Acknowledgements

Report Authors:
Sultan Barakat
Antonio Giustozzi
Christopher Langton
Michael Murphy
Mark Sedra
Arne Strand

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Sultan Barakat
Output 2 Strategic Conflict Assessment Leader
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<tr>
<td>ABP</td>
<td>Afghan Border Police</td>
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<td>AGE</td>
<td>Anti-Government Element</td>
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<td>AIA</td>
<td>Afghan Interim Administration/Authority</td>
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<td>ANA</td>
<td>Afghan National Army</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANAP</td>
<td>Afghan National Auxiliary Police</td>
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<td>ANBP</td>
<td>Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme</td>
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<td>ANDS</td>
<td>Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
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<td>ANP</td>
<td>Afghan National Police</td>
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<td>AOG</td>
<td>Armed Opposition Group</td>
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<td>ARTF</td>
<td>Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund</td>
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<td>ASNF</td>
<td>Afghan Special Narcotics Force</td>
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<td>ASOP</td>
<td>Afghan Social Outreach Programme</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Country Assistance Programme</td>
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<td>CARD</td>
<td>Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Programme</td>
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<td>CDC</td>
<td>Community Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>CJTF</td>
<td>Criminal Justice Task Force</td>
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<td>CNPA</td>
<td>Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>CNTF</td>
<td>Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIAG</td>
<td>Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups</td>
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<td>FATA</td>
<td>Federally Administered Tribal Areas</td>
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<td>GIRA</td>
<td>Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan</td>
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<td>HMG</td>
<td>Her Majesty's Government</td>
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<td>HWC</td>
<td>Heavy Weapons Cantonment</td>
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<td>I-ANDS</td>
<td>Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy</td>
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<td>IDLG</td>
<td>Independent Directorate for Local Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMUJT</td>
<td>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan</td>
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<tr>
<td>ISAF</td>
<td>International Security Assistance Force</td>
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<tr>
<td>JDR</td>
<td>Joint Donor Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOTFA</td>
<td>Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>MASD</td>
<td>Munitions and Stockpile Destruction</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDTF</td>
<td>Multi-Donor Trust Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>MMA</td>
<td>Muttahida Majlis-e Amal</td>
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<tr>
<td>MOD</td>
<td>Ministry of Defence</td>
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<td>MOI</td>
<td>Ministry of the Interior</td>
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<td>MOJ</td>
<td>Ministry of Justice</td>
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Executive Summary

This strategic assessment of conflict in Afghanistan along with the political economy analysis, economic growth diagnostic and poverty and social exclusion inquiry are provided to strengthen the analytical foundation of DFID’s Country Plan. As this is predicated on operationalising the National Security, International Relations and Development (NSID) strategy, this assessment examines global, national and societal conflict dynamics in relation to foreign policy, security and reconstruction.

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan emerges from a combination of several inter-related sub-conflicts. It is neither a singular conflict nor a phenomenon of anti versus pro-government elements. In short, it involves:

• An insurgency comprised of armed opposition groups (AOGs) led by or loosely affiliated with the Taliban;
• A narcotics-oriented conflict which, as in any organised criminal pursuit, has few aims beyond the protection, continuation and expansion of its illicit enterprise;
• Localised disputes motivated by opposition to local officials and public administrations which are controlled by long-standing local rivals; these are reputedly responsible for up to half of attacks against the Afghan government; and,
• A potential intra-state war between re-mobilising militias in northern and southern Afghanistan due to the inflammation of regional tensions caused, in part, by the international intervention.

Conflict Analysis

In fact, many actors involved in the conflict, such as those engaged in narcotics trafficking, are not attempting to overthrow the State but instead to achieve autonomy, to earn pride or income or to bolster their negotiating position vis-à-vis the State. According to the analysis presented in this report, the following actors and related motivations are critical to the current conflict(s):

• The Taliban has become an increasingly fragmented, though progressively more popular, group by accepting fighters with a wide variety of motivations ranging from personal profit to religious fundamentalism. While some of its leaders and fighters anticipate and seek a return to the type of control possessed by the Taliban in the late 1990s, many, including some at the higher echelons of the hierarchy, are seeking an advantageous bargaining position in anticipation of future negotiations with the Afghan government. They are benefiting from other actors, particularly the Haqqani Network and defectors from Jamiat-e Islami;

• *Hizb-e Islami* has quickly become one of the most significant and fastest growing AOG. It is believed to have nearly tripled its involvement in the opposition within the last two years, though its leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, has not yet forsaken the political process in which his unofficial proxies have gained positions. *Hizb-e Islami* fights primarily to remove international influence upon Afghanistan, to seek political power for the group and for Hekmatyar and to maintain autonomy for its affiliated narcotics traffickers;

• Regional groups, particularly from Pakistan, have further contributed to the opposition in Afghanistan. While their motivations are complex and divergent, many seek the removal of international troops from their borders, the creation of a formally recognised trans-Durand Line state or autonomous province and the rise of a fundamentalist regime in Pakistan. They see their goals in Pakistan as being broadly supported by the destabilisation of Afghanistan;

• *Jihadist* groups, particularly al-Qaeda, have sought to bring about the withdrawal of international forces and to combat what they view as Western political and cultural imperialism throughout Muslim lands. While not necessarily significant as a fighting force in Afghanistan, they have been instrumental in sharing tactics between Iraq and Afghanistan and
in funnelling large amounts of financial assistance to the Taliban, in particular. They have also supported the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan (IMU/T), which is based in Waziristan and is active within Afghanistan; and,

- Poppy trafficking networks are also active in seeking autonomy for their illicit enterprise. While primarily engaged in defensive violence and formally disconnected from AOGs, those engaged in the poppy/narcotics trafficking are commonly believed to pay ‘taxes’ to AOGs in order to ensure continued instability and the distraction of the Afghan and international militaries. Most notably, they have co-opted large swaths of the Afghan security services and government officials, particularly in poppy-growing areas, thus making them a leading contributor to State weakness. That said, they do not seek the total collapse of the current regime, as a large-scale conflict would hinder cultivation, processing and transportation of poppies and opiates.

Despite such overarching, group-wide concerns, individual and societal motives are also highly relevant in the ongoing conflict, which can most notably be differentiated from the anti-Soviet jihad by the relatively slow rate of mobilisation. Men are not determining en masse to fight spontaneously due to a proximate threat but upon consideration of a variety of factors related to: i) the defence of Islam, ii) personal pride and honour, iii) economic self-interest, iv) obligations to commanders or elders and v) the responsibility to protect one’s family from any potential physical or cultural threat. Such motives have been particularly influential upon young unemployed men with little prospects for marriage and few sources of income. This demographic group has been both the greatest boon for AOGs and a relatively low priority for international assistance.

The financing for AOGs has come from a number of sources:

- Al-Qaeda has directly funded the Taliban with funds donated by individuals from, in particular, Gulf States;
- The Taliban itself has acted as an intermediary, funnelling resources to Hizb-e Islami, the Haqqani Network and potentially others;
- Narcotics traffickers have played only a minor role in financing the Taliban-led insurgent groups, primarily contributing to the opposition through the purchasing of protection from armed groups;
- Charitable donations (zakat) channelled from Pakistan to Afghanistan have provided a rarely reported source of financing for AOGs; and,
- The black market trade in luxury goods throughout south-central Asia, while of an unknown magnitude, is believed to be the fastest growing source of AOG financing.

In all cases, the level of financial support provided through these different channels remains unknown. Yet, given the availability of inexpensive bomb-making materials within Soviet-era landmines and unexploded ordnance (UXO), AOGs are not heavily dependent upon financial support. As such, financial interdiction and poppy eradication may be seen as having little tangible effect upon the insurgency.

These dynamics are explored further in a case study of incipient conflict in western Afghanistan.

**International Intervention**

The international intervention was not designed in a manner to counter these motivations or sources of support. Its grounding in the US-led War on Terror meant that counter-terrorism and government building were prioritised over the establishment of a legitimate State and the licit economic development of rural Afghanistan. On a more programmatic level, the following trends are apparent:

- Poppy eradication, which brought economic ruin to targeted farmers in southern Afghanistan, was prioritised by select international actors, thus facilitating AOG recruitment;
Governance has been repeatedly prioritised, and democratic institutions have been established. However, international actors (HMG to a far lesser extent) continue to bypass the Afghan National Assembly and, in some cases, ministries in order to provide reconstruction and development assistance according to their own criteria;

Security sector reform has been poorly planned and divided between five uncoordinated pillars. The Afghan National Police (ANP) has come to signify predation more than protection, and the Afghan National Army (ANA), a relative success, still suffers from high rates of attrition and primarily serves to supplement international forces. The disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and disarmament of illegal armed groups (DIAG) processes have been poorly designed, ineffective and insensitive to regional tensions within the country;

The international military has suffered from similar weaknesses, particularly a lack of internal coordination, short-term deployments, highly limiting national caveats and competition between NATO command and the governments of troop-supplying nations. The military-led provision of reconstruction assistance through Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) has reflected many of these same weaknesses and requires rationalisation; and,

International reconstruction assistance has provided notable achievements related to health and education, though few seem sustainable, as with the Afghan security services, in the absence of long-term international subsidy. The provision of assistance by international entities, rather than by or through the government, has contributed to a lack of State capacity and legitimacy. Furthermore, the lack of attention to rural economic development has provided a boon for AOG recruitment.

When combined, these missteps reflect a situation in which the government has been made to appear irrelevant due to its marginalisation in the reconstruction process. As a result, the State has failed to develop internal capacity and has remained unable to achieve legitimacy, a concept which is examined in detail within this report. Equally troubling, the tendency to inflame regional tensions by providing aid most heavily to insecure areas in the south and by supporting southern-based community self-defence programmes, has magnified internal rivalries and raised the potential for large-scale, intra-state conflict.

Policies and Options

Yet, this situation can be rectified, though doing so will require dramatic rather than incremental changes in strategy. The AOGs have become too strong, popular and widespread to defeat, and history has repeatedly shown, particularly in Afghanistan, the ineffectiveness of military interventions against native insurgencies.

As such, a political solution is the best if not the only option for achieving security in the current context. Many AOG members seem to be positioning themselves in anticipation of political dialogue and negotiation. Yet, many are unwilling to engage with what they consider to be a ‘Vichy’ government, while other AOG leaders see victory near at hand and would prefer to accept negotiation only as a fall-back option to success on the battlefield. Similarly, many in the government are reportedly unwilling to negotiate whether due to high levels of animosity or, more commonly, due to vested political and economic interests in instability. The presence of poppy trafficking networks and their elaborate inter-connections with political leaders and the security services means that, given their hostility to stability and extensive governmental control, they could mobilise financial and political, if not militant, resources in opposition to dialogue. Furthermore, the US, while its foreign policy elite are beginning to recognise the need for engagement, may find opposition to negotiating with ‘the enemy’ among its citizenry and elected officials. The upcoming Presidential elections in the US do, however, provide a key window of opportunity.
As such, the leading priority is to create leverage to weaken opposition to negotiations and to arrive at a point at which all or nearly all actors consider themselves to have an interest in a political settlement. Doing so will require a complex range of interventions.

- AOG recruitment should be challenged through comprehensive economic development assistance in rural areas, the capacity development of State structures, reform of security and judicial structures and the provision of services by the government to its citizenry;
- Interdiction and enforcement, rather than eradication, in relation to narcotics trafficking will be critical in order to avoid antagonising poor farmers while preventing trafficking networks from continuing to purchase the obedience of elected officials and the security services;
- Increased but highly targeted military pressure should be brought to bear upon AOGs in order to weaken their bargaining position and to convince them that a political settlement is preferable to continued violence; and,
- Winning American and broader international approval for negotiations will require a conceptual shift away from military security and towards a more comprehensive understanding of human security.

If a political settlement cannot be reached, the alternative scenarios are troubling. AOGs could continue winning new recruits and growing, ultimately leading to the collapse of the Afghan government. A resulting civil war would likely bring a return to a situation as existed from 1992 to 1996 in Afghanistan. Alternatively, a dysfunctional status quo could quite easily set in, with each stakeholder contributing to the weakness of the Afghan government as a means towards ensuring personal enrichment through narcotics trafficking and other illicit activities.

Negotiations and dialogue can, however, be achieved, and Afghanistan can begin once again on a process toward peace and development. From the beginning, however, this process will need to begin with the careful understanding of conflict in Afghanistan, which this report strives to provide. An analysis of conflict is provided, following an introduction (Section One) and discussion of the methodology (Section Two), in the third section of this report. This analysis is then applied to a critical examination of the international intervention in Section Four and a set of proposed policies and options in Section Five. The conclusion, Section Six, provides a series of potential courses that the conflict may take in the coming five to 10 years. Case studies of western and southern Afghanistan, it should be noted, are provided following Sections Three and Four, respectively.
Figure 1. Overview of the Report Structure and Findings

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<th>Global</th>
<th>National</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>War on Terror</td>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>Ethnicity and Culture</td>
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<td>Western Liberalism</td>
<td>Centre-Periphery Relations</td>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Corruption and Oppportunism</td>
<td>Security</td>
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<td>Intra-State Regionalism</td>
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<td>Inter-State Regionalism, including an examination of all regional actors</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Armed Opposition Groups</td>
<td>Pro-Government Forces/Elements</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Taliban, Hizb-e Islami, Jamiat-e Islami, Haqqani Network, Pakistani Insurgent Groups (TTP, TNFSM, etc.), Jihadist Groups/Networks (Al-Qaeda), Poppy Trafficking Networks</td>
<td>International Community, US Government, Afghan Government, Afghan Security Services (ANA, ANP, NDS, etc.), International Military (ISAF, OEF), Reconstruction Actors (NGOs, IFIs, IOs, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral or Highly Varied Actors: Warlords, Regional Powerbrokers, Private Security Companies</td>
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<th>Dynamics</th>
<th>Global</th>
<th>National</th>
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<tr>
<td>The War on Terror led to perceptions of a War on Muslims and armed defence of Islam</td>
<td>Lack of governmental legitimacy emerged from limited public sector capacity, little State involvement in reconstruction assistance, poor service delivery, inability to ensure security (due to ANA/ANP weakness) and predatory behaviour of police and public officials</td>
<td>Income and livelihoods remain in short supply, thus compelling young men, in particular, to seek employment and money through opposition or criminal groups</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic interests related to combating terrorism have limited attention to state building</td>
<td>Intra-state, regional tensions have become inflamed between the Pashtun south and northern ethnic minorities and could lead to increased preparations for large-scale civil war</td>
<td>Links between commanders and former soldiers/combatants, particularly among northern militias, mandates re-mobilisation if so directed by the group’s leadership</td>
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<td>Civilian casualties resulting from military action leads to resentment of the international community and Afghan government</td>
<td></td>
<td>The need to protect one’s family – particularly in the light of aggressive military actions, insurgent attacks and predatory police – has been used as a rallying point for participation in AOGs</td>
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**Impact of the International Intervention on Conflict Dynamics**

| Counter-terrorism goals led to empowerment of ‘warlords’ and factionalisation of the government |
| Heavy role of international community has undercut legitimacy of Afghan government |
| Lack of attention to capacity development has prevented greater government ownership of both security and reconstruction |
| Security sector interventions have been poorly integrated, and police reform continues poorly |
| Lack of conflict sensitivity led to fuelling of intra-state tensions and the rising spectre of intra-state conflict |
| Lack of focus on agriculture, livelihoods and other programmes relevant to the young male population has proven a boon for insurgent recruitment |
| The failure of the international community and Afghan government to provide security has led to self-defence and the mobilisation of previously dormant armed networks |

**Overall Strategy**

The international community should facilitate the creation of conditions necessary for the initiation of political engagement and, eventually, negotiations between the Afghan government, the armed opposition and northern militias/factions. Facilitation should not be understood as implying direct involvement, as HMG involvement would risk undermining the negotiation process. Doing so will require a joint approach involving DFID, FCO and MOD led by and drawing upon the Stabilisation Unit.

**Specific Options**

| Utilise public diplomacy, combining messages and development assistance, to counter the notion of a War on Islam and to hinder insurgent recruitment |
| Support the strengthening of the Afghan government |
| Lighten and consolidate military interventions, and avoid blurring the lines between military and humanitarian interventions |
| Strengthen the Afghan security sector through ANA/ANP reform; adopting a formal Security Sector Reform (SSR) transformation process, using the IF-SSR as the guiding framework. |
| Cautiously consider the risks of community self-defence programmes and proposals |
| Promote public integrity through counter-narcotics initiatives focused upon interdiction, enforcement and alternative livelihoods |
| Balance interventions regionally to avoid further inflaming tensions |
| Recommend the creation, by the Afghan government, of an independent peace trust fund, with resources from the Stabilisation Fund, to collect financing to fully support a political process |
| Discourage poppy eradication |
| Pursue comprehensive agricultural development to slow the rate of insurgent recruitment |
| Consider the implementation of a national service requirement to build national solidarity |
| Fund community-based peace building initiatives to lay the bottom-up groundwork for future political negotiations |
Map of Afghanistan
1. **Introduction**

The launch of a project related to the understanding of conflict within Afghanistan is a wise and far-sighted initiative and one which is new in name only. Her Majesty's Government (HMG) and others engaged in state-building, security, reconstruction and combat in Afghanistan have analysed the conflict and assessed the chosen interventions on an ongoing basis. The benefit of this undertaking is the ability to bring together leading experts and to allow them to explore the causes, to evaluate changing dynamics and to issue prognoses and proposals. It is not an academic exercise but the reverse-engineering of conflict, the dismantling of a system which has been running for 30 years and which, despite a brief period of relative calm, now seems to be gaining speed and momentum.

Rather surprisingly, no credible contemporary, nation-wide conflict analysis of Afghanistan is publicly available despite excellent localised efforts undertaken by the Norwegian and German governments. Assessments of security and reconstruction in Afghanistan abound in the post-9/11 world, but none begin with a comprehensive discussion of the structures, actors and dynamics which fuel conflict. Generally, the analysis is assumed or implicit, most commonly focused around Afghans' hatred of foreign interlopers, poppy-driven greed, fundamentalist commitment to a radical interpretation of Islam or opposition to modernization and Western values. Yet, these assumptions and perceptions are rarely stated and even more rarely justified through a careful examination of historical patterns and contemporary dynamics.

In total, this document not only compensates for this lack of focused analysis but suggests a fundamental shift in the manner in which conflict is understood and countered within Afghanistan. Earlier understandings and analyses have failed to capture the dynamics underlying the recent rise in violence and have unhelpfully valued security and stability – outcomes associated primarily with military power and the foundation of Western-style state systems – to the detriment of political dialogue and negotiation, processes which many wrongly viewed as having ended with the Bonn Agreement.

This examination and presentation of options begins with the understanding that military and security-oriented interventions no longer have the potential to achieve peaceful stability within Afghanistan. The insurgency has grown too powerful, too widespread and too enmeshed in the Afghan traditions of national honour and self-defence, emblematic of the Mujahid resistance to the Soviets, to destroy. Based on its current level of human resources and minimal financial requirements, neither intelligence nor bombardment nor the full decimation of poppy cultivation can derail it to the degree necessary to continue unchallenged state building and reconstruction. The US Director of National Intelligence, Michael McConnell, recently reported to the American Congress that the death and capture of high-level Taliban operatives has had little effect on insurgent violence and that emboldened military intervention has failed to hinder rapid insurgent expansion. Current interventions will not only make the insurgency chronic – the type of persistent foe which defeated the British in 1919 and the Soviets 70 years later – but also more popular, widespread and deadly if, indeed, it does not ignite a nation-wide civil war between re-arming ethnic and regional militias. Yet, the possibility remains for intervening more conscientiously and comprehensively, using political engagement with armed elements, the politicisation of violent conflict, national solidarity and state-driven services and reconstruction efforts, to make stability seem more advantageous than armed resistance to the vast majority of current and would-be fighters.

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1.1 **Structure of the Report**

This report is divided between three levels of structures, dynamics and interventions. It considers global (conceptual and geo-strategic), national (governance-oriented) and societal (socio-cultural and micro-economic) factors influencing conflict. As with any rubric, this tri-partite structure sometimes disguises the connections between the levels, thus making it critical for them to be understood as primary rather than holistic categories. For instance, the individual's quest for income through poppy cultivation feeds into the greed of the political and criminal elite and the undermining of governance through the co-optation of public officials and security services.

Using this structure, the report proceeds to examine, in the introduction, the extent of the security decline and the specific nature of the multiple, inter-related conflicts occurring (and which have the potential to occur) within Afghanistan. Section Two examines the methodology used throughout the inquiry, and Section Three begins the conflict analysis with a discussion of structures and actors pertinent to the Afghan conflict. This chapter then concludes with a comprehensive discussion of global, national and societal dynamics. An emphasis, it will be noted, is frequently placed on the individual within this report. This focus is intentional and reflects the unique trend of the ongoing conflict, that recruitment and mobilisation are occurring in a scattered (though systematic) manner as individuals' balance of interest tilts in favour of participation in AOGs or criminal enterprises. Collective mobilisation by entire communities is no longer occurring as it had during the anti-Soviet jihad.

Section Four involves a targeted analysis of the international interventions. Rather than providing a critique of the general effectiveness of the intervention, the report focuses specifically on its relation to security. Section Five attempts to combine lessons from past interventions and contemporary conflict dynamics and chart a path towards a political resolution to the conflict. Doing so will, however, require the leveraging of economic, military, security sector, anti-corruption and socio-cultural interventions and forces in order to bring all sides to the negotiating table. As such, the proposed strategies and options address all facets of HMG's presence in Afghanistan.

1.2 **The Deterioration of Security**

Actual and perceived insecurity have been rising in Afghanistan. Coalition/International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) fatalities increased from 57 and 58 in 2003 and 2004 respectively to 191 in 2006 and 232 in 2007. The following statistics demonstrate the extent of contemporary insecurity and the changing tactics being utilised by AOGs, though it is important to understand that the relative lack of armed opposition in 2002 through 2004 does not represent a period of peaceful contentment among all actors. Rather, this time period involved the mobilisation of armed groups, the establishment of connections between them, the recruitment of fighters and the dissemination of anti-government and anti-Coalition/ISAF propaganda. These preparations facilitated the significantly increased number of attacks, particularly asymmetric attacks, from 2006 to the present.

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2 This term, which is used throughout the report, refers to groups which are attempting to either overthrow or weaken the Afghan state. As such, it includes both criminal networks and organisations which are frequently referred to as 'the insurgency'.

Figure 2. The Mounting Number and Impact of Attacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attacks targeting non-military/security targets</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>491</td>
<td>969</td>
<td>1,127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of 'Successful' Attacks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>74.5</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian Deaths per 'Successful' Attack</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IED Attacks</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>783</td>
<td>1,730</td>
<td>1,314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide Bombings</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The increased number of attacks is also combined, as seen above, with a greater number of civilian casualties resulting from each attack. As a result, it is apparent both that select AOGs are beginning to target civilian populations directly and that, due to the increasing number of fatalities per attack, that the AOGs are becoming more proficient.

Figure 3. The Increasing Human Costs of Terrorist Attacks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilians Killed, Injured or Kidnapped during AOG Attacks</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,540</td>
<td>3,557</td>
<td>4,673</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghan Civilian Fatalities</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition Military Fatalities</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to these figures, it is apparent that the security situation is rapidly deteriorating despite the fact that the insurgency's most powerful weaponry, including mortars and, likely, man-portable air-defence systems (MANPADS), has not yet been deployed successfully. While few statistics are available for 2008, the number of insurgent attacks in the first quarter of the year (January through March) has already increased by two-thirds relative to the same period in 2007, 704 up from 424. These attacks have become increasingly deadly, as the number of casualties resulting from such attacks has risen by more than 75 per cent, 463 compared with 264. While ISAF forces have won

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4 Comprehensive statistics for 2008 were not yet publicly available. The currently published data concerning the evolution of security in the first quarter 2008 is, however, included at various points in the text of this report.

5 Anthony Cordesman (2008) The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Update (Washington, DC: Centre for Strategic and International Studies), p. 24. Data included within the next three rows is provided within the same document or is extrapolated from statistics provided therein.

6 ‘Successful’ attacks are those which resulted in casualties. Attacks in which the bomb did not detonate or in which it detonated accidentally and with no human impact are deemed to have been unsuccessful.


8 UNAMA (2007) Suicide Bombings in Afghanistan (Kabul: UNAMA), Sept.

9 Cordesman (2008) The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Update. Data included within the next three rows is provided within the same document or is extrapolated from statistics provided therein.

10 No credible statistics are available prior to 2007. The number listed, at 1,500, comes from a report of the United Nations Secretary General and should be greeted as an approximation, as should a report from the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) which puts the number at approximately 1,980 for 2007.


12 It should be noted that SCA Team members received differing accounts of the Taliban’s armaments. While all agreed that the insurgency possesses MANPADS, some informants reported that they were old, no longer functioning and not a threat.

13 Adapted from Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, and Jonathan S. Landay, "US Seeking Troops to Send to Afghanistan, Miami
every symmetric battle against the Taliban, asymmetric attacks, such as suicide bombings and IEDs, have risen from 40 per cent of AOG attacks in 2006 to 80 per cent in 2007. ISAF’s military advantage is, thus, significantly blunted.

The level of insecurity has not only worsened but has spread from, primarily, the troublesome border with Pakistan and isolated parts of the south to encapsulate the entirety of the south, southeast and east with increasing encroachment into the typically peaceful west and the central region around Kabul. Statistics compiled from a number of sources indicate that the increase in violence has been proportionately the same in southern and western Afghanistan, at 40 per cent, between the first quarter of 2007 and 2008. The total number of attacks during the same time period increased by a staggering 70 per cent.

Figure 4. Geographical Spread of Insecurity

The south remains, as it had in the past, the base of the Taliban whereas insecurity in the east is heavily influenced by Hizb-e Islami, the Haqqani Network and smaller AOGs. The western and northern parts of the country, while relatively secure, are suffering from the remobilisation of illegal armed groups and occasional Taliban attacks. The central region, particularly Kabul, is targeted by all groups involved.

Herald, April 16, 2008.

An understanding of the diversity of the insurgency and other threats to security is a key component of this analysis. It shows that, while insecurity is a rising trend, the actors involved and their associated motivations and interests are varied. Attention to such nuance was emphasised within the methodology which, first and foremost, asked the questions: What, specifically, is meant by ‘the conflict’ within Afghanistan? How many conflicts are taking place, and what are the relations between them?

1.3 Afghanistan’s Multi-Conflict System

The ongoing conflict cannot be understood as a discrete conflict between two parties but rather as a complex conflict system. The conflict between the ‘insurgency’ and the government (and its international supporters) is perceived to be the most significant. However, the insurgency itself is comprised of a number of AOGs with differing motives. The Taliban is comprised of members seeking a return to near-absolute power while others pursue a strong bargaining position from which to enter and exert influence over the present (though slightly modified) State. Newer Taliban members may be seeking income or attempting to express frustration with the post-2001 lack of anticipated progress, while many others are far more radical and identify most closely with al-Qaeda. Hizb-e Islami, the Haqqani Network and other AOGs affiliated with the Taliban all aim for the fulfilment of different goals and are subject to in-fighting as well as externally directed attacks. These conflicts involve and overlap with poppy trafficking networks, which support and occasionally engage in violence in order to protect their financial interests. Largely disconnected from this conflict and the broader insurgency are localised conflicts involving communities and ‘strongmen’. According to some informants, up to 70 per cent of the violence in the south and 50 per cent nationwide can be attributed to local disputes conducted through AOGs, claimed by AOGs or falsely attributed to AOGs rather than verifiable, anti-State insurgent activity.19 At the root of this violence are the grievances of some communities or social groups over perceptions of exclusion from the public administration. For instance, in Kandahar, the Noorzai tribe is virtually excluded from government offices, which are monopolised by rival tribes, and feels marginalized by the State. As a response they have affiliated themselves with the Taliban and, subsequently, attacked government interests, which are viewed as inseparable form rival local, qawmi interests.

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18 Vigilant Strategic Services Afghanistan (2008) ISAF RC (E) area – incident comparison – TB / AGE attacks, published online by Barnett Rubin, 10 May. Available at: http://bp3.blogger.com/_bxtQNTuY3LE/SCZsp0RA89I/AAAAAAAAA00/4DP4sCoiZlo/s1600-h/RCE+2008-7+week18.jpg

19 Personal communication, UNAMA personnel, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008. In such cases, tribal ‘strongmen’ frustrated with their lack of control over the local, district or provincial administration may temporarily ally themselves with an AOG, such as the Taliban, in order to gain support for an attack. Alternatively, such ‘strongmen’ may attack independently and allow the attack to be attributed to or claimed by the Taliban in order to avoid responsibility or retribution.
Yet, these primary conflicts have generated a level of instability and insecurity which also raises the possibility of future conflicts which are growing increasingly possible. The most likely and potentially destructive such conflict is the transformation of an insurgency into a nation-wide war akin to that of the early-mid-1990s. North-south tensions have developed and may lead to a re-constituted Northern Alliance battling the Taliban for control of the Afghan State. Defections among the Afghan military would become widespread, and political figures would likely fall back upon ethnic affiliations. In such a situation, the government would like collapse, and the existing international military presence would almost certainly be unable to contain the resulting violence. This conflict is also joined by another potential though unlikely sectarian conflict. Sunni-Shia tensions in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, which resulted in a localised conflict, have shown that events elsewhere in the Muslim world have raised sectarian sentiments in and around Afghanistan, which is 80 per cent Sunni and 20 per cent Shia. Concerns have arisen that Wahabbi advocates are attempting to exploit sectarian sentiments in order to increase their influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan as a means of pursuing broader influence in the Muslim world against the rising role of Shia Iran. Such a conflict, even if it does not occur region-wide with violence throughout south and southwest Asia, could lead to small-scale conflicts and increased instability in Afghanistan.

Figure 6. Ongoing and Potential Conflicts in Afghanistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Parties</th>
<th>Status/Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taliban-led Insurgency</td>
<td>The Taliban and the international and Afghan military forces/security services.</td>
<td>Ongoing It involves the Taliban and several affiliates and allied groups (in addition to large numbers of passive supporters). It is internally fragmented, as some members seek a return to 2000-style Taliban control while others pursue only the removal of foreign troops or the leveraging of force as a precursor to political negotiations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narco Conflict</td>
<td>Poppy trafficking networks (heavily composed of Afghan security service members) and the international military forces and contractors.</td>
<td>Ongoing It seeks a weak government incapable of eradicating cultivation, preventing processing and compromising transportation routes, though facilitators of this conflict do not aim to overthrow the sitting government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Localised Disputes/Conflicts</td>
<td>Local, qawmi elements, various local (district or provincial) Afghan government administrations and, in some cases, AOG members.</td>
<td>Ongoing Rather than a single conflict, it is numerous minor conflicts at local levels which are commonly between local communities (referred to as qawm within Afghanistan) or between communities and State entities. These conflicts seek a non-monopolistic division of political power and State-controlled resources. Entities engaged in such acts of violence cannot be understood as opposition groups given that they do not aim to destabilise the higher-level political structures. That said, local, qawmi groups may align themselves with AOGs, such as the Noorazi’s have with the Taliban, in order to combat what they view as an unjust and inequitable government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional, Intra-State Conflict</td>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Potential/Unlikely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern militias/armed groups and the Taliban (and other Pashtun militias) with the government playing a marginal role.</td>
<td>Such a conflict, if it occurs, will involve a competition for control of the State. Its occurrence will reflect the widespread belief that an effective, credible and militarily effective State is unviable. At present, this conflict is one of interests and perception rather than a violent battle.</td>
<td>Such a conflict could either involve region-wide violence or a series of localised conflicts within Afghanistan (and in Pakistani border provinces).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sectarian Conflict</th>
<th>Potential/Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni militias in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Shia militias in Afghanistan and Pakistan (with Iranian support) and external Wahabbi militias (with support from Gulf States).</td>
<td>Such a conflict could either involve region-wide violence or a series of localised conflicts within Afghanistan (and in Pakistani border provinces).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Methodology

The methodology employed for the Strategic Conflict Assessment (SCA) has relied heavily upon DFID’s Strategic Conflict Assessment Guidance Notes, which includes a three-stage approach involving a conflict analysis, an assessment of international interventions and a series of corresponding options. A summary of the methodology, which has previously been provided to HMG, is included below.

2.1 Methodology

The first stage involved a conflict analysis which examines the underlying causes of and dynamics influencing conflict within Afghanistan. This analysis required an exploration of the history of conflict in Afghanistan, as addressed in the literature review and the field work, in order to identify structures and actors which have contributed and currently contribute to these dynamics. The conflict analysis was then applied to the range of international interventions and those implemented by the Afghan government with international assistance to determine their assessed or potential impact upon stability and security. Emphasis was placed upon military, security and reconstruction interventions. The impact of these interventions upon security was assessed to the degree feasible, despite the frequent lack of valid quantifiable data and the difficulty in attributing relative influence with the range of influences upon and actors pursuing, and opposing, stability and conflict. Based on the analyses of conflict and of the international response, the methodology involved the development of strategies and options to pursue peaceful stability.

While this methodology is not novel, it is important to note that the real innovation does not come in the design – as any proper analysis must consider structures, actors and dynamics – but in the consolidation of current, pertinent data and perspectives and in the ability to note intersections and influences. The necessary data was collected by the six team members: Sultan Barakat (Output 2 Leader/Conflict Assessment Expert), Antonio Giustozzi (Historian), Christopher Langton OBE (Terrorism and Insurgency Expert), Michael Murphy (Military Expert), Mark Sedra (Security Sector Specialist) and Arne Strand (Political Scientist). In total, these team members conducted 46 days of field research, including 41 in Afghanistan and another five within Pakistan. These involved the Military Expert (10 days), Historian (10 days), Security Sector Specialist (10 days), Terrorism and Insurgency Expert (10 Days) and Political Scientist (6 days). While team members sought a geographically comprehensive portrait of conflict within Afghanistan, the research took place primarily within Kabul (including visits to Bagram and other nearby areas) with four days having been spent in Kandahar and another four in Helmand. The Terrorism and Insurgency Expert committed five days to research in Pakistan, primarily in Islamabad and Peshawar. His findings shed light upon the cross-border nature of the insurgency and its overlap into Pakistani border provinces, including Waziristan, Baluchistan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP). As an official trip to Herat was not feasible as planned, the Team’s Historian unofficially conducted field work there – as part of his independent research – during a two-week visit to western Afghanistan in April and May 2008. Additional parts of the country are covered by Sultan Barakat’s recent engagements throughout Afghanistan. Such field-based endeavours were supplemented by the in-depth literature review conducted by the Team and by constant monitoring of the situation through the media and other sources. As a result of the breadth of research conducted, Team members were frequently able to obtain a degree of specificity which, while fascinating, is not necessarily relevant to the international intervention or to HMG’s future policies and options.

2.2 Contacts and Key Informants

During the planning phase of this project and in the development of field work plans, lists of key contacts were made. Individuals and institutions requiring consultation were divided among the team members based on their individual terms of reference. The full list of individuals and entities...
consulted are included within Annex A. In total, more than 164 individuals were interviewed as part of the field research. These include more than a dozen Afghan elected officials, including members of Provincial Councils and the National Assembly. Furthermore, high-level representatives of the Ministry for Rural Rehabilitation and Development, the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics were all interviewed. Furthermore, a detailed and timely interpretation of the security situation was provided by American, British and Pakistani intelligence officers as well as by British, Dutch and American military officers and by former Taliban officials.

Several informants, due to concerns regarding the confidentiality of information or political ramifications resulting from certain statements, requested not to be named. Such individuals are referred to using descriptions which allow their perspective and approximate position to be known without allowing their identities to be readily deduced.

2.3 Methodological Considerations

The methodology proved appropriate for the assignment. It provided a solid portrait of the variety of interventions taking place within Afghanistan. That said, team members, due to security restrictions, were not able to meet with informants in rural communities or with members of the various armed groups. In addition, while the team members were all familiar with the development of the conflict within Afghanistan and have conducted extensive research there, the results cannot reflect a longitudinal perspective. Attempts should be made to create or support mechanisms which adequately capture certain indicators of conflict vulnerability in different regions across time. The current paucity of data concerning Afghanistan is a major short-coming of the security and reconstruction planning and monitoring processes. Monitoring in the contemporary conflict in Iraq is far stronger and should be used as a model. One prime example from Afghanistan, however, is the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) monitoring of Afghanistan’s reconstruction. This document, first produced in 2005 and updated in 2007, provides quantifiable and professionally collected data concerning the most critical factor in Afghanistan, the perceptions of the Afghan people, throughout all regions of the country.

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3. **Conflict Analysis**

Throughout any SCA, the conflict analysis is the foundational and pivotal component. It reveals those dynamics which motivate conflict and which could lead to its resolution. This analysis reviews key structures, central actors and critical dynamics and provides an update of the contemporary conflict. As such, it focuses upon the insurgency, other armed groups, poppy traffickers and the international and Afghan military forces while also incorporating civilian elements, such as humanitarian actors, which significantly influence the conflict.

### 3.1 Structures

There are a variety of key structures influencing conflict in Afghanistan. These structures are neither organisations nor institutions but persistent features of a society (and conflict within that society) that comprise the ‘rules of the game’. While subject to fluctuations and interpretations, structures remain relatively stable. These apply primarily to Afghanistan but also to the international coalition operating therein.

#### 3.1.1 Global Structures

While the most critical structures frequently concern the nation in which the conflict is taking place, Afghanistan's role as the first post-9/11 conflict gave it a unique status. It became both the testing ground for perceptions regarding terrorism, Islam and the power of international intervention and a location for addressing a widespread sense of vulnerability. These have rendered global structures potentially the most significant in the conflict.

- **The War on Terror**
  
  The War on Terror and its geo-political ramifications have provided a significant backdrop for the intervention in Afghanistan. Having emerged as a result of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the War on Terror aims to combat terrorist groups, primarily al-Qaeda, and to prevent the types of failed states which are widely believed to incubate such groups. It has contributed to strategic priorities such as the stabilisation of Pakistan and the prevention of nuclear proliferation in Iran and has also aided in the pursuit of broader political and military interests in south, central and southwest Asia. From a cultural standpoint, it reflects a renewed sense of vulnerability within the West and the belief that terrorism is preventable, identifiable and based primarily upon cross-cultural misperceptions. The stark ‘with or against us’ mentality which has accompanied this war has also discounted sources of discontent within the broader Muslim world while, simultaneously, attempting to win 'hearts and minds'. As such, it could be indicated that the War on Terror, integral to the conflict in Afghanistan, has also led to an oversimplification of conflict and insurgency more broadly.

  Within Afghanistan, the War on Terror and pursuit of terrorists led to missteps which, at present, have contributed to insecurity. These include bargaining with Northern Alliance ‘warlords’, thus allowing them to act with relative impunity, to grab hold of political power and to avoid meaningful disarmament and demilitarisation. These mistakes have fuelled regional tensions and have severely compromised the nation-wide legitimacy of the State. Furthermore, the unilateralism which became a hallmark of the War on Terror prevented the initial expansion of ISAF in the early post-intervention period, thus losing a vital opportunity to cement security improvements.

- **Western Liberalism**

  Western liberalism, a concept which, despite its differing interpretations, has been highly relevant in the pursuit of stability in Afghanistan. Primarily concerned with human and civil rights, equality of opportunity and market-driven economic systems, Western Liberalism emphasises the individual and his or her presumed rationality above all else. Factors such as relationships, kinship, faith and force are seen as being extraneous and, in some cases, coercive elements the influence of which should be
constrained.

In Afghanistan, Western Liberalism, as applied to electoral politics, has popularised the notion that winning and maintaining the support of the majority of the country is a key criteria for maintaining control and containing the insurgency. However, as the field research demonstrated, the support or allegiance of the majority is irrelevant in combating an insurgency given that insurgencies can be sustained with only a small level of human and material resources.

### 3.1.2 National Structures

The influence or force of global and largely conceptual structures contrasted with the realities of Afghanistan and the entrenched structures therein that constrain the role of the State and fragment the country internally and within the broader region.

#### 3.1.2.1 Geography

Afghanistan’s rugged topography has served as a natural barrier to state expansion since the birth of the modern state in the country in the 19th century. Even with technological innovations in transportation and communications, Afghanistan’s geography presents an obstacle to state-builders. Any government in Kabul intent on expanding its influence outside Kabul and some main urban centres must possess security forces with condition-specific communications systems and air assets. The sanctuary that Afghanistan’s mountain ranges provide for rebels and insurgents demands a large military with experience in asymmetric warfare. As a land-locked country with long, largely indefensible borders, Afghanistan must invest heavily in border security to combat not only cross-border insurgency activity and conventional threats from neighbouring states, but smuggling and the trafficking of narcotics, weapons and people.

Afghanistan’s border with Pakistan, denoted by the Durand Line established under British colonial rule in 1893 to divide Afghanistan and what was then the British colony of India, cuts through the ethnic Pashtun heartland. It has frequently generated tensions as Afghan and Pakistani Pashtuns have sought the establishment of an independent or autonomous country which crosses this colonial demarcation.

#### 3.1.2.2 Centre–Periphery Relations

The relations between Afghan central State authority and the outlying areas have been a powerful force throughout Afghan history. Traditionally, provincial leaders as well as rural communities have felt that autonomy is a right which a centralised State apparatus is consistently attempting to deny. As Barnett Rubin has commented, Afghans have commonly seen control of a centralised State as ‘war booty belonging to the victor.’ As such, State power has been not only a contextual feature of conflict but, in many ways, its goal. The exercise of this power was not perceived to be the responsibility of the victor but, rather, an opportunity for the continued subjugation of the defeated, the transformation of violent conflict to political violence. In 1959, for instance, riots broke out in Kandahar over the government’s attempts to collect tax revenues. Opposition to the rule of Amanullah Khan 30 years earlier similarly involved not only his imposition of progressive domestic policies but the fact that he attempted to finance them by directly taxing the people. As such, a weak central government with autonomy along the periphery has often been viewed as one of the few viable forms of governance, though this arrangement is also highly susceptible to challenges by control-seeking groups.

That said, this structure seems to be changing in contemporary Afghanistan. Having seen relative peace and stability under the Taliban, Afghans began to view a highly centralised and powerful government as a potential guardian of security to a degree not seen in the hundred years since the

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21 B Rubin (2003), The Politics of Centre-Periphery Relations in Afghanistan (New York: NYU Centre for International Cooperation), March.
rule of Abdur Rahman Khan. As such, calls for a strong central Afghan government in Kabul were widely heard following the Coalition-led intervention in 2001 and 2002. Yet, the inability to maintain control over large swathes of the country – and the Taliban’s proven ability to do so – has undermined the sitting government and bolstered the insurgency. The discourse of centre-periphery relations may only apply to states which, upon grasping control, remain weak or fail to achieve at least a near-monopoly on the use of violence. The strengthening of the Afghan government is thus closely linked to counter-insurgency and security. A seemingly weak government within Afghanistan will always be challenged.

3.1.2.3 Corruption and Opportunism
Corruption is endemic across the State, particularly within the public administration and security sectors. The police and judiciary could be categorized as the two State institutions most adversely affected by corruption. Insufficient salaries are a major cause of corruption in the rule of law institutions, but rising police salaries are expected to at least partially mitigate this issue. Another motivation for corruption is simple opportunism, as the country’s police, jurists and other officials are in an advantageous position to extract revenue through rent-seeking behaviour. High levels of corruption have poisoned relations between communities and the State and led to increased recourse to customary security, judicial and governance structures, a fact which has at least partly worked to the favour of AOGs.

3.1.2.4 Intra-State Regionalism
Regional tensions within Afghanistan are an additional structure, with those ethnic groups based in the north traditionally working far more closely with one another than with the largely southern-based Pashtuns. While both regions, north and south, fought against the Soviet occupation, the anti-Taliban resistance of the late 1990s reflected, essentially, a northern-led resistance of the United Front/Northern Alliance against the Taliban-dominated south. Given that the US-led Coalition intervention in late 2001 worked closely with the Northern Alliance against the Taliban, the conflict immediately adopted an overt regional component addressed further in the discussion of contemporary conflict dynamics.

While the remaining relevance of ‘regional’ factors may be officially discounted given the abolition of regional structures by the Afghan government, they remain a definitive structure since first introduced by the Soviets. The vast majority of reporting mechanisms, including those used by the UN, and international military structures have viewed the conflict and intervention through a regional lens.

3.1.2.5 Inter-State Regionalism
Afghanistan bridges south Asia and the Middle East while butting up against the former Soviet Union and China. It is, thus, heavily influenced by its neighbours – Iran, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and China – while playing a key role in global disputes and conflicts involving the US, Iran, Pakistan, India, Russia, China and former Soviet Central Asian Republics. These regional dynamics, however, have the potential to integrate a stable Afghanistan into their economic and regional institutions or to contribute to its instability.

Pakistan – Of the myriad regional dynamics, those between Afghanistan and Pakistan are the most critical. As a matter of foreign policy, Pakistan views instability in Afghanistan as a counter-weight to the Afghan government’s close relations with India. Uncomfortable with such ties, it is widely believed that Pakistan will remain hesitant to pursue a more intensive counter-insurgency strategy along its border with Afghanistan until the Afghan government has re-affirmed its regional political neutrality as first stated in the 2002 ‘Good Neighbourly Agreement’, guaranteed that it will never support military action against Pakistan and appointed pro-Pakistani politicians to a number of significant roles. That said, even such accommodations would not necessarily guarantee that
Pakistan could significantly reduce insurgent infiltration into Afghanistan. The size and geography of the borderlands and the historical involvement of the Pakistani Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) with armed elements in Afghanistan may, however, mitigate the potential results.

Pakistani fighters and Afghan fighters based on the borderlands are known to regularly cross into Afghanistan in order to stage attacks. The shared Pashtun identity between these border areas and, while fluctuating and disputed, ideological alignment with the Taliban has supported insurgent forces. The political rise of the *Muttahida Majlis-e Amal* (MMA), a coalition of political parties friendly to the Taliban, in NWFP, Baluchistan and FATA in 2002 facilitated cross-border insurgent operations and blunted the Pakistani government's anti-terrorism achievements in the region. The MMA’s electoral defeat in February 2008, however, provides or, potentially, reveals a critical opportunity to weaken support for the Taliban in Pakistani border provinces and to co-opt the political coalition or its member parties.²² While some informants are optimistic about the ability to do so, those most familiar with the Pakistani border provinces indicate that the MMA’s defeat should not in any way be read as a diminishment of support for Afghan or Pakistani insurgent and terrorist groups.

**Iran** – Relations with Iran are closely linked to its relations with the United States and other international stakeholders. The Iranian government, while supportive of Hamid Karzai’s administration, wishes to emphasise its role in maintaining stability in its eastern neighbour. While the ability of Iranian State and non-state elements to influence Afghanistan is undisputed, it should be noted that the degree of intentionality attributed to Teheran may be exaggerated. Informants have indicated that while guns have crossed from Iran into Afghanistan, these have rarely if ever been Iranian weapons and, in seemingly most or all cases, are purchased on the black market rather than being provided by the Iranian government. US government attempts to credit Iran with any role in Afghan violence, in addition to being of questionable veracity, do nothing to improve security within Afghanistan.²³ Potentially more destabilising than any military provocation from Iran, however, could be the forced return of an estimated 1.6 million Afghan refugees from Iran to Afghanistan. While a lengthy process, it is feared that such a sizable population movement could further strain economic development and social cohesion in western Afghanistan, thus leading to mass unemployment, the fragmentation of communities struggling to integrate returnees and the growth of militias and criminal enterprises. Reintegration of returnees in western Afghanistan will need to be monitored closely and financially supported in order to avoid fuelling the already budding conflict in the region.²⁴

In addition to these two major regional dynamics, others seem far less likely and incapable of severely worsening Afghanistan’s domestic security situation. Afghanistan’s influence upon the India-Pakistan conflict may either be positive, if it spurs increased commerce, or negligible, if it fails to do so. The Tajik and Turkmen governments have proven erratic but very minimally influential upon their ethnic kin in Afghanistan while grappling with their internal challenges. The same can be said of the less stable and hyper-paranoid Uzbek government of Islam Karimov. The potential for a messy succession battle following Karimov’s reign seems relatively likely given that he has failed to identify a successor, thus providing a key opening for the al-Qaeda-backed Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan (IMU/T), which is currently based in Waziristan. The IMU/T has, given its defeat in Uzbekistan, focused on becoming a powerful regional force which will be able to mobilise resources and fighters from Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Middle East.

Russia and China, major players in the region, have largely proven unengaged in Afghanistan aside

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²³ Informants from within the British military and with British Embassy officials in Kabul indicated that Iranian state agents or proxies may be attempting to stockpile weapons in western Afghanistan in the event of any international military interventions targeted at Iran. Personal communications, British military and Embassy personnel, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.

from economic cooperation. Uncomfortable with American troops stationed so near their borders on what increasingly seems to be a permanent basis (rather than a temporary one as initially stated), these two countries have hesitated to directly involve themselves. Closer involvement of Russia and China should remain a strategic priority, though Chinese opposition to any energy-sharing or cross-border energy pipelines involving India should be blunted.

3.1.3 Societal Structures

Such global, national and cross-border elements were often further constrained by societal, micro-level structures. It is important to note that each of these structures, which include ethnicity, culture, religion and security, operate on a national and an international level. However, they are labelled as micro-level given that, as will be emphasised in the discussion of conflict dynamics, they are critical dimensions of individuals’ experience of conflict and relative role within it.

3.1.3.1 Ethnicity and Culture

Afghan society has long been dominated by adherence to the qawm, or community, over all else. This community, with which would-be rulers frequently conflicted, is principally a local, social entity but extends more broadly to encompass family, tribe and other forms of social identification. The violation of this realm is akin to an attack on an individual and is prone to provoking a violent response. The Durand Line itself is a violation of the qawm given that the boundary cut through Pashtun ethnic and tribal homelands and has, ever since, inspired calls for a trans-border Pashtun homeland. As evident from this example, the sense of community is considered strongest among Pashtun Afghans, situated predominantly in the south and east with substantial overlap into Pakistani border provinces, who are estimated to include 44 per cent of the population. Other ethnic groups include Tajiks (25 per cent), Hazara (10 per cent), Uzbeks (8 per cent) and others, including Aimaqs and Turkmens (a combined 13 per cent). Ethnic identity has been more significant as a shared identity than as a cultural bond or tradition, and many of Afghanistan’s warlords have maintained mono-ethnic militias. These separate groups do, however, come together in the face of a common enemy though, as the period from 1992 to 1996 showed, cease cooperation and may turn against one another once their shared goal is attained. At present, for instance, there are strong concerns that the security forces, particularly the police, will endeavour to serve the interests of their ethnic or kinship group rather than the country as a whole.

Conflict has not only brought Afghans together but has, most notably, driven them apart. During the Soviet era, in particular, traditional leaders, Khans and Maleks, were either co-opted or killed. Local jirgas, traditional decision making councils, remained in existence but had been tainted by the concept’s adoption by the Soviets and by subsequent regimes. As a result Afghan society largely lost its capability for self-governance. The only significant exception to this pattern is found in the south- and particularly Paktika and Khost, where the tribes were allowed to survive in order to serve as a counter-force to Pakistani encroachment. In addition, the ‘Kalashnikovisation’ of Afghan culture, a result of the estimated US$6 billion in weapons provided by the US, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and China to the Mujahidin, has brought about an increase in crime, violence, territorial protection and isolation. Weapons also facilitated the production and, more importantly, transport of Afghan opium poppies into and through neighbouring countries, a trade which led to rising levels of drug use.

3.1.3.2 Religion

In addition to ethnicity, Islam, according to its local and fluid interpretations, is a powerful force. However, as the cultivation of poppies, as forbidden by Sharia, reflects, Islam’s role within Afghanistan is neither strictly fundamentalist nor completely stable in its interpretation and application. Yet, it is strongly felt and considered a sacred and inviolable part of life. However, it is important to note that, unlike the ongoing war in Iraq, sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia Muslims have not been a defining feature of conflict within Afghanistan, largely given the country’s
predominantly (80 per cent) Sunni composition. That said, localised sectarian battles within a Pakistani border province, as further discussed in relation to conflict dynamics, does raise concern.

Islam has taken four major paths in Afghanistan. The first is ‘traditional Islam’, which includes local folklore and is identified with the Sufi orders. The second, ‘revivalist Islam’, includes Deobandis, Salafis, Tablighis and other groups. The remaining two are notable for their relation to the State. ‘Pro-government Islam’ is comprised of clerics, generally on the public payroll, who extol the virtues of the government and its policies, while ‘political Islam’, as pursued by Hizb-e Islami, Jamiat-e Islami and other groups in Afghanistan, seeks a varying degree of incorporation of Islam directly into the State.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Box 1. The Resolution of Islam and the Western State System in Afghanistan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Over the course of the past three decades, various attempts have been made to integrate Islam into Afghan political institutions, always with very modest results. A National Directorate for Security (NDS) programme to pay mullahs is reported to involve as many as 250,000 mullahs, though its impact is limited due to the fact that amounts of cash passed on are modest. In Wardak Province, a 2007 survey found that all of the mullahs interviewed were hostile to foreign presence in the country. In fact, attempts to purchase the support of the clergy seems to have reinforced radical mullahs in the countryside as co-opted mullahs have moved from rural communities to cities in order to enjoy their government-produced resources. Doing so results in the insertion of younger mullahs who, due to the radicalisation of Islamic networks in Pakistan, are likely to be more fundamentalist than their predecessors. Broadly speaking, the clergy is naturally inclined to resist the establishment of a Western-style, secular state, as it sees madrassas being replaced by state schools, mass media supplanting the authority of the clergy and state systems overwhelming customary bodies (which often provide the clergy with their income and status). The establishment of state madrassas in an attempt to co-opt the concept is unlikely to have a major impact given the preference among students and teachers for independent madrassas with generous funding from foreign patrons. In total, the clergy represents a constituency opposed to the establishment of a secular, ‘modern’ state in Afghanistan. As a result of the events of the past 25 years, the clergy has gradually acquired a strong awareness of the implications of modern state building in Afghanistan and opposes it for logical, self-interests reasons. The key is not to eliminate such opposition by convincing the clergy of the goodness of liberal institutions but, rather, to channel such opposition towards non-violent forms. However, the clergy is highly protective of its independence, and its ranks will resist cooption. International intervention into Afghan religious life may, if attempted, do more harm than good.</td>
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3.1.3.3 Security

While security is taken to mean a transient state, its lack within Afghanistan has elevated it to the level of a critical albeit dynamic structure. Persistent insecurity has forced Afghans to consider security and its various forms in a complex and sophisticated manner. Security within Afghanistan is viewed in both physical as well as socio-cultural terms. Being free from armed violence is considered to be critical, as it is elsewhere in the world. Physical insecurity not only involves conflict, terrorism and brutality but also criminality, corruption and harassment. As such, areas deemed secure by the international community may not necessarily be perceived as such by local populations if, as has proven the case, petty criminality and frequent rent-seeking behaviour among public officials are common. In addition, security within Afghanistan involves a critical dimension of

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25 Almost the entirety of the remaining 20 percent are Shia.
cultural security. The presence of forces intent upon shaping or disrupting Afghan culture, by which is meant traditions and localised incarnations of Islam, is viewed no less severe than a physical assault, particularly in Pashtun areas. Just as a physical attack must be repelled, the source of cultural attacks must be battled until overcome. This lesson was palpable in the Soviet and Taliban eras and, to a lesser extent, during the reign of Amanullah Khan.

3.2 Actors: AOGs

The armed opposition involves a complex series of organisations with, in some cases, highly divergent ideologies. Most, if not all, however, seek greater autonomy from the government and the withdrawal or marginalisation of international military forces. In this way, AOG motivations can be compared to those of the Mujahedin resistance to the PDPA and the Soviet forces throughout the late 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, many of the contemporary insurgent groups have chosen to discard titles such as the Taliban or neo-Taliban, as the international community increasingly labels them, and take up the banner of the Mujahedin. Such a trend reflects a rapid development in the insurgency from an initial narrow band of fundamentalist fighters to a still narrow but substantially larger movement which, increasingly, is motivated by nationalist ideology and the pursuit of freedom from external interference.

Yet, it is important to recognise that the armed opposition, while divided among several groups and factions, includes a demographic similarity: angry young men. In Afghanistan’s villages the presence of large numbers of frustrated young males with few prospects of finding jobs and of gathering the resources necessary to pursue a bride represents a large stockpile of combustible material which the insurgents have been trying, with a degree of success, to set ablaze. In particular, young returnees from Pakistan who grew up away from the influence of elders seem particularly suitable for recruitment into radical opposition groups. The prospect of being issued a weapon (with the personal power deriving from it) and the social status deriving from the role of Mujahid are powerful motivations for joining AOGs. Addressing this group and undercutting its social and economic motivations should be seen as critical challenge and opportunity for containing the insurgency’s growth.

3.2.1 Taliban

The most significant part of the insurgency remains the Taliban despite not having been able to re-establish supply lines, command and control structures and the level of financing it had in mid-2001. Following the international military intervention in late 2001 and early 2002, its members fled to Pakistan and integrated within communities throughout southern Afghanistan and are now making a resurgence. Informed estimates put its maximum current size at 20,000 members (others closer to 10,000 or 15,000 members) with only a minority being full-time fighters. Still commanded by Mullah Omar, the Taliban officially seeks a return to power within Afghanistan, a goal which will require the withdrawal of the international military forces and the overthrow of the Afghan government. While many of its original members and recent recruits are motivated by a fundamentalist Islamic ideology which compels them to impose a radical interpretation of Sharia law, many newer members have joined out of more traditional Mujahedin motives of expelling an occupying army and the government it helped to install. On an individual level, as will be discussed further in the dynamics section, many are fighting in order to prestige, to express frustration with a lack of employment opportunities, to seek revenge in the aftermath of military-causes civilian casualties and a number of other individual and overlapping reasons. Relatively unexpectedly, a rising number of recent Taliban recruits have adopted the global jihadist perspective of al-Qaeda and have become more radical than the Taliban’s clerical leadership. UN officials in Kabul report

27 Personal communications, community leaders, Gardez, Kandahar and Jalalabad, Afghanistan, 2005-07.
28 Commentators such as Bearden and Gerges Fawaz who are familiar with the Taliban often note that, despite the constraints imposed by its current outlaw position, seems to be far less well funded than prior to 2002.
that many Taliban elements, including, potentially, its leadership, sustain the ‘insurgency’ as a means of improving their bargaining power in advance of an anticipated negotiation process or power-sharing arrangement. Such an aim is considered likely and wise given the Taliban’s historically relative if not apparent weakness. The group’s recent expansion has been built on new recruits and, as such, has become far more internally fragmented, thus providing a significant opportunity for the international community to win defectors and limit the Taliban’s coherence and capacity. Yet, the open arms with which the Taliban has embraced a multitude of fighters has also contributed to its exceptionally fast growth across Afghanistan.

### 3.2.2 Hizb-e Islami

The second most significant insurgent group is *Hizb-e Islami*. Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s *Hizb-e-Islami* fought both with the Mujahidin and then with the Taliban in whose government he played a part. At present, *Hizb-e Islami* is split into two separate factions, Hekmatyar’s *Hizb-e Islami*, operating in Nuristan and Kunar, and an offshoot initially created by Yunus Khalis which has, in effect, been fully incorporated into the Taliban. Hekmatyar remains the dominant figure and leader of the largest *Hizb-e Islami* faction. While he and his affiliates are officially barred from politics, individuals affiliated with the *Hizb-e Islami* political faction, created in 2005 and officially not associated with Hekmatyar, have won seats in the National Assembly and are active in the *Wolesi Jirga* in Kabul.

Hekmatyar’s dual political and military approach has provided him with a strong hand in either stability or conflict. This fact may make him the leading figure in any scenario of Afghanistan’s future security. While often believed to be closely linked with the Iranian government due to his long stay in Iran, from which he was expelled in 2002, Hekmatyar has no known operational connection with Iran.

Concerns have recently developed, however, that he has begun mobilising for increased violence if not war. Recruitment among university students, a traditional *Hizb-e Islami* base of support, in northern Afghanistan has increased, and previously dormant low-level commanders and fighters have been re-mobilised. Informed individuals currently estimate that, while far from flexing its full muscle and from giving up on the political system, Hekmatyar’s faction may account for up to a quarter of all active insurgents (up from approximately 10 per cent in 2006). In 2007, evident signs of initial infiltration, cooptation and mobilisation among *Hizb-e Islami* emerged in Herat, Badghis, Ghor, Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Takhar, Faryab, Wardak and Kabul. In early 2008 Jowzjan, Balkh and Saripul had to be added to the list.

Equally troubling are concerns that both *Hizb-e Islami* factions may be accepting funds or supplies from the Taliban, to supplement their already considerable control over poppy trafficking. Indeed, there are additional concerns that, due to the loss of its better educated and less fundamentalist members through death and attrition, *Hizb-e Islami*’s composition may now be largely indistinguishable from the original Taliban’s. The full mobilisation of Hekmatyar’s faction in support of the Taliban would dramatically increase the insurgency’s numbers. Such a development seems likely if Hekmatyar feels that he will have more to gain in combat rather than in politics.

### 3.2.3 Jamiat-e Islami

There are also signs that fringes of *Jamiat-e Islami* are turning to armed opposition to the State,
particularly in the West (Herat and Ghor provinces) but also in the northeast. This mobilisation, being small and isolated rather than coordinated, has not had much military impact but contributes to the spread of insecurity and facilitates the efforts of the Taliban to establish supply lines reaching to the northern and western borders. The underlying motivation for this attitude is the feeling of marginalisation which affects many of the former _Jamiat_ commanders following the international intervention and, in particular, the DDR process which attempted to sever their connections with combatants. These disgruntled former commanders are believed to be using association with the Taliban as a bargaining chip. They will, according to this logic, earn income and influence through involvement in criminal enterprises before arranging a high-profile ‘surrender’ to the government in exchange for a government appointment. In other cases, _Jamiat_ commanders have facilitated AOG attacks, though not necessarily linked with the Taliban, in order to discredit the local administration and pursue their appointment to a relatively senior position in the district or provincial administration.33

3.2.4 **Haqqani Network**

Jalaluddin Haqqani fought for the Mujahidin. When the Taliban came to power and the Mujahidin were largely defeated, many of his members, though not Jalaluddin himself, changed sides. Jalaluddin’s son, Sirajuddin, now commands the Network’s field operations in support of and with financial backing from the Taliban, and _Haqqani_ members recognise the Taliban’s _Mullah_ Omar as their leader. Informants indicate that Sirajuddin Haqqani controls _Haqqani_ fighters as well as all Taliban-affiliated militants in Waziristan. It should be noted that the _Haqqani_ Network is widely credited with the bombing of the Serena Hotel in Kabul in January 2008. As demonstrated in this attack, the _Haqqani_ Network should be considered a highly capable player.

3.2.5 **Pakistani Insurgent Groups**

The so-called Pakistani Taliban, _Tereek-e-Taliban_ (TTP), led by Baitullah Mehsud, is believed to have close links to al-Qaeda, but seems careful to give allegiance to _Mullah_ Omar who, for his part, has distanced himself from Mehsud whose acts have gone beyond that which _Mullah_ Omar deems as acceptable. Mehsud’s actions against the Pakistani security forces as well as his beheading of Muslim opponents have angered Omar. Mehsud is a Wahhabist in practice and not a member of the _Hannifi_ tradition as is much of the Afghan Taliban’s leadership. The TTP, having recently suffered high losses at the hands of the Pakistani army and the loss of its political supporters, the MMA, seems well poised to relocate operations into Afghanistan. In February 2008, its members kidnapped the Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan, who it released three months later. That said, it possess a high level of support in the border provinces and may focus on further strengthening its operational capacity before carrying out future attacks.

In addition to the TTP, a variety of other Pakistani and Kashmiri insurgent and terrorist groups have the potential to engage in Afghanistan. One is _Tereek-na-faz-sharia-muslameen_ (TNFSM), which agitated for _Sharia_ in Swat, Pakistan in the 1990s. Anthony Cordesman indicates that, following _Hizb-e Islami_ and the _Haqqani_ Network, it is the strongest AOG in eastern Afghanistan.34 In addition, Mangal Bagh, leader of the Khyber-based _Lashkar-e Islam_, has become increasingly active within Pakistan in early 2008, as has Haji Namdar’s ‘Voice and Virtue’ group in Waziristan and elsewhere. As with the TTP, these groups may find their political aims within Pakistan assisted by instability in Afghanistan or, more simply, may decide to join their fellow fundamentalists in their struggle on the other side of the Durand Line out of anti-Western sentiments. A history of tribal cooperation in cases of shared political pursuit is common between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

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3.2.6 Al-Qaeda, Other Jihadist Groups and Affiliates

At present, there are 14 global jihadist groups operating in Afghanistan, of which al-Qaeda is the only critical actor.²⁵ While considered a more meaningful symbolic and financial rather than militant force, al-Qaeda is believed to operate within Afghanistan as well as Pakistan with the active involvement of Arabs, Chechens and Uzbeks. Two percent of AOG forces killed in Afghanistan in 2007 are believed to have been ‘foreigners’ likely affiliated with jihadist groups.²⁶ A rallying point for international Islamic fundamentalist insurgent and terrorist organisations, al-Qaeda’s proclamation of a global jihad against the West is increasingly being echoed by the Taliban and other insurgent groups in Afghanistan. While the role of al-Qaeda is not equivalent to that of other insurgent groups, it is believed to be largely behind the increasing use of tactics such as kidnappings, beheadings and suicide bombings, practices not previously seen in Afghanistan. While al-Qaeda’s role was previously considered to be marginal given the lack of attacks against civilian targets and aid workers, this trend has changed among AOGs, particularly the Taliban. In 2007, 40 World Food Programme (WFP) convoys were attacked; 40 aid workers were killed, and another 89 were abducted.²⁷ Indeed, the Taliban, while accepting funding from al-Qaeda, has experienced mixed relations with the group.²⁸ Jihadist volunteers from abroad, excluding Pakistani Pashtuns, sent by al-Qaeda are commonly unwelcome by the Taliban inside Afghanistan.²⁹ As such, al-Qaeda’s increased involvement in Afghanistan will remain limited and may impel it to pursue both links with other AOGs and the further radicalisation of the Taliban.

One key al-Qaeda affiliate and, indeed, subcontractor is Tahir Yuldashev’s Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan/Turkestan (IMU/T), currently based in Waziristan, which seeks the overthrow of Islam Karimov’s regime in Tashkent. Yet, the IMU/T has morphed into a broader regional power, largely by necessity following its large-scale defeat within Uzbekistan, and intends to destabilise the Uzbek government by fostering regional instability and by winning long-term backing from regional organisations and financiers.

3.2.7 Poppy Trafficking Networks

These networks, which exist in nearly every province of Afghanistan, extend from poor sharecroppers to Ministry-level affiliates and protectors. Rather than involving a simple connection between farmers and traffickers, they involve a highly complex and flexible structure similar to that of any organised criminal activity. Corruption of those Afghan agencies charged with controlling opium production, particularly the Ministry of Interior (MOI), the ANP and the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) have rendered these largely immune from domestic law enforcement or interdiction. Eradication, where applied, has done limited amounts of damage to these networks, which shift their enterprise to neighbouring areas and, later, return to those areas from which they had previously been removed. Individuals involved rarely have an ideological aim such as the AOGs and are primarily driven by profit.

However, the estimated eight to 12 leading narco ‘barons’ are reportedly cooperating with both the Taliban and regional warlords to ensure the safety and security of their markets and trafficking routes. The Taliban are running a protection ‘racket’ for drug traffickers in some areas and extracting zakat (tithe) from poppy farmers, yet there is no evidence of direct involvement in production or trafficking. Unlike the Taliban, the drug barons do not wish to see a collapse of the State but rather

²⁶ Personal communication, confidential source, April 2008. Fighters are generally believed to belong to al-Qaeda based on intelligence sources regarding the identity of fighters and, most telling, when they are deemed not to be Afghan or Pakistani.
the maintenance of a certain level of instability, particularly in the southeast where the bulk of the opium trade is centred. Instability coupled with State weakness provides a vacuum within which they can do business. Threatened with a large-scale intra-state conflict within Afghanistan, these networks could potentially be induced, particularly at their higher echelons, to advocate for stability and political resolution.
## The Armed Opposition: Composition, Location, Motivation and Interests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Leader</th>
<th>Main Motives</th>
<th>Goals/Interests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taliban</td>
<td>South, southeast and east with increasing expansion in the north-west and west</td>
<td>Mullah Omar</td>
<td>The Taliban is exceptionally fragmented and has a range of motives including religious fundamentalism, a desire to prevent external interference, material gain and furtherance of a global jihad against the West and its collaborators.</td>
<td>Different factions have differing ultimate goals and interests ranging from: &lt;ul&gt; &lt;li&gt;The attainment of a solid position from which to enter into negotiations with the government; and,&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;To overthrow the government and effect the departure of foreign troops.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;/ul&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizb-e Islami</td>
<td>Kunduz, Balkh, Parwan, Baghlan, Wardak, Ghazni, Badakshan, Pakia, Khost, Kandahar, Herat, Jowzjan, Sari Pul, Kunar, Kapisa, Nuristan and Nangahar Provinces</td>
<td>Gulbuddin Hekmatyar</td>
<td>Hizb-e Islami is primarily motivated by the presence of foreign troops and by the desire to impose a greater degree of political Islam.</td>
<td>Hekmatyar has two main goals for Hizb-e: &lt;ul&gt; &lt;li&gt;The use expanding territorial influence, violence and the threat of violence to attain a solid position from which to negotiate a formal and considerable political role for himself and Hizb-e Islami; and,&lt;/li&gt; &lt;li&gt;To remain in a solid position to vie for control of the State in the event of its collapse due to insurgent violence.&lt;/li&gt; &lt;/ul&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamiat-e Islami</td>
<td>Herat and Ghor Provinces, north-eastern Afghanistan</td>
<td>N/A; only fringes, not leadership mobilising</td>
<td>Only a portion of Jamiat's fringes have entered the current conflict; they are motivated by a sense of insignificance and marginalisation in the post-2001 dispensation.</td>
<td>Political power, generally at a provincial or district level (as a means of gaining significance and access to resources)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Haqqani Network, effectively a branch of the Taliban | South-eastern Afghanistan                                               | Jalaluddin Haqqani | The Haqqani Network is motivated by the removal of international influence upon Afghanistan and the more comprehensive application of Islam to Afghanistan’s political system. | • Departure of international troops; and,  
  • Installation of an independent, Islamic government.                                                                                                                                                    |
| Pakistani Taliban (TTP) | Pakistan (FATA, NWFP, Baluchistan and elsewhere)                     | Baitullah Mehsud | It is motivated by the pursuit of a fundamentalist Islamic State in Pakistan, a goal which is pursued by either destabilising Afghanistan or helping to install a fundamentalist  | • Overthrow of the Afghan government;  
  • Departure of international troops; and,  
  • Taliban victory or continued instability in Afghanistan.                                                                                                                                          |
Poppy Traffickers | Southern and Eastern Afghanistan | None | They are, at all levels, motivated overwhelmingly by the pursuit of income. | • Autonomy from government control (under the current or future regime); and,  
• Avoidance of large-scale conflict in Afghanistan.  

Al-Qaeda | Pakistan, Afghanistan | Osama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri | They are motivated by a global jihad against the United States and the West more broadly. In many though not all cases, this is met with a desire to implement a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam upon political systems in the broader ‘Muslim world’ | • Overthrow of the Afghan government;  
• Departure of international troops; and,  
• Taliban victory or the creation of conditions suitable for the hosting of a pan-Islamic terrorist organisation.
3.3 **Actors: Neutral or Highly Varied**

Actors included within this category are either presently neutral or, more frequently, have no group-wide affiliation with either AOGs or the government. The classification is admittedly imperfect, though it is critical to examine the following actors outside of the binary categories of anti- and pro-government.

3.3.1 **Regional Warlords and Powerbrokers**

Regional warlords continue to compete over resources and supporters across the country but particularly in the North. Competition over natural resources, drug trafficking routes and even the loyalty of communities and sub-national commanders, has frequently led to armed clashes. These figures have resisted State-sponsored demilitarisation processes, only making symbolic contributions. They have followed a dual policy when interacting with the State. Publicly, they vociferously support the State and typically occupy prominent positions within it, while surreptitiously working to keep the State out of their regional strongholds.

At the local level, State personnel tend to be loyal to local warlords and powerbrokers rather than the central State. While such individuals may not be considered anti-government, they are critical actors with the potential to mobilise political and military support for either stability or insecurity. Moreover, these warlords tend also to exercise control over local judicial bodies and other critical institutions, thus giving them the potential to control local conditions and practices and to either allow or counter State-driven services and powers. The capturing of State security institutions by armed powerbrokers at the local level, and the associated factionalisation of the security sector presents one of the foremost obstacles to establishing security in the country.

3.3.2 **Private Security Companies**

The influx of international civilian organizations in Afghanistan in the wake of the Taliban's fall coupled with the persistence of high levels of insecurity—a result of general criminality, terrorism and the anti-government insurgency—generated a sustained demand for private security providers. It is difficult to determine the number of private security companies (PSCs) or individual contractors working in Afghanistan given that, until the recent promulgation of the Private Security Company Law, no regulatory framework existed to monitor and govern their activities. PSCs tend to eschew transparency, augmenting suspicion of their activities by local and international actors.

Almost every category of international actor employs PSCs in Afghanistan, including the United Nations, donor governments, private sector companies and NGOs. They have become an omnipresent feature of the Afghan security landscape. Estimates of the number of international private security contractors working in Afghanistan range from 3,000 to 4,000. Contractors are generally divided into two groups: Western expatriates, consisting primarily of nationals from Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Canada, Zimbabwe and the United States; and third party nationals, predominantly comprising Ghurkhas who previously served in the Indian, British and Nepalese militaries. The Ghurkhas play a crucial role for the PSCs, serving, as one UN official puts it, as a ‘middle link between the Afghans and the internationals.’

While the core staff of the PSCs are international, they rely heavily on locally engaged staff. The bulk of man-guarding or static guarding - safeguarding fixed locations or facilities - is undertaken by Afghan staff. It is even more difficult to provide a precise figure regarding the number of Afghan

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40 This term refers to individuals who had led significant militias during the anti-Soviet *Jihad* and since. During and since the international intervention in 2001, many such individuals have received substantial recognition from the international community and governmental positions within the Afghan government. Individuals referred to here as warlords are, regardless of formal or legitimate title, are those who maintain illegal militias or who have the ability to quickly mobilise officially demobilised militant networks.
staff employed by PSCs, as several PSCs sub-contract to regional warlords or small Afghan PSCs.

3.4 Actors: Pro-Government

This section provides an overview of the varying goals and interests of the international community and the Afghan government. Overall, it becomes apparent that powerful international actors seek security in their countries through stability in Afghanistan but that, simultaneously, they have pursued a relatively weak State which they are able to significantly influence. This contradiction, as will be discussed in the analysis of the international response, has been one core contributor to the current decline in security in Afghanistan.

3.4.1 The International Community

The international community, broadly speaking, remains the most significant pro-government actor. Yet, despite the seeming unity of the phrase, ‘international community’, it is as highly fragmented and complex as the AOGs. As recently noted, the international community has pursued numerous and sometimes contradictory goals, including: counter-terrorism, the re-invention of the NATO alliance, personal ambition, counter-narcotics, liberal idealism and the protection of regional security and economic interests. Or, more simply, the international community could be divided among states which are pursuing relatively unadulterated goals of stabilisation and improved living standards and those which, while committed to the first, also seek fulfilment of geo-strategic goals in the region.

3.4.1.1 American Exceptionalism

At the outset of the conflict, the US-led Coalition entered Afghanistan in order to destroy the Taliban and al-Qaeda. This initial goal, having been perceived as complete, was followed by several additional objectives: the maintenance of security, the establishment of a viable State, the eradication of poppy production, the reconstruction of the country and, above all, the creation of a stable, democratic State. These objectives are not, however, motivations. The US and, to a lesser extent, UK pursued these objectives out of motivations to topple terrorist networks capable of striking their nations, to ensure the foundation of State security services strong enough to prevent terrorist activities and, it is commonly reported, to maintain a military presence in close proximity to Iran, Pakistan, China, Russia and former-Soviet Central Asia. Afghanistan was perceived as an integral buffer or staging post from which to remain proximately engaged in regional political and military developments. As time went on and security deteriorated, the motivations remained constant though were joined by a desire to avoid the perceived failure of the military and State building endeavours in Afghanistan. As a result, it is widely perceived that previous attachments to geo-strategic goals may be re-thought or marginalised as the overall collapse of the intervention seems possible. In this manner, the current challenges being faced in Afghanistan may have encouraged the broader international community to undertake a simplification of objectives.

3.4.2 Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRA)

The Afghan government, including its various branches and ministries, is primarily concerned with establishing a stable, sovereign State. In order to do so, it requires security, territorial control, a near monopoly on the use of force and the ability to provide meaningful services to its citizenry. Factions within the government do, however, pursue alternative outcomes. Officials engaged with poppy trafficking networks may desire an end to eradication and interdiction efforts and, in total, the relative weakness of governmental authority in many areas. Former warlords absorbed into the

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42 This most recent goal is closely linked with a desire to prevent casualties among their soldiers, with the citizenries of Western countries being far more discouraged by casualties than the Afghan AOGs, which had lost 15 fighters on average for each ISAF soldier killed during symmetric battles
government, furthermore, view the State as a vehicle for strengthening their regional or ethnic kin while combating their current and former enemies. As such, the State is internally fragmented with several of its members seeking to undercut its authority and many seeking to use it as a weapon against parts of the country.

3.4.3 Afghan Security Services
The Afghan security services include the ANA, the ANP and a variety of other smaller forces including the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), the Afghan Border Police (ABP), the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA) and the NDS. Each of these services has a combination of strengths and problems. The ANA, currently comprised of 70,000 members, has proven effective though suffers from low retention and high desertion rates. One third of its members are absent without leave (AWOL) at any point in time. The ANP, CNPA and ABP have been plagued with corruption and other abuses. ANCOP has proven effective due to having received what each of the services requires: additional training, higher salaries, improved pay and rank systems and adequate equipment.

3.4.4 International Military Forces
The current force comprises more than 60,000 troops, 47,000 of which are ISAF, from 40 countries and includes 26 PRTs. The overall figures have been increased recently to more than 50,000 for the spring-summer 'fighting season'. Specialist reinforcements of high-manoeuvre combat troops, including a US Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), and trainer/mentors for the ANA were announced by US Secretary of Defence Robert Gates in January 2008 and have now been mobilised and inserted into the south in support of ISAF's mission. ISAF's mission is to: ‘Conduct military operations in the assigned area of operations to assist the Government of Afghanistan in the establishment and maintenance of a safe and secure environment with full engagement of Afghan National Security Forces, in order to extend government authority and influence, thereby facilitating Afghanistan's reconstruction and contributing to regional stability'.

3.4.5 Reconstruction and Development Agents
Given the duration of the conflict and the initiation of reconstruction and development activities quickly following the late 2001 collapse of the Taliban, actors in this arena have become actors within the conflict. Reconstruction has followed a largely traditional path with bi-lateral and multi-lateral donors funding projects implemented by local and international NGOs with the government playing a peripheral role. The largest actors in this sector are US, UK and Canadian governments alongside the United Nations (UN), World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Islamic Development Bank (IDB). Afghanistan has also witnessed the rise of increased humanitarian and development assistance from Gulf States. While each key donor has a separate series of objectives, the overall purpose of these actors is to win local support for the international military intervention and newly installed government while, to the degree feasible, improving living conditions. For the UN agencies and NGOs implementing programmes, however, the goals are more complex. In many cases, NGOs hope to pursue continuation of their own financing by maintaining responsibility for traditional government services. Most, however, are motivated by a desire to improve the quality of life in Afghanistan and to provide the international community with a demonstration of the political and security-oriented significance of reconstruction.

3.5 Dynamics
Conflict in Afghanistan derives from the aforementioned structures and actors but is, at its core, relatively simpler. Despite the international complexity, the regional integration of the conflict and
the diversity of ethnic and other local affiliations, the main sources of insecurity are discernible both historically and within the ongoing insurgency. At the end of this section, these dynamics as well as the actors involved are examined in relation to the incipient conflict in western Afghanistan.

3.5.1 Historical Dynamics

Historically, Afghanistan has responded violently to the presence of both armed foreign elements and ‘outsiders’ intent upon actively pursuing cultural or political change. The colonial rule of Britain, starting in 1828, involved three Anglo-Afghan wars, from 1839 to 1842, from 1878 to 1880 and, finally, in 1919. This final and short-lived war impelled Britain, weary of battle following the First World War, to sign the Treaty of Rawalpindi, thus ending the colonial era. Independence was followed by rapid modernisation under King Amanullah Khan which included the abolition of the veil, mandating of primary education and promotion of co-education. After a decade and as a result of the unpopularity of such culturally threatening efforts, he was forced to abdicate and, following a violent power struggle, was briefly replaced by his cousin, Nadir Shah. In 1933, Zahir Shah became King following a peaceful succession and ruled through benign neglect and cautious, incremental change until the proclaimed abolition of the monarchy in 1973 by Mohammad Daoud Khan, a former prime minister and Zahir Shah’s cousin. Daoud, attempting to play the US and Soviet Union against one another, was assassinated by the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in April 1978. Power struggles between communist leaders and the two factions of the PDPA, Parcham and Khalq, ensued until the Soviet Union invaded the country in 1979 supposedly to bolster the fledgling government. From 1979 to 1989, with support of the US, Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia, the Mujahidin, a collection of tribal and ethnic militias, challenged and successfully led to the withdrawal of Soviet forces. The Soviet-backed government of Najibullah, who is remembered today as the last strong and relatively benign leader, collapsed in April 1992 as a result of the loss of Soviet financing. The resulting power vacuum led to violent power struggles between Mujahidin commanders from 1992 to 1996 which resulted in the destruction of large swaths of Kabul, in particular. The degree of insecurity experienced by ordinary Afghans during this civil war raised initial support for the Taliban, headed by Mullah Mohammad Omar and initially composed of Afghan refugees educated in fundamentalist Pakistani madrassas. By the mid 1990s, the Taliban had taken control of the vast majority of Afghanistan aside from the rebellious Panjshir Valley and imposed an increasingly restrictive interpretation of Islam. While its original size is unknown and debated, it is commonly believed that the Taliban maintained control through the imposition of swift and brutal punishments for infractions and by establishing covert networks of informants. Still, the methods of Taliban control remain a subject of speculation rather than fact. This control, tight as it had seemed, quickly folded as the United States-led Coalition invaded in pursuit of Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

From this history, it is apparent that Afghan men are loathe to permit the presence of outside forces or actors intent upon influencing the qawm. This dynamic is most evident in the anti-Soviet jihad. The response to the Taliban was weaker only because of the war-weariness of the Mujahidin and the support the movement received from ethnic Pashtuns, Hizb-e Islami defectors and existing movements such as Harakat-e Enqelab which, like the Taliban, was rooted in a conservative network of mullahs. The only recent conflict which fails to meet this pattern is, potentially, the internal conflict which raged in Afghanistan from 1992 to 1996. This conflict reflects another historical dynamic of conflict in Afghanistan, an exceptionally sensitive perception of threat which is most commonly applied to other tribal and ethnic groups. The victorious Mujahidin groups entered into conflict out of concern that another group would take the reigns and attempt to subjugate all others. While this threat perception was also driven by ‘warlords’ pursuit of power and wealth, the individual soldiers were motivated by fear of repression by another faction. As such, threat does not require any inciting gesture but is provoked in Afghans simply by the presence of multiple sources of power and authority.
The current conflict dynamics, particularly since 2006, closely resemble those of the earlier eras only in slow motion. Discomfort with the arrival of foreign troops, which sparked widespread and spontaneous outbursts of violence in the case of the Soviets, was mitigated in 2002 by further war weariness and by the high level of dissatisfaction with the growing fundamentalism of the Taliban regime. However, armed resistance has recently grown, as it did during the Soviet era, as the military presence expands. While troops did not directly attempt to shape village life, the intrusive nature of aggressive home searches were viewed as deplorable and humiliating. The dominant attitude in 2001 seems to have been that foreign forces were welcomed as peacekeepers and as a safeguard against coups or factional fighting, but not as tools of ‘good governance’ in the provinces. However, as time passed, many Afghans began to view the international community – which repeatedly declined to set a date for withdrawal – as having overstayed its welcome and as overly involved in Afghan State systems at all levels. This perception was magnified by civilian fatalities resulting from international military action and the lack of anticipated economic growth in rural areas. Yet, these factors still did not incite widespread resistance to the ongoing international intervention. Instead, recruitment has been orchestrated by the Taliban and other AOGs which have consistently used propaganda to gain members and local support for their illicit enterprises or fundamentalist agendas.

3.5.2 Global Dynamics
The aforementioned structure of the War on Terror with which the conflict in Afghanistan has been so closely identified has contributed to conflict dynamics. It has, most notably, contributed to religiously-founded motives for war based on the belief that, in fact, a war on Islam has been declared. Furthermore, it has led the United States, in particular, to pursue its own geo-strategic interests over those of the Afghan government and people.

3.5.2.1 Islam, Jihad and the War on Terror
Many AOG fighters are driven by the belief that their culture, country and faith are under attack by an international intervention sent overwhelmingly from predominantly Christian nations. Due to the spread of information and communication technology, including the Internet and satellite television, Afghans are regularly exposed to international events. Seeing the conflict in their own country, the war raging in Iraq, Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay scandals, the religious conversion (to Christianity) of Abdul Rahman in Afghanistan, the use of torture against predominantly Muslim captives validated by the US government, atrocities being committed with immunity by US government-protected PSCs, threats being made against Iran and the publication and re-publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed, they are easily convinced, even without propaganda, that a global war has been launched against Islam and Muslims. As such, they fight not out of greed or due to parochial interest but out of moral conviction.

3.5.2.2 Erosion of Public Support due to Military Collateral Damage
The vigorous pursuit of the Taliban and al-Qaeda and the lack of ground forces initially led to a focus on the use of aerial bombardment. The heavy reliance on air power, both on the part of the Coalition and ISAF has threatened the mission on a political level, as the growth of civilian casualties has raised the ire of the Afghan public and placed new pressure on the government to take a tough line with international military forces.

A greater focus upon more targeted attacks was developed, and 250-pound bombs and concrete warheads were utilised in order to reduce collateral damage. The benefits of these methods were, however, somewhat tempered by the Taliban and al-Qaeda’s use of civilians, including women and children, as human shields.45 The lack of a public diplomacy strategy to turn such heinous tactics against the AOGs means that they were primarily attributed to the international community and, by

45 Cordesman (2008), The Afghan–Pakistan War: A Status Update, p. 130.
extension, the Afghan government.

3.5.3 National Dynamics

These global dynamics, particularly the pursuit of national interests and goals by the United States, have contributed to a State which lacks capacity, legitimacy and unity. However, these problems have not necessarily resulted solely from geo-strategic positioning but, more directly, from technical failures in planning and implementation by the national and international community.

3.5.3.1 Lack of Governmental Legitimacy

The legitimacy of the Afghan government has been undercut by three factors: (i) its inability to provide services to (or arrange the delivery of services to) the Afghan people; (ii) endemic corruption among public officials and the ANP; and, (iii) by an inability to maintain security. The US Ambassador to Afghanistan put the problem aptly in noting: ‘There is deterioration in terms of personal security. People are more frightened. It’s the problems with the police; its corruption; its weak local governance.’

The reconstruction process led directly to this dynamic. Substantial amounts of reconstruction and development assistance were promised by the international community, though it was implemented primarily by NGOs and contractors. In addition to the extra-programmatic use of large amounts of assistance by NGOs, UN agencies and contractors – up to 40 per cent according to a recent report from the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) – the provision of critical services such as health, education and infrastructure by non-State elements failed to overcome centre-periphery divisions. The continuation of this situation almost seven years following the international intervention has only worsened the perception of an incapable State. Despite common conceptions, the solution is not only to continue building the state, including its capacity, but also encouraging it to relinquish many of its responsibilities to private sector, civil society and customary institutions which are best able to credibly deliver services and even governance. This approach favours collaborative governance and, in some cases, a small degree of wilful but benign neglect on the part of the State.

Yet, in some areas, greater State involvement is absolutely critical. The State’s credibility has been undercut by its most common incarnations, the police and elected officials, being rife with corruption and petty criminality. Yet, it is also important to note that challenges to Afghanistan’s legitimacy were not only internal. They also emerged from Afghanistan’s ‘dual legitimacy trap’ which rendered the State responsible both to its domestic constituency and to the international actors which funded the reconstruction process.

Box 2. The Perception of Legitimacy in Afghanistan

The phrase ‘legitimacy’ has been frequently applied to the Afghan context. Yet, understanding of the term varies greatly. While the international community and academic experts have frequently used the term to imply violated sovereignty, the undue imposition of foreign government influence upon another state, its meanings may in fact be far more diverse and complex. That said, no comprehensive body of work on perceptions of legitimacy exists, and creating one should be a future task for DFID FCO.

Based on the review of the literature and SCA Team members’ extensive experience in Afghanistan, the term is frequently understood in varied manners. In southern Afghanistan, legitimacy has customarily been closely linked with Islam and a monopoly on the use of force. To be legitimate, a leader had to operate within the local interpretations of Islam, themselves varied and dynamic, and the Pashtun tribal code, Pashtunwali. Alternatively, a highly powerful individual or regime able to gain at least a near-monopoly on the use of force, as had the Taliban,

is deemed legitimate. That said, such comments also undoubtedly reflect Taliban-related biases and perceptions of Pashtuns as a more ‘tribal’ population responsive only to brute force. The high rate of support for a coalition government between the Taliban and sitting government in the south, at 76 per cent region wide (the highest of any region), would seem to imply that Pashtuns recognize the value and potential legitimacy of consensus-based rule. In northern Afghanistan, particularly among Tajiks, legitimacy is frequently believed to emerge in a Massoud model, where defence of one’s community, broadly defined, is valued above all else. The fragmentation of the Mujahidin into more than 15 factions in the 1980s and the in-fighting between them in the 1990s may suggest that, in fact, the north may have the most victory-based, zero-sum notion of power and legitimacy.

Regardless, nationwide, there are similarities. All Afghans indicate that a regime is legitimate if it provides goods and prevents violations, just as it does throughout much of the world. A state or other entity which is able to mobilise resources for its people and prevent unjust violence, criminality or excessive inequality is deemed legitimate. It should be carefully noted, however, that the Afghan State does not necessarily need to directly provide all forms of assistance. In many cases, a State can prevent challenges to its legitimacy and contribute most significantly to service delivery and local governance by simply playing a marginal or supportive role. In this case, collaborative governance – and the relinquishment of a certain degree of control – mitigates rather than contributes to state weakness.

The weakness of the police and the relative strength but continued inability of the ANA to provide security has further emphasised the State’s weakness. The Afghan government is, thus, viewed as a neutral force, at best, or as a predatory force, at worst. A ‘governance gap’ has emerged not due to the lack of a state but precisely due to its conspicuous and sometimes predatory presence. Communities, thus, view active or passive support for AOGs as either acceptable or as an imperative in the pursuit of good governance. Given that Afghanistan has historically had a weak State and weak government, it is of little surprise that the rather centralised top-down approach to state building has made limited gains in stabilising the periphery. Lack of revenues undermine centre-province transfers, and loyalty to the centre has been difficult to forge. There is an urgent need therefore to unpack what state building means in the current context, including understanding the difference between building government and state building, the latter of which involves fostering synergy between multiple spheres of state and non-state structures.

3.5.3.3 Intra-State, Regional Tensions

The perception of a weak State has resulted in its cooption by various elements in order to pursue regional rather than national goals, thus further undercutting its legitimacy. North-south tensions and animosity lingering from the anti-Taliban resistance led by the Northern Alliance were transposed onto the Interim Administration and subsequent government as northern commanders claimed key governmental posts. President Hamid Karzai, came to be seen as a Pashtun face for an anti-Pashtun agenda. The dynamic changed with the resurgence of the Taliban and other Taliban-allied AOGs which came to be derisively regarded as ‘Karzai’s Taliban’ by many in the north. The subsequent focus of international assistance and attention on the south, to contain if not combat the insurgency, created further resentment among the north which felt it should have been more amply rewarded for its role in overthrowing the Taliban. With a growing sense that the insurgency has rearmed the south and an increasing focus on de-factionalisation within the national government, which has attempted to limit the power of Northern Alliance warlords-turned-politicians, the north has felt directly challenged. High-level discussion of fostering arbaki, semi-traditional local self-defence networks, in the south and east to combat the insurgency has made

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*It should be noted that arbaki were only traditional in a maximum of three Afghan provinces. The idea has, however, frequently been packaged as a core part of Afghan tradition which will be readily understood as focused upon self-defence rather than
the north feel even more strongly that they have been disarmed by the international community, through DDR and DIAG, while the south has been re-militarised. This level of tension is doubtlessly contributing to the remobilisation of northern militias and should be regarded as one of the greatest threats to Afghan security.

3.5.3.4 Sectarian Tensions

While not yet a significant motivation for conflict, sectarian tensions, growing throughout the Muslim world due to events in Iraq, must be carefully tracked. Within the Kurram Tribal Agency, a location within FATA, a sectarian feud is going on between a Sunni led group called Lashkar-e Jangi, and the Shia Tori tribe which has formed two militant groups of its own, the Mehdi Army and Hezbollah, names which echo the more well-known groups of the Middle East. The feud is remarkable given that, despite past violence between Sunnis and Shias in the area, this most recent outbreak seems to be motivated on the Sunnis side by TTP and other Wahhabi groups. It may, in fact, reflect an emerging trend by which sectarian violence is intentionally provoked by groups which perceive such tensions to operate in their favour. International observers should consider the development of sectarian violence as exceptionally destabilising for the region and, within Afghanistan, for the Shia minority.

<table>
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<th>Box 3. Sectarian Conflict in Afghanistan</th>
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<td>Sectarian conflict played a negligible role during the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s and only emerged as a factor of some importance after 1992 as Ittihad-e Islami engaged in bitter conflict with the militias of Hizb-e Wahdat, often targeting the civilian population. At present, despite isolated sectarian attacks in Herat and on the fringes of Hazarajat, north-south regional competition is deemed far more important than sectarianism. To the extent that there is a genuinely religious source of conflict, it primarily emerges from the fast pace of cultural change in Afghanistan due largely to the arrival of the modern mass media, to which the conservative rural clergy disapprove.</td>
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3.5.4 Societal Dynamics

Many of the most significant forces contributing to the ongoing conflict take place at the societal or individual level. This fact is clearly seen in the slow process of mobilisation of combatants. Unlike mass defections, individuals or, in some cases, small groups of individuals are deciding to begin fighting alongside an AOG once his or their personal considerations impel such an action. The groupthink which had characterised earlier conflicts in Afghanistan is surprisingly absent in, at least, the decision to mobilise. Unfortunately, little study has been put into this psycho-social process.

3.5.4.1 Income and Livelihood

Recruitment of fighters to the insurgency cannot be separated from economics. The relatively unchanged rural economy did not provide many Afghans with sufficient income to meet their families’ basic needs. Likewise, failure of the government to deliver a peace dividend to large parts of the country has in turn driven numerous Afghans to seek employment in anti-government groups, criminal militias or the illicit economy as, essentially, some of the only available sources of employment and income besides labour migration to Pakistan, Iran or the Gulf States. Monthly payments of up to US$150 for Taliban recruits have been reported. However, this finding is a controversial one. While it seems likely that payments to fighters are, in some cases, occurring, the extent of this practice is unknown and widely doubted by several informants. As a result, it would be hasty and, given the low-cost nature of the insurgency, somewhat inappropriate to conclude that the insurgency may be quashed by depriving it of financial support.
That said, economics may become a more potent motivation for recruitment if levels of deprivation increase. Rising food prices, to highlight one important trend, are having a major impact on the lives of the population and on the recruitment of insurgents. The price of flour rose by 75 per cent in the first three months of 2008 after having risen by 60 per cent in 2007. In provinces such as Badghis and Ghor, the problem of food shortages was compounded by a 70 per cent fall in the grain crop due to drought in 2007. Overall the Ministry of Commerce estimated that Afghanistan produced 1.2 million metric tons of grain in 2007 while the annual requirement is 6 million metric tons. Many Afghans blame the government for this dire state of affairs, and the lack of food, employment and money makes young Afghans a fertile source of manpower for the Taliban. The large percentage of the population which is made up of young unemployed males of weapon-bearing age is a potent ingredient for insurgency.

3.5.4.2 Pride, Purpose & Honour

In other cases, the motivation to fight may be driven more forcefully by the pursuit of pride and honour rather than by economic concerns, though the two are closely linked. In this situation, young men's inability to find employment or save money impedes their ability to achieve complete manhood within Afghan society. Furthermore, they are unable to contribute to their family and to begin saving money in order to improve their marital prospects. For these individuals, the only way in which to gain social status in the current economic environment may, as had previous generations, be with the gun. While further discussed in the analysis of the international response, it is important to highlight that this group has also been the subject of the least amount of assistance from the international community. Gender, education, health care, governance and other programmes have tended to engage children, women and elders while leaving that group most vulnerable to recruitment untended.

3.5.4.3 Obligation and Hierarchy

While less significant at present, some individuals are motivated to fight due to obligation and hierarchy. ‘Demobilised’ commanders, few if any of which were removed from their militaristic hierarchy, retain the loyalty of their soldiers and maintain the right to call them to arms at will. In this case, a soldier’s remobilisation, even if officially demobilised and reintegrated, is obligatory and could only be challenged at great physical and social risk. As such, the mobilisation of factions such as Hizb-e Islami and, increasingly, Jamiat-e Islami and Ittihad-e Islami should be viewed as exceptionally troubling.

3.5.4.4 Familial Protection

Finally, some degree of fighting has occurred to fill the greatest obligation of an Afghan man, to protect his family. With increased insecurity resulting from petty criminality, insurgents, military forces and the ANP, the government’s growing but still insufficient military capacity and wavering among international troops and their political minders, many Afghans see affiliation with an armed group as a means of familial protection. In essence, it showed a desire to remain affiliated with the one power that seemed the most likely to last the duration (and the group which seemed most likely to punish those who did not support it). As the government failed to establish itself as more stable and durable than the Taliban, increasing numbers of people have begun siding with the latter.

3.5.4.5 Population-Specific Trends in Micro Dynamics

The field research elucidated a variety of trends among specific populations within Afghanistan. While not necessarily scientific, these trends allow for the targeting of particular demographic or social groups for international assistance.

49 Personal communication, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
50 Over 50 per cent of the male population is under 25 years of age.
As the diagram above (Figure 8) demonstrates, several groups remain relatively stationary and do not exhibit any shifting allegiances. Mullahs and religious networks remain closely affiliated with the Taliban and, by extension, the Pakistani structures from which the Taliban emerged. Strongmen as well, by which the report refers to local notable but non-customary leaders, many of whom were militia commanders of some local repute, are beginning to move away from the government and now see the Taliban as the critical power-broker. The educated class, as in the 1980s, identifies more closely with Hizb-e Islami than with other opposition groups but, overall, still favours the State. Students, who are being directly recruited in some parts of the country by Hizb-e Islami, are trending in its favour. Young men are doing the same, though new recruits are dividing loyalties between the Taliban as well. Communities are heavily influenced by local conditions in determining with which group to affiliate. The only group moving in the government's favour are elders who will have little remaining influence in relation to armed groups should their proliferation continue unabated.

Through this depiction, students and young men seem particularly vulnerable to affiliation with AOGs and may be specifically targeted with government or international programming. Similar dynamics can be seen alongside the broader conflict dynamics in the following case study of the incipient conflict in western Afghanistan.

3.5.5 Financing AOGs in Afghanistan

Despite these separate motives, it should also be noted that fighting requires a source of support. Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, narcotics trafficking, charitable donations and the black market trade in luxury goods have emerged as some of the most significant sources of funding for AOGs.

3.5.5.1 Al-Qaeda and the Taliban

Al-Qaeda is reportedly a significant source of funding for the Taliban and almost the sole source of income for the IMU/T. Private contributors to al-Qaeda in the Gulf States have reportedly been requesting that their funds support operations within Afghanistan. The Taliban may, though reports differ, have itself become a source of financing for various insurgent groups, including the Haqqani Network and Hizb-e Islami.
3.5.5.2 Narcotics Trafficking

Hizb-e Islami’s control over poppy trafficking provides it with a steady source of income. Yet, the international community’s assumption that poppy cultivation and trafficking supports the insurgency is considerably overstated and reflects the classical fallacy, post hoc ergo propter hoc (after the fact, therefore because of the fact) in which one occurrence following another is presumed to be the result of the first. Rather than being related to one another the rise in poppy cultivation and insurgency reflect the weakness, relatively meagre territorial control, perceived illegitimacy and administrative lack of capacity of the Afghan State. Poppies are not the insurgents’ blank check they are perceived to be. It must, however, be admitted that taxes on cultivation, transportation and, increasingly, processing may provide a limited amount of financial support for all armed groups throughout the country. Yet, it is important to consider the other main forms of financial support for the Afghan insurgency.

3.5.5.3 Pakistani Zakat

In addition, financial support for the insurgency also comes from Pakistan, where it is given as unrecorded zakat, or charity. Funding for madrassas in Pakistan, as well as in Afghanistan, is an area of concern as most financial support for these institutions is invisible. According to Pakistan’s Ministry of Religious Affairs the Government only receives 4.2 billion Rupees (£32 million) from the annual charitable obligation (zakat) which is paid by Muslims. In contrast the madrassas are reported to receive 72 billion Rupees (£552 million) in zakat from unknown donors. It is suspected that the practices of Hawala and Hundi are used in the transfer of funds, making detection exceptionally difficult. The result is that illicit finance involved in funding a significant part of insurgent activity is concealed.

3.5.5.4 Black Market Trade

Yet, one of the fastest growing sources of income is the black market trade in goods, primarily from China, into Pakistan and Afghanistan. Large containers loaded with luxury goods, particularly electronics, bypass tax authorities and are sold at low rates in Pakistan or Afghanistan. Some goods are, in fact, exported to Afghanistan before being re-imported into Pakistan in order to disguise their origin and bypass certain taxes. This trade is facilitated by the large number of containers travelling north from Pakistan’s Arabian Sea ports, Karachi and Gwadar. Gwadar will become the largest container port in the Arabian Sea once it is fully developed. Consequently there will be a volumetric increase in container traffic into Afghanistan and onwards into Central Asia from Pakistan and from Central Asia via Afghanistan to Gwadar. The estimated volume of goods being moved through Gwadar by container is expected to increase from 8 million tonnes at present to at least 20 million tonnes by 2020. Little regulation and monitoring will be possible. In 2002, the UN estimated that only two per cent of containers worldwide were checked. Some containers are loaded with their doors facing inwards so that it is impossible to check them, though this same approach is used by legitimate businesspeople to guard against petty criminals. In Peshawar there is evidence of goods from transiting TEUs leaking into the local economy from where the proceeds from their sale can be passed to a local tribal or criminal group and so to the insurgency.

Globalization is a facilitator by driving demand in Afghanistan and surrounding countries for high-tech electronics and other luxury goods. Organised crime gangs operating across the Durand Line are, according to the Ministry of Interior, ‘trading’ these goods in Kabul and Peshawar, though they

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51 The ability to process poppies within Afghanistan has recently expanded from an almost complete lack of processing facilities five years ago. At present, informants indicate that 2/3 of Afghan poppies are processed domestically.
52 Personal communication, Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamabad, Pakistan, April 2008.
53 Personal communication, Ministry of Interior, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
55 Personal communication, personnel of a multi-national shipping company, April 2008.
are also believed to finance and have links to insurgent groups. ‘Rais Hoddaida’, the leader of one such cross-border trading group, is an ethnic Pashtun believed to assist suicide bombers.\textsuperscript{56} To compensate the family of a suicide bomber, which reportedly receives US$300, requires only 40 or 50 per cent of the proceeds from the sale of a camcorder on the black market. Moreover, electronic goods are used by insurgents to facilitate communication, operations and public relations.

3.5.5.5 The Limited Relevance of AOG Financing

Despite these funding streams, it is important not to overplay their importance. The Afghan insurgency is a low-cost operation. Payments for a proportion of fighters and compensation for the families of suicide bombers may be some of the greatest expenses. Bomb-making materials, the main input of IEDs and suicide bombs, are readily available in Soviet-era UXO and landmines. As such, it is unreasonable to assume that the cessation of funding from poppy trafficking or black market goods would lead to the large-scale collapse of the insurgency. The only intervention to likely have a significant impact would be the severing of financing lines between Gulf States and Afghanistan.

Box 4. Case Study: Conflict in Western Afghanistan

The time of jihad in western Afghanistan (1979-1992) was characterised by the relative weakness of insurgent movements due to a number of factors: the remoteness of most of these provinces from the Pakistani border, the refusal of the Iranian government to supply the insurgents and the mainly flat landscape, which allowed government and Soviet forces to use armour effectively and denied hiding places to the insurgents. Gradually, most insurgents in Farah and Herat were subdued or forced to make deals or ‘reconcile’ with Kabul. Baghdis, due to its remote location, was ignored by armed groups and experienced only sporadic violence.

The collapse of Najibullah’s government in 1992 presented an unanticipated opportunity to the surviving insurgents, among whom the leading figure was Mohammed Ismail Khan. After occupying Herat and seizing the supplies stockpiled there by the Soviets, Ismail Khan set out to consolidate his control over the whole region. His autocratic ways rapidly alienated many of those who had initially sided with him, and before the end of 1992 he faced a challenge by formerly government-backed militias and by of Hizb-e Islami. Ismail Khan defeated this challenge and another in early 1993. His efforts to extend his power to Baghdis, Farah and Ghor were only partly successful, with Ismail Khan never imposing control over Farah and Ghor.\textsuperscript{57}

Even Ismail Khan’s control over Herat province was not to last long. In early 1995, after having been rebuffed in their attempt to take Kabul, the Taliban started directing their attention towards western Afghanistan. Although Ismail Khan had successfully established a monopoly on the use of force in the province, there were clear elements of disfunctionality if the system which ‘The Emirate of Herat’ had created. His militaristic approach was resented by a population anticipating the benefits of peace. While he had the ambition to create a rather sophisticated and complex system of governance, he refused to give any space to the educated class, a fact which resulted in inefficiency. Having successfully defeated the Taliban’s first attempt to enter Herat, he launched an ambitious offensive towards Kandahar, hoping to do away with the Taliban once and for all. His hastily assembled and badly organised force was crushed in Helmand, and the Taliban were then able to take Herat facing little resistance.\textsuperscript{58}

Once in power, the Taliban enlisted significant levels of local support in all of these provinces, particularly among the Pashtun tribal population. In Ghor, it was Aimaq commanders linked to

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\textsuperscript{56} Personal communication, Ministry of the Interior, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.


\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
Hizb-e Islami who had previously been defeated by Ismail Khan who helped the Taliban conquest. Some rugged areas of Baghdis and particularly Ghor were never taken by the Taliban and became the centres of an anti-Taliban insurgency. Until 2001, the anti-Taliban insurgency in the west achieved very little. Following the US-led Coalition military action in late 2001, an intervention to which Iran provided support in the west, the Taliban control quickly collapsed, and Ismail Khan was able to re-establish his control over Herat, appointing himself as governor. His autocratic ways having not changed, he soon faced opposition both among the Pashtun tribes of Shindand, Gulran and Ghuryan and also from former allies in Ghor and Baghdis. He was never able to re-establish even a semblance of direct control over any of the surrounding provinces while at the same time antagonising the central government because of his refusal to hand over extensive custom duties from trade with Iran. The emergence of Herat as an alternative power centre in the west worried Kabul, while Ismail Khan’s links to Iran worried the Afghan government’s leading international supporter, the United States. In the summer of 2004, a concerted effort to unseat him was launched by an alliance of all his rivals, allegedly sponsored by Kabul. Ismail Khan was forced to leave the position of governor and accept a ministerial post in Kabul. However, he did not renounce his ambition to bring Herat back under his control.\textsuperscript{59}

Until 2005, western Afghanistan was almost completely unaffected by the insurgency. Some incidents in Baghdis between Pashtuns, potentially affiliated with the Taliban, and Tajik militias loyal to Ismail Khan occurred in 2003. Similar conflicts in Shindand and elsewhere were unrelated to the broader insurgency and were motivated by local grievances. In Ghor, conflicts between local commanders were frequent, but these did not in any way concern opposition to the central government. The presence of Taliban in Pasaband, which has a significant Pashtun population, was reported in 2002, though, as in other parts of the country, these were inactive groups focused more on avoiding retribution than joining the insurgency. The most notable tensions in the west, at this point, concerned the ongoing struggle between Ismail Khan and the Kabul-based government.\textsuperscript{60}

The situation began changing dramatically in 2006, apparently as a result of British deployment in Helmand. The official British version of events, that the Taliban entered Farah to escape the pressure of British forces in Helmand, is only a partial explanation. It is also important to consider that the Taliban suddenly had greater resources and freedom of movement in Helmand due to popular reaction against the British presence, which in turn allowed the Taliban to deploy significant resources in Farah for the first time. Being one of the provinces with the weakest government presence, the eastern an southern district of Farah, populated by Pashtuns mostly from the Noorzai tribe, rapidly fell under the influence of the Taliban, who re-mobilised their old supporters there and started new recruitment. The very weak police of Farah proved unable to

\textsuperscript{60} Interviews with police officers, members of parliament, members of the provincial councils and UN officials, Herat, Afghanistan, April/May 2008.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{62} In this case, the foreign troops were American.
\textsuperscript{63} Interviews with police officers, members of parliament, members of the provincial councils and UN officials, Herat, Afghanistan, April/May 2008.
\textsuperscript{64} Personal communications, police officers, members of the Afghan National Assembly, members of the provincial councils and UN officials, Herat, Afghanistan, April/May 2008.
\textsuperscript{65} Personal communications, NDG and ISAF sources, Herat, Afghanistan, April 2008.
\textsuperscript{66} Personal communications, police officers, members of the Afghan National Assembly, members of the provincial councils, PRT officials and UN officials, Herat, Afghanistan, April/May 2008.
\textsuperscript{67} Personal communications, police officers, members of parliament, members of the provincial councils and UN officials, Herat, Afghanistan, April/May 2008.
\textsuperscript{69} Personal communications, NGO workers, members of the Afghan National Assembly, UN officials, April 2008.
\textsuperscript{70} Personal communications, UN officials and members of the international diplomatic corps, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
cope. The Taliban were frequently able to take police stations there. The presence of foreign
troops was also very limited. Throughout 2006 and 2007, the Taliban had limited success in
penetrating the western districts of Farah, though they have had greater success in westward
expansion in late 2007 and in the first third of 2008.61

Once having destabilised most of Farah, the Taliban were in a strong position to infiltrate Herat
Province. Pashtun strongmen opposed to Ismail Khan were still hoping that the central
government would continue to support them and reward them with official appointments. The
assassination at the end of 2006 of the leading Pashtun strongman in Farah, Amanullah Khan,
together with the failure of Kabul to deliver on its promises to Ismail Khan’s opponents, created
new opportunities for the Taliban. During 2007, Taliban presence in Shindand became very
significant and led to the first large-scale military conflict between foreign troops and Taliban in
this region.62 The heavy loss of life among civilians consolidated the Taliban’s role in the local
political landscape. The conflict between the small Barakzai community, supported by Ismail
Khan, and the dominant Noorzais contributed to make the Taliban a welcome presence among
the latter. The conflict cannot be described as tribal as such; Noorzai communities in
neighbouring Adraskan district were left largely unaffected. Even among the Noorzais of
Shindand, only some members of the tribe became actively involved with the Taliban, while
others cooperated with the government and many remained neutral.63

Opportunities for the Taliban to infiltrate the rest of Herat province started arising during 2007.
Turf wars for the control of the province intensified during this year. Ismail Khan seems to have
calculated that governor Anwari was sufficiently weak and that replacing him with one of his
allies (or even with Ismail Khan himself) was a possibility worth pursuing. In order to create the
conditions for this to happen, he utilised the same tactics that Kabul had used in 2004 to unseat
him, clandestinely sponsoring armed resistance to undermine the sitting governor and win broad
public support for his return to power. The spread of banditry to many districts of this once safe
and secure province gave Ismail Khan sufficient leverage to obtain the appointment of one of his
men as chief of police of the province. Once that appointment was achieved, Ismail Khan and his
supporters were in an even better position to destabilise the security situation. Moreover, the
police were paralysed by internal tensions between the pro-Ismail Khan component and
professional officers who opposed him. In order to defeat a gang of kidnappers in Guzara district,
the governor brought in the border police, who intervened with backup by American special
forces.64

Afghan NDS sources now estimate that of the 50 armed groups which operate in Herat province,
most of them do not appear to have anything but a merely criminal agenda. However, about 15
of them are believed to entertain some connection with the Taliban. At least a few of these
groups, including one in Shindand with up to 300 members, can be classified as ‘real’ Taliban. The
Taliban are actively seeking to recruit other groups, including some defected members of
Jamiat-e Islami. A typical example is that of Ghulam Yahya, a former Jamiat commander of
Guzara district who is now an active AOG member. He had been working in the provincial
administration until being fired in 2006. He is known to have received a visit by a delegation of
Taliban, who appear to have asked him to join their movement. He reportedly refused to join over
a number of disagreements (for example his alleged refusal to shut down girls’ schools), but
appears to be still maintaining contact with the Taliban.65

The political turf wars in Herat encouraged the emergence of armed groups, many of which
entertained relations with political figures, particularly when operating in the vicinity of the city.
The president of the Council of the Ulema, Mawlawi Khodaidad, is for example known to have
actively encouraged the formation of at least one armed group in Guzara. He is actively trying to
gather around himself all oppositions to Ismail Khan and, in particular, Pashtun opposition
groups. Since 2003, he has been taking an increasingly prominent role in opposing Ismail Khan,
who is himself protected by militias, despite the formal disbandment of his forces in 2005. The
organisational centre of Ismail Khan’s forces has now moved to Guzara and Enjil districts, which would allow faster mobilisation in the event of an open conflict. Compared to 2004, when he was removed from the position of governor, Ismail Khan’s military force seems to have decayed significantly. This is the result of his distance from Herat (he is now Minister of Energy in Kabul) and of reduced expenditure (he has no longer control over customs revenue). Nonetheless, Ismail Khan is still believed to have the capability to quickly mobilise a force of up to 3,000 men.66

A third emerging pole of attraction in Herat’s politics is Dr. Azizi, head of the Provincial Council. A good speaker and a respected professional, Azizi enjoys considerable support within Herat’s educated class and much of the youth; he is not engaged in ‘armed politics’.67

The key dynamics in the decay of the State structure in Herat is political paralysis at the centre. When in 2004 the central government removed Ismail Khan from the governorship, it encouraged the mobilisation of armed groups to fight against Ismail Khan in order to de-legitimise and discredit him and to expose its weakness. Although the plan was successful, it also proved destabilising in a number of remote regions where the government and the local authorities had no strength to restrain or control armed groups. These groups have, however, been decaying or have transitioned from militias to criminal entities. The most prominent example of this shift is found in Shindand, specifically in Zeerkoh, a mountainous area inhabited by Noorzai Pashtuns. As early as the first few days of the post-Ismail Khan era in 2004, the militias were already indulging in looting and thievery. The death of the leader of these militias, Amanullah Khan, in 2006, contributed to their decay. The Zeerkoh militias have since fragmented under several leaders, some of whom established a direct connection with the Taliban.68

The dynamics of the other western provinces in over the past two years were, in many regards, similar. In Ghor, between 2002 and 2006, prominent militia leaders competed over the control of Chaghcharan and the drug route crossing the country. Those militias which did not gain a piece of the narcotics trafficking route look to politics, becoming members of the National Assembly or searching for other ways to maintain influence and accumulate capital. The growing influence of the Taliban in Helmand in 2005 to 2007 provided such opportunity. One of the erstwhile contenders for control over Chaghcharan, Ahmad Morghabi, has reportedly established relations with the Taliban and may be facilitating the transport of Taliban supplies to north-western Afghanistan. The former Hizb-e Islami commanders of northern Ghor are similarly reported to be re-connecting to the Taliban. There is no evidence of in-depth penetration of Taliban elements, who have tended to work through existing militias as proxies. The Taliban from Helmand are however still using the southern district of Pasaband as a logistical rear. The same is now happening as well in Taywara district. The Taliban might be more interested in maintaining their supply route rather than in turning Ghor into a battlefield. Pashtun Taliban fighters would not be easily accepted among Ghor’s Aimaqs. That said, Ghor is highly vulnerable to conflict. Conflicts among local strongmen are commonplace, though the weakness of the provincial administration and military presence, represented by a Lithuanian PRT, are so weak that each faction’s freedom to operate is currently unchallenged and would only be risked in combat.69

In Baghdis, the deployment of a relatively strong contingent of ANA and of some ISAF forces put a lid on the expansion of the Taliban towards the end of 2007, but the insurgents’ control over Bala-e Murghab remains unchallenged. Poor or non-existing roads hamper the ability of the armed forces to deploy there. Low intensity guerrilla operations have however been spreading throughout Baghdis, including to areas populated by Aimaqs. The poverty of the province does not allow local anti-Taliban strongmen to mobilise sufficient forces to prevent Taliban infiltration. Reportedly, a single Aimaq community is actively fighting against the Taliban but refuses to work with similarly minded State entities given their widespread corruption. Some sources allege that a dirt road is being built over an existing track in Jawand by the Taliban, who would be trying to improve their supply line into Baghdis. Other sources allege that the improvement effort is being funded by drug smugglers. In either case, the building of this road by
non-State agents bears witness to the extreme weakness of the State in Baghdis and the resulting ability of any AOGs to operate there with relative impunity. 

Although the penetration of Herat province by the Taliban been limited, there seems to be potential in the western district of Ghuryan and Gulran, where Noorzais have a strong presence. Using tribal connections, Taliban agents could easily penetrate and find hosts in this area. By exploiting long-standing local rivalries between Pashtun groups and supporters of Ismail Khan, they could create a situation through which to gain power and influence. The settlement of the conflict between Ismail Khan and forces opposed to him, one manner of avoiding conflict and Taliban infiltration, does not seem to be within reach, even if Kabul is on the verge of replacing governor Anwari. The division is now so deep that any choice of governor is likely to fail to satisfy at least one of the main factions and keep escalation on track. As long as Kabul’s hold is perceived as failing across the country, opposing factions will have little incentive to reach a settlement. This instability will maintain opportunities for comprehensive Taliban infiltration.

3.6 Section 3 Summary: Conflict Analysis

Conflict in Afghanistan has historically operated according to somewhat consistent dynamics. External interference and, in particular, the presence of armed ‘outsider’ forces have led to violent resistance. States, as shown by the Taliban, have only been able to maintain power through the imposition of sometimes brutal force and, critically, within familiar cultural and religious structures. The current conflict, which is comprised of several sub-conflicts, has largely ignored these lessons in sending a foreign military force and taking a direct role in the Afghan government while failing to turn initial military victories into a monopoly on the use of force.

The resulting political and security situation has impelled substantial though not widespread participation in armed groups to, among other motivations, oust the foreign forces or either topple or weaken the State. AOGs will continue to grow to pursue these higher-level interests and, on the individual, societal level, to earn income in a largely unchanged rural economy, to earn pride and honour in light of the cultural violation of Afghanistan by the international intervention and to protect one’s family from internal as well as external opponents. In particular, the growing concern with intra-state regional tensions between the north and the Pashtun south could turn armed opposition to the government into a broader civil war.
4. The International Intervention

Examining the security trends which have developed over the past three years, it seems evident that the international intervention has failed to improve security and to meet the expectations of the Afghan people. As such, attacks and casualties are on the rise, and a small but not insignificant number of individuals begin to see renewed conflict as preferable to the post-intervention dispensation. As the full international engagement is exceptionally multi-faceted and complex, this document aims to provide a summary before proceeding to provide an analysis regarding the impact of this intervention on the aforementioned conflict dynamics. The section concludes with a case study of combined military and reconstruction efforts being undertaken by ISAF troops, particular the British contingent, in southern Afghanistan and their effects upon security.

4.1 The Military Intervention, OEF and ISAF

The intervention of US-led international military forces in 2001 into Afghanistan, promoted as part of the ‘Global War on Terror’, began with strikes from aircraft and missiles from US and UK forces; then only a few hundred special operations personnel supported thousands of Afghans from the Northern Alliance before the force strength of ‘Operation Enduring Freedom’ (OEF) increased by 2005 to about 21,000 predominantly US (18,000), with the balance comprising international allies. The UK was a significant contributor. Early priorities were to disrupt and destroy Taliban command and control centres and terrorist training camps, a goal which was facilitated in a number of areas by partnership between international forces and anti-Taliban militias. The highest priority throughout this process was seen as the promotion of security, particularly 'hard' security, with the physical presence of professional armed forces capable of providing the secure environment essential for governance, rule of law, human rights and economic and social development. Initially the Coalition focused on securing Kabul and the central region and developed the concept of PRTs as a 'light-footed extension of influence' into more distant regions.

The NATO-led ISAF has taken over much of the previous role of the Coalition and expanded upon it, assuming its mission on 9 August 2003 with five phases: assessment and preparation (including operations in Kabul); geographic expansion; stabilisation; transition; and, redeployment. This expansion was mandated by the UN and extended to the north (October 2004), to the west (September 2005), to the south (end of July 2006) and then to the east (by 5 October 2006). This allowed the expansion of international military-secured areas in parallel with other I-ANDS 'pillar' initiatives thus developing the civil-military partnership in support of the Afghan government. NATO defines its role in Afghanistan as 'a key component of the international community's engagement in Afghanistan, assisting the Afghan authorities in providing security and stability, paving the way for reconstruction and effective governance'.

Key elements of the expansion were a significant increase in troop levels, the creation of a framework of subordinate formations and headquarters and an increase in the number of PRTs. The headquarters responsible, from the Allied Commander Europe’s Rapid Reaction Corps, is charged with engaging with international civil partners including the UN, EU and development agencies to support recovery and development. The current mission comprises more than 47,000 troops from 40 countries and includes 26 PRTs.

To achieve its mission, ISAF has established five Regional Commands (RCs) each having a lead nation and each comprising a Command and Control Headquarters and a Forward Support Base, largely logistics hubs which provide transport and medical support. ISAF Regional Commands also

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coordinate all regional civil-military activities conducted by the military elements of the PRTs in their areas of responsibility. A criticism of current structures is that although ISAF coordinates the efforts of the PRTs it does not 'command' them given that they are 'stove-piped' to national embassies and capitals. The five RCs and their relative strengths are:

- RC North (RC-N), Germany-led, 4,700-strong with five PRTs;
- RC West (RC-W), Italy-led, 2,600-strong with four PRTs;
- RC Capital (RC-C), Italy-led, 5,800-strong with no PRTs;
- RC South (RC-S), UK-lead with a rotational command between Canada, the Netherlands and the UK; currently under Canadian command, 18,000-strong previously but boosted to 21,000 for the 'fighting season' with four PRTs; and,
- RC East (RC-E), US-led, 16,000-strong with 13 PRTs.

The strengths of the RC forces give a clear indication of their relative levels of conflict with the south and east seen as far less stable than the other regions.

### 4.2 Security Sector Interventions

SSR has operated according to a 'lead nation' system. The security sector was divided into five pillars, and a lead nation was appointed to oversee reforms in each. The five pillars and the countries assigned to them were: military reform (the US), police reform (Germany), judicial reform (Italy), demilitarisation (Japan) and counter-narcotics (the UK). The intent of the lead nation system was to assure balanced donor support for the process, ensuring that each element of it receives commensurate attention and resources.\(^75\) The Office of the Afghan National Security Council (ONSC) was intended to assume a coordination role for the process, though it lacked the necessary resources to assert an effective oversight and coordination role for the SSR process.\(^76\)

One of the principal causes of this coordination deficit is the lack of an overarching strategy for the sector, a reality recognised by the Afghan Study Group Report released in January 2008.\(^77\) Afghan-led strategic plans such as Securing Afghanistan’s Future (SAF) and the Afghanistan Compact were intended to infuse the process with greater direction but failed to do so given that they either lacked government buy-in, as in the case of SAF, or provided vague benchmarks and guidance on the prioritisation and sequencing, as in the case of the Compact.\(^78\) As a result, there is no cohesive National Security Policy that draws defence, law and order and judicial reforms together.\(^79\) The ANDS refers to the need for a formal SSR process to be developed, around the issue of ‘right-financing’ SSR to avoid inflationary risks. However, as this is an Afghan government strategy and given the high flow of off-budget spending in the security sector, both the international community and the government will need to work towards developing a sustainable security system.

### 4.2.1 The ANA and ANP

The capability and effectiveness of the ANA has grown steadily since its inception, with the force gradually gaining the status of a national symbol.\(^80\) Problems of recruitment, ethnic balance, and equipment shortfalls have been brought under control.\(^81\) The US has provided it with up-to-date

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M16 Assault Rifles and vehicles. The remaining problem lies with shortfalls in fixed and rotary wing aircraft which are needed to give the force greater mobility. The de-politicisation and de-factionalisation of the Afghan military establishment remains an unfulfilled priority. The ANA has been shown to be very effective in combat operations and is positively viewed by the Afghan people. However, it still cannot undertake large-scale operations without Coalition/NATO support. Continued in-service training, in the form of mentor teams is required. However, many of the basic equipment needs of the ANA have been met. Moreover, troop retention continues to be a serious problem. The attrition rate stands at roughly 13 per cent per annum, and up to 40 per cent of a typical ANA unit is absent without leave (AWOL) at any one time.

The projected force size of the ANA is 80,000 troops, although it is expected that this target will be increased to 120,000 to meet the growing security threat posed by the insurgency. By early 2008, 49,000 soldiers had been trained and equipped with 37,000 in active ranks. The force will be dominated by infantry, organised into five corps that will control between them 13 infantry brigades, one commando brigade, and one mechanised brigade.

While the ANA tends to be seen as the success story of the SSR process, the ANP are widely perceived to be its greatest failure. The ANP includes the following units: Uniformed Police, Counter-Narcotics Police, Border Police, Customs Police, Civil Order Police, Counter-Terrorism Police and the Criminal Investigation Unit. Two reports in 2007, one by the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) and the other by the International Crisis Group (ICG) outlined the troubling state of the police reform process. Rampant corruption, deep-seated factionalisation and operational incompetence were listed as common characteristics of the police and the institution that manages it, the MOI. Most Afghans see the police as a source of predation rather than protection.

The ANP can be described as one of the most dysfunctional institutions in the country. Up to 50 per cent of the police are involved in the drug trade on some level. The police have performed poorly in the field and have become a major target of insurgent groups. One of the reasons for the desperate state of police is the underinvestment in the force in the early stages of the reform process. Germany, as the lead nation, focussed its limited resources on the creation of a National Police Academy in Kabul to train upper level officers, failing to address the rank-and-file. The US entered the process to address this shortcoming in 2003, rapidly establishing a countrywide network of eight regional training centres to jumpstart basic police training. By 2008 they were by far the largest donor to the process. Yet, there is a gap in police mentors in Afghanistan that not even the major infusions of U.S. funding have alleviated. It was believed that the inauguration of the EU policing mission in June 2007 would narrow this gap, but, thus far, it has not resulted in the major boost in personnel that had been anticipated.

Among the major challenges facing the police in early 2008 are a lack of in-service training, equipment shortfalls and an inadequate salary payment system. A pay and rank reform process was launched in 2006 to rationalize the force structure of the police - which was extremely top heavy - to introduce a meritocratic system of advancement, and to institute an elevated wage scale. The first two stages of the rank reform component targeting the highest ranking officers in the force, including police generals and police chiefs, was very successful. However, the subsequent three

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84 Hodes and Sedra, The Search for Security in Post-Taliban Afghanistan.
levels addressing mid and lower ranking officers was compromised due to corruption. Vetting procedures were circumvented allowing candidates to secure police positions. Many of the ANP’s failings are shared by and emerge, at least in part, from its ministerial overseer, the MOI. The MOI is dominated by ethnic based factions and is heavily corrupt. Surprisingly few reforms were implemented at the Ministry until 2006. At that point an accelerated reform process was launched, and the bulk of reforms have been sub-contracted out to DynCorp International and MPRI. Yet, basic systems such as communications, finance, and logistics still do not function properly at the Ministry. It is not even clear how many people the Ministry employs due to the large number of ghost employees.

4.2.2 Judicial and Penitentiary Reform
At the beginning of 2008, the Afghan judiciary and penitentiary system were a state of disarray. Underinvestment and the lack of an overarching reform strategy account for the lack of progress to overhaul the decrepit structures. According to the World Bank in a 2005 report, only 3 per cent of the donor funds allocated to the security sector went to the justice institutions. While funding levels have increased in recent years, as the need for a judicial and penal system to accompany the police force has become an apparent, major resource shortfall remains. It is estimated that up to US$1 billion dollars will be required over the coming decade to complete the necessary reforms in the system. As of early 2008 roughly one-third of that amount had been committed by donors. Encouragingly, the process now has a coherent strategy. A conference on the rule of law held in Rome in July 2007 led to the adoption of a National Justice Sector Strategy. This is a major breakthrough for the process, as interventions in the justice sector have tended to be ad hoc and poorly coordinated.

The two main donors to the justice system have been Italy and the United States, with a number of other smaller donors, like Canada and the UK, making contributions. Relations between the two main donors have at various points been strained. This stemmed from their divergent visions for reform and their differing legal traditions – Italy emanating from a civil code system and the United States, common law – which, in the absence of a strategy to bind them led to conflicting interventions.

Prison reform lacked a donor champion, making it the ‘missing link’ of the SSR process. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has taken a lead on penitentiary reform with funding from a number of donors, most prominently Italy and the United States. With the exception of some high profile projects in Kabul, including the refurbishment of the Pul-i Charkhi prison facility, the construction of a high security wing for drugs offenders at Pul-i Charkhi, and the building of specialized detention centres for women and children, very little has been done to address the needs of the prison system on a countrywide level. This, despite the fact that two concurrent surveys of the prison system conducted by the Coalition and the International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) in 2006 found that the majority of the country's prisons were inhabitable and did not come close to meeting international standards. The main problems that confront Afghanistan’s prisons include: overcrowding, poor sanitary conditions, and the lack of any programs for inmate rehabilitation. It is in the words of one UNODC official, a humanitarian issue as well as a security issue.

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87 Personal communication, UN Official, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
4.2.3 Counter-Narcotics

The government’s counter-narcotics strategy has been criticised for being too heavily focussed on eradication, which typically targets poor farmers—the lowest rung on the poppy value chain—rather than wealthy traffickers who drive the trade. Law enforcement, interdiction and criminal prosecution are the main levers used to confront traffickers and the mafia-style networks that support them. The progress made to establish the infrastructure to interdict narcotics and prosecute traffickers has been mixed. Like the rest of the security sector, corruption has seeped into the specialized narcotics law enforcement institutions, particularly the main body, the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan (CNPA). Informants in the field indicate that, according to unpublished statistics, up to 50 per cent of all ANP members are believed to play a direct role in narcotics trafficking. Indeed, the slow pace of police reform and the initial failure to adequately train, pay and monitor police officers has directly facilitated the relatively interference-free growth of poppy cultivation and narcotics trafficking. Indeed, another key failure of the counter-narcotics strategy has been the failure to see it as a cross-cutting issue, particularly one relevant to rural economic development. With few if any viable economic alternatives fostered by the international community, rural farmers have faced a decision between supporting their families and engaging in this illicit trade. Nonetheless, some significant headway has been made, and several relevant institutions have been erected.

### Box 5. Institutions Relevant to Counter-Narcotics in Afghanistan

**Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan** – The CNPA is the specialist counter-narcotics law enforcement branch of the MOI. Established in January 2003, it forms the vanguard of Afghanistan’s interdiction campaign. While it has made some significant arrests of mid-level traffickers, some of its own officers have been accused of narcotics offences.

**National Interdiction Unit (NIU)** – The NIU is a unit of the CNPA and undertakes low- and mid-level interdiction operations across the country. It has been trained by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), and, under its tutelage, has conducted several successful interdiction operations across the country. The DEA uses Foreign-deployed Advisory Support Teams (FAST) to provide the NIU with mentoring, training, and direct operational support, with the objective of making the NIU capable of independent operations.

**Special Narcotics Force (ASNF)** – The ASNF was created within the MOI to conduct sensitive interdiction operations. Trained by Britain’s elite Special Air Service (SAS), the ASNF reports directly to the Minister of Interior and President. It is a particularly un-transparent organisation but it is believed to be very effective. For instance, in 2004 alone it destroyed over 51 tonnes of opium and 32 heroin-producing labs, and arrested 20 mid-level traffickers.

**Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF)** – In 2005, the CJTF was created with support from the United States, the UNODC and several other donor countries to fast-track major drug cases within Afghanistan. It has the authority to work on those cases that involve more than 2 kg of heroin, 10 kg of opium, 50 kg of hashish, or 50 L of precursor chemicals. For drug cases involving lesser amounts, regional prosecution authorities and Supreme Court branches have the authority to prosecute. The CJTF is located at a Counter Narcotic Justice Centre (CNJC) in Kabul, which can be considered a ‘one-stop shop’ for prosecutions. It includes a courtroom, detention facility and offices for judges, prosecutors and defence counsel. Judicial personnel on the task force are specially trained for narcotics cases and receive mentorship from international judges and lawyers. Taking prosecutions out of provincial courts and concentrating all resources into one facility is intended to both curb corruption and to protect judicial operators.

The creation of the CJTF has facilitated a sharp increase in prosecutions and provided a mechanism for the collection of drug related crime data. Prior to 2005, no mid or high-level traffickers were prosecuted for drug offences in Kabul. In 2005, 424 cases were processed, many of which could be categorized as mid or high-level offenders. In 2006, the number of cases
4.2.4 Demilitarisation

This intervention includes four inter-related programmes: the DDR of ex-combatants, heavy weapons cantonment (HWC), mine and ammunition stockpile destruction (MASD) and the DIAG. The first three elements achieved varying levels of success. The three-year DDR program, the most expensive in history, resulted in the demobilisation of over 60,000 ex-combatants and the collection of over 57,000 weapons. However, the long-term impact of reintegration assistance is widely doubted, as is the success of the program in permanently breaking down militia patronage networks.

The HWC program, supported by NATO and the UN, resulted in the collection and deactivation over 11,000 heavy weapons ranging from artillery and tanks to SCUD Missiles. While impressive, it is important to understand the changing dynamics of conflict in Afghanistan and its impact in the decisions of commanders to relinquish their heavy weapons. The reality is that the presence of the US military, with its airpower, makes heavy weaponry redundant. They are costly to maintain and difficult to store. Small arms and asymmetric tactics provide the best means to achieve tactical objectives in the current environment. Accordingly, the HWC program provided a means for commanders to gain political capital in exchange for weapons that were largely redundant.

The MASD initiative claims that there is 100,000 metric tonnes of ammunition and explosive materials littering the country. They have made significant headway in addressing the problem. The program is well designed and meets an urgent need as the majority of the IEDs used by insurgents are constructed from explosive material harvested from ammunition and mines caches.

The DIAG program has largely been a failure. The government and UN estimate that there are 1,800 illegal armed groups in the country comprising 130,000 militiamen. Although the program was supposed to be completed by early 2008, it had not come close to meeting its objectives, collecting roughly 30,000 of the hundreds of thousands of weapons in the hands of these groups. There are two major problems with the design of the program. First, it offers no individualised incentives for compliance. Rather it offers community development incentives. The problem is that many of the groups targeted are alienated from their local communities and use their guns to gain access to the lucrative criminalized economy. They need an adequate incentive to abandon this income. Second, the program relies on the threat of coercion to succeed, a threat that is not credible today. The ANP are supposed to forcibly disarm groups that do not voluntarily comply with DIAG; however, it has neither the capacity nor inclination to do so. As of early 2008, not a single militia had been forcibly disarmed despite rampant non-compliance with the process. According to the current plan, the program, currently being supported by the UNDP, will be transferred into the MOI. Considering the entrenched interests opposed to disarmament in the MOI and its corruption and incompetence, this will raise the likelihood of the program’s failure.

4.2.5 ANAP, NDS and Security Financing

In 2006, the government introduced the Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), a scheme that involved the mobilisation of militia forces – providing them with minimal training, a weapon and a uniform – to supplement the regular police who were overburdened due to the deteriorating security situation. The ANAP experiment has largely been a failure, as ANAP units have performed poorly in the field and have been heavily infiltrated by spoiler groups such as the Taliban. In

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addition, there is little transparency surrounding reforms to one of the largest and most influential security institutions in the country, the NDS, the State intelligence service. Some reforms of this body have been undertaken. However, more attention is widely believed to be needed given the legacy of abuse among intelligence agencies in the region.

Finally, greater attention must be paid to the fiscal sustainability of reforms. A 2005 World Bank report revealed that the reform process is creating a security system that the Afghan government will not be able to afford over the long-term. In fiscal year 2004/05, security expenditures totalled slightly less than 500 per cent of domestic revenues and 23 per cent of GDP. In contrast, the global average for defence expenditures hovers at about four per cent of GDP. Even if the government meets its target of raising domestic revenue to eight per cent of GDP by fiscal year 2010/11, it will still not be able to sustain such expenditures. While this problem is widely recognised by the donor community and Afghan government, few solutions have been proposed to address it. By failing to consider the long-term sustainability of reforms, the process risks creating an external dependency rather than a self-sufficient set of institutions.

4.3 Civilian-Led Reconstruction and Development

The most recent conflict – or set of conflicts – in Afghanistan was extraordinary in that, prior to military engagement, preparations for and discussions regarding the reconstruction process were underway. The first round of talks regarding Afghanistan’s future, in Bonn in December 2001, ended with a call, by the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA), for ‘the international community, particularly donor countries and multilateral institutions, to reaffirm, strengthen and implement their commitment to assist with the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in coordination with the Interim Authority.’

4.3.1 Strategic and Policy Frameworks

From 2002 the framework for rehabilitation and development changed dramatically in Afghanistan, from being led by individual NGOs and UN agencies to formally being subject to the control and coordination from the Afghan government. From spring 2002 a set of policies, strategies and prioritised areas were presented, and the Ministry of Finance spent considerable energy on securing alignment with policies and coordination of efforts from donors, UN agencies, banks and NGOs. Trust funds, as the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF), were established to ensure a proper and transparent handling of funds.

Already in April 2002, the AIA presented the draft National Development Framework followed by a draft National Budget and proposal for National Priority Projects in October. The Afghan government strategy, SAF, was developed in 2004. Afghanistan’s Millennium Development Goals, introduced in 2005, were joined by an Interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS). The final Afghan National Development Strategy was launched in April 2008, outlining challenges and Afghan government targets under eight pillars.

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94 Ibid.
Despite this heavy State involvement in strategic planning, which was often more public relations than reality, policy from 2002 onwards was for a non-implementing State in which the tasks commonly undertaken by ministries were to be contracted through bidding processes to private companies and NGOs. Much of the emphasis was placed on building the capacity of central ministries in Kabul, less on developing functional administrations on provincial and district levels, and in many instances capacities were temporarily bought by contracting international consultants.

4.3.2 Financing Reconstruction and Development

The first donor conference in Tokyo in January 2002 resulted in pledges of US$5.2 billion in non-military aid for a five-year timeframe against a preliminary needs assessment which estimated the five-year need at US$ 14 billion. The April 2004 Berlin conference increased pledges to US$ 8.2 billion over an eight-year period against the government’s estimated seven-year need for US$ 27.6 billion laid out in SAF. The evident financing gap has been the subject of considerable scholarship and advocacy. Barnett Rubin points out that, for the first three years of the reconstruction effort, per capita annual assistance was 12 per cent of that which was provided in Bosnia and only a third as much as that provided in Iraq. In March 2008, ACBAR published a report indicating that total pledges of US$25 billion were met by only US$15 billion in contributions and estimated that 40 per cent of all assistance went out-of-country through international advisers, contractors, staff members and headquarters fees. Perhaps most troubling is that, from 2002 to 2005, only US$3.3 billion of the US$13.4 billion pledged was spent on reconstruction and development.

The intent was for all funds to be provided through ARTF, which was intended to serve as a de facto treasury for the Afghan government. However, while most European donors complied by channelling rehabilitation and development funding through the Trust Funds or even to the Afghan government itself, the largest donor, the US, did not. While the US has been criticised for not contributing more funds directly to the government or the ARTF, many ministries do not presently hold the necessary capacity to handle or implement large-scale projects. This lack of capacity is a major source of frustration among a number of donors genuinely supportive of the Afghan government.

While rehabilitation and development assistance channelled through the Afghan government is under rather strict control from various oversight agencies, the same has not necessarily been the case for other projects that then are prone to misuse and corruption. A number of concerns have been raised against the practise of USAID and their subcontractors, where a recent report from ACBAR state that aid assistance has ‘been heavily influenced by the political and military objectives of donors, especially the imperative to win so called ‘hearts and minds’, and “...vast sums of aid are lost in corporate profits of contractors and sub-contractors, which can be as high as 50% on a single contract.”

Afghanistan), April.
102 Personal communication, Representative of the European Commission, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
4.4 Global Analysis of the International Intervention

The international intervention has done little to influence the global dynamics of conflict, a rather unsurprising finding given that the largest donor and the most significant political and military actor, the United States, set the terms of the macro dynamics.

4.5 National Analysis of the International Intervention

The international community notably failed to address the capacity and legitimacy of the Afghan government and did not adequately establish a highly capable Afghan military force. It did, however, lead to an increase in tensions between various regions and groups within the country.

4.5.1 Undermining the Legitimacy of the Afghan Government

On the whole, the international intervention failed to bolster the government's legitimacy in a number of ways. The Afghan government has been marginalised in the provision of assistance and has controlled little more than a fraction (approximately eight per cent) of its own core operating budget. The ARTF, originally designed to act as a de facto treasury for the government, has remained almost entirely under the control of its 'donors' meeting' and has received almost no funds from some of Afghanistan’s largest donors, the US and Japan. In sum, due to the bypassing of the ARTF and the preference for direct execution by donors through implementing partners, the Afghan government has only had control over approximately one per cent of all project-based international assistance. While it is not necessary for the Afghan State to utilise all international revenues itself, it should be more greatly involve in their allocation. Indeed, it would have seemed more appropriate had an active promotion of collaborative governance been institutionalised. Doing so would have allowed the international community, the Afghan government and civil society, both customary and formal, to divide and share responsibilities. The result of not pursuing collaborative governance has been a disempowered government and one which has, due to its exclusion from the process, not developed the necessary capabilities to take a leading role in the country’s recovery and stabilisation. While the international community continues to argue that the lack of capacity justifies the circumvention of government structures, it is important to note that they have entrenched this lack by failing to provide adequate opportunities for capacity development.

The resulting inability of the government to provide or direct (through the private sector and civil society) services to its citizenry has led to a legitimacy gap. The State is, thus, believed to be ineffectual or, considering the corrupt and criminal behaviour of many ANP officers and public officials, a greater source of predation rather than protection. Further contributing to the loss of the government’s legitimacy has been the extensive involvement of the international community within Afghan politics. The decision of British diplomats to engage in discussions with Taliban representatives, for example, undercut the government’s ability to do so and implied that Britain, rather than the Afghan government, was the most significant power-broker. Despite the clear dominant position of the US within Afghanistan, it was surprising to note that one prominent Afghan government informant, who declined to be identified, indicated that such incidents were a sign that the British still considered themselves to have a certain colonial right to make decisions on behalf of the Afghan government and to subvert the modernising impulse of the Afghan government out of a belief that Afghans would be happy returning to an era of significant regressive Taliban influence.

104 The ARTF is a major funding channel for support for the GIRA rehabilitation and development efforts. The largest contributions to the fund has been made by 1) the United Kingdom (24.6 per cent), Canada (17.6 per cent), the EC/EU (12.9 per cent), United States (12.1 per cent), Netherlands (10.3 per cent), Norway (5.3 per cent) and Germany (4.9 per cent) of 28 donors who totally paid in US$2.34 billion by spring 2008.
4.5.2 Haphazard, Poorly Planned Security Sector Reform

While several security sector interventions are addressed below, problems emerged from the outset due to the lack of a strategy and the fragmented organisation of the process. The creation of five separate pillars, each assigned to a lead nation, disrupted a process which is inherently inter-related. The differing level of competence and resources brought by each nation – and the notable failure of police and judicial reform, in particular – have undercut the process and impelled the US government to assume de facto leadership of nearly all pillars.

Many of the most critical and complex debates currently concern the army and police. The ANA has been a relative success story, though high rates of desertion and attrition mean that a broad, professional and highly capable officer corps will develop only very slowly. Its expansion to 80,000 troops has been approved despite the Afghan government’s stated preference for a 120,000-troop strong force.

Troops currently graduating from the military training programs are regularly sent straight from the training ground to the front, with little time for in-service mentorship or to gain practical experience in permissive environments. As one U.S. General described the effort to build security forces in the midst of an insurgency in Iraq, it is like repairing a plane while in flights, and while being shot at. The same analogy could apply to the creation and reform the ANA.

The ANP, as is widely reputed, is rife with corruption at all levels, and MOI reforms and changes in leadership have failed to resolve the deep-seated problems. It seems increasingly likely that, for the good of security within Afghanistan, the long-term future of the ANP may need to be substantially reconsidered. The Focused District Development Programme (FDDP), which removes police from communities for training while temporarily replacing them with the professional Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), has had initial success in spurring communities to provide oversight to and combat rent-seeking behaviour among the ANP.

ANP reform, it should be noted, is reliant upon the presence of a capable judiciary to adjudicate legal infractions and undertake objective finding of fact. Yet, the judicial reform process has moved slowly and has allowed criminal networks and corruption to pervade and ultimately undermine the system. Additional resources must be provided into this critical area while traditional measures are strengthened and imbued with respect for the rule of law and human rights. Doing so will allow for a greater emphasis on the type of restorative justice more commonly valued within Afghanistan but spurned by the judicial and penal system.

4.5.3 Contribution to Intra-State, Regional Tensions

The international intervention has failed to demonstrate a sufficient level of awareness for the potency of intra-state regional tensions between the north and Pashtun south. As has previously been discussed, the installation of Northern Alliance militia commanders into key governmental posts has been greeted with anger and anxiety among the south. In the first 3-4 years of the post-Taliban period, the Panjshiri Tajiks dominated the police and military establishments, and Tajiks still exercise a disproportionate share of power in the security sector while groups like the Hazara remain underrepresented.

Inversely, the de-northernisation of the central government, which has been pursued to compensate for this initial error, has been handled with a disregard for how such a move would be seen. Furthermore, the focus of reconstruction, development and security assistance upon the insecure south has led the north to feel neglected and further marginalised. A ‘perverse incentive’ has thus been instituted whereby the international community rewards insecurity and aggression in the south while leaving former allies in the north with comparably little assistance.

These missteps, however, pale in comparison to one which the international community, including HMG, is in the process of supporting. The Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP), proposed by
the Independent Directorate for Local Governance (IDLG), would involve the creation of community self-defence groups which would supplement the police and be mobilised in the event of an attack or AOG infiltration. In addition to the full security-related ramifications of this proposition, addressed in full in Section 5, this initiative is being interpreted as the internationally-sanctioned re-armament of the Taliban and other armed Pashtun groups (though no weapons are being distributed). The northern ethnic factions and ‘demobilised’ militias have expressed unease about a program that would permit the re-armament of Pashtun armed groups at a time when most of the North just emerged from the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration programme. The resulting concern in the north is already beginning to lead to a stiffened military posture and the enhanced possibility of regional conflict.

Programmes will rightly emphasise areas of the greatest insecurity, and some will be highly geographically concentrated. However, even in such cases, an attempt has to be made to provide clear signals and compensatory assistance to opposing groups and regions within the country.

4.6 Societal Analysis of the International Intervention

On a societal level, the interventions were also deemed to be problematic primarily due to inappropriate sectoral foci which left the demographic groups most vulnerable to conflict relatively unaddressed.

4.6.1 Inappropriate Demographic and Sectoral Focus

The sectors and demographic groups upon which the international community focused did not contribute as greatly to security as they potentially could have. Demographically, a focus on gender and education led to a considerable focus on women and children. Attention to governance, founded in the belief that the promotion of elders and traditional leaders would lead to stability, focused primarily on older populations. Left out of the equation was the group of young men who pose, in nearly every country of the world, the greatest threat to peace and security. Livelihoods and economic development provided the greatest opportunity to address this group. However, agriculture, a source of employment for nearly 70 per cent of Afghans, was one of the least emphasised sectors of intervention. One recent survey conducted for the German government in northern Afghanistan showed that fewer than one in six households had benefited from agricultural assistance, a proportion that is likely to be much higher than elsewhere in the country. More broadly, livelihoods were rarely addressed, and efforts tended to focus upon urban areas and the higher echelons of the economy rather than on sustainable, low-level employment in rural communities. Without adequate sources of income, itself a cultural imperative to allow men to pursue marriage, these young men were highly vulnerable to recruitment by AOGs. While reconstruction assistance must remain linked to human insecurity and the need to address vulnerable and marginalised populations, initial reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan – and not only those in the ‘emergency’ or ‘quick impact’ phase – should have focused on supporting the international security and military efforts in order to guarantee a sustainable humanitarian space for more purely humanitarian priorities to be pursued.

Box 6. Case Study: Military and Development Strategy in Southern Afghanistan

In southern Afghanistan, conflict and remoteness from Kabul has solidified ethnic identity, as Pashtuns, rather than an Afghan national identity. As such, they have grown to view national governance with a certain degree of mistrust if not hostility. Conflict has also resulted in low levels of basic services, human insecurity, high levels of illiteracy and unemployment in addition to gaps in the capacity of the local administration. The continuing insurgency has sustained an

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106 Personal communication, Canadian Political Advisor, HQ RC(S), Kandahar, Afghanistan, April 2008.
environment of fear, and rising civilian casualties are taken to reflect the government's failure to provide security and rule of law, thus encouraging many people to seek security elsewhere.\textsuperscript{107}

UNDSS identifies the Pashtun-dominated insurgency in the south and notes the ‘Dynamic Occupation’ of district centres, the rising use of asymmetric attacks, including those aimed at civilian populations, and the ever-present influence of narcotics. These findings are widely accepted, including by the Regional Command-South (RC-S) Headquarters.\textsuperscript{108,109}

An indication of the severity of the conflict in the south can be seen from comment on Operation MEDUSA, conducted 5 kilometres from Kandahar City in 2006, which included: ‘numerous casualties, trench warfare and the Taliban fighting as platoons’.\textsuperscript{110} The chilling scale of ANP losses are reflected in figures from EUPOL’s Senior Police Advisor in Helmand, who cited 220 ANP killed in action in that province alone during 2006 and 2007, with 21 killed thus far as of late April 2008.\textsuperscript{111} Another indication of the severity of the AOG campaign is the fact that in March 2008, 115 IEDs were detonated in southern Afghanistan, resulting in 90 casualties, including 14 international troops killed and another 36 injured.\textsuperscript{112} That said, the decline in security is not all-encompassing. In many cases, it radiates outward from the centres of towns controlled by the Afghan government and international forces. The town of Gereshk in Helmand includes a ‘green area’ of relative safety, where people pay taxes and the Mayor guides development activities, as well as a ‘yellow area’ where the citizens are somewhat influenced by the Taliban and a ‘killing zone’, where the incidence of suicide attack is especially high.\textsuperscript{113} All of the above have contributed to a climate of insecurity and constrained development to only a small area which, as a result of the assistance received, is believed to be pro-government and, hence, at risk of attack should international forces depart.

Key actors in the south include the Afghan government, provincial governors, provincial and local councils (shuras or jirgas), the ANA, the ANP, ISAF, UNAMA, international organisations, NGOs and PRTs. The Afghan government is not considered to be overly involved in the region, though examples were given of periodic and well received visits from national ministry representatives.\textsuperscript{114} The motivation of governors and other political figures is questioned, with many perceived as being opportunists who lack formal education, literacy and other traits which make them doubtful champions of reconstruction. The ANA and ANP are criticised for failing to hold territory gained by the military, and the ANP is widely perceived as corrupt and affiliated with tribal rather than governmental responsibilities.\textsuperscript{115}

ISAF, with 18,000 troops normally boosted to 21,000 for the ‘fighting season’ from spring through the summer, is the strongest military force. RC(S) includes troops from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Estonia, the Netherlands, the UK and the US in addition to four PRTs. British Forces are currently about 7,800 strong with the majority in the south. The current lead formation in Helmand is 16 Air Assault Brigade, an elite formation ideally suited to the tempo of operations in the ‘fighting season’. The Brigade was last in-country in 2006 for the summer of ISAF’s expansion, and the Commando Brigade covered summer 2007, establishing a pattern of lifting the combat...
capability and in particular the mobility of troops in the assault infantry role for the ‘season’. The
‘surge’ of 3,000 reinforcements from the US includes 1,000 marines to train the ANA and a highly
mobile Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).

International interventions in the south began with relatively low levels of US forces and the
establishment of a PRT in Kandahar in 2003. A significant rise in force levels came with the
expansion of ISAF’s mandate with some early placements of international forces, including the
British in Helmand in January 2006. As part of ISAF’s extended role, a regional and subordinate
command structure was established with RC(S) Headquarters controlling the south with
responsibility for four provinces and with command rotating between Canada, the Netherlands
and Britain. RC(S) has four PRTs one per province each with a lead nation, in Kandahar (Canada),
Lashkar-Gah (UK), Tarin Kowt (Netherlands) and Qalat (US).

The international security framework is in place, though it continues to lack a broader framework
or Comprehensive Approach. The Comprehensive Approach which is now being implemented
includes four components: (i) the national and local layers of government and administration; (ii)
the ANA and ANP together, essential for the ‘Afghanisation’ of security and supporting the rule
of law; (iii) UNAMA and the IOs and NGOs; and, (iv) the international military forces, PRTs
included. All of these require varying degrees of security to be in place in order to function
optimally. The ‘Comprehensive Approach’ is embraced by NATO/ISAF and RC(S) Headquarters
with the latter having recognized the need to produce a Regional Plan that involves ‘all partners
and all players’ and considers Afghan and international approaches. At its recent meeting in
Bucharest in April 2008, NATO indicated: ‘Success [in Afghanistan] requires a comprehensive
approach across security, governance and development efforts and between all local and
international partners in support of the Afghan government. We will intensify our contribution to
such a comprehensive approach’. HQ RC(S) is committed to securing 75 per cent of the people
through the creation of ‘green zones’, stable areas which will meet the essential needs of the
community and separate them from the anti-government elements. This is to be done with and
by the locals themselves and is clearly set-out in the RC(S) Comprehensive Implementation Plan
and the Helmand Road Map.

Firm action is to be taken to isolate and disrupt AOGs, which are primarily associated with the
Taliban in the south, so as to influence and secure the population in support of the government.
Then secure areas will be expanded using the ‘ink-blot’ method. An example of the ‘ink-blot’ as it
relates to Helmand Province, including Musa Qal’eh (MSQ), Sangin (SGN), Gareshk (GSK), Lashkar
Gah (LKG) and Garmisir (BMR), is included below. Operations in Garmisir are still in progress.
The ‘ink-blot’ method pursues a gradual physical extension of spheres of influence and an increasing emphasis on developing capable governance in support of provincial and national plans in these ‘spheres’.

An alternative or parallel approach argues the ‘ink-blot’ method is too incremental to be noticed and appreciated by surrounding populations and fails to promote the effectiveness and interest of GIRA in regional and provincial development. Proponents of this approach suggest implementing ‘iconic’ projects which dramatically change the quality of life of local communities and are a more significant manifestation of change and opportunity. An example of such a project is the Kajaki Dam in southern Afghanistan which is strongly favoured by the US but which requires a high degree of guaranteed security for successful implementation and operation. 

This theme of ‘iconic’ projects came from a number of sources including the Dutch Political Advisor to RC(S) Headquarters who also favoured a major canal project in eastern Helmand which would improve access and irrigation in a relatively remote and underdeveloped area making a real change to the quality of life. Supporters of the ‘iconic’ projects approach argue that the outcomes or effects of these projects would be visible in the case of providing electricity with its potential to light urban areas, to extend the operating hours of markets and to contribute to currently challenging livelihoods such as manufacturing and large-scale agricultural processing and packaging.

The two schools are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and regardless of which is prioritised, the extension of security ‘ink-blots’ to include up to 75 per cent of the population may provide humanitarian and political space for the development of capable governance and reconstruction.

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120 Presentation, Taskforce Helmand, Afghanistan, April 2008.
121 Personal communication, Deputy Chief of Staff for Reconstruction and Development, HQ RC(S), Kandahar, Afghanistan, April 2008. The Kajaki Dam has capacity for three turbines capable of generating a total of 50MW, a huge amount for the area, but one turbine was never installed and has to be transported there from Kabul, a major logistic task requiring significant road-building in a very high risk area, one in-place turbine has to be refurbished, a lengthy task, and should it all be achieved the power lines would have to be upgraded from 110kv to 220kv.
122 Personal communication, Netherlands Political Advisor, HQ RC(S), Kandahar, Afghanistan, April 2008.
4.7 Section 4 Summary: The International Intervention

Broadly speaking, the international intervention failed to pay adequate attention to the previously described conflict dynamics. The design of the intervention failed to build the legitimacy or capacity of the State. It thus remained unable to provide services, to ensure security and to operate autonomously. It controlled only a minor fraction of its operating costs, a fact which the international community has blamed on a lack of public sector capacity while marginalising capacity development for nearly seven years.

On a political level, the incorporation of ‘warlords’ affiliated with the Northern Alliance into the government has meant that the political system has been highly factionalised. It has, thus, returned to its historical position as a means of pursuing group and individual interests and subjugating enemies. As a result, the State’s credibility has become minimal, and intra-state, regional tensions have proliferated.

The willingness of individuals to maintain stability and spur armed groups has been undercut as living standards have been hindered by a public sector with limited capabilities and as threats have arisen from opposition and criminal groups, from the international military and from the ANP. The potentially mitigating force of rural economic development, which could restrain young men from supporting armed groups, has been misguidedy sidelined until relatively recently.
5. Strategies and Options

It is critical to avoid utopian visions of a future Afghanistan with unchallenged stability, low levels of unemployment and fully functioning social support systems. The recently released ANDS, to its credit, avoids such an implication. The Afghanistan of the next decade will continue to struggle with some level of insecurity, with segments of the population which will be unlikely to fully recognize the complete authority of the newly instituted State, with poppy cultivation and with relatively high levels of poverty. However, steady progress is possible. While a variety of specific recommendations for addressing individual sectors of intervention such as the military, counter-narcotics, reconstruction and security sector reform are included below, these should not be interpreted as stand-alone interventions but as components contributing to the ultimate aim, a political solution to the conflict. In operationalising NSID, it may be useful to consider the merit of many of the proposed strategies and options, to strengthen the existing framework of engagement, and, therefore, to enhance the effectiveness of security and conflict outcomes.

5.1 The Pursuit of Political Engagement

A political solution to the conflict would, in essence, involve a re-negotiation of national power-sharing arrangements by the government with the Taliban, most notably, and would require at least tacit approval from the UN and US given their close involvement. Core issues of debate would concern regional autonomy for Pashtun lands, the role and duration of the international military presence, the division of key political posts within the government and a re-consideration of the role of Islam within the Afghan State.

5.1.1 Overcoming Vested Interests

Despite a reportedly high level of public support within Afghanistan, a political solution is neither clear nor imminent. While many informants and critical actors recognise the need for political dialogue leading up to formal negotiations, the parties themselves may have an interest in avoiding such a situation. For the United States and its Coalition partners, including the UK, a political solution would be an admission that they have been militarily unsuccessful. It would also be seen as negotiating with an enemy which has killed substantial numbers of foreign troops. Furthermore, it will reveal the truth that such engagement should have been pursued from the outset and that the Bonn political process, which leading experts have appropriately described as inappropriately narrow, in 2001 could have averted, to a certain degree, the violence of the last six years. For current political figures, negotiations will risk their positions and, hence, their access to State resources. Furthermore, it will jeopardize their involvement in enterprises, such as narcotics trafficking and private security companies (PSCs), which benefit from continued instability. Many will, quite simply, be hesitant to reconcile with their former enemy. The Taliban itself may, given its current level of success and rate of growth, be loath to engage in a political process. Why, it is fair to ask, would the Taliban negotiate for limited control when it seems likely that, in the long run, it may be able to once again claim broad territorial and near-complete political control?

That said, political engagement remains a possibility. For all of its apparent success, the Taliban is a considerably weaker organisation than it was eight years ago. The war in Iraq has not only forced the international community to split its attention but has led the Taliban’s foreign financiers to contribute the bulk of their assistance to Iraq. The increasing success of the Taliban may also make Afghan and international political figures decide that negotiation and compromise is preferable to the loss of control or the outbreak of large-scale warfare in the coming years. The US, furthermore, nearing presidential elections and with mounting economic woes and difficulties in Iraq, is warming to the notion of negotiations involving the Taliban. Several senior members of the National Security Council (NSC) have, in private communications, indicated a growing interest in a political

settlement among their ranks.

Box 7. Past Attempts at Political Engagement with the Opposition and Regional Actors

In August 2007 the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan held a Peace Jirga which assembled tribal leaders, civil society groups and government representatives from both sides of the Durand Line, in Kabul to discuss ways to stem cross-border insurgency activity and consolidate peace in the region. The jirga received the endorsement and support of the international donor community but, despite a temporary thawing of relations between the two states, failed to lead to a decline attacks against Afghan targets originating in Pakistan.

For several years the Afghan government has operated a Taliban Reconciliation Programme (TRP) that seeks to woo moderate Taliban to renounce violence. The program offers such fighters an amnesty and potentially positions in the administration if they lay down their arms and declare their allegiance to the State. This programme has succeeded in bringing several hundred Taliban fighters out from the cold, but has not had any impact in reducing the growing momentum of the movement.

Several donor countries have also unilaterally made isolated overtures to Taliban groupings. The British military did this on numerous occasions in Helmand, the latest attempt resulting in the expulsion of two Irish diplomats, one working for the UN and the other with the European Commission. Other troop contributing states such as the Netherlands and Canada have contemplated such contacts, despite the disapproval of the Afghan government. The trend of unilateral contacts with the Taliban on the part of several NATO states can only have the effect of damaging relations with the government and undermining its negotiation position with the Taliban. It is not the role of international actors to negotiate with the Taliban but the democratically elected Afghan government.

5.1.2 The Role of the International Community

The international community may initially find it difficult to earn support for a political settlement among their own citizens and elected officials; and this situation may not be all bad considering the troublesome role that international actors have played in the past. The British diplomatic mission to Afghanistan was reprimanded for having engaged the Taliban. In doing so, the Afghan government was responding appropriately. The international community must not try to politically engage AOGs on their own or stand in the way of Afghan government-led efforts. The involvement of international actors in any political dialogue and negotiation process will irreparably taint it. AOGs will be hesitant to participate and accept the results of any such agreement, and the foreign interference will significantly undermine the credibility and legitimacy of the government in the eyes of ordinary Afghans. Rather, the process should be fully and completely directed by the Afghan government with, if deemed appropriate, external facilitation by a widely trusted Islamic figure or Independent Peace Commission.

5.1.3 Whom to Involve

A similar question will be who to involve in this process of political engagement. The participation of too few groups will limit its effectiveness, as was seen after Bonn, though the involvement of too many, given the aforementioned diversity of interests, is likely to lead to paralysis, in-fighting and a degree of compromise and power-sharing unacceptable to the sitting government. The involvement of Pakistan, while desirable, would, likewise, lead to calls for the involvement of Iran, India, China and potentially other countries, thus contaminating the process with extraneous diplomatic concerns.

While the Afghan government will make the ultimate determination, it is advised that such a process directly involve only the Afghan government and representatives of the Taliban with the latter having the opportunity to include members of affiliates such as Hizb-e Islami and the
Haqqani Network as part of its negotiating team. In doing so, AOGs not directly included will be unable to blame their exclusion to the Afghan government or its international allies. Oversight and guidance may be provided by a broader, non-approving committee inclusive of Hizb-e Islami, Jamiat-e Islami and other critical stakeholder groups. Advanced buy-in from Pakistan and Iran, most notably, will need to be achieved through the reiteration of Afghanistan’s regional neutrality. The Pakistani and Iranian governments must be provided assurances that Afghanistan will pose no threat itself or through those international forces stationed in its territory. In addition, settling the differences with Pakistan will inevitably require Afghanistan to recognize the Durand line, which many Pashtun nationalists are unwilling to do. The new government in Pakistan has generated hope that a solution to many of the cross border grievances could be on the horizon.

5.1.4 How to Facilitate the Pursuit of a Political Process

As previously stated, the greatest challenge is to convince relevant parties that a negotiated settlement is in their favour. Doing so will require a great deal of leverage around which the entirety of the international intervention should revolve in the coming one to three years until the opportunity is ripe for negotiations. This will require close attention to the dynamics examined in Section 3 of this report.

The international community would be wise to lessen the harsh rhetoric previously applied to the Taliban and other AOGs. The declassification of particular individuals and organisations as terrorists by the US, for instance, would be a powerful symbolic gesture which could signal a veritable willingness to support Afghan government-led dialogue without being a part of it. Perhaps more importantly, the international community absolutely must express its long-term commitment to Afghanistan in tangible and meaningful ways. Troop withdrawals should cease. National caveats on ISAF forces should be removed, and reconstruction commitments should be met in full as a symbol of support for the government. Leading political figures should consistently emphasise their country’s intent to remain within Afghanistan for many years, a message which would be well supported by increased numbers of troops and, more likely, by large-scale, long-term infrastructure projects related to hydro-power and gas pipelines. The AOGs cannot be led to believe that they may simply outlast the international presence. To its credit, the House of Commons Committee on International Development’s report, Reconstructing Afghanistan, forcefully and convincingly emphasises a long-term commitment. Furthermore, the international community’s support of the Afghan government will be critical to show that it is a capable and credible negotiating partner for AOGs. In this regard, aid financing should be provided directly to the State for allocation by the National Assembly which, along with the entirety of the government at national, provincial and district levels, should be subject to intense stand-alone capacity development funded by the international community. This increased control of finances and capacity will, however, contribute the greatest to the State’s legitimacy if it is accompanied by the devolution, in certain cases, of service delivery and governance to the private sector and civil society through a process of collaborative governance.

On the national level, a two-pronged approach will be necessary to win the support of key political figures. A courtship approach will be necessary in order to convince them that they will maintain a key role in government and that, in fact, their willingness to sanction negotiations could be rewarded economically with increased assistance for their constituencies. Simultaneously, repercussions for spoilers may need to be threatened. The high-profile prosecution of national and provincial political figures engaged in narcotics trafficking and rent-seeking behaviour could provide, in particular, an inducement for cooperation.

To avoid the intensification of north-south divisions which would result from political engagement, given the north’s perception that the Taliban is being re-instated and rewarded for its past violence,

124 A first step in doing so will be a massive improvement in state capacity as discussed further in this section.
several steps will need to be taken. The north will have to be provided with extensive amounts of reconstruction and development assistance, particularly to ‘lynchpins’ for preventing re-mobilisation such as demobilised combatants and commanders of the Northern Alliance.\textsuperscript{125} Additional posts for northern figures may need to be created, preferably at the provincial if not national level, in order to buy-in leading figures. Most significantly, northerners will need to be heavily involved in the political engagement process and will require, during the negotiations, a detailed and heavily monitored plan for the disarmament of southern militias. Even if such a plan fails to remove a substantial portion of the available weapons, northern fighters will want to see that the south has experienced the same demilitarisation process as the north underwent with the Afghanistan’ New Beginning Programme (ANBP) and DIAG.

Defection to the Taliban and other AOGs must be severely slowed. The provision of extensive agriculture and livelihood support will go a long way to doing so. Targeting such opportunities for young men will do the greatest damage to AOG recruitment, as will programmes designed to provide young men with vocational and education training (VET). International assistance flowing to long-standing stable and newly secured areas will prevent them from effective Taliban and AOG infiltration. To provide assistance in the estimated 50 per cent of the country which is inaccessible to civilian reconstruction and development organisations, several options are available: increased use of Islamic organisations and countries as assistance providers, the provision of assistance directly to communities or the implementation of projects by a fully external but highly-trusted entity from, for instance, Pakistan. Assistance delivery by military actors should cease completely. With the resulting decrease in its popularity, AOGs will find diminished freedom to operate. Counter-insurgency operations, assisted by community-level intelligence gathering, will become increasingly effective and targeted, thus leading to greater insurgent losses. Finally, a carefully tailored public diplomacy strategy, in which the UK should take a lead, will help to reverse the damage done by the rhetoric and scandal-ridden implementation of the War on Terror. This strategy should focus upon raising awareness of civilian deaths, particularly among women and children, resulting from Taliban, al-Qaeda and AOG attacks in Afghanistan. Furthermore, an emphasis on the Iraq conflict and the level of sectarian violence therein could provide a powerful message that, if Afghanistan does not stabilise rapidly, it could be subject to similar atrocities against civilian populations.

The following chart reflects these and other suggestions and provides an accessible summary of the current positions towards and pro and anti-settlement interests and influences upon a variety of critical international, governmental, religious and demographic stakeholders. An attempt is made to relate each recommendation to specific actions by HMG.

\textsuperscript{125} In doing so, the hierarchy of the armed groups should be reflected in the provision of assistance. Low and mid-tier commanders felt disrespected during the initial DDR process due to being provided the same level of assistance as the individuals who had been under their command.
### Figure 10. A Framework for the Pursuit of Political Engagement and Negotiations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actor</th>
<th>Attitudes Towards Political Settlement</th>
<th>Anti-Settlement Interests/Forces</th>
<th>Pro-Settlement Interests/Forces</th>
<th>Relevant Interventions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taliban, Hizb-e Islami, Haqqani Network</strong></td>
<td>Members of each group and a portion of the leadership are believed to support a political resolution to the conflict; others will be deeply opposed based on the presumption that they can and will ultimately defeat the government and effect the withdrawal of its international allies.</td>
<td>Sources of financing would likely cease, particularly from al-Qaeda, zakat and a portion of narcotics trafficking, should a political settlement be sought or reached. However, the perception that negotiation would involve sacrificing hopes for total victory would be the most influential.</td>
<td>The failure to incite mass mobilisation, to win more than scattered support and the failure to attract larger-scale financing severely hinders the AOGs. The legitimisation which involvement in political negotiations would bring is a potent force among the leadership of most Afghan AOGs and a precedent likely to be supported by Pakistani anti-government groups.</td>
<td>AOG recruitment should be undercut by reducing reasons for mobilisation. Doing so would require: Rural economic development targeting young men and former combatants and commanders. Public diplomacy emphasising AOG attacks against civilians and the potential costs of further escalation could further undercut the AOGs' passive base of support. These groups' belief in the temporary nature of the foreign presence should be undercut by large-scale, long-term development projects and sustained or expanded troop levels. The overall legitimacy and capacity of the government should be emphasised and improved to show that the government is a credible negotiating partner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Al-Qaeda</strong></td>
<td>Overwhelmingly opposed</td>
<td>Even in the event that interest in a settlement existed, al-Qaeda’s membership and, most importantly, financiers would view such a move as a betrayal.</td>
<td>None; though a possibility may exist that certain al-Qaeda-linked groups may have an interest in gaining clout and legitimacy by supporting or engaging in negotiations. This situation could appear temporary.</td>
<td>Military, counter-insurgency and intelligence activities in addition to enhanced financial interdiction are the only means of reducing the potential for al-Qaeda to serve as a</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| Afghan Political Figures | Political opposition to negotiations with the Taliban are likely to be found in the north, where such engagement would be seen as ‘giving in’ to the Taliban (which would be deemed inappropriate for political, historical and socio-cultural reasons).

The economic interests of political figures (and other public officials) in PSCs, narcotics and other criminal activities would lead them to oppose resolution of the conflict. | A desire to bring stability to the government and to foster an environment able to absorb and effectively utilise development assistance would support a political resolution to the conflict. | Pro-settlement attitudes should be supported by pledges of assistance to areas which are stabilised.

Spoilers within the government should be separated from their political interests using the criminal justice system and other means.

Key figures from northern and western Afghanistan should be promised a leading role in any negotiations and in any post-negotiation political dispensation. Increased development assistance to the north should be used to win the support of leaders and to discourage opposition to negotiations. |

| Afghan General Population | Widespread support is common in the south. Fewer statistics are available concerning attitudes in the north. Rising insecurity may, however, bring support across the country. As with political figures, the history of north-south competition would taint the idea of negotiations, particularly among former members of armed groups which have fought against the Taliban or other Pashtun armed groups. Young men may oppose a political resolution out of a desire to gain honour through current or future participation in an armed group, particularly if they do not believe | A desire for increased development assistance in the north – which has been prevented by the international community’s focus on the south – may lead northerners (and southerners in areas unreachable by reconstruction programming) to support a political settlement.

A desire for increased security among all populations (and potentially greater among women) | While the Afghan people’s support cannot be ‘purchased’ increased rates of reconstruction assistance – particularly if injected directly into communities through programmes such as the NSP – could enhance public support.

Expectations should be raised – and eventually met – concerning heightened levels of assistance once security becomes less costly.

Rural economic development and... |
<p>| Afghan Elders | Supportive of a political settlement | One risk is that elders’ credibility may be reduced if they are seen to be siding overtly with the government and international community, though such a perception is already fairly common in many parts of the country. | These individuals see their clout and relevance, already diminished by 30 years of conflict, being further marginalised by continued violence. They, thus, have an interest in a political settlement which will validate their power and provide them with a relevant role. | DFID should utilise elders in assistance delivery, through education shuras or Community Development Councils (CDCs). FCO should engage elders in the aforementioned public diplomacy initiatives. |
| Afghan Clergy, Mullahs | While their sentiments are relatively unknown and difficult to predict, their inclination is, more than any other group, likely to depend on the outcome of negotiations. Their support should also be viewed as critical. | The Afghan clergy is fiercely protective of its independence and autonomy. In many ways, it views itself as a counter-balance to the State or as the State’s natural enemy. They remain concerned that a strong State will limit their power. | The moral role played by the clergy may be mobilised in opposition to violence. The perception that they can extend their influence and the influence of Islam upon the State may impel them to support negotiations – as long as they feel | FCO should encourage the Afghan government to emphasise the possibility that any post-negotiation settlement will include a bolstered role of Islam in the government. DFID should pursue programmes which provide funds for the use of |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>DFID Understanding Afghanistan - Strategic Conflict Assessment - 2.4 Draft Final Report</strong></th>
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<td><strong>US Government</strong></td>
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These and other recommendations related to Afghanistan’s conflict – linked with the aforementioned conflict dynamics and analysis of the international response – are provided below.

5.2 Global Strategies and Options

While highlighting the geo-political strategic interests of the United States, in particular, in the conflict, this is one of the areas in which change is unpredictable and not under the control of HMG. That said, steps may be taken to avoid the role of such extraneous influences upon the international intervention in Afghanistan.

5.2.1 Utilise Public Diplomacy to Counter AOG Recruitment and Support

The international community should support large-scale public diplomacy efforts throughout Afghanistan which work through traditional structures and avoid the mistakes of previous culturally inappropriate or obvious attempts.

In Afghanistan’s poorest areas which are the areas with greatest illiteracy, message passing is often carried out through the religious community. Friday prayers and the mullahs and imams are often the bearers of the insurgent message and the motivators of resistance. It is therefore important that clerics of all types are part of the process which persuades people not to support the insurgency. A correctly structured message delivered in this way is essential. But so too is the follow-up. This is where development connects with counter-insurgency. ‘Fast track’ development projects to meet local needs are not only essential once an area is taken over by government and international forces but also are integral in preventing the loss of the territory gained. The failure to deliver improvements in infrastructure and quality of life means that messages concerning the good will of the international community will be lost. In an inverse tactic, employing black propaganda, the Taliban has distributed leaflets promising reconstruction and development assistance in areas in which the international community has no or limited plans. The resulting raised expectations, when not fulfilled, result in decreased faith in the international community and increased support for the Taliban.

The message and the practice need to be coherent and coordinated. Without these two essential elements at best there is confusion, at worst there is a risk of losing the trust of the people upon whom the success or failure of the campaign ultimately depends. It has been said that there is no trust by Afghan authorities in the British approach.126 This can be the result of successful Taliban propaganda, misinterpretations of intent, or the product of poor overall coordination and mixed messages. The question can be asked hypothetically, “if we are attempting to counter the insurgency by adopting traditional practices, sometimes described as ‘deal making’, how does the Afghan government see this? One official described this as ‘the British treating us as they did in the 19th century. We are trying to create a modern State’. His remarks show a degree of frustration, but more tellingly, they show that the ‘message’ and the practice have to be understood and supported by all parties. Only the insurgency profits in divisions between the Government and its allies.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

FCO should take the lead in implementing public diplomacy while maintaining a relatively covert role. Local partners to deliver key messages should be identified and supported in order to avoid tainting the public diplomacy with Afghan attitudes towards the British government which remain relatively poor when compared with other international actors and even the US government.

DFID should coordinate reconstruction and development assistance with public diplomacy efforts to ensure that anti-AOG messages are combined with tangible evidence of the benefits of the government’s and international community’s commitment. Such programmes should, as with all reconstruction and development, be provided principally through if not by the Afghan government.

126 Personal communication, National Security Council official, Tribal Liaison Office, and NGOs, Pakistan, April 2008.
Increased support for the GIRA is more relevant than goodwill towards the international community, though a certain degree of the latter may be credibly perceived as an important supplement to force protection.

5.2.2 Facilitate the Legitimisation of the Afghan Government

One key component of reducing AOG recruitment and building faith in the current situation is to build the legitimacy of the Afghan State. The lack of such legitimacy, particularly the perception and knowledge that it was controlled by foreign forces, undermined the British and Russian and, to a lesser degree, Taliban attempts at creating a cohesive State within Afghanistan. The international intervention should avoid repeating this mistake and, instead, focus upon building its credibility and providing an acceptable image of effective government in the minds of its citizens. Simple suggestions such as removing donor signs outside projects state purely that all support is provided by Government would be a highly visible way of showing that the State, not the UN and NGOs, are finally delivering services.

5.2.2.1 Nationalise Afghanistan’s Reconstruction and Stabilisation Agenda

The agenda for reconstruction and development must be comprehensively reconsidered. Rather than emphasising the strategic priorities of donor countries for gender, governance and counter-narcotics, local concerns should be assessed and fully reflected in the design and delivery of interventions. While, overall, rural community members prioritise education and livelihoods above all other forms of assistance, the needs should be assessed in detail on a local level. Communities should feel as if they, through their most credible and representative governance structures, are ordering from a menu of options. Doing so is critical to ensuring that community members perceive themselves as being empowered rather than violated by the provision of reconstruction and development assistance. Currently, the reality is just the opposite. Community members accept whatever forms of assistance are provided out of culturally-mandated gratitude and a hope of receiving additional assistance in the future. As such, they feel subject to the short-term projects of international donors and NGOs and, over time, begin to resent their lack of control over the process and the fact that their greatest concerns, such as economic development, are not being addressed. In such a manner, reconstruction has come to reflect an intrusive, undemocratic and culturally imposing intervention which fails, as intended, to win good will.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

Pooled donor funding mechanisms such as social funds, best exemplified by the NSP, should be fully supported by DFID. Such programmes should emphasise the Afghan government’s role in the mobilisation of assistance rather than the role of the donor.

Elders, local governance mechanisms and the clergy should be involved in the design of interventions, and NSP-like programmes should be designed in order to allow for economic development (rather than infrastructure) projects. Examples would include larger-scale energy generating systems, complex irrigation distribution and management programmes, agricultural governance, mid-scale seed multiplication facilities and agricultural processing equipment and cultivation equipment (mills, tractors, etc.).

5.2.2.2 Build Public Sector Capacity for Governance and Service Delivery

Strengthening the government’s capacity and magnifying its role in Afghanistan’s recovery is also integral across all sectors. Focused training for civil servants and elected officials is critical. ‘Integrated’ or on-the-job capacity development activities have been repeatedly marginalised by overwhelmed implementing agencies. As such, the integration of capacity building should be replaced by stand-alone opportunities at the long-discussed but never created Civil Service Academy to be closely linked with and, potentially, managed by the Inter-Ministerial Commission for Capacity Development (ICCD). The decentralisation of capacity building to the provincial and district
level, while frequently viewed as a secondary priority to that of national capacity development, is 
integral in building local support for the government, in improving transparency and in providing 
suitable counterparts for the international intervention. That said, capacity development should not 
just target the public administration but also the National Assembly, which has only received 
approximately US$8 million for capacity development as opposed, for example, the US$7 billion 
being invested in the ANA in fiscal year 2007-08 alone. It should be noted that attention to capacity 
development does not imply that the government should be responsible for all functions typically 
ascribed to the State. Many such responsibilities, particularly in the Afghan context, may be more 
appropriately devolved to other entities – local, corporate and international – with the Afghan 
government as an overseer. In such a case, despite not providing the services, the State will still 
require adequate capacity to monitor and harmonise the collaborative process.

Aligned with the notion of collaborative governance, a rationalisation process must take place 
whereby interventions are either incorporated within the Afghan government or handed over to the 
private sector or civil society. A third solution is also possible whereby the international community 
retains control of some critical areas with a series of milestones according to which the 
interventions or areas are handed over to either the state, the private sector or the civil society. 
Such an approach would allow for a clear separation of duties and would likely, particularly in the 
short term, signal to AOG members as well as to local communities that the State recognises the 
need for greater local control of services and governance.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

DFID should generously support the ICCD and create, with the participation of other donors, a Civil 
Service Academy to train public sector officials. The Academy should involve an umbrella structure 
headquartered in Kabul with regional branches and provincial sub-offices, the former to provide the 
bulk of training and the latter to provide monitoring and follow-up, on-the-job mentoring. 
Integration into or close affiliation with institutions of higher education in Afghanistan and in the 
UK should be seriously considered.

FCO should ensure the provision of training for the Afghan National Assembly. Given the sensitivity 
involved in influencing elected officials, trainers should be recruited primarily from predominantly 
Islamic countries.

The involvement of private firms and contractors in capacity development should be minimised 
given the financial interest these entities have in supplanting rather than improving public sector 
capacity. That said, Afghan entrepreneurs and, in particular, civil society should be given a greater 
share of service delivery and local governance both as a short-term measure and, in some cases, as a 
permanent measure.

**5.2.2.3 Provide Financing Directly to the Afghan Government**

Reconstruction and development funding should be provided to meet the needs established within 
the ANDS. The current levels of assistance, being less than one-eighth that provided in Bosnia and 
Herzegovina, are unacceptable, particularly in a country which has started at a relatively meagre 
level of development. Current commitments must be met, and future needs must be funded. This 
sort of long-term reconstruction process requires an appropriate trust fund. The ARTF, for its 
accomplishments, has been overly directed by donors and, shamefully, has received barely one per 
cent of funds for reconstruction and development programming. The remaining 99 per cent has 
been provided directly to contractors, UN agencies and NGOs for direct execution. The ARTF should 
be restructured so that donors’ influence, particularly in the case of earmarking and ‘preferencing’ is 
disallowed, and its governance structure should be replaced by, preferably, the National Assembly 
itself or by a representative committee including all relevant line ministries. Furthermore, all 
reconstruction and development actors, particularly the US, Germany and Japan, those countries 
least willing to use the ARTF, should be mandated to provide nearly all funds through the Trust 
Fund. Furthermore, in order to prevent donor governments and entities from threatening to
withhold aid in order to pressure the Afghan government, contributors should provide all funds up front and not, as has occasionally been the case, following the approval of individual expenditures.

Again, it is important to note that the provision of funds to the government does not necessitate that the State directly utilise these resources. In many cases, it will be more appropriate for civil society and the private sector to serve as implementers of public goods. In order to ensure that this process occurs in an orderly manner, a formal process for promoting collaborative governance should be instituted. Given the self-interested nature of Afghan ministries and public sector entities, this may indeed be one area in which some degree of donor conditionality may be seen as an unfortunate necessity.

Relevance to HMG Interventions
HMG has been a leader in the provision of assistance to the Afghan government. This role should be maintained and expanded and be coupled with the lobbying of international actors to follow suit. A mid-term (approximately two-year) schedule for the transition of all financing from ‘direct execution’ to the government or its collaborative governance partners should be set and implemented by DFID. The use of aid to pursue and support political engagement will require that, in 2008 and much of 2009, a substantial proportion of assistance may still be provided through direct execution. In such cases, an effort must still be made to provide such assistance somehow through or in the name of the Afghan government.

Correspondingly, HMG would also be wise to enhance the procurement capacity and anti-corruption mechanisms within the Afghan government in order to facilitate the ‘Afghanisation’ of reconstruction. DFID would be well placed to build procurement capacity and, with FCO, to design and recommend culturally appropriate and politically sensitive accountability systems. That said, no safeguard should be so stringent as to result in significant delays in reconstruction or to prevent the Afghan government from functioning without the insertion of highly-paid international consulting firms.

5.2.3 Commit, Consolidate and Lighten Military Interventions
Supporting a political process will require two modifications in current international military strategy. First, the military must take a lighter approach which does not incite AOGs or assist in their recruitment. As the case study of western Afghanistan showed, insecurity has generally followed – rather than fled from – international military forces. Second, the military must emphasise its long-term commitment to Afghanistan in order to allow all elements, AOGs, criminal networks and others, that it will not depart in response to increased casualties and expense.

5.2.3.1 Return to the ‘Light Footprint’ Model of Military Action
International military forces have alienated large portions of the Afghan population. While attempting to win ‘hearts and minds’ through the introduction of PRTs, no level of assistance can counter the killing of civilians or the perception of harassment or cultural insensitivity. This finding is particularly applicable to the insecure parts of the south and east in which the cultural code, Pashtunwali, demands revenge. As such, military excess which kills one civilian creates a dozen hardened enemies and widespread doubts about both the goodness and ability of the international forces. In order to avoid further alienating Afghans, the military must hone its counter-insurgency capacity. It must become quicker, lighter and more geographically dispersed in the most insecure provinces. Aerial bombardment should be minimized. Targeted attacks, aided by broadened intelligence networks involving paid informants as well as mobile phone-equipped community watch groups, should be the dominant manner of combating insurgents.

Ironically, lightening the footprint would be best served by sending an increasing number of troops to Afghanistan. The lack of troops and their relatively geographic concentration has meant that many areas do not benefit from their security potential and that, in order to respond quickly to
threats or intelligence, Predator drones\textsuperscript{127} are used in aerial strikes rather than ground troops (and without the benefit of extensive human imagery, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). An emboldened military presence would allow for increasingly targeted attacks, including by airpower, and a greater presence and response capacity in rural areas. Indeed, the low level of troops in Afghanistan is regrettable if not shameful. Relative to the country’s population, the international community has 5 per cent as many soldiers in Afghanistan as were in Kosovo in 2000 and only a third as many soldiers as are currently in Iraq.\textsuperscript{128} These statistics, when coupled with the relative size and difficult geography of Afghanistan, the failure to cement security following 2002 seems rather self-explanatory.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

MOD and the British military should avoid the use of aerial attacks. An increased military presence should be pursued, to the degree doing so is politically possible, by HMG. FCO and the Office of the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister should encourage allies to provide additional ground forces and/or free existing NAT/ISAF forces from national caveats.

**5.2.3.2 Continue but Reform Model, International Status of PRTs**

PRTs should be maintained, though they should avoid blurring the lines between civilian and military actors by engaging directly in community-based reconstruction. Their focus should be on facilitating a humanitarian space in which civilian and, preferably, government actors are able to engage in reconstruction and development activities. PRTs should, thus, be placed under civilian strategic guidance with military leadership determining the most appropriate means of achieving security.

One intriguing possibility emerging from the field research is the transfer of PRTs from their current NATO/ISAF structure to the United Nations as peacekeepers. Doing so would allow for a primarily protective role while limiting their linkage with combat-oriented military structures. It would, to a certain degree, demilitarise their role. This transfer of authority should be further examined. Such deliberations should consider the perceptions of the UN in various parts of Afghanistan in order to determine whether ‘blue berets’ would be viewed as relatively neutral actors less subject to AOG attacks. Whether in their current form or as UN peace keepers, PRTs would also benefit from the closer involvement of personnel from Islamic countries who may be able to operate with greater credibility and impunity from attack.

The perceived, if not actual, demilitarisation of the PRT model could also be achieved through the modification of their mandate. In addition to providing a humanitarian space, they could also increase their supportive role of reconstruction and development by, for instance, engaging in non-community-based projects such as the construction and protection of large-scale energy-generation and irrigation infrastructure. Alternatively, as suggested by the Washington DC-based CSIS, the PRTs could be transformed into emergency response forces which would provide medical attention, initial reconstruction assistance, medical evacuation (to Kabul or regional centres) services and other necessary assistance in the immediate aftermath of an insurgent attack, natural disaster or other crisis.\textsuperscript{129}

While this report is not necessarily able to indicate which of the aforementioned transformations are considered militarily and political feasible, it is apparent that PRTs, despite their accomplishments, have created risks for reconstruction and development actors which threaten to further risk their safety and security. De-linking reconstruction and the military will not only make reconstruction a less risky enterprise for international actors but will also reduce the community-

\textsuperscript{127} Predators are unmanned aircraft which are used in reconnaissance as well as in strikes against enemy targets.


level involvement of foreign troops and make the military presence less onerous to Afghans who increasingly perceive it as an occupying and overly invasive force.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) should cease the involvement of PRTs in community-based reconstruction. Instead, they should focus on a number of different but related areas: the facilitation of large-scale, iconic infrastructure projects and response in the aftermath of attacks or disasters. HMG, likely through FCO, MOD and the Stabilisation Unit, encourage other PRT lead nations to do the same.

MOD and the Stabilisation Unit should take the lead in the coordination and ‘rationalisation’ of PRTs. This process should involve a joint, multi-national review of PRTs and their relative strategies and strengths, the creation of a PRT coordination council based in Kabul and the development and financing, potentially through a university, think tank or private firm, of a PRT monitoring commission to ensure objective evaluations of interventions and the dissemination of emerging best practices through the coordination council.

Finally, FCO should initiate discussions with the UN regarding the transfer of PRTs to a UN Department for Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) format. The British PRT in Helmand may attempt to pilot this model in order to assess its viability.

**5.2.3.3 Consolidate and Commit Afghan and International Military Forces**

While becoming less involved at the community level, international forces and their political minders should emphasis the military’s commitment to remain within Afghanistan. Currently, the fragmented situation among the international military forces in Afghanistan, particularly national caveats among ISAF forces, has limited the international military response to the mounting insurgency. Troop-supplying nations, as a result of caveats and the rising political questioning regarding the efficacy of the international military presence have made AOGs and the Afghan government concerned about the long-term presence of troops, which is seen as a necessity for maintaining security. Internal NATO wrangling as evident in the Bucharest summit in April of this year underlined the delicate support for ISAF forces.

Such messages are destructive and allow AOGs to conclude that they can, quite simply, outlast foreign troops and seize control once international military forces have departed. The UK should, as the second largest troop-supplying nation, emphasis its long-term military intentions in Afghanistan. Such messages may be conveyed through standard public diplomacy mechanisms and should reach not only government personnel but also armed groups and rural communities. They should, furthermore, by bolstered by an increase in the number of troops stationed within Afghanistan. Moreover, a ongoing process of promoting coherence should continue and result in a consolidated military strategy. The pursuit of the Comprehensive Approach should also, if not primarily, focus upon consolidation, coordination and communication between the international forces and the Afghan political and military establishment. Currently, planning is largely conducted by ISAF commanders with MOD and ANA personnel playing an advisory role. They are not fully integrated into military planning, a fact which should be changed immediately. ISAF planners should be located within the MOD rather than within ISAF Headquarters, and MOD and ANA personnel should be involved in planning and execution from the ground up. Doing so will convey critical messages about the legitimacy of the Afghan government and the capacity of its military forces. Finally, greater continuity should be provided, particularly among those forces interacting with Afghan civilians and security services. The six-month tours, which are generally shorter than the 12-to-24-month tours completed by civilian employees of the FCO and Stabilisation Unit, have meant that Afghans perceive a considerable lack of international commitment and are forced to re-acquaint themselves and re-negotiate agreements with new personnel on an almost constant
basis. The MOD’s decision to increase tours of duty will support this recommendation, and extended hand-over periods should be arranged between those key military personnel who will be in regular contact with the Afghan public.

Relevance to HMG Interventions
MOD and FCO must take the lead in pursuing greater unity and coordination among ISAF-troop-supplying nations and between ISAF and the US military. Doing so will require the removal of national caveats. All nations should be encouraged to lengthen the military tours of their troops, and the HMG should set a positive example in this regard.

The ‘Comprehensive Approach’ should continue to be pursued, and the British military should take the lead in ensuring the full incorporation of the ANA and Afghan MOD into ISAF planning and operations. The British military may support this goal through influencing activities as well as through the full incorporation of the ANA and MOD into its planning (and into RC(S) when the rotating command returns to the UK).

5.3 National Strategies and Options
Within Afghanistan itself, there are a wide variety of processes which HMG should take a leading role in supporting. These primarily include the strengthening of Afghan security structures and the careful avoidance of further exacerbating intra-state tensions between northern and southern Afghanistan.

5.3.1 Strengthen Afghan Security Structures
In pursuing security and a political settlement, the ability of the Afghan security services will need to be significantly improved. Doing so will allow them to more effectively engage in combat and counter-insurgency and challenge the success being made by AOGs. Such pressure will be critical in convincing AOGs of the need for a political settlement and will, furthermore, help to prevent the sort of predatory behaviour among the ANP, in particular, which has alienated public support for the Afghan government.

5.3.1.1 Reform the ANA and ANP
Significant reforms are also necessary among the ANA and, in particular, the ANP. Within both the ANA and the ANP, pay and rank systems should be – as they currently are being – restructured, and merit should replace nepotism as the basis for promotion. The current process of pay and rank reform, launched in 2006, has borne some fruit at the senior-most level in the police, but at the lowest levels, there is strong evidence that it has been compromised in the face of corruption and factional pressure. Improvements are necessary, and, considering the vital importance of the process, a review should be undertaken to assess the extent to which the program’s rules and procedures were circumvented. Systems to transfer ANA and ANP payments to home communities should be instituted, even if costly, prior to the establishment of a comprehensive formal banking sector. In addition, it is of course vital to limit inflationary costs that only expose the extreme revenue weaknesses of the State. Currently, the national budget increasingly resembles a security budget, undermining the long term potential to deliver other health and education services, along side other basic transfers, to the Afghan people. Balancing fiscal and expenditure policies will be vital in this regard.

Furthermore, corrupt elements within the police should be tackled from the top down, and oversight structures should be strengthened. Pending high-level reform of the ANP and the MOI and the use

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130 M Fisher (2008) ‘Soldiers’ 6 Month Tour in Afghanistan under the Military’s Microscope’, National Post, 21 March. It should be noted that international military personnel indicated that civilian experts, particularly those working with PRTs, often worked longer tours but took more frequent and lengthy holidays. In either event, all individuals engaged in Afghanistan’s reconstruction should aim to commit lengthier but still reasonable amounts of time on the ground.
of the Focused District Development Programme (FDDP) to improve and regulate the current officer corps, the long-term viability of the ANP in its current form should be re-assessed. Several alternative models exist.

To better meet the demands of the security situation without depriving the police of a community policing orientation, the force should be restructured and endowed with a robust Gendarmerie or paramilitary component. This would permit the institution of a division of labour in which some police receive specialized paramilitary training and contribute to the counter-insurgency while others receive standard police training and assume regular police duties. The monitoring of ANP community policing through local governance bodies would be one manner in which corruption could partly be addressed. Furthermore, a police ombudsmen’s office should be created, but situated outside the MOI to insulate it from intimidation and corruption. It should be given wide powers and significant resources that would allow it to investigate abuses and allegations of corruption across the country. It should work closely with both the Internal Affairs police of the Ministry of Interior and the Attorney General.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

Pending an objective review of its performance, the UK MOD and Stabilisation Unit should modify and expand the scope of the FDDP. Such a programme should be implemented alongside the overhaul of the Afghan MOI, an ongoing process which should continue to be encouraged and financially supported by HMG.

### 5.3.1.2 Cautiously Approach Community Self-Defence Programmes

Community self-defence programmes should be approached with great caution. Previous attempts to mobilise communities in pursuit of their own defence, by the PDPA and Soviets in 1979 and 1980, laid the basis for the Mujahidin, and the recent ANAP, as was previously discussed, resulted in major complications and led to security risks associated with the dissemination of police uniforms and weapons.

Current proposals, particularly IDLG’s ASOP, are better designed given that they will not provide weapons, training or uniforms and given that they are intended to be overseen by specifically-created *shuras* comprised of the most respected individuals. These *shuras*, it is anticipated, will be able to provide a degree of social and financial control – as they will be responsible for distributing payments – that the ANAP lacked. ASOP will also involve screening for Taliban or other AOG members, which the ANAP did not. Drawing on militias or tribal levies (*lashkars*) to supplement the coercive power of the State is a common strategy in the history of the modern Afghan State stretching back to Abdur Rahman Khan in the late 19th century. This approach recognizes the decentralization of power and authority.

That said, the idea remains highly controversial and fraught with potential complications. The ANA opposed ASOP and similar programmes out of concern that doing so will distract attention and resources from more important, longer-term goals such as the building of a highly capable army. The argument that ASOP creates militias is, essentially, undeniable. Individuals associated with self-defence programmes will, according to almost all informants, become under the control of local commanders and ‘strongmen’. Once created, this process cannot be effectively controlled, even by *shuras*, and the Afghan government will not be able to effectively monitor or prevent their involvement in AOGs or criminal networks. Its command and control structures will be nearly inexistent. Furthermore, the relation between self-defence and the ANP will be complex, and it seems likely that ASOP may become engaged in the same type of predatory activity as the ANP unless the latter is significantly and effectively reformed prior to rolling out any self-defence

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131 Personal communication, Senior Military Defence Official, Kabul, Afghanistan, April 2008.
initiative. Potentially more troubling, however, is the possibility that community self-defence networks will attack the greatest perceived source of insecurity, the ANP and local administrations. Community-self defence programmes also need to be designed with a careful exit strategy and the advance commitment of funds for demobilisation programmes, inclusive of livelihood support. If such is not provided — or even if it is provided — ASOP affiliates will likely continue some form of armed or criminal activity once (or potentially before) government financing ceases. Finally, and perhaps most worryingly, community-self defence will, by necessity, be rolled out in locations with the greatest insecurity. As these locations are almost entirely within Pashtun areas, particularly in the south, community self-defence will be seen and is already seen as the re-arming and re-mobilisation of Pashtun militias by Karzai’s government. The north will almost certainly increase its military posture in response, thus moving the country one step close to civil war.

While this report makes no definitive recommendation regarding their implementation, the hope is that the aforementioned points will be considered before the full-scale deployment of community self-defence programmes. If ultimately deemed to be a greater contribution rather than risk to security, the previously described need for monitoring and safeguards — to the degree these are feasible — must be incorporated. Contingency plans for likely complications, whether the engagement of ASOP affiliates in opposition or criminal groups, conflict between the ANP and self-defence groups or tensions between the north and south, should be developed from the outset and not only in response to a crisis.

One alternative could involve Neighbourhood Security Groups (NSGs) as proposed by the Senlis Council in its recent report, *Afghanistan: Decision 2008*.132 These bodies would also involve the creation of security shuras but would limit them to liaising with rather than supplementing formal security services. Such a proposal could be effective in providing communities with a greater sense of autonomy, though there is a likely possibility that they will be seen for what they are — intelligence-gathering systems.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

HMG should temper the support and urgency being directed towards ASOP and other community self-defence programmes. FCO should ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the risks of these propositions (as described above) and should withhold funding for them — and encourage other donor nations to do the same — if adequate safeguards are not put in place to avoid regional tensions and avoid conflict with the ANP. NSGs should be promoted, in the latter case, as a viable and less risky alternative, and funding should be offered by HMG for their creation.

### 5.3.1.3 Resist Calls for ANA Expansion to 120,000 Troops

Calls for ANA expansion to 120,000 are financially reckless given the existing lack of sustainability among the Afghan security services. The ANA is financially unsustainable even in at current size without long-term, off-budget support from the international community. Expansion would only create a larger entity and one which, if and when foreign support decreases, would create major security risks pending downsizing. Furthermore, the role of the ANA as either a military, peacekeeping or policing force should be clarified, and it should be imbued with a strong nationalist ideology to prevent fragmentation and factionalisation.

Given the approved ANA expansion to 80,000 troops and the remaining though unlikely potential of further expansion, planning for demobilisation and reintegration, following a sustained period of security in the country, should be developed. Such planning often takes place as with the ANBP-led DDR process, hastily and with meagre if not negative results.

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Relevance to HMG Interventions

HMG should advocate against the expansion of the ANA to 120,000 troops. Such efforts should, however, be done as privately as possible in order to avoid the perception of overt control of the Afghan government. Additional funds and trainers, if available, should be provided instead to the ANA in order to improve the quality of the force and its access to necessary equipment.

In the seemingly unlikely event that a major expansion is permitted, DFID and the Stabilisation Unit should privately begin considering the challenge of future security sector downsizing in Afghanistan (as applicable to the ANA, ANP and other security institutions). A critical evaluation of ANBP and DIAG will be an important component of this planning.

5.3.1.4 Promote Public Integrity through Counter-Narcotics

Furthermore, the poppy trafficking networks should be tackled, in the short-term, through increased interdiction alongside borders and in neighbouring countries. Well equipped, highly trained and generously paid border guards both within Afghanistan and its neighbours should be created with international assistance. The target of interdiction should, however, not solely be the poppies and opiates but also the precursor chemicals which are necessary for processing. By closely tracking the sale and transport of these chemicals, the international community and Afghan government could provide an ideal solution in which cultivators continue to receive payment for the raw product while the organised criminal networks will be unable to add value. As such, processing will continue, as it previously had, to be done outside of Afghanistan, thus leaving far fewer profits in the country to finance violence and undermine public officials.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

While continuing to abstain from poppy eradication, interdiction and enforcement should be vigorously pursued in both Afghanistan and in countries along the trafficking routes. HMG should fund such efforts, and the MOD should provide them with military and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support. An emphasis should be placed on the elites among the narcotics trafficking networks and should also aim to make a highly public example of complicit governmental officials, particularly in the ANP and MOI.

The production and transport of precursor chemicals should be made a priority for interdiction efforts by MOD. FCO should pursue greater international monitoring and control of their production and distribution through the UN, through bi-lateral agreements with key producer countries and, potentially relevant to Afghanistan, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

5.3.2 Minimise Intra-State Tensions

Divisions between groups, particularly between northern and southern armed groups, should not be inflamed in order to prevent large-scale, intra-state conflict. First, assistance should be provided – and perceived as being provided – in equal levels to Pashtun and non-Pashtun areas. Second, further DIAG should not be pursued in the north until stability has been achieved, and government programmes perceived as re-arming or re-mobilising militias should be implemented with national and ethnic balance or not at all. Third, proposals concerning a cross-border Pashtun autonomous zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan should be viewed with intense scepticism. Doing so would be likely to inflame regional tensions and provoke re-mobilisation in the north. The Uzbek and Tajik governments would, furthermore, view such a development as potentially challenging their own borders and could, as a result, call for the removal of Coalition military forces from their countries.

5.3.2.1 Counter-Act ‘Perverse Incentives’

In addition to focusing more stringently upon livelihoods, other opportunities exist for using assistance in order to promote security. One recent development is the perception of a ‘perverse incentive’ whereby assistance is provided in the greatest amounts to insecure areas or areas which have recently become secure. By comparison, locations with little AOG activity may receive relatively
little assistance. Elected officials and rural community members alike have noted this trend in northern Afghanistan, the Hazarajat and in scattered stable communities in otherwise insecure regions. Accordingly, these individuals have concluded that violence is necessary to attract reconstruction assistance and that, as such, they should engage in or permit AOGs or other armed groups to engage in attacks within their regions. Such conclusions could lead to Taliban expansion into current secure areas, though these comments should also be interpreted as posturing and attempts to maximise assistance received. Yet, they also reflect a growing dissatisfaction with the international community and an additional contributing factor to north-south (non-Pashtun-Pashtun) tensions given that most violence and, hence, assistance is targeted in Pashtun areas.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

DFID should provide increased assistance to areas which are and which have long been secure in order to avoid this perverse incentive. Public diplomacy provided by the FCO should counter the perception that assistance is a reward for insecurity. Monitoring of the geographic distribution of assistance may be kept, though it should remain confidential given its political sensitivity.

5.4 Societal Strategies and Options

As discussed within the dynamics section, individual, societal motivations for participation in AOGs and criminal networks are more significant in the ongoing conflict than in any other in Afghanistan in recent history. As such, these must be specifically targeted. The following options apply directly to these societal motivations, though the previous sections – particularly concerning the reform of the ANP and development of effective public diplomacy – are intended to serve similar functions.

5.4.1 Abstain From and Discourage Poppy Eradication

Following security, no area has received comparable international attention than Afghanistan's booming poppy industry. Yet, for all its notoriety, it is rarely a cause of concern to many Afghans. Indeed for one in six it is the lifeline that is keeping them fed and their children in school. A distinction must be made, before considering policy, between the impoverished farmer and the well-armed traffickers and their political protectors. The latter two groups receive the vast majority of profits from narcotics and use it to bribe public officials, corrupt segments of the security service, support private militias and attempt to limit the territorial extension of State control.

With this distinction in mind, the importance of stopping the traffickers while not, necessarily, preventing the production and growth of the poppy becomes the only logical and humane solution. Eradication, which does not have the domestic or international political support to be widely implemented, will only push cultivation from province to province, leaving a trail of insecurity in its wake, and raise the value of the opium poppies produced. Furthermore, it will lead to increased poverty and to widespread hatred and resentment of international forces and their Afghan government host, as it has already done.

Rather, the international community and Afghan government will need to pursue alternative options, few as they may be. However alluring, purchasing poppies from poor farmers will only increase production and would not work given that traffickers would respond violently against the farmers. Similarly, converting poppies into painkillers, as heavily emphasised by the Senlis Council, will likely fail given that such recommendations drastically overestimate the global demand for morphine and other opium derivatives. The only successful intervention will require the ever-elusive alternative livelihood.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

As previously stated, HMG should abstain from poppy eradication, pursuing interdiction and enforcement instead, and should encourage other international actors to do the same. In order to compensate for the negative effects of eradication operations conducted by other international actors, DFID, in cooperation with PRTs and the Stabilisation Unit, may wish to tailor assistance
packages to lessen the resulting economic burden and recruitment ability of AOGs. Moreover, given that poppy reduction is such a challenging objective, it may be more useful for the UK to resist leading on such efforts. Doing so would risk straining HMG’s relationships with the Afghan government and would put British actors at an increased risk of attack.

5.4.2 Vigorously Pursue Comprehensive Rural Economic Development

As previously indicated, Afghans should be permitted to set the reconstruction and development agenda. One critical area which is consistently emphasised by Afghans and of strategic importance to the international community is livelihoods. Despite the impressive growth in economic development since 2002, men in rural communities are still among the most likely to perceive that their lives have not been positively impacted by the international intervention. These individuals, who form the category most at risk of recruitment into armed groups, require employment both to avert the shame associated with idleness in Afghanistan, to care for their families, to improve marriage prospects and to be able to decline inducements to grow opium poppies.

For the vast majority of rural communities, agriculture remains the leading source of employment. As such, it should receive the vast majority of support. This support must avoid the common trend whereby agriculture projects are frequently done in a fragmented manner, with irrigation and drainage, input supply, extension services, processing, marketing and transportation all treated as discrete elements addressed by different projects. A comprehensive approach must be taken to agriculture as well as to the military intervention, and projects should deal with all forms of assistance in a single area. That said, projects alone will not provide anything but a stop-gap measure. Extension services, seed multiplication, animal breeding and insemination and other services are technically complex and challenging. In many countries, they are provided by or heavily subsidised by the state. A similar model should be promoted within Afghanistan whereby local companies or a single State agency are established in order to provide comprehensive agricultural services with the majority of costs guaranteed by the international community. Initially, a heavy emphasis will need to be placed on subsistence agriculture and, where applicable, agriculture for local trading. Integration into international agricultural markets, so frequently pursued by international donors and NGOs, should be considered as a long-term goal.

Relevance to HMG Interventions

DFID should increase its financial commitment to rural agricultural development in order to link such interventions with other donors and fully with the Afghan government, this commitment should focus upon the programmes highlighted within the ANDS, particularly the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) programme. In the light of the global food crisis, which has significantly impacted Afghanistan, attention should be paid to sub-CARD programmes such as the National Food Security Programme. On a mid-term basis, the Rural Enterprise Programme and Research and Extension System should be emphasised.

5.4.3 Consider National Service to Build Solidarity and Address Young Men

One critical, cross-cutting intervention would be the mandating of national service across Afghanistan. Young men, in particular, could be required at a certain age to dedicate a minimum length of time to national service in either the form of nominal military preparation or reconstruction-related training. In both cases, the primary emphasis would be placed on bringing young men together from different regions and ethnic groups, providing them with education and training and imbuing them with a sense of national identity, civic responsibility and solidarity. Doing so would also provide a rite of passage through which men could gain socio-cultural standing without joining an illegal armed groups or criminal enterprise. Furthermore, it could prepare them to potentially join the ANA, ANP or, more likely, an army reserve force through the ‘military’ training or to engage in reconstruction initiatives, through training related to construction, agriculture or
water system maintenance. This programme would have a great deal of potential to build local capacities, strengthen the State and mitigate conflict-causing tensions.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

DFID should consider the viability of this programme, beginning with the commissioning of a study of global examples of national service and of attitudes among the State and the citizenry towards such a programme in Afghanistan. If successful, it should take the lead in facilitating a government-led process of designing and implementing such a programme, a process which should involve the creation of a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) or endowment to support it.

### 5.5 Cross-Cutting Strategies for a Political Resolution

Through the aforementioned strategies, options and pursuits, it will be critical to provide constant support for the preparation of dialogue and political negotiations. Doing so will require the opening of channels of communication at all levels of civil society and the government. If such groundwork is not laid, and if a minimal amount of trust has not been established by the time that all parties are ‘ripe’ for negotiation, the opportunity may be lost by an unforeseen political, military or security incident.

#### 5.5.1 Support Community-Based Peace Building

The outcome of any political process between the Afghan government and select AOGs will be more widely accepted if local animosities are muted and if an understanding for participatory politics is grasped. As such, support must be provided for the types of community-based peace building programmes which were common in the late 1990s in Afghanistan. These should focus on tangible matters such as local development planning, water resource management and oversight of schools and other public resources. Such initiatives have already been undertaken, particularly through the NSP, and should be expanded to include broader participation than NSP-fostered CDCs. Participatory structures which are designed to accommodate young men and clerics would, in particular, provide greater benefits to security.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

DFID should take the lead in financing community-based peace building programmes within Afghanistan. As with other interventions, this should begin with a results-oriented evaluation of past and ongoing peace building programmes. Given varied perceptions of Britain within Afghanistan and its colonial past, implementing partners, primarily NGOs rather than State actors, should avoid donor visibility for the good of the interventions.

#### 5.5.2 Facilitate Public Resource-Based Dispute Resolution

On a more overtly political level, structures will have to be put in place by the Afghan government in order to resolve the sorts of localised, qawmi disputes over access to State resources which have contributed up to half of all attacks attributed to the insurgency.133

Given the varied nature of these conflicts and the number of ministries and provincial and district administrations involved, it will be necessary to encourage the Afghan government to create a highly professional and closely monitored oversight committee or entity which can intervene in areas in which access to State resources have contributed to conflict. This entity should, essentially, involve arbitration and the pursuit of consensus. That said, such a system could lead to a situation in which communities stage attacks in order to allow for the renegotiation of any and every local decision and policy with which they disagree. As such, the oversight committee will be charged with working only in areas which have not experienced violence and only at the invitation of local

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133 It should, however, be noted as does the Understanding Afghanistan Political Economy Analysis (Middlebrook, et al., 2008: 11)) that it may be ‘inevitable that there will be protracted tussles between state and non-state agents over access’ to power and resources.
communities. This entity should pre-empt, not encourage violent conflict.

It will be necessary for the oversight committee or entity to work closely with jirgas at a local level in order to ensure that the process of resolving disputes is seen as respecting rather than challenging local leaders and processes. Involving local, customary structures will also prevent the State from being fully credited with any outcome deemed somewhat displeasing to one or both sides in a dispute.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

DFID should not directly engage in dispute resolution but, rather, would be wise to provide funding for such interventions through the Afghan government. In order to ensure accountability, DFID should also remain somewhat involved through the recruitment or creation of an independent monitoring commission to avoid corruption among the oversight committee.

From the outset, MOD would be wise to encourage the ANA to maintain a presence during public sector dispute resolution engagements in order to respond to attacks or to protect the oversight committee in the event that its ruling is highly contentious. That said, DFID-funded capacity development of a professional corps of negotiators and dispute resolution experts should emphasise the importance of consensus.

### 5.5.3 Promote Dialogue Concerning Humanitarian Access

In order to take the level of negotiations one step further and to actively engage the Afghan government and AOGs, dialogue concerning humanitarian access should be initiated. Such negotiations should begin by focusing on small-scale agreements concerning NGOs’ and the government’s freedom to operate in communities effected by floods, mudslides or other disasters. As trust and negotiating skills are developed through this introductory process, the government and AOGs may slowly begin discussions of higher-level priorities such as the resolution of widespread food insecurity through comprehensive rural development assistance. Such programmes may need to be implemented primarily by NGOs given the sensitivity of an extensive government presence in AOG-controlled areas.

These sorts of negotiations would have a number of benefits: (i) improving the negotiation capacity of individuals on both sides of the core conflict; (ii) providing benefits to communities which they would be able to credit jointly to the government and to the AOG; (iii) improving living standards; (iv) fostering alternative livelihoods (with agriculture programming); (v) preventing fatalities among humanitarian aid workers; and, (vi) opening lines of communication. With these lines open, it will be far easier to grasp an opportunity for nation-wide political negotiations when the situation becomes ripe.

**Relevance to HMG Interventions**

HMG would be wise to remain absent from such negotiations, though the FCO, through the British Embassy in Kabul, would be wise to encourage such a programme among the government. FCO or DFID funding for negotiation and dispute resolution skills among government participants would also be necessary.

Where negotiations concerning humanitarian access are successful, DFID should provide a high level of assistance – either directly to the government or, more likely, through a non-governmental implementing partner – for the areas in which access has been granted.

### 5.6 Section 5 Summary: Strategies and Options

The international intervention must be focused and coordinated around a single priority: the pursuit of a political resolution to the over-arching conflict between the Taliban and affiliated AOGs and the Afghan government and its foreign allies. In this pursuit, interventions must be targeted at overcoming the resistance that the key stakeholders will have to participation in such a political
process. The US may require convincing, though the upcoming elections provide an opening once a new administration is in office. The Taliban and other AOGs will need to be convinced of their inability to topple the government and affect the withdrawal of international forces. To do so, the international community must commit and bolster its military presence. It must begin to focus on long-term, iconic reconstruction and development priorities and it must pursue a more widespread and focused counter-insurgency strategy. The support of rural communities – and wary northern militias – will need to be pursued through the provision of additional reconstruction and development assistance. Such assistance, which should focus heavily on livelihoods in order to dampen AOG recruitment, should be provided through State structures in order to begin repairing the government’s legitimacy. This goal should be furthered by an unprecedented level of resources for ANP reform, using programmes such as FDDP, and by the cessation of donor contributions bypassing the State.

Pressure will also need to be applied to the Afghan political establishment. In addition to being targeted by comprehensive, stand alone capacity development opportunities, those officials with a greater interest in instability than in security should be marginalised.

That said, pressure will not necessarily lead to peace. While leverage must be sought against those who could oppose a political resolution, the bulk of actors within the AOGs and the governments should be prepared for peace building through consensus-building programmes at a number of levels. Public diplomacy which emphasises the harmful effects of insecurity and the potential for backsliding into a situation more closely approximating that in Iraq will, furthermore, go a long way to undercutting the AOG-supportive role being played by communities in Afghanistan.
6. Conclusion

Based on the future course of the international intervention, a wide and sometimes uncontrollable series of dynamics, Afghanistan’s future will develop. This conclusion aims to provide a series of portraits, which are intended to be taken as estimates of an incredibly complex situation, in order to exemplify the serious consequences of inaction or continuation of the current dynamics and to suggest what could be with the appropriate international intervention. The following scenarios emerge from the literature, from informants interviewed during the field research and based on the conclusions and informed analysis of team members. In operationalising NSID, it is vital to consider options, risks and scenarios, against which programming decisions can be made.

6.1 Future Scenario: Continued Decline

The downward spiral will continue. Suicide bombings and IED attacks will increase. The military response, targeting pockets of insurgents and, almost unavoidably, Pakistan itself, will cost the lives of civilians and further raise animosity against the international forces. Reconstruction and development assistance will be limited to increasingly few safe zones, with insecure areas benefiting only from PRT infrastructure projects and considerable but minimally effectual blitzkriegs of assistance in areas recently cleared of insurgents.

Concerned with a global real estate and credit crisis, with fewer tax revenues being collected in the developed world, Coalition countries will begin to question the cost-effectiveness of continued military action. Countries committing small numbers of troops will begin to withdraw their forces, sending a message to the insurgency and to the Afghan public that the international community is beginning to abandon them. Communities will begin falling back upon former patterns of self-protection and will look for leadership to insurgents, local militia commanders and anyone else who can provide security. Governance gains of the past seven years will evaporate along with DDR and DIAG’s admittedly sparse achievements.

While not engaging in conflict, northern and southern militias, over the course of the coming two to three years, will begin re-arming on the basis of self-defence though, in reality, in preparation for the sort of power vacuum that tore the country apart throughout the mid-1990s. A reunited but somewhat weakened Northern Alliance, having put more faith in the political system than their southern countrymen, will battle and be defeated by a Taliban with widened popularity and financing from Gulf States, poppies, Pakistanis and black market trade. Remaining international forces will begin to depart en masse, though some will remain in friendly pockets of the north and west.

The Taliban, having gained control of the south, will become a safe haven for Pakistani terrorist and insurgent forces. International military forces may periodically attack Taliban strongholds following major security incidents in the region, though the status quo will go largely unchanged for the foreseeable future. Such a situation may emerge if the current trends in Afghanistan continue.

6.2 Future Scenario: Stabilisation and Backsliding

According to such a scenario, the dominant interests of AOGs and criminal networks will seek fulfilment. Poppy trafficking networks will achieve a weak State unable to counter their illicit trade, a goal which will be maintained by their allies within the government and by other profit-minded figures benefiting from instability. AOGs will continue operations with occasional attacks and skirmishes with Afghan and international security services, though their expansion will remain limited by weak recruitment. Their increasing level of attacks against civilians will, furthermore, lead them to alienate large numbers of individuals and limit their involvement only to core areas of the south, south-east and east.

The victims of such a situation will be the Afghan government, which will remain near-permanently
weak, and the Afghan people, who will lose access to State services and reconstruction assistance. The international community's large though not complete departure will allow for the full conversion of Afghanistan into a largely criminal-dominated State.

6.3 Future Scenario: Peace

Recognising the rising rates of violence and the mounting cost of the conflict during a period of economic troubles, the international community will begin preparing the ground for negotiations with the Taliban to facilitate an eventual if not proximate withdrawal. Reconstruction and development assistance, particularly concerning rural economic development, would pour into southern, western and northern Afghanistan to slow rates of Taliban and other AOG recruitment. Public diplomacy to counter Taliban and al-Qaeda propaganda would further reduce AOG recruitment and weaken the insurgency’s base of passive public support.

The international community would make its long-term intentions in Afghanistan clear by maintaining if not increasing troop levels and by beginning work on large-scale iconic reconstruction projects such as primary irrigation canals and hydro-power facilities. Any attacks on such projects would provide further evidence that AOGs are operating in contradiction to the benefit of the Afghan people, and its support would be further reduced. The capacity development of the State and bolstering of its legitimacy through a facilitative rather than intrusive role for the international community would show that the Afghan government is a credible alternative to the Taliban and its affiliates. This message would be bolstered through the formal process of promoting collaborative governance which would devolve certain functions of the state to the private sector and institutional as well as customary civil society.

The capacity development of the Afghan security services will, simultaneously, lead to increasing AOG losses. The Taliban will, thus, be willing to undertake negotiations, as would the Afghan government following the political marginalisation of internal spoilers. With the conspicuous absence but silent support of the international community, negotiations would begin to determine a new political arrangement. While the final form will be determined by the parties involved but may well consider a Federalist model of the State with provincial self-governance (particularly in sensitive areas related to Islam and social values) and extensive and transparent monitoring arrangements under the supervision of the national government in Kabul.

The international community would, prior to or following these negotiations, support Afghan government calls for a ceasefire or cessation of hostilities to be legitimated by a UN resolution. During this period, the Taliban would be allowed to begin its political transformation into a political party and begin fielding candidates. Pending a successful round of Taliban-inclusive elections, the international military could begin scaling back operations and troop levels while maintaining an assurance force in Bagram and in southern Afghanistan, likely in Helmand Province, for a five-to-10-year period with plans for a subsequent withdrawal.

6.4 Averting Escalation and Backsliding

While based on perceptions and a close awareness of past and current trends, these scenarios are not necessarily predictive. Their value, however, is in attempting to portray, in a narrative or sequential form, the dynamics at play. These dynamics show that an extended international presence and heightened military attacks will provide a boon to insurgent recruitment. They show that insurgent recruitment in the south leads northern militias, still very much intact, to begin rearming and remobilising. Civil war is a possibility and one which will only become more so if delays in State capacity building and service delivery, ANA expansion, ANP reform and secured long-term financing do not materialise and quickly.

\[134\] Bagram refers to the large military base located in close proximity to Kabul where US forces are currently situated.
While ‘breaking points’ have been declared since 2005, with military commanders, civilians, policy experts, political leaders and others claiming that the Afghans’ goodwill towards the international community has evaporated and insecurity will reign, they have not materialised. Despite the mounting pessimism which has emerged concerning the future of Afghanistan, progress is possible. The Afghan people have shown a great deal of patience with the international community, and armed groups have had only moderate success thus far in recruitment. Change is not required immediately. In fact, the sort of political engagement proposed would fail if attempted in the short or medium term. Rather, a careful strategy must be pursued which directs all interventions, whether implemented by DFID, the FCO, MOD, Stabilisation Unit, GIRA or any other actors towards the leveraging of support for coming negotiations.
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Annex B A Strategy for SSR

The following recommendations should be pursued as part of a comprehensive and integrated approach to the reformation of Afghanistan’s security sector and to enhance security and the legitimacy and capacity of the Afghan government.

Consider the Creation of a Military Reserve Force

The Afghan government and international community should consider the creation of an Afghan military reserve force which could help to meet the manpower deficits of the ANA without mobilizing regional militias. The creation of the force would also help to imbue Afghan society with a greater attachment to the State.

Embed NATO military planners in the Afghan Ministry of Defence

There is a need for better coordination in campaign planning between NATO and the ANA. NATO has shown a reluctance in undertaking joint planning with the ANA. Not only should it overcome this reluctance, but it should gradually shift the planning process into the Afghan MOD. NATO planners should be embedded within the Ministry.

Re-Structure the ANP to Include a Gendarmerie Force

The militarization of the ANP to confront the insurgency has deprived it of a community policing focus, which has in turn undermined its ability to meet the human security needs of local populations and build their trust. To better meet the demands of the security situation without depriving the police of a community policing orientation, the force should be restructured and endowed with a robust Gendarmerie or paramilitary component. This would permit the institution of a division of labour in which some police receive specialised paramilitary training and are deployed to the front and others receive standard police training and assume regular police duties.

Create an Ombudsman Office to Monitor Corruption in the Police

A police ombudsmen’s office should be created, but situated outside the MOI to insulate it from intimidation and corruption. It should be given wide powers and significant resources that would allow it to investigate abuses and allegations of corruption across the country. It should work closely with both the Internal Affairs police of the MOI and the Attorney General.

Conduct Review of the Pay and Rank Reform Process

There is strong evidence that the final two stages of the Pay and Rank Reform process were compromised due to corruption and mismanagement. Considering the vital importance of the process, a review should be undertaken to assess the extent to which the program’s rules and procedures were circumvented and to devise a strategy to address the problem. The integrity of the entire reform process is at stake.

Form a Standing Commission to Consider Strategies to Reconcile Formal and Informal Judicial Structures

In contemporary Afghanistan informal institutions are far more viable and sustainable than their formal counterparts. Accordingly, it is necessary that the State carefully consider how to reconcile these structures, fostering a relationship of complimentarity. A commission should be created assembling representatives from all the judicial institutions as well as the main donors in the process to consider proposals to reconcile and de-conflict the formal and informal.

Create a UN Trust Fund to Support Prison Reform

Give the major funding deficits affecting the penitentiary reform process, a trust fund should be created, administered by the UN, to support the process. It would be akin to the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) and the Counter-Narcotics Trust Fund.

Create a SSR Action Group Supported by a Security Sector Reform Monitoring and Evaluation Cell (SSRMEC)

In light of the failure of the ONSC to assert an Afghan ownership, coordination, and leadership role
in relation to the SSR process, there is a need for the creation of a cross-governmental body to carry out this function. It should take the form of an SSR Action Group (SSRAG), on the same lines as the Policy Action Group (PAG), responsible for overseeing joint government and international responses to the insurgency (likened to a war cabinet). Like the PAG the membership of the SSRAG should be kept small, limited to the executive, the main line security Ministries, and key international donors and intergovernmental bodies.

An SSR Monitoring and Evaluation Cell (SSRMEC) should be created to act as the secretariat of the SSRAG. It will be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the progress of security sector reforms and reporting back to the SSRAG.

Suspend the DIAG Program
The DIAG program is failing. Transferring the program to the MOI will not alter that situation, it will just expedite its demise. The program should be suspended and a new scoping study undertaken to assess the reasons for the programs poor performance. The study should make recommendations on how the program could be re-calibrated to better meet existing challenges.

Provide Greater Support to National Assembly Security Committees
The security committees in the National Assembly – Defence, Internal Security and Justice – could potentially play a vital role in providing oversight and accountability over the security institutions. However, they don’t have the resources to fulfil their mandate. The entire assembly only receives $8 million in building-building assistance, and only a fraction of that goes to the committees. Greater resources, both human and monetary, must be provided to the committees as well as training and mentorship (Informant 22).

Create Working Group to Analyse the Issue of Fiscal Sustainability in the Security Sector
The notion of fiscal sustainability in the security sector is widely recognised to be a critical problem, but there is an unwillingness to address it due to the more pressing short-term security challenges that exist. To ensure that the government is prepared to confront this challenge in the future a committee should be created under the auspices of the Ministry of Finance to examine long-term strategies to address it. It should include members from all the security and justice institutions, key donors, the World Bank, and other relevant intergovernmental bodies.

In the event that the current strategy is revised according to some of the recommendations made above, you could see the beginnings of a gradual disengagement of international troops in 5 years. The Afghan security forces will be able to assume primary responsibility within that period. Corruption will be significantly reduced and the culture of impunity in the security sector could be dampened considerably.
Annex C  Team Member Bios

Dr. Sultan Barakat (Team Leader/Conflict Assessment Expert) is the Director of the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) at the University of York, a role he has filled since 1994. Dr Barakat specialises in the reconstruction of war-torn societies and has experience with conflict analysis, peace building, training, programme design, capacity building and policy development throughout the Middle East, Africa, Central and South Asia and elsewhere. For the past decade, his research has focused primarily upon Afghanistan. Dr Barakat published Reconstructing War-Torn Societies: Afghanistan in 2004 and After the Conflict: Reconstruction and Development in the Aftermath of War in 2005. Between 2005 and 2006, he served as Team Leader for the World Bank and Afghan government’s mid-term evaluation of the flagship NSP.

Dr. Antonio Giustozzi (Historian) is a Research Fellow at the Crisis States Research Centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science. He works on the security dimension of failed states and states in a critical situation. Dr Giustozzi also researches the political aspects of insurgency and warlordism and states’ response. Recent additions to his fields of study are ethno-politics and the study of administration building in recovering states. In recent years, he has mainly been working in and on Afghanistan, including on a recently published book, Koran Kalashnikov and Laptop, as well as on a forthcoming book, Empires of Mud.

Colonel (Ret) Christopher Langton OBE (Terrorism and Counter-Insurgency Expert) is a Senior Fellow in Conflict and Defence Diplomacy at the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) in London, a position which he filled after 32 years service in the British Army. He has experience from Northern Ireland and from service as a Military and Defence Attaché in Russia and the CIS, including the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia. He was Deputy Chief of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG). Colonel Langton is a Russian linguist. Before being appointed as Senior Fellow for Conflict and Defence Diplomacy he was Head of the Defence Analysis Department, Editor of The Military Balance and Research Fellow for Russia & Eurasia.

Major (Ret) Michael Murphy (Military Expert) completed a full career as a British Army officer deploying in recent years at the interface between military and civil missions. He has a proven track record in multi-national and complex environments in the Balkans, Sierra Leone, Iraq and post-tsunami Banda Aceh. This developed his understanding of relationships between national, international, civil and military agencies and highlighted opportunities for better focused effects through cooperation and integration of effort. His most recent field role was as Deputy Team Leader and Chief of Staff of the forming Provincial Reconstruction Team in Basra, Iraq, where he was responsible for collating the multi-agency civil military planning for a coordinated programme to develop sustainable capable governance.

Dr. Mark Sedra (Security Sector Specialist) is a Research Scholar in the Department of Political Science at the University of Waterloo and a Senior Fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). His research focuses on the topic of post-conflict state-building with an emphasis on security issues. Dr Sedra has conducted research on a number of countries and regions, including Northern Ireland, the Middle East, and the Balkans; however, the bulk of his research in recent years has centred on Afghanistan. Dr Sedra was formerly a Research Associate at the Bonn International Centre for Conversion (BICC) and a Visiting Research Fellow at the UK Defence Academy. He also served as the 2004-2005 Cadieux Léger Fellow in the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs.

Dr. Arne Strand (Political Scientist) is educated in Post-war Recovery Studies, with specialisation on coordination of humanitarian assistance in complex emergencies. He has long experience of directing Norwegian NGOs work in Afghanistan, including implementation of projects, needs and resource assessments, monitoring and evaluating of projects. He has been involved in developing management and professional capacities of Afghan national NGOs and in NGOs role in peace
building. During recent years he has been team leader of several evaluations in Afghanistan, reviewing the operations and strategies of UN agencies, NGOs and NGO consortia. He has participated in several international studies of Humanitarian Mine Action, the peace process in Aceh (Indonesia) and NGO coordination in Sri Lanka. He has directed and been a team member on a range of commissioned studies on Afghanistan in general and on aid coordination and peace building in particular.