The Impact of Governance Agreements & Programmes on Stabilisation

Stefanie Nijssen
Governance and Rule of Law Desk Officer
stefanie.nijssen@cimicweb.org

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The UK’s Stabilisation Unit defines stabilisation as “the process of establishing peace and security in countries affected by conflict and instability.” It notes that this process often requires “external joint military and civilian support to perform some or all of the following tasks: prevent or reduce violence, protect people and key institutions, promote political processes and prepare for longer-term development.” Several such elements, particularly fostering institutions and political processes, closely concern governance.

This document refers to governance as defined in a policy paper from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). That paper defined governance as “the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs at all levels.” More recent definitions, UNDP reports, also include issues such as transparency, accountability and judicial reform, which are addressed to varying degrees within the following pages. Governance agreements and programmes are therefore not only formal policies or diplomatic pacts but also initiatives that seek to build governance capacity, strengthen rule of law and expand a state’s legitimacy among its citizenry and throughout its territory (e.g., by fostering development or providing basic services). This broad definition of governance relates closely to the definition of stabilisation noted above, as evident in a governance “issue note” from the Stabilisation Unit.

The Conflict Research Unit at the Clingendael Institute also points out that governance can even affect the likelihood of conflict and instability. The specific manner in which governance contributes to stability in Afghanistan is taken up in the remainder of this piece, which is divided into two sections – one dedicated to agreements and another focused upon programmes at the national and subnational levels.

Inter-Governmental Agreements

Agreements between Afghanistan and neighbouring or partner countries have an impact on stabilisation, reports a document by New York University’s Center for International Cooperation. They may facilitate or complicate
long-term development, governance and security. In the case of Afghanistan, as evidenced in this section, the most important regional agreements are primarily economic in nature. Experts such as Mangal Sherzad, a law and political science professor at Nangarhar University, told The Christian Science Monitor that such economic agreements are in fact crucial in enabling the Afghan government to generate revenues and to become independent of foreign donors. According to Foreign Affairs, “[a] secure, stable, and prosperous Afghanistan can therefore exist only in the context of a secure, stable, and prosperous neighbourhood.”

1. Strategic Partnership Agreement with the United States (under discussion)

The US and Afghan governments have been in discussions the past several months over a strategic partnership agreement that NATO and US officials say will have major implications for stabilisation, according to The Guardian. According to the United States Department of State (DoS), the agreement is intended to provide a transparent political framework for long-term cooperation between the United States and Afghanistan. According to the Center for American Progress (CAP), Afghan and American officials are looking at ways to meet the cost of building and maintaining the expanding Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the coming years. The ANSF is expected to receive USD 13 billion in US support in 2012. Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) reported that both Afghans and the international community expect continued military support beyond 2014. The American Ambassador to Afghanistan told Reuters in 2011 that the US government does not seek permanent American military bases in Afghanistan or a presence that would be a threat to any of Afghanistan’s neighbours.

2. European Union Strategic Cooperation Agreement (under discussion)

Members of the European Union (EU) are currently discussing a strategic cooperation agreement with Afghanistan, Khaama Press reports. The issues which are expected to be included in the pact between Afghanistan and the EU include the following: infrastructure reconstruction, financial administration, human rights and counter-narcotics. EU member countries are also expected to extend their police mission, which provides training to the Afghan National Police (ANP), for a further three years, Khaama Press noted. The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) announced that Afghanistan will also ink separate strategic deals with the United Kingdom, France and Italy before the end of 2014, Ariana News reports. Presidential palace spokesman Aimal Faizi told Outlook Afghanistan that the agreement with the UK would include support for good governance, economic cooperation, ANSF training and the possible creation of a military academy in Afghanistan.

3. Strategic Pact with India (October 2011)

Afghanistan and India signed a strategic pact in the latter half of 2011. The agreement re-affirmed India’s existing USD 2 billion aid effort in Afghanistan, reports Reuters. Additionally, Reuters noted that the pact detailed cooperation in counter-terrorism operations, training of security forces and trade. India’s trillion-dollar economy is heavily invested across the region. Eurasia Review notes that the agreement was primarily seen in technical rather than political terms. It signalled India’s interest in Afghanistan’s natural resources and its willingness to continue to contribute to reconstruction and development in Afghanistan despite insecurity there. Indian firms are prepared to face risks in order to exploit Afghanistan’s mineral resources, reports Reuters. According to a brief by Sajjad Ashraf, a Visiting Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, “India is conscious that peace in Afghanistan is the key to exploiting the vast economic potential of Central Asia.”
4. Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement

In June 2011, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to enforce a long-awaited Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (APTTA) that would help Afghanistan boost its economy, Pakistani government officials told Reuters. Under the agreement, Afghanistan will be able to import goods with fewer delays and expenses via Pakistan. Currently, 34% of Afghanistan’s imported goods are transported through Pakistan, with the rest coming via Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, Reuters states. According to the Press Trust India (PTI), the US government stressed the need to extend the transit trade agreement to India. The text of the APTTA itself says that Afghan trucks may carry goods to the Indo-Pakistani border crossing at Wagah but “on return [they] will not carry Indian Exports”. Additionally, once Afghan trucks reach Wagah they have to unload their products and reload them unto Indian trucks. Between 2009 and 2010, the proportion of Afghan exports destined for India increased by 35.6%, the World Trade Organization (WTO) reported. Including India in the APTTA would, therefore, allow Afghan products to easily transit not only through Pakistan but also deep into India, the Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, Robert Blake, told PTI. A Pakistani official told The Express Tribune that Pakistan could consider allowing Indian exports to Afghanistan under the APTTA “at an appropriate time in the future”.

5. Agreements with China

According to the Associated Press (AP), Afghanistan’s government signed a deal on 28 December 2011 with the state-owned China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), making China the first foreign country to exploit Afghan oil and natural gas. The Ministry of Mines (MoM) listed the initial value of the project with CNPC at USD 700 million. The oil and natural gas deal follows a USD 3.4 billion deal, signed in 2008, which provides another Chinese state-owned enterprise with a 25-year lease to copper mines in Mes Aynak, south of Kabul, reports The Christian Science Monitor. According to Foreign Policy, Chinese firms have made investments in infrastructure, including train lines linking Afghanistan to the rest of the region. The AP reported that, although China’s involvement has been mainly of an economic nature, mineral exploitation is expected to “bring enormous financial benefits to the government.” According to Afghan Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani, the Afghan government will receive 70% of the profits from the sale of the oil and natural gas under the agreement with CNPC, thus making the agreement “an important step toward self-sufficiency.” According to the MoM website, the agreement will also pave the way for creating thousands of jobs; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) says job creation could improve stabilisation efforts by deterring Afghans from joining the insurgency.

7. Regional Agreements

A number of regional agreements and initiatives may also foster stabilisation in Afghanistan. Afghan lawmakers approved the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project in April 2011, the...
Express Tribune reported. The TAPI pipeline will transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to India, generating transit fees for the Afghan government, the BBC reported. According to the South Asian News Agency (SANA), Turkmenistan finalised the Gas Sale and Purchase Agreement (GSPA) with all the participating countries in late December 2011, after much delay due to differences over the pricing of gas.

Other regional initiatives with implications for Afghanistan’s stabilisation include the Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), which brings leaders and business leaders from across the region to foster economic growth in Afghanistan, and the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Programme of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). CAREC is a partnership of 10 countries and six multilateral institutions working to promote development, economic growth and poverty reduction in Central Asia. It has been particularly active in promoting the integration of Afghanistan within Central and South Asia through the promotion of energy and transportation linkages and commercial ties.

Perhaps the most significant regional agreement for stabilisation, however, is the Good Neighbourly Relations Declaration, which was signed by Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in 2002. The Declaration stipulated that regional relations should be framed by principles of territorial integrity, mutual respect, friendly relations, co-operation and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.

Programmes

1. Selected National Priority Programmes

Building upon the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS), which was finalised in 2008, Afghanistan’s National Priority Programmes (NPPs) were expanded and presented at the Kabul International Conference in July 2010. The NPPs are efforts designed to contribute to improved service delivery, job creation, economic growth and a durable and inclusive peace. A number of these can potentially impact stability in Afghanistan and are expanded upon below.

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP)

The APRP is a programme led by the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) that aims to reintegrate former fighters who renounce violence, break ties with terrorists and agree to abide by the Afghan constitution, according to the ANDS Prioritization and Implementation Plan (ANDS PIP). Reintegration efforts focus on foot soldiers, groups and local leaders who reportedly form the bulk of the insurgency. The APRP begins with community, district and provincial leaders reaching out to insurgents in order to better understand their grievances and concerns and to encourage them to stop fighting and re-join their community. Next, steps are taken to promote peace between the reintegrating insurgent and their home communities. The process involves packages of assistance which benefit the entire community, not just the former fighter. These are designed following an assessment of community needs and may include, for instance, development projects for the community, vocational and literacy training or employment schemes.

As of June 2011 reintegration was taking place in 16 provinces and emerging in numerous others. By 30 September 2011, UNDP was reporting that 2,655 reintegration candidates from 20 provinces had joined the programme. At the same time, the Afghan government reported it was negotiating with 40 to 50 more groups which included up to 2,000 fighters in total. An evaluation of UNDP support to the APRP showed that the programme had difficulties in identifying committed insurgents, lacked adequate monitoring capacity, was undermined by the cross-border movement of insurgents and suffered from an under-developed capacity in some APRP structures. Regardless of its shortcomings, the APRP is viewed as one of the programmes most crucial to the stabilisation of Afghanistan.
National Solidarity Programme (NSP)

The NSP was created in 2003 by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) to develop the ability of Afghan communities to identify, plan, manage and monitor their own development projects. According to the ANDS PIP, the Afghan government views the NSP as a means for not only promoting development but also for fostering local, democratic self-governance and for showing that the central government can play a beneficial role in the lives of rural communities. According to the NSP website, the programme builds capacity at the community level by establishing and training Community Development Councils (CDC), which are elected from among the local population, on financial management, procurement, technical skills and transparency. Once the CDC has been elected, members map out development requirements and priorities by creating a Community Development Plan (CDP). The NSP then provides block grants of up to USD 60,000 per community to enable them to implement projects identified in the CDP with the technical assistance of a “facilitating partner”, most commonly an international nongovernmental organisation (NGO). The World Bank notes that the NSP has made significant achievements in empowering communities and increasing public faith in the system of government. The Center for a New American Security (CNAS) also reports that, since NSP-funded projects are popular among Afghan communities, the Taliban avoids attacking them.

National Area-Based Development Programme (NABDP)

The NABDP commenced as a joint initiative of the MRRD and UNDP in 2002, the ANDS PIP highlights. The programme focuses upon reducing the disparities between geographical areas through investment in infrastructure, local economic development and, usually, subnational governance initiatives. The first phase included immediate support for urgent recovery projects and capacity building for national, provincial and local authorities as well as projects to stimulate local economies and generate sustainable employment. According to a UNDP “Midterm Review” of the NABDP in 2008, one of the greatest achievements of NABDP was the establishment of District Development Assemblies (DDA). CNAS reports that DDAs helps Afghans establish relationships among Afghan citizens that bridge traditional divides.

National Programme for Law and Justice for All

The ANDS PIP states that the Law and Justice for All Programme aims to enhance the ability and capacity of justice institutions to deliver judicial services by doing the following: (i) simplifying operational procedures, (ii) reviewing the main civil and penal laws and (iii) enhancing justice institutions’ capacity to produce new laws and regulations. It also aims to expand the formal justice system to all parts of the country while simultaneously working to link and integrate the formal and the informal justice systems. Strengthening the provision of justice and legal services is intended to, according to ANDS PIP, strengthen citizens’ trust in the justice sector and in the Afghan government. US National Public Radio (NPR) reported that people often use Taliban judges, trained in Islamic law, to settle disputes since they perceive the government courts to be corrupt and too slow to act. According to a report by the US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Law and Justice for All is part of a wider effort to promote a robust alternative to the Taliban justice sector.

National Transparency and Accountability Programme

Aimed at increasing the transparency and accountability of governmental procedures and controls, the programme’s long-term goals include the establishment of a complaints management system in all regional offices. This system would document complaints, refer complaints to relevant agencies and provide monetary awards to whistle-blowers who report public sector corruption. According to a UNDP policy document, state institutions that operate with transparency, integrity and accountability are essential to strengthening the
legitimacy of public institutions, by increasing public trust and creating an enabling environment for economic and social development.

It should be noted that there are a number of other NPPs that have a potential impact on stabilisation. However, information on these programmes is limited since many of them were only introduced at the time of the Kabul Conference in 2011 and are therefore still in the early stages of implementation.

2. The Focused District Development Programme

An April 2011 report by the Dusseldorf Institute for Foreign and Security Policy (DIAS) writes that, currently, the ANP are acting as units for the “hold” phase of counterinsurgency and, as such, have had less time available for civilian policing functions. The DIAS report states that a significant number of ANP recruits receive training focused upon paramilitary rather than civilian or community-based policing. According to DIAS, this may render many Afghan police officers with only limited abilities to promote rule of law and counter criminality at the local level. In addition, given that training for the ANP has not been harmonised among various agencies involved in this process, officers working even in a single location may have differing skills and differing understandings of their role and responsibilities.

The Focused District Development (FDD) programme, which was designed with an awareness of the issues highlighted by DIAS, is intended to ensure that Afghan police are properly equipped to handle their duties by teaching them basic skills such as weapons handling, apprehension techniques, vehicle search procedures, riot control and the law. In 2009, the FDD began to concentrate on training one province at a time, not moving forward until all officers had completed the six phases. All of the police officers of a district are trained together to imbue them with common standards. FDD provides a rigid and independent assessment of both the individual police officers and the ANP units and intensive mentoring in the months after training to prevent relapses into undesirable policing practices.

Three in five Afghans see the police as corrupt, Reuters reported in 2011. A US Department of Defense (DoD) report to Congress has stated that, since the ANP is the most visible arm of the government, corruption within the ANP could negatively affect how much trust the populace places in the government. According to a report from the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI) and the Foreign Policy Research Institute (FPRI), a competent police force forms the foundation upon which the architecture of development, peace and civil security is built. In Afghanistan, the report states, the appearance of lawlessness is “a primary reason for citizen disillusionment with the central government and growing sympathy for insurgent forces.”

Conclusion

The ANDS states that if governance is not rapidly improved, that a “political and administrative vacuum will be filled by non-state structures driven by illegal and narcotic interests, not by the Government.” Regional economic and strategic agreements could play a part in this by building up Afghanistan’s economic self-sufficiency. An economically self-sustaining Afghanistan could bear the cost of its many development programmes, many of which are believed to be key to stabilisation and promoting confidence in the government.

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7 According to DIAS, these phases include (1) “District Assessment”; (2) “Relief in Place by Covering Force”; (3) “Reconstitution of the District Police Force”; (4) “Reinsertion of Reconstituted District Police Force”; (5) “Close Overwatch by Police Monitoring Team (PMT); and (6) the “Operational Overwatch by PMT” which includes periodic assessments and sustainment training.