

Where Do We Go From Here?

By Mark Sedra | March 2003

The internationally supported reconstruction and nation-building effort in Afghanistan can boast many successes in the period since the Taliban's collapse in November 2001. Two million Afghan refugees have returned to the country; three million Afghan children, particularly girls, have resumed school; a new currency, the Afghani, has been established; and a central government, chosen on a democratic basis, has grown more assertive and effective with each passing day.

In spite of these achievements, which would have been the stuff of fantasy three years ago under the repressive rule of the Taliban, a security vacuum has emerged across the country that threatens to undermine the entire nation-building effort. The resurgence of warlordism and the persistence of insurgency activities by the remnants of the Taliban and Al Qaeda have fostered insecurity and obstructed the reconstruction process.¹

The fundamental dilemma facing the international community is how to advance reconstruction amid conditions of political and social insecurity and a continuing low-intensity war. To solve this dilemma, international support to the Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA), whether it be political, economic or military in nature, should be devised and channeled with the clear objective of addressing its causes: warlordism and spoiler groups. Regrettably, donor action to confront these underlying causes, most notably U.S. military intervention, has in many cases exacerbated insecurity.

Equally disconcerting and detrimental has been donor inaction on a number of critical areas, including security sector reform, which has progressed slowly. Consequently, it is important that donor support be redesigned and expanded to make it more efficacious. By promoting institution-building and dialogue among key power-brokers at the political level; increasing and more effectively disbursing aid at the economic level; and assisting the reform of the ATA's national security apparatus and deploying peacekeepers at the military level, the international community can overcome the present insecurity impasse.

This FPIF policy report provides recommendations on how to refocus and reinvigorate donor support in the political, economic and military spheres, to better equip the ATA to confront insecurity and its causes. It aims to offer draft blueprint for the reform and revitalization of international donor policy and practice in Afghanistan.



Warlords of Two Kinds

There are two categories of warlords in Afghanistan today: total spoilers and partial spoilers.² The majority are partial spoilers, individuals who could conceivably be integrated into a central state system with the right combination of incentives and disincentives. In contrast, total spoilers are innately opposed to central authority and are unappeasable. The only method to constrain and ultimately uproot such implacable figures appears to be the application of sustained pressure, most likely involving the use of force.

Clearly, warlords in all guises pose a daunting challenge to the new regime. Any process to sideline or exclude them would encounter a violent reaction that the central government would likely be unable to handle without outside intervention. There is no option but to integrate partial spoilers into the new polity over time through a policy of negotiation and consensus building, while freezing total spoilers out of the process.

The resilience of the Taliban and Al Qaeda presents a particularly imposing threat to Afghan security. There is mounting evidence that they are regrouping along Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan, and have coalesced around former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and his fundamentalist Hizb-I-Islami party. This consortium of total spoilers was allegedly behind a spate of terrorist attacks launched in 2002 against the ATA, Afghan civilians, coalition military forces, and international humanitarian workers. These attacks included a thwarted assassination attempt on President Karzai and a car bombing in Kabul that killed over thirty Afghan civilians. Hekmatyar recently declared a *jihad* or holy war against U.S. forces and its collaborators, a veiled reference to the Karzai government. Reports also indicate that Hekmatyar's followers and some Taliban fighters have formed a group called *Lahskar Fedayan-e-Islami*, or Islamic Martyrs Brigade, to conduct suicide attacks against U.S. and ATA targets, a disturbing portent of things to come.³

Political Recommendations

1. Secure the adherence of neighboring states to a strict policy of non-interference

Regional actors must cease all support for sub-state actors—individual parties, tribes, and warlords—within Afghanistan. A significant step toward achieving this goal was achieved with the signing of the Kabul Declaration on Good-neighbourly Relations, a pledge of non-interference by Afghanistan's immediate neighbours: Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, China, and Iran, on 22 December 2002.⁴

Despite previous assurances from most states in the region that they would respect Afghanistan's sovereignty following the Taliban's collapse, external interference continued unabated in 2002. Russia pledged U.S.\$100 million in military aid to the powerful warlord and Defence Minister, General Mohammed Fahim; Iran continues to give cash and military support to Ismail Khan, a powerful warlord who controls most of western Afghanistan; and Uzbekistan provides Uzbek strongman Rashid Dostum with aid and a close protection unit.⁵ Alarming, India and Pakistan appear to be using Afghanistan as a surrogate battlefield in their continuing conflict over Kashmir. India provides Afghanistan with military, economic, and political support and has opened consulates in several cities around the country, including Kandahar and Jalalabad, near the Pakistani border. Many analysts argue that India is attempting to open up a new front in its conflict with Pakistan.

For its part, Pakistan's Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) is said to be providing sanctuary and arms to the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Hekmatyar's Hizb-I-Islami party. According to U.S. Military Spokespersons, 90% of the attacks on U.S. forces emanate from Pakistan, despite Pakistan's pledge to crack down on cross border insurgency activity under the auspices of the War on Terror. It appears that Pakistan is playing a double game, which must be halted. It is essential that the UN and the international community monitor such developments and compel regional states to uphold their pledges of non-interference.

2. Accelerate the security sector reform process

The April 2002 Geneva conference on security sector reform developed a comprehensive plan to confront the imposing problems of instability and insecurity that emerged after the fall of the Taliban. The security sector reform agenda rests on five pillars, each of which was assigned to a donor nation for supervision: Military Reform (U.S.); Police Reform (Germany); Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (Japan); Counter-Narcotics (UK); and Judicial Training (Italian). Progress on these areas in 2002 was generally much slower than expected. The process must be reinvigorated, as it provides a means to construct a sustainable and accountable security apparatus, a prerequisite for peace and stability.

Military reform must be expanded, refined, and accelerated

By the beginning of 2003, the Afghan National Army (ANA) numbered 1,700-1,800. Hence, for every trained soldier in the national army, there are at least 100 armed men in local militia throughout the country. At the current rate of graduation, it will take up to 25 years for the ANA to meet its agreed force size of 70,000.⁶ Further complicating the process is the high rate of desertion, which is running at approximately 40%. Low pay, poor food and living conditions, and confusion regarding the length and terms of service impelled many graduates to return home following basic training.⁷

A professional and effective national army is an essential element of efforts to legitimize the central government across the country and will be needed to maintain order when elections are held in 2004. The ATA and U.S. estimate that under favorable conditions, it will take at least five years to establish a capable and functioning force. It is advisable that this period be shortened considerably. Accordingly, the U.S.-coordinated training program to build the ANA should be revised and expanded.

To achieve this objective, the international commitment to training and equipping the ANA needs to be increased significantly. The U.S.\$50 million contribution made by the U.S. to the process should be doubled; an amount comparable to that spent by the U.S. to train an army in post-war Bosnia. The burden for this increase in funding should not necessarily be borne entirely by the U.S. Countries like France, who have assumed greater responsibilities in the military reform process over the past year, should defray part of the costs associated to the program's expansion.

Accelerate police reform

The Kabul student riots of November 2002, which resulted in the deaths of several students at the hands of overzealous police officers, illustrates the need to expand the police training scheme currently being implemented. Karzai partially attributed this incident to the police's lack of training and professionalism. Many officers in Afghanistan are illiterate and have only a primary education. Also, the bulk of the police under government salary remain in Kabul, leaving a security void outside the capital. To firmly establish the state's monopoly over the use of force, a centrally trained and administered professional police force must be deployed throughout the country.

Endeavoring to stimulate reform, the German government has rehabilitated the national police academy in Kabul, donated equipment, and contributed police instructors. The academy, whose lecturers have received training overseas, has a capacity of 1,500 full-time students and has set the length of its standard training program at three years. With the ATA setting a goal of providing training for 9,000 officers in Kabul and 75,000 nationwide, it will take decades to professionalize the entire force. Enlarging the program could expedite this process.

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Implement disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration plans

An excellent proposal for a disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) pilot program, entitled the Partnership for Peace Program, was finalized by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) in consultation with the ATA in August 2002. Although the program is fully funded, it has yet to be operationalized. With the exception of a few small-scale ad hoc projects, little has been implemented on the DDR front. However, developments in early 2003 indicate that the process may acquire new momentum in 2003.

In January 2003, the Afghan government announced the formation of four commissions to oversee an accelerated process of disarmament and demobilization that will be implemented across the country. This decision came after a landmark meeting attended by Rashid Dostum, Mohammad Atta, Ismail Khan, Gul Agha Sherazi, and Din Mohammed, all major warlords. They agreed to disarm their forces to facilitate the creation of a 70,000 strong national army.

The plan aims to disarm and demobilize up to 250,000 militiamen in exchange for cash, vocational training, and help in finding work. To launch the process, the Japanese government announced in late January that it would host an international conference of Group of Eight Nations (G8) and Afghan leaders on the issue of demobilization in February 2003. The purpose of the meeting, to outline plans and secure fresh pledges of support for the initiative, may be what is needed to get the process on track.

Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration is a pivotal element of any effort to sever the relationship of exploitation between the warlords and the Afghan population. As long as the principal factors motivating Afghans to take up arms—poverty and a lack of viable employment opportunities—exist, violence, insecurity, and lawlessness will remain the norm in Afghanistan.

A more balanced approach is needed for counter-narcotics

In 2002, Afghanistan returned to its position as the world's foremost producer of heroin. The 2002 crop



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reached an estimated 3,400 mt., a 540% increase on the yield for 2001 and significantly higher than the 1,900-2,700 mt. earlier predicted for 2002.⁸ According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 50 heroin refineries began operation in eastern Afghanistan alone in 2002.⁹ This lucrative trade is a major source of income for warlords and spoiler groups.

On 17 January 2002, in an attempt to arrest control of drug production, the Afghan Interim Administration (AIA) banned poppy cultivation and the consumption of heroin and introduced an aggressive poppy eradication program. From the outset, the program has been plagued by inefficiency and mismanagement. It offers U.S.\$350 for each *jirib* (one fifth of a hectare) of poppies destroyed; however, poppy growers can make double that from growing their produce and selling it on the open market.¹⁰ Compounding the problem, many farmers have claimed that they have not been duly compensated for the destruction of their crops.

It will be difficult for the ATA to lower production if they cannot provide alternative livelihoods for farmers. In drought-ridden areas of the country this is one of the only crops that farmers can afford to produce—it is attractive because it is drought resistant, easy to store, and extremely profitable. A farmer can make between 60 and 65 times more money growing poppies than wheat.¹¹ Therefore, the key to counter-narcotics efforts will be the provision of subsidies to farmers to grow alternative crops.

In terms of international support, the UK government has implemented a pilot program to train a drug enforcement unit of the Afghan police. Four experienced British law enforcement officers have begun training an initial batch of 16 recruits on advanced drug enforcement techniques. The trainees will form the core of a new drug law enforcement department of the Afghan national police.¹²

While this program is beneficial, it fails to address the underlying cause of drug production in Afghanistan: a lack of viable alternative livelihoods for farmers. Resources and energy must be invested in the design and implementation of alternative-crop and rural infrastructure development programs, to run parallel to eradication programs. The government does not have the capacity, particularly in remote drug-producing areas, to forcefully uphold the poppy ban. It requires incentives to build public trust.

Judicial reform requires more attention and support

Establishing the rule of law in Afghanistan is a vital aspect of the peace building and reconstruction effort.

The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Deputy Country Director in Afghanistan, Knut Ostby, aptly recognizes that "Afghanistan's economic growth, political and social security depends on a functioning legal system."¹³

Judicial reform also provides a vehicle to reintegrate Afghan women into the country's political, economic, and social life. The international community has devoted a significant amount of attention to re-empowering women but, in spite of some progress made in restoring their basic rights, such as health and education, there is still along way to go. Women remain disenfranchised and in many areas barred from public life, thereby depriving Afghanistan of a valuable resource for reconstruction: the intellectual and creative potential of half its population.

On 28 November 2002 a judicial reform commission, supported by the Italian government and

UNDP, was inaugurated to initiate the reconstruction of the country's legal framework. The founding of the commission was followed by the convening of an international conference entitled, Reform of the Afghan Justice System, held in Rome in December 2002. Conference participants pledged U.S.\$30 million for the judicial reform process.¹⁴

The commission has a difficult mandate: to develop a legal framework that respects Islamic legal principles yet recognizes the equality of women. Nonetheless the commission took a major step toward achieving these goals on 26 January 2003 when it and UNDP initiated a two-year project called Rebuilding the Justice System in Afghanistan. The first phase of the project will involve the reconstruction and provision of equipment for courthouses

across the country; the training of judges and other law offices; the increase of capacity of the administration of the justice system; and the organization of seminars and training for the staff of the system. Special attention will be paid to ensuring gender equality in the system and strengthening the teaching

and research capacity of Kabul University's Faculty of Law and *Sharia*. The Italian government and UNDP should take steps to ensure that judicial reform features more prominently in the wider reconstruction agenda, that donor aid is delivered in a timely fashion, and that technical assistance is provided when and where it is required.

3. Address human rights violations

The perception that certain regional figures can act with impunity fuels grievances and inter-ethnic tension, thus it is important to enhance efforts to halt human rights abuses. Unfortunately, the ATA and the UN have chosen to distance themselves from the issue of transitional justice, viewing it as too explosive to address at such a tenuous juncture in the nation-building process. They have prioritized security ahead of pressing accountability for past human rights abuses, an approach that ignores the interrelations between human rights and security. Addressing such

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crimes is a key element of peace-building and reconciliation processes in post-conflict settings, as seen in Rwanda, the Former Yugoslavia, and South Africa. To halt cycles of violence it is often necessary to prosecute blatant human rights offenders for they personify the “culture of impunity” that must be dismantled to rehabilitate war-torn societies.

The establishment of an Afghan Human Rights Commission by the Bonn Agreement was a step in the right direction. The commission made a significant amount of progress in 2002, but human rights violations, as well as evidence of past atrocities, continue to emerge. Human Rights Watch has documented serious human rights abuses in northern and western Afghanistan during the past year. What is needed is a human rights policy with teeth that will deter potential abusers. Only by delving into the past crimes of the various warlords and factions can a national catharsis take place and reconciliation begin. To achieve these goals, the nascent Afghan Human Rights Commission requires enhanced political, economic, and military support from the international community.

4. Encourage the growth of civil society

Local government and civil society organizations, such as local councils or *Shuras*, could provide an alternative source of authority to the warlords during

the transition period when the government lacks the wherewithal to make its presence felt throughout the country. Community-based approaches to reconstruction should be pursued in parallel to efforts to create robust state structures. Nation building should not be thought of solely in terms of creating and strengthening state institutions, but rather as deepening the capacities of individual communities to govern themselves.

It is important that the ATA, NGOs, and intergovernmental institutions engage local communities and civil society. The Herat *Shura* is a model example of an organization that, if provided with international support and emulated across the country, could help curb insecurity and advance reconstruction. This professional organization, borne entirely from local initiative, was founded by a group of university-educated men and women from Herat. According to Mohammed Rafiq Sahheer, the *Shura*'s elected president, the purpose of the organization is “to develop civil society” in order “to get it out of the clutches of the warlords and bring Afghanistan into the modern era.”¹⁵ The *Shura* consists of ten separate associations, including associations of lawyers, economists, teachers, engineers, painters, calligraphers, and poets. According to the *Shura*'s charter, the guilds are intended to “provide authorities and international aid agencies with professional consultations.”¹⁶ Although few in number, organizations such as this could serve as a conduit to promote development and capacity-building across Afghanistan.

The revitalization of local civil society structures, such as the *Shura*, could conceivably circumscribe the authority of the warlords and expedite reconstruction; however, the international community must be cautious when identifying local cooperation partners. The underlying goal of such endeavors should be to encourage local initiative and foster the establishment of sustainable structures. There have been instances in Afghanistan where *ad hoc*, unsustainable entities have been cobbled together in response to international demand. The creation of such transitive, artificial structures is counterproductive and should be discouraged.

Economic Recommendations

1. More donor aid must be funneled to the ATA

International donors must remove the obstacles in the aid pipeline to Afghanistan. It is crucial that the ATA and international organizations implementing reconstruction programs receive the money pledged to them on schedule. In addition to the need to fund rehabilitation and reconstruction initiatives, the ATA requires this money to pay the salaries of its bureaucracy and security forces. One of the best ways to deprive the regional warlords of their power base is to entice the soldiers under their command with offers of stable wages and benefits.

Salaries for public servants in Afghanistan are conspicuously low. The average salary earned by Afghan civil servants is U.S.\$22 per month; some cabinet ministers make no more than U.S.\$40 per month. This induces corruption, makes it difficult to attract qualified Afghans from the Diaspora, and fosters a brain drain, whereby skilled Afghans leave the ATA for higher paying jobs with international NGOs and UN agencies. Accordingly, the international community must funnel more funds directly to the ATA. Just 16% of funds for 2002, roughly U.S.\$87 million went directly to the ATA—the rest flowed through UN agencies and NGOs.¹⁷ The ATA should be the driving force behind reconstruction, not the myriad of NGOs and international organizations that have descended upon Kabul. If, as the World Bank asserts, the ATA lacks the capacity to handle and distribute such a high volume of funds, then it is the responsibility of the UN and the donor community to build that capacity.

The new regime will be unable to solidify its position in the country if the people perceive it to be an impotent bystander in the reconstruction effort. A peace dividend must be provided to gain the confidence of the populace. The dissolution of the Afghan Support Group (ASG), a loose organization established by donor states to coordinate the distribution

of aid, was a positive step in this regard. The ASG has handed over its responsibilities to a streamlined consultative group based in Kabul and led by Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani. This will give the ATA a stronger voice in the aid disbursement process.

In terms of aid allocation, the United States has been one of the most generous and efficient donor states, delivering more than U.S.\$350 million dollars in aid during 2002, 17% more than what it pledged at the Tokyo donors conference.¹⁸ In response to the

ardent appeals of the ATA and international relief agencies, the U.S. has indicated that it will increase this non-military spending to over U.S.\$400 million in 2003. However, the gross disparity between U.S. military and nonmilitary spending illustrates that it can do much more to advance reconstruction. Each month the United

States spends an estimated U.S.\$1 billion on military operations and an average of \$25 million in aid.¹⁹ The U.S. should take steps to narrow this considerable gap for development and reconstruction rather than military force is the key to stabilizing Afghanistan.

2. More, and longer term, aid is needed

Even if the donor community fulfills its aid pledges, more international assistance to Afghanistan will be required to stimulate the country's rehabilitation. At the January 2002 Tokyo Donors Conference, donors pledged U.S.\$5.25 billion for Afghan reconstruction between 2002-2006; however, the World Bank estimates that U.S.\$10-12 billion dollars will be needed for this effort during the same five-year span. A comparison of the average per capita level of aid distribution in several post conflict settings further illustrates the discrepancy between the needs of Afghanistan and the response of the international community. In Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor, an average

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of U.S.\$250 per person, per year of aid was donated. In contrast, the international community has pledged U.S.\$42 per person, per year of aid to Afghanistan over a period of five years.²⁰

There are indications that the aid community may be willing to rectify this glaring funding inequity. At a December 2002 donor conference in Oslo, donors pledged U.S.\$1.2 billion in fresh aid for 2003 and another U.S.\$800 million is expected. If all the pledges materialize, the flow of aid will exceed last year's flow by one third.²¹

Peace building and reconstruction is a long-term process that could take generations to complete. Accordingly, long-term aid commitments from donors are essential. In spite of this reality, only six donors have committed to five years or more. There is no short-term remedy or panacea for Afghanistan; the psychological and physical scars left from 23 years of civil war will take decades to heal. The International community must recognize this fact

and commit to long-term investments in the country's future.

3. The reconstruction strategy must shift from short-term relief to long-term infrastructure development

Job creation is the key to removing the dependence of Afghans on the warlords. Serving in a militia has, in the case of many Afghans, been the only option for employment. An increase in donor-supported investment projects would have an enormous impact in creating employment for the multitudes of unemployed Afghans, among them ex-combatants. However, the delivery of major investment projects, such as road construction and agricultural rehabilitation, has, thus far, been slow. Eventually, increased economic opportunities will make it difficult for warlords to keep their forces together. Attractive alternatives for those under arms will undermine the armies of the warlords. Therefore it is imperative the international community promote the establishment of large-scale labor-intensive reconstruction projects to create these jobs.

Military Recommendations

1. Expand ISAF

The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was inaugurated on 20 December 2001 by UN Security Council Resolution 1386. Composed of approximately 4,800 troops drawn from 19 different countries, ISAF's mandate is to provide security for Kabul and its immediate environs. The success of ISAF in stabilizing Kabul has fostered the view that the security environment across Afghanistan would be greatly improved if ISAF were expanded outside the capital.

Policymakers and observers have offered numerous plans for ISAF's expansion. One scenario would see it deployed to major urban centers outside the capital; forces in these regional hubs could maintain law and order, safeguard aid workers, facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid, and carry out reconstruction.

There are varying estimates as to how many additional troops would be required for this expanded mission, ranging from 5,000 to 30,000. A deployment of approximately 1,000 troops to each major population center would likely be sufficient.

Germany, which assumed joint command of ISAF with the Dutch on 10 February 2003, proposed at a 8 February 2003 international security conference in Munich that the command of ISAF be handed over to NATO. Although German Defense Minister Peter Struck did not express a desire to see the force expanded beyond Kabul, under the NATO framework this option would surely become more credible and feasible.²² ISAF's expansion could give the ATA flexibility and room for maneuver to confront recalcitrant warlords and extend the writ of the ATA into the provinces. While this would entail a considerable cost for international donors—one they have shown

an unwillingness to incur—it increasingly appears that such an investment is essential.

2. The United States should adjust its military strategy in Afghanistan while continuing to apply pressure on spoiler groups

The military strategy adopted by the United States in post-Taliban Afghanistan has been problematic in a number of areas. In particular, its solicitation of military support from certain warlords has adversely impacted the ATA and the reconstruction process. U.S. engagement is crucial for the success of the nation-building effort; however, U.S. military strategy must be harmonized with the peace-building and development objectives of the ATA to ensure that the long-term interests of the Afghan people are not sacrificed for short-term military expediency in the War on Terror.

The United States must cease providing unconditional support to Afghan warlords. This policy has prompted many warlords to openly defy the ATA. In particular, they must cease training and equipping anti-Al Qaeda units, utilized as U.S. proxies in the war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The government in Kabul has not been involved or consulted in the establishment and operation of these units, which remain loyal to regional warlords.

Developments in early 2003 demonstrate that the cessation of U.S. support to certain warlords could compel them to acquiesce to the central government. Padsha Khan Zadran, one of the few warlords who refused to recognize the legitimacy of the Karzai government, has been among the most destabilizing figures in Afghanistan during the past year. He was emboldened by the patronage and support he received from the U.S.; his militia was trained, equipped, and utilized by the U.S. military in joint operations. However, late in 2002 the U.S. ceased all

material support to Zadran and members of his militia were excluded from U.S.-led operations.

The U.S. subsequently detained many of Zadran's subcommanders, including his nephew, who was allegedly under the employ of the CIA. Deprived of his superpower patron, the ATA was able to overrun Zadran's forces in his strongholds of Gardez and Khost, capturing the two cities. Zadran's men, who now number no more than 500, have been relegated to manning roadblocks outside these cities. The emasculated Zadran, who cannot pay his troops without U.S. aid, has allegedly entered talks with the government about a rapprochement that could bring him to Kabul as a member of the government.²³ This is a stunning breakthrough for a government that has been struggling to forge a policy to deal with the warlords. The key to its success was U.S. pressure; it clearly demonstrates that concerted U.S. military and political pressure could bring the warlords to heel.

Over 8,000 U.S. troops remain in Afghanistan under the auspices of the war on terrorism. The resiliency of the Taliban and Al Qaeda poses a significant dilemma to the United States military and the international community: how do you advance reconstruction while a war, albeit a low-intensity one, continues? With U.S. military operations appearing increasingly ineffective, the intensity of spoiler insurgency activity intensifying, and the reconstruction process faltering, the U.S. has sought to modify its overall strategy, fusing military and development objectives. They have developed a plan to station 40-60 soldiers in as many as eight cities outside Kabul to provide security and support reconstruction. Dubbed Provisional Reconstruction Teams (PRT) they will include Special Operations Soldiers, Army Civil Affairs Officers, conventional ground troops, officials from USAID, and representatives from the U.S. State Department. In addition to initiating and assisting development projects, these teams are supposed to

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provide safe enclaves for the ATA, international NGOs and the UN to operate. The Bush administration plans to ask members of NATO to provide small numbers of troops for these teams. The first Civil-Military Operations Centre (CMOC) was opened in Gardez in late January 2003; an additional center will be established in Baiman in central Afghanistan in the coming months.

While it is encouraging that the U.S. Military has recognized the limitations of its previous strategy and has sought to remedy them, its new policy fails to meet the unique exigencies of the situation. A great deal of criticism, primarily from relief agencies in the field, has been leveled at the new policy. Critics affirm that the PRTs will be dependent on the warlords for security, strengthening these figures; their presence will blur the distinction between military and humanitarian operations, thereby endangering humanitarian workers in the field; they will politicize the development process by gravitating to pro-government communities as opposed to areas believed to have pro-Al Qaeda sympathies; and their lack of female staff will render them unable to address the unique needs of Afghan women.

U.S. forces should leave the coordination of reconstruction to the Afghan government, the UN, and other civilian aid agencies. The goal of restoring security in the country would be better served by the U.S. military adopting a peacekeeping role and providing assistance to disarmament and demobilization efforts, objectives more in tune with the military's modus operandi. If the U.S. were to commit a significant proportion of its troops to peacekeeping duties, other states, particularly in Europe, would surely follow suit. The primary reason for the reluctance of European governments to support an expansion of ISAF is their lack of military capacity to undertake such a large operation without U.S. support. With U.S. leadership, and under the auspices of NATO, they would likely reevaluate their objections to supporting a comprehensive peacekeeping operation.



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Even if ISAF is expanded it is critical that U.S.-led Coalition and ATA forces continue to exert sustained pressure on total spoilers. With the Taliban, Al Qaeda and Hekmatyar massing their forces in the south of the country, steps must be taken to neutralize the threat they pose. Attacks on U.S. and ATA forces, which have gradually increased in intensity since November 2002, will likely intensify further if war breaks out in Iraq. Foreshadowing this eventuality, on 27 January 2002, U.S., European and Afghan forces engaged in what has been described as the fiercest fighting in eight months with 80 rebels believed to be loyal to Hekmatyar in the mountainous area of southeastern Afghanistan near the town of Spin Boldak. Rising violence in the southeast, which resulted in the deaths of at least 30 Afghan civilians and soldiers between 29 January and 8 February, threatens to curtail all humanitarian aid to this impoverished region.²⁴ The ATA recently deployed 5,000 troops and police to the nearby town of Spin Boldak to confront the growing threat, an encouraging display of resolve and assertiveness. Total spoilers will only respond to pressure, thus the international community and the ATA should take an aggressive and proactive stance toward them.

Conclusion: Critical Phase of Nation-Building

The nation-building process in Afghanistan is entering a critical phase. The ATA, in its second year of power, must deliver on its promise of a better life for the Afghan people in 2003 or risk losing their allegiance. The window of opportunity for Afghan reconstruction and peace-building is closing. It is incumbent on the international community to help Afghanistan seize this unprecedented opportunity for renewal. Assisting the Afghan government ameliorate adverse security conditions is key to achieving this overarching objective. The continuing war in Afghanistan makes this task problematic for a minimum level of physical security is required for nation-building to proceed, thus particular attention must be paid to reconciling the oft-incompatible aims of the war on terror and the reconstruction process.

Capacity-building must be a core element of all donor policies in Afghanistan; the international community must remain cognizant of the danger of fostering Afghan dependence on the international community. The sudden and dramatic increase in international aid and support threatens to create dependency on international assistance and undermine Afghan efforts to assume ownership of the recon-

struction program. One of the strengths of Afghan society is its strong spirit of independence and entrepreneurship; this must be nurtured. To ensure that Afghan initiative is encouraged, not stifled, the international community should endeavor to leave a light footprint but with a wide impression. By expanding its involvement with a focus on fostering the creation of sustainable policies and structures, the donor community can help the ATA confront the omnipresent problem of warlordism, integrating partial spoilers into the new polity while purging the country of total spoilers. This will be a long-term and multifaceted process that could take generations to complete, thus it is essential that the donor community resist the inevitable pressures to shift spending and attention to other trouble spots before this mammoth task is completed.

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