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Afghanistan's fraudulent presidential elections have dimmed the prospects for success in that country. I thank Chairman Tierney and the subcommittee for their decision to explore what went wrong and the consequences for future US policy, including the critical decision as to whether to send additional troops.

President Karzai's administration has long been characterized by ineffectiveness and tolerance for corruption. Now, however, he is also irretrievably tainted by the massive fraud committed on his behalf in the August 20 elections. Many Afghans—particularly ethnic Tajiks—do not see him as Afghanistan's legitimate leader. The electoral fraud has undercut support for the international military mission in the country and has stopped the momentum behind President Obama's new Afghanistan strategy. In short, it is not too much to argue that Afghanistan's election fraud has provided the Taliban their greatest strategic gains in eight years of war.

Those who committed the fraud are responsible for it. I do not know the degree of President Karzai's personal involvement, but he clearly sought to benefit from it, strongly resisting the Electoral Complaints process that eventually brought his vote total below the 50% threshold needed to avoid a run off. Karzai put his personal interest above his country's interest with near catastrophic consequences for Afghanistan.

The United States and its allies entrusted the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with supporting the Afghanistan elections. The UN helped mobilize more that $300 million to pay for the elections—most from the United States—but did not exercise any oversight over the electoral process. This was, in my view, an omission with stunning repercussions that is worthy of your subcommittee's close scrutiny.

The Security Council tasked UNAMA with supporting Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) with the holding of "free, fair, inclusive and transparent" elections. The problem was that the IEC was not independent. Karzai appointed all seven of its members and they acted as agents of his campaign not as a non-partisan election body. Wittingly or not, the IEC facilitated the fraud. In every instance of fraud, staff hired by the IEC either committed the fraud, collaborated with those who did, or knew about the fraud and failed to report it. The IEC declined to take measures that could have reduced the risk of fraud before the elections and included more than one million obviously fraudulent votes in the preliminary election tally.

Given all that was at stake for Afghanistan and for the prospects for the international military mission, UNAMA should have used its considerable influence to insist on fair elections, but it did not.

Kai Eide, the Norwegian diplomat who heads the UN Mission, took the view that UNAMA should support the IEC, but not interfere even when its actions were blatantly partisan. There were multiple opportunities when the UNAMA could have acted but did not.

In July, I came to the realization that the greatest risk to the Afghan elections was from "ghost" polling stations, that is polling centers sited in areas so insecure that the centers would never open. In coordination with the Ambassadors from the US, UK, EU and NATO, I pressed the Afghan Ministers of Defense and Interior either to secure these polling centers or to close them. The Afghan Ministers, whose continued tenure in office was to depend on the fraud, complained about my intervention and Kai Eide ordered me to drop the matter. As it turned out, most of the electoral fraud occurred in these ghost polling centers.

During the election campaign, Mr. Eide stated that UNAMA's role was to ensure a level playing field. Yet, he opposed any step that might be seen as critical of President Karzai. For example, he ordered the deletion of a section critical of state media bias from the political rights report prepared jointly by UNAMA's human rights unit and the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The deleted section pointed out that state television, RTA TV, gave Karzai six times the news coverage that it gave Dr. Abdullah, his principal opponent, and that RTA Radio devoted a staggering 91% of its coverage to Karzai and less than one per cent to Dr. Abdullah. Although Mr Eide insisted he would make an issue of illegal electioneering by state officials (almost all on Karzai's behalf), Kai never did so, nor did he allow others to do so.

With Mr. Eide's blessing, UNAMA established and manned an election center that ran around the clock through the balloting and counting period. At considerable personal risk, UNAMA field staff collected data on turnout and fraud. Our data showed a miniscule turnout in key Southern Provinces, but these provinces were to report a large number of votes for Karzai. Once it became clear to Mr Eide that the output from our election center would be deeply disturbing to President Karzai, he ordered the staff not to share the data with anyone, including the Afghan institutions charged with preserving the integrity of the electoral process.

On September 2, I learned that the Independent Election Commission (IEC) was about to abandon its published safeguards so as to include in the final tally a large number of Karzai votes that it knew to be fraudulent (including those from polling centers that never opened). As Office-in-Charge, I spoke with the chief electoral officer to urge that the IEC stick with its established procedures. President Karzai had the Foreign Minister protest my supposed interference in the electoral process and, as you know, the Afghanistan Permanent Representative threatened to have me expelled from the country. Mr. Eide

sided with Karzai in this matter, seemingly indifferent to fact that these fraudulent ballots were the ones that put Karzai over 50%.

Kai Eide's approach compromised UNAMA's reputation for neutrality, at least with the Afghan opposition. Both Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani, Karzai's two main challengers, told me that they had no confidence in Mr. Eide because they felt he was indifferent to the fraud and biased toward Karzai. This is the nearly universal view among the UNAMA staff and is shared by many diplomats in Kabul. Unfortunately, it also has a basis in reality.

Because UNAMA failed to act, the IEC included fraudulent ballots in the preliminary tally thus putting Karzai over 50% and plunging Afghanistan into a seven-week political crisis. A separate body, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) with a majority of international commissioners, had to sort through the fraud ultimately excluding enough fraudulent ballots to bring Karzai just below 50%. (The ECC did not do a full recount but instead sampled just 10% of the suspect ballots; had they done a full recount, Karzai would likely have been closer to 40% of the vote.) After the ECC determined there would have to be a second round, the IEC announced rules that virtually ensured it would not be fair. It rehired the staff responsible for the fraud and announced it would increase the number of polling centers, effectively ensuring even greater opportunities for fraud. Understandably Abdullah Abdullah, Karzai's main rival, chose not to go to he second round, not wishing to put Afghan lives at risk for participating in an election where their votes would not be honestly counted.

UNAMA's failure to address the evident problems with the Afghan elections has severely damaged the prospects for success in Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the response of the United Nations headquarters was no better. When Secretary-General Ban ki-Moon and Undersecretary-General Alain Le Roy learned of the disagreement between Mr Eide and myself, they did not investigate. No one spoke to me about the issue of electoral fraud at all. Instead, I was recalled, a polite word for saying I was fired.

When I asked Mr. Le Roy how I could explain my recall to the very dedidcated professional staff at UNAMA, he said to tell them it was because my private disagreement with Mr Eide became publicly known, although he readily agreed it was through no fault of my own or Mr. Eide's. Diplomatic missions are not democracies and I accepted Mr. Eide's decisions even though I thought he was very wrong. An inability to tolerate private disagreement is a sign of weakness, which in this case had adverse consequences for the UN Mission and the overall effort in Afghanistan.

President Obama's counter-insurgency strategy depends on a credible local partner. US and NATO troops can clear the Taliban from an area but eventually the foreign troops must be followed by Afghan troops to provide security, Afghan police to keep order, and an Afghan government presence to provide honest administration, public services, and to assist in economic development. A fraud tainted Karzai Administration is not such a partner.

Although the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in 2009, as it has every year since 2004, sending additional troops is no answer. Without a credible Afghan partner, they cannot accomplish their mission and sending them is therefore a poor use of a valuable resource.