



## AFGHAN NATIONAL POLICE – PILLAR WITHIN THE NATIONAL SECURITY SYSTEM

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The confrontations in Afghanistan, which began in the autumn of 2001, created the premises for starting a process of reforming the security system, in the context of the intervention of the international military force. The evolution of this process was marked by the influence of foreign advisers in all fields of society. The institutions that opened this way of transformation were the army and the police. In the conception of the international community, the police was considered the younger sister of the army, so the efforts to reform the two segments were not identical. The development of the police forces was more difficult, the funds allocated were less, and these aspects contributed to the creation of large discrepancies between the two institutions. Frequent changes in strategy have led to a lack of consistency and continuity. The secondary role assigned to the police sector, within the national security system still has an effect today when it seems that the Afghan national police has remained far behind the army on the way to reform.

**Keywords:** security environment; Afghan National Police; reform; international coalition; Afghanistan.

The fall of the Taliban regime in the autumn of 2001, as a result of US intervention in Afghanistan, and the establishment of an Afghan interim government created the premises for triggering the state's reconstruction and reform process. In order to achieve this goal, stabilization and a secure security environment were needed to encourage international institutions to join this effort. Thus, the first sector that began reconstruction, reformation and development was the security system, more specifically, the Afghan national army and police.

In order to guide and advise the national authorities in their reform efforts, lead-nations for the important sectors have been established at the international community level. Following this decision, Germany took over the responsibility of supporting the development of Afghan national police. This choice was related to the long-standing support provided by the country to the Afghan police, prior to the intervention of Soviet troops in Afghanistan in 1979.

Although the European model applied by German advisers naturally emphasized the basic tasks of the police institution, emphasizing the role of this structure in solving the problems of citizens, at an international level, was not fully appreciated. The US, as a leader in the international coalition

operating in the Afghan theater of operations, wanted a police which would carry out military operations against members of insurgent groups. Even though in 2007 the nation-specific tasks of the leader were taken over by EUPOL (European Union Police), in parallel, the USA implemented some measures to turn the police into a fighting entity.

The adoption of a new approach that required a rapid militarization of the police upset the driving factors of this institution, and the changes imposed by the parallel nation-leader, coupled with the low level of financial investments in this sector, led to a very slow development rate.

### **The reform of the Afghan national police according to the German model**

The Afghan National Police (ANP) is a very important structure within the security system subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs along with two other departments, the counter-narcotics police and the counter-terrorism department. Over the years, the ANP has had several branches, of which we mention Afghan Uniform Police (AUP) – responsible for law enforcement, Afghan Highway Police (AHP) – responsible for traffic safety on the main communication route in Afghanistan, Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) – responsible for establishing public order, Afghan Border Police (ABP) – responsible for state border security, Afghan Local Police (ALP) – initially responsible for fighting insurgents locally, subsequently, responsible for the first local investigations,

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the Afghan National Police Auxiliary (ANPA) – responsible for supporting local authorities in the fight against insurgent groups.

As mentioned above, the country that undertook the reform and restructuring of this sector was Germany. Even the Afghan Ministry of Internal Affairs at that time acknowledged the need for international assistance for police reform.

During the second<sup>1</sup> international donor conference held in Berlin on March 13, 2002, the German government decided to set up a special structure (The German Police Project Office – GPPO) to manage the Afghan police reconstruction effort. In this regard, an agreement was signed between the German Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Afghan Interim Government, through which the German side committed to provide financial and material advice, assistance and support to the ANP forces.

The GPPO focused on five areas of activity: counseling and assistance for the structural reorganization of the police, rehabilitation of the Kabul Police Academy, renovation of facilities belonging to the police institution, endowment with equipment and coordinating the actions of international partners.

The first contingent of ANP advisers deployed to Afghanistan from Germany was made up of 10 police officers from different departments, and its staff increased over the years to about 45 officers in 2007<sup>2</sup>.

Their initial dislocation was in the capital city of Kabul, and subsequently they worked in the provinces of the north of the country, an area in which Germany began to dislocate forces within the army that contribute to stabilizing and maintaining security environment until the Afghan Armed Forces full operational capacity is achieved. The main task of the German team was to coordinate the efforts of international police advisers (there were other states that joined Germany in the effort to rebuild the police sector) and to provide equipment to the ANP structures.

This early period was marked by some deficiencies in monitoring the actions of ANP forces at district and community levels caused by GPPO members moving strictly to areas where German armed forces were able to provide them with permanent close protection. This aspect led to the impossibility of verifying the information required

for the evaluation process of ANP actions and the elaboration of erroneous assessments regarding the progress, registered by the police structures in the process of reconstruction, reformation and development. The correct results could only be recorded at the ministerial and regional levels, at which the interaction with the Afghan partners was immediate.

The Kabul Police Academy was renovated and opened in August 2002 as part of a ceremony attended by Hamid Karzai, the president of the Afghan Transition Authority, an institution whose main task was to coordinate actions for the reconstruction and reform of the Afghan state. The German police officers contributed fundamentally to the implementation of a new concept of education of the future Afghan police officers and sub-officers by modifying the curricular area and by applying the "train the trainers" concept.

The project proposed by the German Police Academy team was a rapid success. After a short period, when the German side managed the transformative activities necessary for the educational institution, the responsibility for managing the educational process was transferred to the Afghan authorities, as the German advisers remained solely responsible for monitoring the leadership process of the academy.

After the Taliban leadership regime in which the police did not receive specific training, many of them being former mujahideen during the Soviet-Afghan conflict, and the vast majority subordinated to local warlords, Germany stressed the importance of reopening the academy that trained annually around of 1,500 officers (five-year study programs) and about 500 non-commissioned officers (three-month study programs)<sup>3</sup>. The stated goal of the Afghan Internal Affairs Ministry at that time was to reach an effective 70,000 police force in all branches of the sector.

The material and financial support provided by the German side was considerable and very necessary as the infrastructure, equipment, weapons and means of transport were in a deplorable and insufficient state. Thus, the main investments of the German government and of the associated international donors were directed to the reconstruction of the buildings and facilities necessary for the normal activities of the police activities (office buildings, police stations, checkpoints), the purchase



of special vehicles, motorcycles and installations, maintenance equipment, X-ray equipment, metal detectors necessary for the control of persons and baggage at airports, computers and programs for them, modern means of communication, uniforms and specific equipment for staffing, etc.

The main effort during the German-Afghan cooperation in the police field was the personnel counseling and training, a lasting process that shows its effects over time. The intention of the German authorities was that the total transfer of responsibility to the Afghan authorities would occur as soon as possible, but the obstacles that slowed down the normal course of the reform process were not foreseen. As in all other areas where the international community has provided support to the Afghan party, a major impediment has been the regular replacement of the advisers (depending on the country from which they came, they have been in office for six months or one year).

Another major obstacle was the high level of illiteracy of the police employees for whom literacy courses were needed, but after completing all forms of training, due to the low level of pay, many of the members of the police structures left the system and employed in private security firms, very wealthy individuals or deserted and enrolled among insurgent groups. Most of the time, they left with their uniforms, weapons and equipment.

A vital area of the reform was the change of the organizational state, and the main divergence between the lead-nation and the Afghan authorities was related to the reduction of the large number of functions in the organizational chart. This aspect was hardly accepted by the Afghan side, and following the discussions, in 2005, President Hamid Karzai adopted measures to increase the salaries of the police, reduce the number of important functions (generals) and increase the number of small functions and set up the system of promotion on the basis of meritocracy instead of promotion based on giving and taking bribes or nepotism.

The reorganization of the border police (ABP – Afghan Border Police) has been a challenge for international experts, but after many attempts it has been found to be organizationally effective, but less effective in terms of action. Illegal border crossings and trafficking in arms, drugs and military equipment were frequent, especially at the Afghan-Pakistani border, and these activities favored the actions of insurgent groups in the area.

We can conclude that the German project was the right one to initiate the Afghan police reform process if we consider that it involved a number of important and necessary measures in the areas of education, organization and endowment. The pace of development that was not the anticipated one did not allow a faster transformation in action plan, and the local human resource selected for this job disappointed and did not rise to the level of involvement of the members of the international community in the reconstruction effort of the Afghan state.

### **The contribution of EUPOL to the reform of the ANP**

Since June 2007, Germany's leadership in the process of reforming the Afghan police has been taken over by EUPOL-A (EUPOL – Afghanistan), an international body that aims to continue the approach of training Afghan police officers on the civilian aspect of specific actions. One of the initial objectives of EUPOL-A was to increase the number of police officers and international civilian experts to 400<sup>4</sup>, but the assignment of the positions provided in the organizational chart of the advisory structures has always been a problem of the international community.

The proposed strategy was based on six main directions: developing hierarchical relationships at all levels of the institution, optimizing the process of collecting and managing information, setting up crime investigation structures, fighting corruption, improving relations between police and justice structures and developing the idea of compliance of human rights in general, and of women, in particular, both within the institution and in police relations with the population.

The new leader-structure reaffirmed the need to train the police in order to solve situations in the areas of public order, to combat crime, human beings trafficking, weapons, drugs and illicit materials, investigations and to support the authorities in applying the laws specific to a rule of law and less in the field of fighting armed against insurgent groups.

Since the beginning of the mandate, EUPOL-A has expanded the representation network locally, opening offices in no less than 16 provinces. This aspect underlines the fact that this institution wanted a deeper involvement at the tactical level,



at smaller levels, in the area of the provinces and districts.

EUPOL-A's main concern was to interact with the management factors at the level of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to guide and contribute to the unified professionalization of the police and to the institutional reform of this sector. At the same time, it sought to make connections with structures from other institutions whose actions have implications in the activity of the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Some of the eloquent achievements of EUPOL-A were the opening, with European Union funds, of the Afghan Police Staff College in 2010, an institution that contributed substantially to the training of a large number of Afghan policemen and to the implementation of the institution of the sole emergency phone number.

It also contributed to increasing the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs within the state institutions by contributing to the establishment of structures to investigate corruption, inappropriate behavior and police abuses. During the management of the support given to the reform process, EUPOL-A has contributed to the reorganization, transformation and development of ANP institutions, professionalization of police members and improvement of leadership, raising the level of confidence of the population in ANP, recruitment of female persons and their acceptance in managerial structures, awareness of respect for human rights and laws adopted by the central boards.

The EUPOL mandate in Afghanistan ended in December 2016, with the closing of the last international offices in this country, transferring the responsibility of monitoring the ANP actions to the members of the Resolute Support Mission, an international mission led by the North Atlantic alliance since January 2015.

### **US support for the reconstruction of ANP**

The U.S. assumed the support of the Afghan National Army (ANA) reform as a lead-nation, but they monitored the evolution of the police sector reform and, in the initial phase, they appreciated the German approach regarding the ANP which, from the point of view of the Americans, focused strictly on the educational and training side of leaders and less on the operational side.

That is why, in 2003, in parallel with the programs carried out by the German authorities, they started a training program for the members of the ANP who were occupying functions at the base of the institution. "The US State Department set up, in the first phase, a police training center in Kabul, which later served as a model for seven other centers set up throughout Afghanistan"<sup>5</sup>. In these centers, the ANP members attended different types of courses (the basic course for the staff with the minimum level of education, the course for the illiterate staff, the training course for the personnel with experience in the police field).

The efficiency of these courses was not the expected one, and the causes can be easily deduced. The quality of the educational act was very low because the US contributed a very small number of instructors, their number being supplemented by Afghan instructors who had no knowledge of methodology and pedagogy. The high level of illiteracy among the course participants did not allow them to accumulate knowledge by reading or writing, and the fact that the information was transmitted through interpreters who were not familiar with the terminology (the course support was in English) decreased to the maximum the efficiency of the courses. Also, the large number of police officers who needed a minimum of basic training forced the decision-makers to shorten the course period and to opt for quantity at the expense of quality.

One reason invoked by the US for the slow pace of ANP development was the lack of involvement of the international community, in the initial phase, in providing the necessary funds to an institution that was in a deplorable situation. Yet, through the United Nations (UN) development program for Afghanistan a LOTFA (Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan) was established for all international donors. In 2004 only \$11.2 million of those 65 million requested had been gathered<sup>6</sup>. This led to large delays in the payment of the salaries of police officers who committed corruption acts, and had negative consequences in terms of the confidence level of the population in the ANP members.

In 2005, the US government transferred responsibility for the Afghan police assistance program from the Department of State to the Department of Defense, which in turn delegated this task to the Combined Security and Transition



Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A), which was dealing with the assistance program of the Afghan army in the reform and development process.

Although this measure increased the number of personnel destined to train the ANP and reform the Afghan Ministry of Internal Affairs and increased the amount of funds allocated to this program, it seems that the yield was not satisfactory to the US authorities.

Another program was started by CSTC-A in 2007, and it sought closer monitoring of the performance of Afghan policemen in the communities they served. A previous report underlined that there was not enough visibility at the level of the police structures on the small steps, and the assessment made, based on the information received from the Afghan partners, proved to be inconsistent with reality. Through this new program, mixed teams of US military and civilian policemen traveled to district level in order to obtain accurate data on the effectiveness of the measures implemented. In addition to the fact that the ANP members did not carry out their specific tasks for which they had been trained, the Afghan authorities reported very high numbers of staff compared to the actual ones to receive larger amounts of money from international donors.

The support given by the US to the Afghan police reform effort continued with the deployment, in 2009, of an additional 4,000 troops destined to train the ANP and ANA. The intention of the US authorities was that the ANP members be able to act in the operations against the insurgents as a support force of the army. This can also be deduced from the organization of this institution, which consisted of structures similar to the army (platoons, companies, battalions).

Despite all these efforts and a colossal sum invested (\$6.2 billion by 2008<sup>7</sup>), a report by US government authorities highlighted that although police numbers had increased to 70,000, CSTC-A reported that no unit had reached full operational capacity level.

The main causes that led to this unwanted situation are the inability of the American authorities to provide more trainers, the major deficiencies in the management process practiced by the Afghan authorities within the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the massive spread of corruption and the huge gaps in the salary system at ANP level.

As part of the strategy of the international counterinsurgency coalition, the police were used to maintain the territories in which the influence of the insurgent groups had been annihilated by occupying control points located near the localities and along the main communication routes. After leaving the areas by the main forces, the insurgent cells came back and set fire to these isolated locations, causing numerous losses among the police. Moreover, the insurgents captured weapons, ammunition and equipment from the conquered facilities that they subsequently used during attacks against international and local armed forces.

In order to increase the efficiency of the fight against insurgency locally, the U.S. launched a new program to create another branch of the ANP called the Afghan National Police Auxiliary (ANPA). Through this program, the governors of the provinces in which the level of insurgency was higher were offered money to recruit staff from the local population who received weapons, uniforms and salary to fit the new structure.

Basically, this initiative encouraged the formation of former local militias that opposed the actions of insurgent groups against the communities they belonged to. After only two years this program was terminated because it proved to be inappropriate as it offered the possibility of enrolling the people who fraternized with the insurgents, it created dissatisfaction within the members of the ANP who declared themselves outraged by the fact that the members of the new structure wore the same uniforms and took the same salary although they did not follow any form of training and it was shown that most of the funds were used by local Afghan leaders for personal prosperity.

In the context of the above, we are entitled to assert that the US approach to supporting police reform had as its main objective the militarization of this institution to support the joint effort to remove insurgent groups. At the level of 2010, the ANP resembled a military structure, endowed with armament and equipment specific to the armed forces, but with a level of training far below them. This triggered reactions among European states that had another vision regarding the reform of the police sector. At the same time, suspicions arose regarding the final status of the ANP at the time of the conclusion of the International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) mission.



Will it be a structure with specific police tasks or will it remain a militarized institution that will continue the counterinsurgency fight?

During my participation in the Resolute Support Mission, within the international headquarters in Kabul, in 2017, I found the answer to this question. The police reform continued in the same manner with the emphasis on the fighting side. Efforts to change the strategy in this sector had partial results, and the police continued to perform both specific tasks and combat tasks. Moreover, in 2018, ANCOP was transferred to the subordinate of the Afghan Ministry of Defence<sup>8</sup> considering at that time that the level of training and endowment will allow their members to perform military operations together with the army structures.

At this moment, to a large extent, the police perform specific tasks in the areas of public order, fighting corruption, fighting against cultivation, production and trafficking of narcotics, but continue to participate in counter-insurgency actions, which produces large losses (injured and killed).

ANP has four main and three secondary structures. The first category is Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), Public Security Police (PSP), Afghan Border Police (ABP) and Afghan Anti-Crime Police (AACP), and the second category is Afghan Local Police (ALP), Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) and Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA)<sup>9</sup>.

The most effective police component is the Police Special Units (PSU), a structure directly subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, similar to the special operations forces in the army. Due to the success of this structure, it is desired to expand such units and to apply the concept of 'big brother' (already existing units, with full operational capacity and experience in the police sector, will provide assistance and advice to those established under direct monitoring of international advisers).

## Conclusions

From my point of view, the initial approach in the field of reconstruction and reform of the police structures adopted by Germany and the partner countries was an appropriate one in relation to the purpose desired by the international community, but it seems that the slow pace of development of this sector has led to the parallel involvement of

the US in this process. Judging from the reports prepared by the US Department of State on the evolution of Afghan security institutions, it seems that the strategy applied was not the most effective. The security situation that existed at that time could somewhat justify the decision of the US authorities if we consider that since 2004 insurgent groups have increased the level of violent actions against local and international security forces. The small number of specialized personnel determined the decision to involve the police structures in the military operations, which led to the failure to meet the objectives set by the lead-nation within the stipulated time intervals.

The latest periodic reports<sup>10</sup> indicate that an effective organization of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and ANP has finally been reached, and Afghan National Police components have begun to perform tasks specific to the areas for which they were set up. Participation in counter-insurgent military actions has a very low weight in the spectrum of police activities, and this allows police officers to interact more with the local population and to contribute to the extension of the authority of government institutions and to their efforts to implement reforms and measures that have the purpose of a better life in a state that effectively combines the values of tribal culture with the values specific to a rule of law.

## NOTES:

1 The first international conference, after the fall of the Taliban regime, took place in Petersberg (near Bonn), November 27 - December 5, 2001, as a result of which the international support for the reconstruction of Afghanistan was laid. The following year, three international donor conferences were held in Tokyo, Berlin and Geneva, which aimed to coordinate the international effort on support areas.

2 Markus Feilke, *German experiences in police building in Afghanistan*, 2010, p. 7, <http://www.grips.ac.jp/r-center/wp-content/uploads/10-02.pdf>, accessed at November 17, 2019.

3 Robert M. Perito, *Afghanistan's Police – the weak link in security sector reform*, published in "United States Institution for Peace Special Report", August 2009, p. 3, [https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_police.pdf](https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_police.pdf), accessed at January 27, 2020.

4 Markus Feilke, *op.cit.*, p. 14.

5 Robert M. Perito, *op.cit.*, p. 4 (translation).

6 *Ibidem*, p. 5.

7 *Ibidem*, p. 6.

8 <https://rs.nato.int/news-center/feature-stories/2018-feature-stories/ministry-of-defense-takes-command-of-police-unit.aspx>, accessed at January 28, 2020.



9 [Department of Defense], USA, *Enhancing security and stability in Afghanistan*, June 2019, p. 76, <https://media.defense.gov/2019/Jul/12/2002156816/-1/-1/1/ENHANCING-SECURITY-AND-STABILITY-IN-AFGHANISTAN.PDF>, accessed at February 3, 2020.

10 [Department of Defence], USA, *Enhancing security and stability in Afghanistan*, June 2018, December 2018, June 2019, December 2019.

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