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This paper describes the present situation and suggests the next steps in the process. The author argues that security sector reform (SSR) in Afghanistan is clearly an exit strategy based on a 2002 G8 agenda involving a 5-pillar process that is flawed. The implementers have not taken account of lead-nation or donor competencies and have not developed strong linkages between the 5 pillars. Hence progress has been mixed. The main points the paper makes are: The 5 pillars involve military reform; police reform; judicial reform; the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants; and counter-narcotics. The latter pillar is led by the UK.

Whilst there have been significant achievements in military reform and DDR, with some success in police reform, there has been little achieved in counter-narcotics. Despite some successes in judicial reform it is lagging far behind. The proposed sizes of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the police force are of significant concern that is coupled to the financial burden of sustainability over the next 7-10 years. There are immediate problems involving the provision of equipment for the ANA and police, ethnic dominance, illegally armed groups and corruption.
The obstacles that remain are immense. Above all the international community needs to recognise that realistically reform will take 10-20 years. More immediately there is a need to establish a base level of security in a country that is reliant on the critical objective to both de-politicise and de-factionalise the security sector. Effective coordination requires a strategic-level coordinator. The ownership of SSR programmes needs to be resolved. The Afghan government will continue to be reliant on donors for the survivability of the programmes. The uneven resource allocation between the pillars must be narrowed. Afghanistan requires politically predictable state building in terms of both human and institutional capacity that must be seen as a long-term commitment. There is a need to develop a regional strategy encompassing security and economic cooperation. Underlying all these challenges is the elimination of the corruption that is endemic in Afghanistan that has been exacerbated by the drugs trade.
It is too early to judge whether the foundations achieved for the 5-pillar programmes are stable and sustainable. Although the current programmes may look justifiable in the shortterm, achieving meaningful judicial reform will be the critical key to the long-term legitimacy of the security sector.