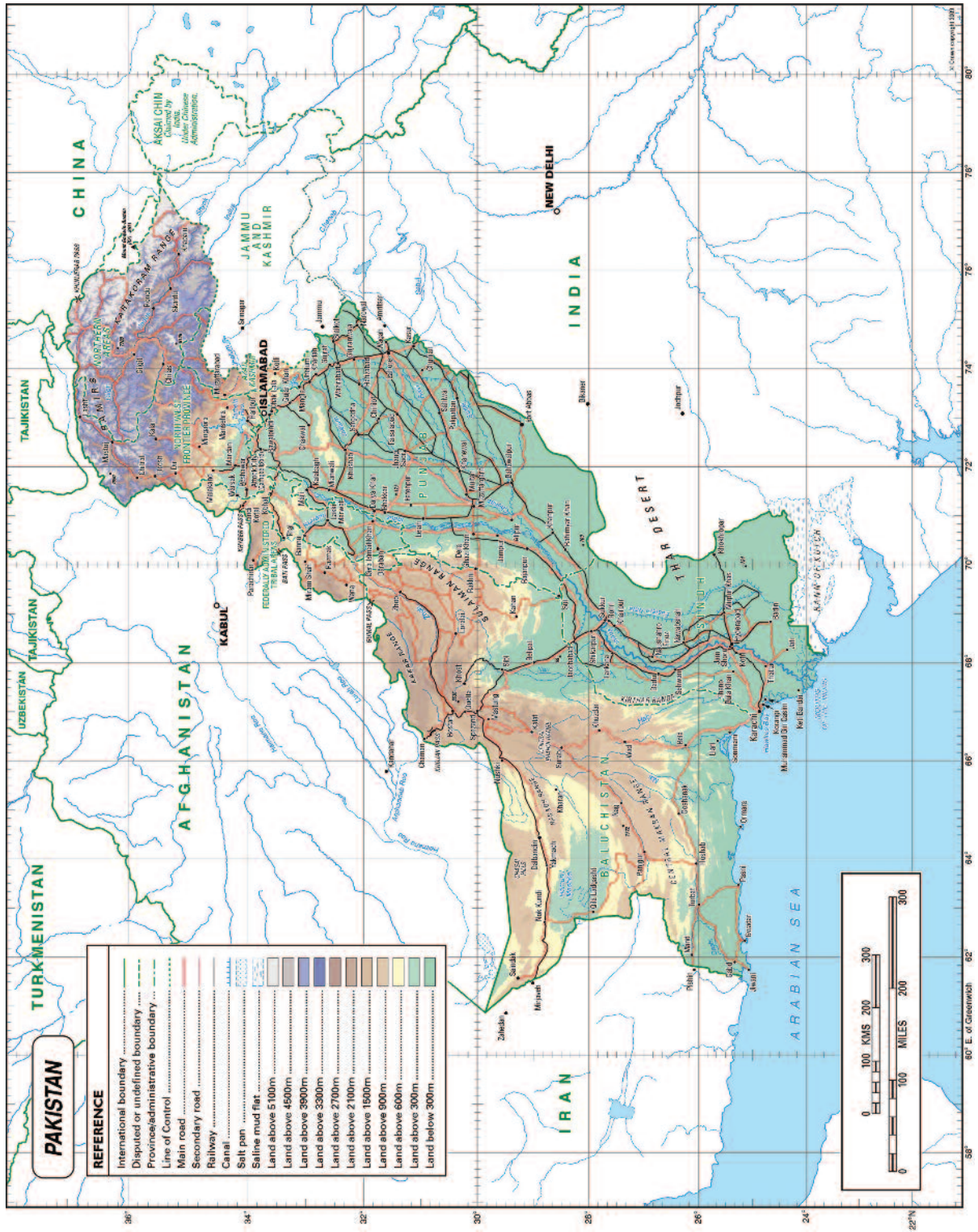
As Part A made clear, the challenges in both Afghanistan and Pakistan are very significant; and 2009 is likely to be another difficult year. But it also made clear how vital it is to the region, to global security and to our own national security, that these challenges are met. While the evolving situation demands that we constantly learn and adjust, there are also important areas of progress we can build on; and important opportunities to be grasped in the coming year, with the increasing commitment from the US, and the chance of renewed political engagement in Afghanistan through the elections.

In such a critical period, we need to keep the focus on long-term objectives. In previous decades, international support for the region has not always taken the long-term vision which will be essential to the success of the strategy we have set out in this document: supporting economic development that brings jobs and hope to communities; better-targeted and better-coordinated aid programmes delivered in partnership with sovereign governments and NGOs; training and mentoring local security forces; and a commitment to control and reduce the drugs trade. To help build stability, democratic governance, and prosperity in the region, and help defeat terrorism and violent extremism, we, and our partners in the UN, NATO and elsewhere, must commit ourselves now to working to achieve those goals over the long term.

The challenges are very significant, but with a clear and realistic strategy, clear metrics and greater international coordination, we can succeed. Part B of this document has set out the UK's current plans for our contribution to the broader international commitment to this vital region – the objectives, principles, and strategy by which our commitment will be put into practice, and against which it should be judged.

Regional maps

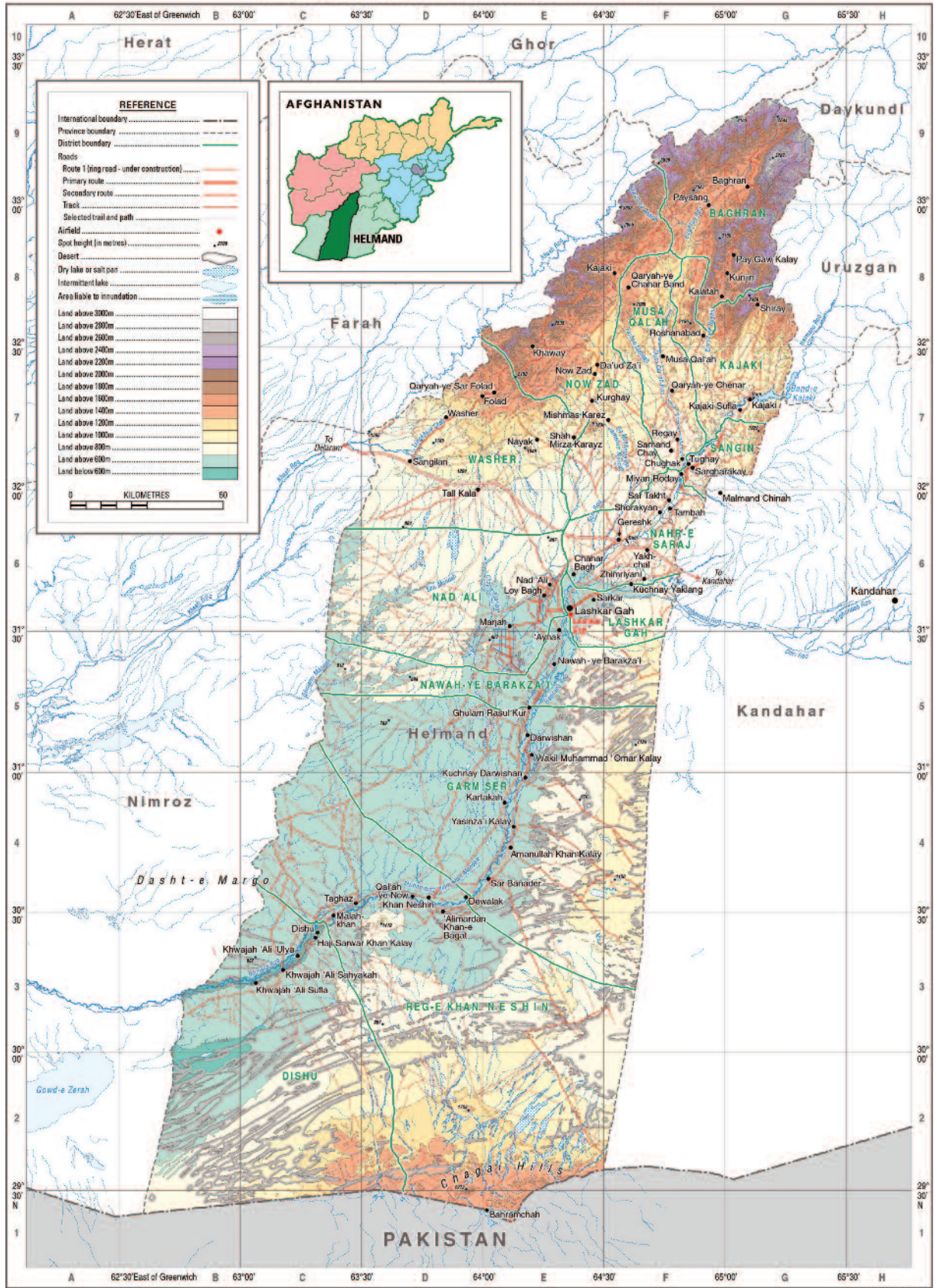




Pakistan / Afghanistan Border Area



AFGHANISTAN - HELMAND PROVINCE



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