

**Peace – Building and Democracy Promotion in  
Afghanistan: The APRP and Reconciliation with the  
Taliban\***

**Dr. Marissa Quie  
The University of Cambridge  
[Mq10000@cam.ac.uk](mailto:Mq10000@cam.ac.uk)**

***Paper to be presented at the Pan – European  
Conference of the standing group on International  
Relations of the EPCR  
Stockholm 8 – 11 September 2010***

*\* The author wishes to thank Minister M. Stanekzai and the UNDP Afghanistan for the opportunity to be part of the design team for the APRP at the Joint Secretariat*

*A full review of past efforts at reconciliation with the Taliban reveals that the process has lacked consistency. The Government and its international partners offer conflicting messages and no agreed upon policy framework exists to pursue reconciliation in a cohesive manner. Additionally, an incomplete understanding of the Taliban and other groups engaged in violence further contributes to a lack of serious progress.*

Minister Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai CEO of the Joint Secretariat, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

### **Background to the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme**

Nine years have elapsed since the most recent international intervention, yet Afghanistan remains in an unstable situation. The current intensification of violence is only the latest chapter in the country's three decade long war. The war began as a component of the Cold War ideological clash. It transformed into a regional conflict connected with tribal and ethnic factionalism. It then became a focal point of the wider battle between the West and transnational Islamic terrorism. Obama has recognised the potential explosiveness of this conflict and therefore sought to engage with Iran, to find mechanisms for peace in the Israel-Palestine conflict and to work out a durable solution for Afghanistan.

From the vantage point of two decades distance, the anti-hero of the Cold War, Mikhail Gorbachev, has counsel for Afghanistan's main ally, the United States. He says the Cold War ended because of the policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika*. 'The times work through people and history' (Vanden Heuvel, K. and Cohen, S. (2009) "Gorbachev on 1989", *The Nation*, 28 October). Gorbachev argues that the West concluded it "won the Cold War and had no need to change. That point of view is mistaken and it undermined mutual collective security for everyone and a new world order." In reference to what he learned when he ended the war in Afghanistan and what lessons President Obama should heed, he says: "*problems there could not be solved by the use of force.*" (ibid). This stands in stark contrast to Obama's view that the war in Afghanistan is a "*war of necessity.*" Gorbachev says that it is not

acceptable to impose one's own idea of order on a country without taking into account the population of that country." He exhorts Obama to "*settle the problem with dialogue*". The dialogue needs, unlike the Geneva and Bonn Accords to incorporate *all* interested groups. The West must clarify objectives and re-focus intervention on appropriate forms of state-building and the consolidation of peace rather than military victories.

The argument that the consolidation of peace through reconciliation with the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami places too high a demand on Afghanistan's fragile state and democracy is very relevant. Yet the nation is incontestably at a precarious juncture. In spite of the US military surge in 2009, long term peace cannot be achieved by military means alone. A failure to achieve peace could ultimately mean civil war and the failure of Afghanistan's nascent democracy and the gains made since 2001. If the Karzai government collapses, Afghanistan could implode into the kind of anarchy and atomised civil warfare of the 1990s. Such a state would have strong parallels with the one taken over by the Taliban in the 1990s, or contemporary Somalia –where lawlessness has created an open space for al Shabab, a violent al Qaeda-supported Islamist movement. This scenario has obvious consequences for the stability of the region and international security more generally.

Afghanistan has a long history of reintegration. For Pashtuns who constitute the majority of the population, reconciliation (*musaleha*) and reintegration are integral components of the Pashtun cultural code of *Pashtunwali*. This code includes the ideas of truth (*tiga*) and forgiveness (*afwa*). The role of reconciliation has always provided a successful means, and accepted method for resolving conflicts. Reconciliation has been a central feature of both social norms and social practices of the people of Afghanistan. This has been the case locally, regionally and internationally. The key point here is that reconciliation is not an alien concept superimposed by either the Government of Afghanistan (GIROA) or the international community. Conversely, it is an inherent part of local culture. The focus has to be on the maintenance of dignity and the avoidance of humiliation. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) design attempts to ensure this through the use of third party mediators (*shaks i sevoomi*) or brokers (*Salis ul Khair Syed*).

The APRP has been developed on the basis of the recommendations of the 1600 delegates to the Consultative Peace Jirga (CPJ) of June 2010. The CPJ recommended the APRP as the way forward for Afghanistan to achieve peace. The programme is led and implemented by the Joint Secretariat (JS) under the direction of its Chief Executive Officer, Minister Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai. The JS will receive direction from the High Peace Council. Provincial and District Governors have been designated to play a pivotal role in organising the support and the inclusion of political tribal and religious leaders and informal governmental institutions. Minister Stanekzai has stressed that the programme will require “strong civilian-military cooperation and coordination” to succeed. (JS Meeting 6, July 2010). The UN and ISAF will help to coordinate international community support behind APRP. Finally, newer components of Afghan democracy developed since the roll-out of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) are fundamental to ensuring local support. In this context, Community Development Councils (CDCs) will play a fundamental role in gaining grass roots support for the peace process. Several key officials involved in the peace process as well as designers of the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) believe a strengthening of CDCs and consolidated Village Councils under the APRP will also help to facilitate an appropriate form of state-building for Afghanistan, i.e., from the “bottom-up.” This approach emphasises a renewed perspective on the promotion of democracy in Afghanistan. For the APRP to be successful, empowerment at the local level and a decentralised form of democracy will be crucial elements in the peace process.

The GIRoA and international donors to the APRP view reintegration as an integral part of the COIN Campaign and not as a unilateral alternative. It will only be successful if it is pursued alongside the ongoing efforts to protect the Afghan people, to enable the ANSF, to neutralise influences which are conducive to conflict. This includes ending the support for the insurgency of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). There are considerable obstacles to overcome if reintegration is to reinforce Afghanistan’s fragile democracy. Obstacles include lack of trust in the government (heightened by the failures of the Disarmament Demobilisation and Reintegration Programme (DDR) and the *Proceay-e Tahkeem-e Solha* (the strengthening of peace), (PTS) processes, lack of coherence within the insurgency, lack of government capacity to deliver, lack of incentives to support

democracy as it exists in Afghanistan and the possibility of reprisal attacks.

Architects of the APRP have a strong awareness of the disharmony between what may be perceived as economic incentives to join the peace process and the powerful socio-political, ideological, religious and individual factors that draw people to the insurgency. Both the international donors and the GIRoA understand that a well-designed plan which is feasible in terms of delivery and implementation is crucial. This must be linked with genuine political resolve to achieve a basic level of good governance and the provision of real security for communities and individuals that join in the peace process. If these objectives are not achieved, the peace programme could have the reverse effect and further destabilise the failing state in Afghanistan. A key difficulty with the peace and reintegration concept is that the expectations which surround it are too high. It is not a cure for Afghanistan's fundamental problems. Conversely, it can only treat symptoms connected with the deeper issues of Afghanistan's failing state and fragmented society rather than these issues themselves.

This paper traces the quest for peace from the stress on military campaigns towards a combined strategy that highlights the role of dialogue. Sections 2, 3, and 4 analyse the structure, objectives and stages of the APRP. Section 5 evaluates previous attempts to achieve peace including the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration programme (DDR), the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) and the PTS programmes. Section 6 looks at the composition of the Taliban and its influence across Afghanistan. Section 7 outlines the Taliban perspective on the peace process. Section 8 considers the prospects for the consolidation of peace and democracy. The role of regional actors is discussed in Section 9 and section 10 looks at the practical applications of the APRP in the pilot scheme in the Shindand District of Herat province.

## From Military Campaigns to Dialogue

Afghanistan has endured over 30 years of instability. The present conflict can be traced to the beginnings of the US military operation, Operation Enduring Freedom which started on 7 October 2001. It was launched in response to the September 11 attacks in New York. The second military operation is the ISAF which was established by the UN Security Council on December 20, 2001, under Resolution 1386. It was accepted under the Bonn Agreement that no armed groups would be present in Kabul. Nonetheless, the situation on the ground undermined this and at the end of 2003 Lakdhar Brahimi the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General argued that ISAF should move out to areas both surrounding Kabul and throughout the country. On August 11, 2003, NATO took over the command and coordination of ISAF. On 13 October 2003 UN Resolution 1510 authorised the expansion of ISAF operations to include operations throughout Afghanistan. ([http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unscr/resolution\\_1510.pdf](http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unscr/resolution_1510.pdf)) Successive UN resolutions have further expanded both the roles of ISAF and UNAMA as the security situation has deteriorated in Afghanistan.

Whilst an increase in troops may ultimately help foster stability in some areas, it is generally accepted that it cannot in and of itself bring security. During the Soviet occupation, for instance, between 80,000 to 116,000 troops were on the ground. Despite their presence the conflict was not resolved as the majority of the population did not support the Soviet backed Afghan Government.

For the period from 2001 to 2005 the population was largely supportive of the government. However from 2006 onwards, public opinion began to shift towards support of anti-government elements. From 2008 onwards, the population in unstable areas began to provide voluntary support to insurgents and in stable areas the population became less sympathetic to the Karzai administration. At this point the Taliban began changing its strategy, moving away from intimidation of the people towards a more sophisticated approach to win hearts and minds. Taliban groups moved away from generalised attacks towards a targeting of individuals connected with the military forces, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the government. Taliban propaganda also became increasingly sophisticated with the use of the internet, mobile phone text messages, cartoons, graphics,

radio and videos (most notably via You Tube). This has had undeniable appeal for a younger generation of Afghans.

The security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate. The Karzai government as well as the security forces includes corrupt officials and warlords who are regarded by the civilian population as being no better than leaders of Hezb-i-Islami and the Taliban who constitute the main opposition groups. A weak central government, combined with civilian casualties from combat operations is a key variable explaining the increase in support for the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami.

A recent US survey of 120 insurgency- stricken districts (which constitutes roughly a third of all districts) found that only 25% of the population support the government and that over 35% are sympathetic to or openly provide support to the insurgents. (*The Economist*, June 26 2010 p. 32). Under the leadership of General Stanley McChrystal who initiated the Counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign, NATO has begun to use force more discriminately. A particular effort has been made to limit the aerial bombings that have killed so many Afghan civilians and undermined Afghan support. In the first 10 months of McChrystal's campaign, until April of this year, NATO planes dropped 2838 bombs. This constitutes a 19% reduction on the previous 10 months despite an overall increase in fighting. Given that McChrystal's successor, General David Petraeus, wrote the handbook on counterinsurgency for the Iraq campaign, it seems likely that efforts to target force and reduce civilian casualties will continue.

Despite attempts to handle the military campaign with greater sensitivity to civilian interests, the counterinsurgency approach is not a short term solution to the conflict. According to senior NATO officials, it takes on average over 13 years (*ISAF Report on the COIN*, June 2010) to win a counter-insurgency campaign. The Afghanistan campaign is, in effect, only in its second year and has suffered from problems of mismanagement. A Congressional report on \$2 billion of NATO contracts describes the myriad of ways in which a new mafia of politically connected war lords and Afghan government officials siphons off funds in exchange for protection of convoys.

It has been clear for some time that the military dimension of the counterinsurgency campaign requires far more time than US and

European governments are prepared to give it. Domestic support for the war in Afghanistan in NATO capitals is low. There is also acute recognition by Afghan government officials that military support to prop up GIRoA will not be lasting. Hence, the need for a negotiated settlement to the war and a political strategy that works to incorporate insurgent groups into a renewed democratic framework that is genuinely responsive to the interests of the Afghan people.

## **The Structure of APRP**

APRP is a GIRoA led programme that is supported by ISAF, UNAMA and key donors from the international community. The High Peace Council advises the President on policy issues and directs the JS to execute the programme. The JS is an inter-agency body with representation from the Ministry of the Interior (MOI), the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG) and a range of other GIRoA ministries. The JS provides the coordinating function to bring all strands of the programme together and to enable issues to be resolved. It also provides technical and financial support and political encouragement to the provincial and district level.

Acknowledging that reintegration takes place at the community level as a series of local peaces process, the district and provincial reintegration structures are pivotal in that they enable coordination and decision making to take place below the JS level. Support to the communities is primarily provided by District Governors through District Reintegration Shuras. These may have different labels depending on their context and the levels of stability/instability in a given area. Minister Stanekzai, the CEO of APRP recognises the crucial need to develop capacity at local level both for the success of the peace programme and also for the potential stability of Afghan democracy in the future. He frequently spoke of the need for decentralization as a mechanism to strengthen and legitimise the peace process and the authority of the government.

At the provincial level, day to day reintegration activity is to be coordinated and executed by Provincial Peace and Reintegration Committees (PPRCs). These committees will be established by

Provincial Governors with representation from MOD, MOI and NDS in conjunction with provincial development institutions. The designers of APRP recognise that provincial institutions often lack capacity and are at best, fragile. To militate against this there are plans for ISAF through established PRTs and UNAMA (if present in the province) to assist. In addition, tribal and community elders as well as religious scholars will play a key role.

At the tactical and operational levels, the programme focuses on local peace processes. The logic is not to “reward” insurgents in terms of monetary incentives. This is an issue which has frequently been distorted in the press with references to “ten dollar a day Taliban” and area of concern for both GIRoA and donors to the programme. Scott Guggenheim, one of the main designers of the successful NSP suggested an important shift in emphasis away from individual ex-combatants towards the communities where they re-integrate. Community elders therefore advise on the needs of given communities and packages are devised to respond to these needs.

The programme addresses outreach, negotiation, political amnesty (where appropriate), biometrics, vetting and registration. De-targeting of ex-combatants then becomes essential to the restoration of confidence. Acceptance into communities is viewed as a long term process and it is understood that grievance resolution and the attainment of *afwa* or forgiveness and *musaleha* or reconciliation will be complex and subtle processes. In some cases communities will refuse to accept those who wish to reintegrate. ISAF estimates that this may include a pool of approximately 20,000 ex-combatants. They could join APRP initiatives such as the Public Works Corps and ultimately live within urban centres such as Kabul. The lack of detailed plans for those refused integration by their communities is a source for concern as they could constitute a source of conflict in the new areas they join.

## **APRP Objectives**

The architects of APRP conceptualise the programme as a framework to promote peace through a political as opposed to a military approach. It should foster international and regional cooperation, create the political and judicial conditions for peace and reconciliation and encourage broad factions of the Taliban to

renounce violence and live within the laws of Afghanistan and join a constructive process of peace and reintegration. All of these objectives are designed to create conditions conducive to a strengthening of democracy within Afghanistan. Planners within the GIRoA and the international community grasped the challenges to achieving such broad objectives but felt they should still be put in place as goals to be strived for.

The programme is divided into political, institutional and security objectives which should serve to reinforce peace and reintegration. In terms of policy, the programme is structured to garner support for domestic, regional and international efforts to achieve peace and stability in Afghanistan. The central institutional objective is to develop the capacity for conflict-resolution and peace-building within both government and civil society. This entails a focus on methods for conflict resolution (including traditional and new approaches), mechanisms for the delivery of peace dividends and a strengthening of leadership at all levels. It is recognised that leadership remains weak within the GIRoA administration and it is hoped that the incorporation of respected figures at local levels through APRP will help to address this. It is understood that the incorporation of new elements will create difficulties in the initial stages of the programme.

The key security objective is to deliver local security and freedom of movement for communities, individuals and groups who join the peace process. Security for villages and districts participating in the APRP will be provided principally by ANSF and supported by ISAF/Coalition Forces. The GIRoA also plans to bolster security through the creation of the Ministry of the Interior's Public Protection Force (Afghanistan Public Protection Force/Village Stability) (APPF-VS). This is perhaps the weakest area of the programme in that the Mol's capacity remains extremely weak. The recent appointment of Bismillah Khan Mohammadi as a replacement for Hanif Atmar undermines the Karzai administration's claims to be fighting corruption. The APPF-VS concept was the most consistently criticised dimension of the programme by the donor community in the design phase. The ANSF still lacks the competence to implement its role in the peace process and finally the requisite support of ISAF weakens claims that the programme is Afghan-led.

The APRP outlines core objectives in the context of governance, rule of law and human rights. International donors insisted on a high degree of transparency and safeguards against 'administrative and moral corruption as well as illegal property possession' (*The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme*, (GIRoA, July 2010, p. 4). A further requirement is that the programme be compliant with the Afghan Constitution. This is an area which has already received strong criticism particularly from women's groups such as The Afghan Women's Network (AWN) and various human rights forums both within and outside of Afghanistan. They have profound reservations about a potential loss of rights gained since 2001 if former Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami members are integrated into the GIRoA.

The programme also embraces socio-economic and development objectives. Central to this is a National Community Recovery Programme which will function as a component of Phase III of the very successful National Solidarity Programme (NSP). To achieve these goals extensive training will be necessary. The most difficult aspect of the project will be the implementation of National Community Recovery within conflict-affected areas. Priority provinces include both Helmand and Kandahar where intensive fighting is prevalent. The Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD) will be responsible for the roll-out of National Community Recovery and it has serious concerns regarding areas of ongoing combat.

## **Programme Stages**

The APRP puts forward a tripartite peace and integration process over a 5 year time period. Phase 1 is called 'Social Outreach, Confidence-Building and Negotiation. In this phase provincial and district leaders will conduct outreach to individuals and their communities that demonstrate a desire to join the peace process. This will include media campaigns, local and regional Jirgas, and informal outreach underscored by the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs (MoBTA) and the IDLG through the Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP). This stage will constitute the start of grievance resolution between the GIRoA, communities, victims and ex-combatants. Concerns connected with this stage are the lack of capacity in both MoBTA and IDLG in priority provinces, the corruption and consequent lack of trust afforded to some provincial

and district leaders and the questioned legitimacy of GIRoA sponsored local Jirgas.

Phase 2 focuses on demobilisation. This is the part of the programme that manages the transition of the individual from insurgent or combatant to reintegree. It entails initial contact, assessment and vetting, biometrics and registration and weapons management. This phase will include the individual's renunciation of violence and terrorism and the provision of political amnesty. For those on the JPEL it will involve placement on to the Restricted Target List. It will also attempt to incorporate acceptance and forgiveness through mediation and grievance resolution. Demobilisation will also cover the wider issue of detainee releases and their reintegration into normal life. The goals of this phase and rely on an evaluation of the strength of *Pashtunwali* as a component of Afghan culture both within and beyond Pashtun communities. In addition, the assumed desire for peace among the majority of Afghans is crucial to the success of the process.

Following the political and security processes, and based on standardised needs assessment by GIRoA, communities, districts and provinces will be able to select from a range of options. This selection is contingent on security and capacity within specific areas. The list of options reflects the suggestions made by the CPJ and includes: community recovery (facilitated by the MRRD); integration into the ANSF (MoI and MoD); literacy and vocational training (MoLSAMaD); moderate religious education (MoHRA); and transfer to a Public Works Corps or Agricultural Conservation Corps (MoPW and MAIL). It is important to note that not all elements of the programme will be appropriate or necessary for each reintegration occurrence.

Some aspects of APRP may not be practical or feasible in terms of implementation within specific contexts. It is recognised that provincial and district institutions will take time to develop. It is suggested that gaps in the programme should be filled "pragmatically" in the interim. (*ISAF Guide to the APRP*, June 2010). This places a heavy burden on the JS. It will also mean a significant role for ISAF and provincial PRTs. This is problematic in that the APRP is nominally Afghan-led whereas in reality the ISAF Forced Reintegration Cell played a central role in constructing the design phase of the programme. ISAF participation on the ground could undermine the credibility of APRP and its legitimacy as an

Afghan initiative. If the programme is tainted by foreign military involvement local populations may feel insecure and refuse to support it.

## **Previous Attempts to Negotiate Peace**

Reintegration was a component of the 2003-2006 Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process (DDR) put into practice by the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Its mandate was to assist with integration of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF) and to reinforce security sector reform. ANBP lists the objectives of DDR as follows: “By aiming to rid the country of parallel armed structures, the disarmament of illegally armed groups (DIAG) is more than a nation-wide weapons collection programme. Its ultimate objectives are to extend the authority of the GIRoA through the development of its capacity for effective local governance, create the conditions for the establishment, maintenance and support of security throughout Afghanistan, and strengthen public support for the lawful organs of the Afghan state.” (*Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme*, UNDP, 2009, p. 2). ANBP says “the ultimate aim of DDR is to reinforce the authority of government”. DDR was successful in terms of weapons collection and the destruction of anti-personnel and anti-tank mines. It claims that under DIAG 500 illegally armed groups were disbanded and 60,000 former combatants were disarmed and provided with agricultural, vocational and business support. Nonetheless, the programme has not had a durable impact and GIRoA personnel involved in it say it was inadequate in terms of sustained reintegration. Reasons for this include a lack of standardised training, the dependence on local socio-economic conditions in order to provide employment opportunities and poor coordination with provincial and local government and other peace initiatives. (See: Dr. Robin-Edward Poulton, *DIAG Evaluation-Disbandment of Illegally-Armed Groups in Afghanistan, A Project of United Nations Development Programme and Afghanistan’s New Beginnings Programme (ANBP), April 2009*).

The *Proceay-e Tahkeem-e Solha* (Peace Through Solidarity or The Strengthening Peace Programme or Peace and Reconciliation Commission known as PTS) established in 2005, was designed to

win over former insurgents through the process of contacting and subsequently checking on their past activities and connections. PTS has been undermined by weak management, inadequate resources and a lack of coherent political will. Monitoring for the programme has been sub-standard and there is little follow through on promises to those who join. The programme has not been administered in tandem with disarmament and demobilisation programmes (DDR). It has also been tainted by credible allegations of corruption.

PTS enjoyed only relative success at the start. An important weakness has been the programme's inability to provide security. The most notable breach of security is linked with ex-Taliban Commander, Mullah Salam. He was convinced to join PTS and later appointed as District Governor of Musa Qala in Helmand province. He claims to have then been given little support by both GIRoA and the British military and his family were subsequently attacked by the Taliban. (See: US Congressional Research Service, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and US Policy*, 26 November 2008, p.28). A significant number of individuals involved in the programme reported inconsistencies in the PTS agreement and military policy towards them. PTS was further discredited because of failures to honour financial pledges.

The Head of the PTS Commission and the Spokesman for the Upper House, Professor Sigbhatullah Mojadeddi is respected by several Jihadi groups but in practice has little influence beyond his own party members. His background prevents him from being seen as a trusted interlocutor and he lacks the strong links with the Taliban which some other ministers have. As a consequence, trust was lost amongst those anti-government elements that were willing to be reconciled through PTS. In 2008 UNAMA reported some 5000 former insurgents had been reconciled but critics question the accuracy of this figure. The programme was poorly coordinated and lacked offices on the ground in a large number of provinces. It failed to facilitate effective connections with Provincial Governors. PTS does not have coherent international support. The APRP has largely achieved this through the London and Kabul Conferences and through persistent negotiations throughout the programme design phase. PTS programmes will now be merged into the APRP framework.

## The Taliban

The Taliban draws on the complexity and fragmentation of Afghan society. It is not a homogenous or cohesive group. Conversely, it can be viewed as a network within networks. Its principle networks are those of the southwest region of Afghanistan centred in Kandahar province. However, this network also includes the provinces of Helmand, Zabul and Nimruz. Other significant networks are those of the Haqqani, Mansur and Khales 'clans' in the South-eastern and Eastern regions. These networks are more regional than tribal. Nonetheless their core leadership groups are relatively stable and recruited from one tribe - the Haqqanis from the D Zadran, the Mansurs from the Andar and smaller supporting tribes and the Khales from the Khugiani. The network of the late commander Dadullah crosses tribal divides and regions. All of these networks recognise Mullah Omar as their spiritual guide. This is also the case for previously independent groups for example local Wahabi factions in Kunar and Nuristan who have sworn allegiance to Mullah Omar (See: Thomas Ruttig, 'On Kunar's Salafi Insurgents' AAN Blog, 14 January 2010, <http://www.aan-afghanistan.org/index.asp.id=570>.)

On the local level, the Taliban tend to be firmly connected to their tribes and sub-groups. GIRA studies estimate that the vast majority of Taliban units work in or close to their local communities. An important factor in this is that most combatants are part-time fighters. Local communities often perceive 'external' fighters with suspicion and support their own groups. The Taliban *layha* is a book of rules issued for fighters that is now in its third edition. (*De Afghanistan Islami Emarat Dar-ul-Ensha, De Talebano lepara layha*). The *layha* discourages 'external' activity and strongly regulates it. Commanders who wish to 'carry out jihad' outside of their areas of origin have to notify commanders in the appropriate districts or provinces and follow their orders.

Former Taliban insurgents report high levels of mutual mistrust between factions. In 2008, observers remarked on a propensity towards a reinforcement of tribalisation in core Taliban areas such as Helmand, Zabul and Uruzgan. Local Taliban renewed their

control of areas lost to external factions or commanders who were seen as meting out indiscriminate violence to local communities. GIRoA and ANBP analysts noted the way this propensity coincided with efforts on its own part to strengthen peace negotiations. They see this as an indication of the desire for peace by some Taliban factions. If the APRP then has success in priority districts, the message will spread and the potential for success in other areas will be increased.

Until the end of 2001 the Taliban were a kind of quasi-government with some of the apparatus of the modern state. After the US invasion they were forced to reorganise as an insurgent or guerrilla movement. More recently they have succeeded in gaining control over large portions of Afghanistan's territory and have influence in 33 out of the 34 provinces. (See: 'Taliban Have expanded their influence across Afghanistan: NATO official' *Daily Times* (Pakistan) 28 December 2009, [http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C12%5Cs\\_tory\\_28-12-2009\\_pg7\\_37](http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2009%5C12%5Cs_tory_28-12-2009_pg7_37)). Even if many of the Taliban government structures do not exist permanently on the ground apart from in the south of the country, the Taliban are able to provide a 'shadow' or parallel government. This quasi-government is embodied in the Leadership Council. This Council has a range of ministries that mirror the pre-2001 Taliban government structure. The Taliban systematically use the name and insignia of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on official correspondence and on their website: [www.alemarah-iea.com](http://www.alemarah-iea.com).

### **Taliban Perspectives on the Peace Programme**

The Taliban interpret the reconciliation programme as an insincere call for peace and a distraction to weaken the counterinsurgency war effort: "In Afghanistan, the White House rulers and the Pentagon generals do not want peace but only want to weaken the momentum of the war. They never intend to end the war.... The Americans are committing gross violations of human rights in Afghanistan. However, no one, including human rights advocacy entities across the world raise their fingers because all of this is done *under the name of democracy and fighting terrorism*." ('Does America Want Peace in Afghanistan?' <http://www.alemarah-iea.com>, 30/3/2010).

The Taliban portray the conflict as an illegitimate war of neo-colonialism. They do not offer a coherent alternative version of democracy to the existing system. In interviews (June-July 2010) with Mullah Mohammad Is'haq Nazimi, the former spokesman for the Taliban's Supreme Leader, Mullah Omar, he spoke of a practical willingness to negotiate. He said the "Taliban want to participate in government," however; he did not specify exactly what they wanted from this. Nazimi spoke of a desire to entrench Sharia law more fully in Afghanistan. He contends that Sharia is in no way archaic or regressive or draconian. Conversely it "nurtures humanity." In a society where social problems are endemic, it frees humanity to realise its individual potential." Women's groups in Afghanistan including the Afghan Women's Network and many female representatives to the CPJ expressed deep reservations about the potential *interpretations* made of Sharia law should former Taliban be integrated into the government. They believe the Taliban's past record in power speaks for itself. Nazimi had no response to this critique. The JS continues to consult women's groups and will appoint a Gender Adviser to find ways to preserve women's interests as the peace programme moves forward.

Nazimi believes the Taliban has a "distinctive and useful plan" for the future of Afghanistan once the withdrawal of foreign troops has taken place. This plan includes the rehabilitation of social and economic infrastructure, the "advancement and development of the education sector", industrialisation and the development of agriculture. He would not be drawn into a detailed explanation of exactly what these plans would look like in practice. When questioned about the possible mistakes of the pre-2001 Taliban government he said that some extremists had dealt with women unfairly. Afghan women "should be allowed work and education in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an but there should be a separation of the sexes." He said that the Taliban "did not want control of the government but a *voice in its affairs*." He stressed the need for 'honest and selfless service' to the country contrasting this with the corruption of the "puppet" Karzai administration. Nazimi cited the Taliban shadow regime's contrasting lack of corruption. He said the "true sons of this land should have participation in government because the rehabilitation of Afghanistan needs the participation of sincere Afghans." (Interview, June 2010).

Analyses of the inner workings of the Taliban shadow regime and public perceptions of it show a marked lack of corruption and tribal patronage in contrast with the GIRoA example. Nazimi believes the Western conception of “democracy” and government is ultimately inappropriate for Afghanistan and contrast this with an independent Islamic system (Islamic Emirate) from which foreign forces have completely withdrawn. He would not elaborate on the evident contradictions between this idea and the present negotiations – of which he is a key part – to participate in the democratic system. Nazimi says the Taliban would not repeat the mistakes of the past and would not be isolated but develop a network of international relations. As a transitional phase the Taliban suggest a “peace province” be turned over which is subject only to Afghan and other Islamic forces. They claim that in this context conflict would cease and people would live in peace. The example could then be gradually rolled out across the country. This idea lacks appeal for the Karzai government and its international allies.

### **Prospects for the Consolidation of Peace and Democracy**

Officials within the JS and international donors had a clear perception of the need to articulate what the end results of a successful programme would be. This entails an understanding of the complex nature of insurgency groups, an analysis of the reasons for radicalisation and a clear perspective on what successful reintegration will mean.

The JS commissioned several studies to uncover the reasons for radicalisation (See for example, Sarah Ludbury in cooperation with CPAU, “*Testing hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan: Why do Men Join the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami?*” DFID 14 August 2009). If these factors are clearly understood, the peace programme can respond in ways which create genuine alternatives. If the APRP is to have authentic appeal to insurgents, their critique of the existing system must be addressed. The GIRoA has to provide a renewed vision of Afghan democracy that takes into account the failures of the past.

Studies on reasons for radicalisation found that religious motivation is only one of several variables for joining or supporting the Taliban or Hezb-i- Islami. A religious message *does* resonate

with many Afghans but only if it is formulated in terms of two key practical grievances: government corruption and the presence of foreign forces. These are grievances that the Taliban has much success in disseminating through the internet – both in films and in its website as well as text messages and simple word-of-mouth. Disputes over water or conflicts with other families or clans can be motivating factors for joining the insurgency. Membership in the Taliban or Hezb-i-Islami can also act as a means for self-protection and the protection of an individual's family. It can provide status in certain communities or can stem from coercion and intimidation. Poverty and underemployment as well as unemployment often lead to part time work or support for the insurgency.

Central reasons for joining the insurgency are government corruption and the lack of justice in the current system. It is therefore obvious that profound political change must be coupled with the peace initiative. This was a recurrent recommendation of members of the JCMB and international donors in general and it correlates with lessons learned from previous attempts at reintegration in Afghanistan. A US Government Review in 2006, for example, concluded “DDR programmes only succeed (when) coordinated with reform efforts in other key sectors including the security sector (military and police), rule of law, governance and the economy.” (US State Department, *Lessons Learned: DDR in Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations, A Guide For United States Government Planners*, April 2006, p. 5).

If trust between state and civil society is not established, the state will never be able to gain grassroots support. Challenging corruption (Afghanistan is ranked as the second most corrupt nation in the international community) and ridding the administration of alleged perpetrators of human rights abuses and promoting good government are requisite corollaries for the success of APRP. Seema Samar (Chair of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) (JS Meeting May 2010) says that purging the bureaucratic apparatus of the corrupt elements is central to good governance. A clean government which upholds rule of the law is the key to restoring the popular confidence and ending the culture of impunity. This is a variable which the APRP has no control over and one which could seriously undermine its possible success.

The constitution and Afghan electoral laws ban individuals with a history of alleged perpetration of atrocities and human rights abuses from occupying or standing for public offices. Nonetheless, they have continued to participate in parliamentary and local elections. The current Parliamentary elections are a case in point. This reinforces the popular characterisation of the GIRoA as politically partisan (favouring the Northern Alliance) and excluding southerners and as a “puppet” bolstered by international forces. Given the absence of political parties and any viable opposition in fraudulent elections, there are few mechanisms apart from the insurgency for people to express their opposition to and alienation from the political status quo.

The magnitude of the suffering of the people of Afghanistan is overwhelming. The AIHRC ‘Call for Justice’ illustrated that 69% of the Afghan population has claimed that either they were directly subjected to violence and human rights abuse or a member of their family has suffered during the last three decades of the conflict. Ramazan Bashardost (a candidate in the 2009 presidential election) has emphasised the significance of public acknowledgement of the miseries inflicted on the Afghan people by warring groups. He says what is important is that the perpetrators publicly acknowledge what they have done and commit themselves to reparations (Interview 2010). The problem with this – for both the APRP process and societal reconciliation more generally is the absence of standardised and accepted accounts of the past.

Ashraf Ghani, Afghanistan’s former Finance Minister and a recent presidential candidate speaks of the “heavy ghosts Afghanistan must exorcise” (Interview, August 2005, Kabul, Afghanistan). Ghani believes that more than 3 decades of insecurity have had deep effects on Afghanistan’s psyche. Even at the most basic level, language as a horizon of meaning has been attenuated and distorted. This fragmented past may fail be incompatible with the creation of a national unified and coherent view about a common future. Afghanistan can agree on a common future only once it attains a relative consensus about its past history.

In December 2006, Karzai officially launched the Action for Peace, Justice and Reconciliation that was to take forward the recommendations from “A Call for Justice” Report. The Action Plan includes 5 key actions:

1. Acknowledgement of the suffering of the Afghan people.
2. Ensuring credible and accountable state institutions.
3. Truth-seeking and documentation
4. 4. Promotion of reconciliation and national unity
5. Establishment of effective and reasonable accountability mechanisms.

There are provisions for a National Memorial Day for the victims of human rights abuses and war crimes and a National Museum to preserve the memories of victims and educate new generations. Finally there are guidelines for administrative reform, judicial reform, fact-finding gatherings, and training of staff.

The Action Plan has never been put into practice. Yet it does provide a framework for a comprehensive truth-seeking national process which could augment the APRP process and give much-needed legitimacy to fragile Afghan democracy. In addition there is a need to recognise the views articulated within Afghanistan's vibrant civil society. This includes women's groups and human rights groups who should be consulted on a regular rather than an ad hoc basis.

## **Decentralisation, Peace-building and Governance**

Max Weber, in his acclaimed essay, "Politics as a Vocation" argued that a fundamental condition for an entity to be a state is that it retains the monopoly of violence. The central mechanism for this is the army. Current efforts to secure the army have been less than successful. General David Petraeus, Commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan now says that the 18 month time horizon for withdrawal of foreign troops is not feasible. Two years after the fall of the Taliban the Afghan Army numbered only 5000 men. This is roughly the equivalent size of a police department in a large American city like Houston. In 2010 there are approximately 160,000 Afghan soldiers, and police, a quarter of Iraq's security services. They remain largely illiterate and underpaid. Plans to provide security at local level through the Afghanistan Public Protection Force-Village Stability (APPF-VS) have suffered from substantial criticisms from the international donor community who see the potential of these militias to easily transform into terrorist militias. Since 2001, the Taliban has begun to substantially regroup. Recent attacks on the CPJ in June in the centre of Kabul have deeply undermined the legitimacy of the state. The capacity

to provide security is a basic requirement for democracy and, by extension, peace-building. Despite extensive foreign intervention, the state's capacities remain profoundly inadequate in Afghanistan.

Despite the Bush administration's original aversion to nation-building, the international community, in the words of UN Special Representative, Lakhdar Brahimi took a "light footprint" approach to Afghanistan. The Bonn process focused on the mechanisms to construct a stable and capable state. The scheme for reconstructing the Afghan state came from the maximalist model of post-conflict reconstruction first developed during the 1990s. It emerged from the analysis of the lessons learned in interventions in sub-Saharan Africa, the Balkans and East Timor. This paradigm rested on the need for democratic elections and economic liberalization as mechanisms to achieve a stable state. Afghanistan did achieve significant milestones in the October 2004 presidential election, the September 2005 parliamentary and provincial elections and December 2005 inauguration of a new National Assembly. The tainted election of November 2009 was a manifestation of the continued weakness of the state.

The maximalist model was further refined with new requirements to build strong institutions of government based on the rule of the law, civil and political rights and institutional checks and balances. Inevitably, a large gap developed between these objectives and the reality on the ground. Western demands to transform Afghan democracy, particularly with regards to the position of women and the elimination of corruption have come into conflict with the realities of Afghan civil society.

The international community gathered once again with the Afghan leadership to redefine its vision of Afghan state and civil society through the Afghan Compact. This was a much more ambitious plan than the original Bonn Agreement. It delineated an interconnected set of state-building activities to achieve "security, governance, rule of the law human rights and economic and social development" for the Afghan polity. This strategy was based on the belief that the Bonn Agreement, the 2004 and 2005 elections and the new constitution had placed the country on a path to "democratic self-governance". What this road-map neglected was the historic failure of the Afghan state to achieve genuine

legitimacy through the representation of Afghanistan's diverse communities through the model of a centralised democratic state.

Counterinsurgency is more likely to succeed if government structure is closer to the natural preferences of the governed and more responsive to the needs of the people. If groups within the Taliban come to see their military prospects as limited, a system which is responsive at the local level might lead to reconciliation in the hope of securing a meaningful role in areas where their support is strongest.

Combating high-level corruption and improving administrative capacity is a difficult, long-term process. However, a relatively transparent system in which locals are effective decision-makers would allow community leaders to utilise and monitor community funds in ways which most benefit their particular areas. APRP is designed to enhance the power of local government and so to facilitate capacity building by allowing local officials genuine power with regard to local issues. There are some precedents for this in twentieth century Afghan history. Muhammad Nadir Shah and his son Muhammad Zahir Shah ruled for roughly half a century as nominally absolute monarchs, but with limited state bureaucracy and a certain degree of autonomy for the periphery.

Afghanistan is a failing state with which since 2001 has attempted to develop a centralized model of democracy. This is incompatible with the realities of its heterogeneous and fragmented society. The country is in a state of de facto partition. Almost all of the provinces have some form of Taliban shadow government in place. Areas within the periphery are unstable and poorly regulated with high degrees of alienation among local populations. Attempts by the West to superimpose centralised democracy on Afghanistan have failed. (See: Stephen Biddle, Fontini Christia, and J Alexander Thier, "Defining Success in Afghanistan," *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2010, Volume 89, Number 4, pp. 48-60). This was recognised by some of the architects of the Bonn Accords. Sadako Ogata (the Japanese Special Envoy to Afghanistan at the time and the current Director of the Japan International Cooperation Agency), emphasised the need for what she called a "bottom-up" approach putting local communities at the forefront of the political process. She coupled this with Martha Minnow's notion of "imagine coexistence," targeting grievance resolution and the coexistence of micro-identities at the lowest levels. Ogata believes that "top-

down” efforts to establish democracy in Afghanistan are destined to fail (Interview May 2006). This approach underscores the recognition that Afghanistan has historically had a weak state that is incapable of penetrating peripheral areas outside of Kabul and of sustaining legitimacy.

The recognition that local communities remain the fundamental source of Afghan identities and a critical base of governance and accountability is a key part of the APRP programme. This is especially clear in the extensive use made of local *Jirgas* or *Shuras* as well as Community Development Councils and Village Councils. Traditionally, the community council was a forum to resolve problems and negotiate over common goods and community issues. It became the foundation of the very successful National Solidarity Programme (NSP) run by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). The focus on the community level flows from the recognition of the proven capacity of Afghans on the ground to engage in conflict resolution. Through NSP the central government provides development grants to democratically elected community councils for local development projects. The NSP was designed at the national level but is administered locally. To date it has been a strong source of legitimacy and has been fiscally efficient and effective.

APRP utilises the third phase of the NSP as a mechanism for National Community Recovery. The overall goal of this initiative is to support communities affected by the conflict to recover in a *holistic* way. Although initially concentrating on certain districts in southern and eastern provinces where conflict has been most severe, the programme will extend to 4000 villages in 220 districts identified as priorities by the JS and then be extended to a national-scale.

Community Recovery flows from the premise that *all* Afghans have suffered as a result of prolonged conflict. Reintegration should therefore be conceptualized as a collective benefit for entire communities and not a dividend designed only for former combatants and their supporters.

## The Role of Regional Actors

In general regional actors are supportive of the peace process. Turkmenistan previously had friendly relations with the Taliban regime, based on their official policy of positive neutrality. They are supportive of the political process and understand that the conflict cannot be solved by military means alone. Tajikistan, which has close cultural and historical links with Afghanistan, supported the Northern Alliance during the Taliban period. It now supports the reintegration/reconciliation process and has offered to share its own experiences of reconciliation in the wake of the civil war.

Uzbekistan is one of the largest central Asian states. It believes that the Karzai administration is very weak and unable to control the country, particularly outside of Kabul. It understands, however, that a political process is both important and necessary. They have proposed a solution which focuses on the reactivation of the 6+2 idea (the 6 neighbouring countries of Afghanistan plus the US and Russia). This could be extended to a 6+3 formula with the addition of NATO. Uzbekistan differs from other interested members of the international community in that it believes the Karzai administration is not relevant to the negotiation process because they see this government as unsustainable.

The weakness of the Afghan state has long been compounded by the role of Pakistan in its affairs. Pakistan's military has always interpreted the various conflicts in and around Afghanistan as a function of its key institutional and national security interests. The principle interest here: balancing the power and influence of its powerful neighbour, India. India's vast resources, large population and its perceived questioning of the legitimacy of the Pakistan's existence are the reasons underlying Pakistan's concern. In order to protect Pakistan from fragmentation, successive Pakistani governments have tried to neutralise Pashtun and Baluch nationalism through support for Islamist militias among Pashtun tribes. These militias wage asymmetrical warfare on Afghanistan and Kashmir and so counter electoral majorities of opponents of government rule through their grassroots power and effective use of violence and intimidation.

The late 1940s signified momentous change for the region in the form of Indian independence and then partition between India and Pakistan. After Indian independence and the creation of Pakistan,

the Afghans contested the validity of the Durand Line and refused to recognise it as a border. They called for the self-determination of Pashtunistan. The area remains a clear source of insecurity.

The centrality of Pakistan in the security of the region is highlighted by the Obama administration's "Af-Pak strategy". A significant difficulty in this strategy is the lack of coherence in Pakistan itself on the question of Afghanistan. Pakistan's own central government is fragile and unstable. In effect it has a parallel military government with its own interests, power bases and political agenda. The gap between the army which has veto power over all aspects of national security and the civilian government is striking. The military has vacillated between supporting or appeasing militants and waging war against them. It is generally unwilling or unable to adopt an effective strategy against the Taliban.

Matt Waldman (Fellow at the Carr Centre for Human Rights Policy) argues that accounts of the Afghan conflict misconceive the nature of the relationship between Pakistan's security services and the insurgency; this extends beyond coexistence, contact and assistance (See: "The Sun in the Sky: The Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents, Discussion Paper 18 June 2010 at <http://www.crisisstates.com>). Although the Taliban has a strong internal impetus closely linked to Afghan society, an integral exogenous influence is the ISI which directs and sustains the movement according to some Taliban commanders. These commanders say that the ISI provides sanctuary, training, weaponry, funding and supplies to the movement.

ISI influence takes both direct and indirect forms in terms of strategic decision-making and the direction of field operations. Its influence over the Haqqani network is stronger than its impact on the Taliban. It has control over the most extreme and violent militias which are based in Pakistan. Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami insurgents say that the ISI are even represented as participants or observers on the Taliban Supreme Leadership Council also known as the Quetta Shura and on the Haqqani Command Council.

Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan has major geo-political implications. The Afghan government has repeatedly asked the US (both formally and informally) to commit to restricting Pakistan's influence in this area. The strong role of the ISI and key segments

of the Pakistani military implies that any progress in attaining peace and stability in Afghanistan (through APRP and military means) requires their cooperation. In realistic terms, the only way to accomplish this is to address the basic reasons for Pakistan's insecurity and in particular it's continuing conflict with India.

## **Beginnings**

Minister Stanekzai sees APRP as a radical movement away from the centralized approaches that have characterized Afghan politics in modern times. He hopes to build momentum for peace from "the bottom up" (quoted from JS Meeting of 27 June 2010) using local communities to push fighters to end the cycle of violence. "If people feel that the government and the international community genuinely want to end this, and that they will be protected, and that they will not be rearrested, I think as humans they will finally leave that cycle of violence."

The first expressions of interest in APRP came from the western province of Herat and the District of Shindand. There, more than 100 fighters entered discussions with the government in May. The following month two Taliban commanders with some 30 fighters agreed to turn themselves in and to handover their weapons. One of these commanders recounted how he had been with the Taliban since he was old enough to hold a gun, but had been persuaded by local officials to stop fighting to bring peace to his community. Further interest came from the northern province of Baghlan where 50 fighters loyal to the renegade mujahedeen leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar (Hezb-i-Islami as opposed to the Taliban), are living in a government safe house after seeking protection when they clashed with Taliban forces. In June, two members of the Shinwari tribe in Helmand approached their local MP about joining the peace initiative and then later travelled to Kabul to negotiate a settlement on behalf of the 200 families they represented. The JS regarded these cases as tests where pilot programmes could be rolled out in local communities. In these practical case studies many of the weaknesses of APRP were revealed.

Shindand (population 185,418) is one of 16 districts in the province of Herat. The town is bordered on the north by the Shindand Airfield, currently occupied by Afghan, US and Italian forces of the ISAF coalition. The PRT in the area which is run by the Italians is considered relatively weak. The town is at the northern end of the

Zirko Valley which is one of the main centres of poppy production in Western Afghanistan. It has a confirmed shadow Taliban government. The area has extensive weapons stockpiles utilised by the insurgents. The district is very unstable as a consequence of internal conflicts between the Barakzai and Alakozai tribes (both Pashtun sub-groups). The Kabul government has paid little attention to Shindand and there has been strong support for anti-government elements.

The PTS programme has been running in the Zirko Valley for 5 years. According to the Head of the PTS office, Mujadeddi (Afghans often go use only one name), it has had low levels of support from both the central government and the international community. This has undermined the credibility of government efforts to establish peace (Report on Shindand from the Ministry of Labour Social Affairs and Martyrs to the JS, 18 June 2010) was poorly conceived and implemented in Shindand and ignored central community figures. The district suffers from high levels of unemployment. Agriculture, animal husbandry and carpet weaving are the main alternatives to poppy production. Extensive support is needed to revitalise these sectors.

MOLSA representatives met with insurgents who had recently chosen to join PTS (June 15 2010). The meeting was organised as a way of determining weaknesses in local PTS operations and for developing alternative approaches for MOLSA responses to local needs through APRP. Colonel Zemary and Mullah Karim who recently left the Taliban expressed anxiety regarding difficulties caused by ongoing hostilities within their old communities which hampered reintegration. They said that PTS failed to provide genuine assistance for grievance resolution. As an alternative they hoped for guidance in finding land/employment in other provinces. The pressing need for shelter for themselves and their families had not been addressed. There was no adequate provision for training in alternative livelihoods nor was there employment potential within the security forces such as the ANA or ANP.

The JS and the ISAF Forced Reintegration Cell has a clear appreciation of the need to respond to the situation in Shindand quickly and effectively. However, the circumstances in the field mean that many aspects of the programme design have to be modified or reformulated. Insurgent views regarding the failures of both the DIAG and PTS processes insofar as grievance resolution

is concerned illustrate the significance of this process. Thus far, grievance resolution is not well developed within APRP in that it is left to provincial officials who often lack the trust of local communities. To militate against this, the APRP has put forward the idea of independent Ombudsmen. This is a potentially viable concept but it will require substantive training, careful selection of personnel and time to gain the trust of ordinary people. Tribal elders are another possibility. However, their role is often undermined by shadow Taliban governments and the younger generation of Afghans have not grown up with the traditional respect their parents had for tribal elders (comment taken from interview with MP for Farah Province, Helali , 6 July 2010). Finally, APRP proposes the use of Mullahs for grievance resolution. Foreign donors are apprehensive about the lack of regulation of this group. In comparison with Turkey, for example, where the government controls messages disseminated by clerics, Mullahs participating in the programme will be licensed and paid by GIRoA but there is no mechanism in place to monitor what they teach.

The PTS experience of ongoing community hostility and the consequent request for relocation in other provinces is scenario not adequately covered within the APRP rubric. The logistics of relocation can be intricate. The impact of relocation could be profound for other provinces to which insurgents move and could paradoxically involve radicalisation of new groups.

The implementation of literacy and vocational training is problematic because of animosity between the two tribes (Barakzai and Alakozai) and the insurgents come from both groups. Further fragmentation exists between those who supported Hezb-i-Islami and those who supported Taliban factions. This means that plans for a training centre as the physical focus of peace efforts are complicated. Ongoing conflict in Shindand and its surrounding areas has hampered the efforts of the Italian PRT under the leadership of Lt. Colonel Franco De Luca. He promised assistance and support to APRP but cited numerous instances of attempts to create employment and training opportunities which have been undermined by insurgents and armed militias.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MOLSA) lack capacity to implement the plans which they developed together with the JS. MOLSA Deputy Minister, Farhad Faradullah, initially impressed the JS and

ISAF with ideas on civic education and social worker support for former insurgents. Civic Education is in fact the politically correct version of ISAF's recommendations for "de-radicalisation". The DIAG and PTS programmes demonstrated the need for a transitional step between the laying down of weapons and reintegration to achieve a change in mindset that enables former insurgents to authentically return to their communities. ISAF has extensive studies on how this was accomplished in other countries but these ideas were rejected by GIRoA officials who argued that former insurgents should experience no shame but return as "brothers" with "dignity and honour" intact. In practice this means that Mullahs (who lack a standardised message) engage in "moderate Islamic mentoring" and take on the main burden of a change in orientation. MOLSA and MoE lack any real capacity to provide citizenship or civic education and a curriculum focusing on this was not devised. Hence, the counterbalance to any radicalisation experienced through membership in the insurgency is deeply inadequate. MOLSA and MoE also do not have sufficient numbers of trained instructors or personnel skilled in conducting viable market surveys as precursors for the delivery of their services. Consequently, there is a wide gap between the formal articulation of APRP plans and the capacity to deliver. This could result in a failure to meet the expectations of those who join the programme thus exacerbating rather than resolving conflict.

## **Conclusion**

The architects of APRP acknowledge that its objectives are sweeping and may be too broad to be fulfilled. Concomitant with this are the expectations of the Afghan people. On the one hand, these expectations are unrealistic, fuelled by partial and often distorted information regarding high levels of funding, intensive training and employment offered by the programme. On the other hand, the potential successes of the programme have been to some extent thwarted by the failures of the ongoing DIAG initiative and the weaknesses of PTS and DDR. These include inadequate resources, inefficient management and delivery and serious breaches of security. Reintegration was and has been the weakest dimension of all of these efforts and together with reconciliation, poses the greatest challenge for APRP.

The lack of commitment/belief among many of those who are responsible for facilitating APRP is another serious obstacle. Political will was a key ingredient missing in PTS and DDR. This issue also plagues the APRP. Line ministry officials were often reluctant to assist in the design of the programme (although the JS provided extensive opportunities for consultation and assistance). At times, rhetoric and promises to develop design formats exceeded actual results. More often, there was a deep lack of enthusiasm for the programme which may have been rooted in lack of capacity as well as the inadequacy of former efforts. Ministry officials frequently spoke of the ways in which over 30 years of conflict and instability took a toll on political will. Most of those involved had been forced to relocate or to switch allegiances in the past in order to survive. These experiences are common among all Afghans and they make it difficult to give genuine support to any political regime or programme. There were real concerns about the ability of line ministries to deliver on programming and to meet the standards set in the APRP rubric. If the programme is not effectively executed its consequences will be detrimental for Afghan democracy

Key figures in the JS as well as the donor community expressed anxiety about the high levels of funding afforded by the APRP. The indicative budget developed by the Ministry of Finance (MoF) and ISAF is \$782,151,711. Given the GIRoA's history of extensive corruption at every level coupled with the raised hopes of communities at the grassroots, the APRP could ultimately push Afghanistan's failing state towards implosion and possible civil war.

There is apprehension that although care has been taken to learn from the lessons of the failures of previous programmes, the APRP could still be misunderstood and misused as a kind of economic reward for former fighters thus undermining the fundamental objective of community reconciliation. In contrast with this, the designers of the initiative hope that the genuine desire for peace among the Afghan people leads communities to embrace and to shape the programme in their own unique ways to suit the needs of their particular circumstances and contexts. The reward should be the peace dividend and the ability to lead a "normal life." This should be supported by the creation of opportunities for socio-economic sustenance. This objective is underscored by the holistic concept of "National Community Recovery" which stresses the needs of *entire communities*. Through this framework,

communities can more clearly articulate their wants/needs via Community Development Councils (CDCs) and consolidated Village Councils. This strategy could augment local democracy and empowerment. If linkages between this level and provincial and central government are more effectively developed, Afghan democracy as a whole could benefit. The 2004 constitution is sufficiently flexible to allow for the devolution of power. The growing success of the NSP and the new sub-national governance policy, which permits limited administrative and fiscal autonomy for local officials, demonstrates the advantages of developing a decentralised form of democracy that is more responsive and appropriate to local needs.

The PTS process largely failed in terms of security/protection. These elements are also tenuous in the APRP. ISAF's role (even if subtle and behind the scenes) through the PRTs and military assistance could discredit the claim that the programme is "Afghan led." In this way, the APRP could be understood as just another propaganda measure of Karzai's "puppet government." The Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami have consistently worked to undermine the NATO perspective that a military campaign (the COIN) is compatible with an emphasis on dialogue and, in General McChrystal's words: "a normal component of counterinsurgency warfare." (Commander's Initial Assessment," 30 August 2009, p. 2-13). Instead, the Taliban see this as a mechanism on the part of "colonial powers" to divide and rule. This is the message which they regularly disseminate through effective channels of communication with local populations. Formally the Taliban call for the complete withdrawal of all foreign troops before dialogue begins. In practice, high level commanders have been conducting discrete negotiations with the government. A further demand is for the transitional concession of a "peace province" or provinces to be secured only by Afghan or Islamic troops. This demand is unacceptable to the Karzai government and NATO.

Successful reintegration programmes are normally executed in post-conflict conditions. The Taliban and groups connected with it have influence in approximately 33 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. ISAF and the insurgents are currently escalating their military campaigns and the APRP plan to implement its initial programmes in areas with high levels of conflict including Helmand and Kandahar which are "priority provinces." The Taliban response to this is to threaten violent retribution against reintegrees, their

families and supporters. Many communities perhaps rightly fear that the GIRoA may be unable to guarantee their security should they participate.

Local community protection is to be provided by the Afghanistan Public Protection Force/ Village-Stability (APPF-VS). This is an instrument which GIRoA plans to go ahead with and to staff with former insurgents despite the grave reservations of the majority of the donor community. There is real potential for the force to transmute into terrorist militias given inadequate training resources and safeguards. According to Afghan Government records, recidivism was a serious issue for both DDR and PTS. Some high level Commanders “re-integrated” back into the insurgency and were followed by their foot soldiers. Re-integration often resulted in higher levels of commitment to anti-government activities and increased violence. The decision to go ahead with the APPF/VS plan decision could have the opposite effect and undermine community security as well as generate mistrust.

UNDP analyses (Robert Gaylard, “An Evaluation of Mol Capacity,” UNDP, May 2010) pointed to a profound lack of capacity in the Ministry of the Interior to conduct proper vetting of insurgents wishing to join the programme. Data bases are outdated, surveillance mechanisms are weak and Provincial level support for the ministry is inadequate. ISAF assistance will be required in this area and that again undermines the message to local communities that the programme is an Afghan one. Inadequate vetting could reignite old community conflicts or create new ones and pose problems for community security. UNDP surveys indicate that it will be difficult to monitor those who choose to participate in the APRP. The PTS initiative highlights the covert and part-time nature of insurgent activity. Hence, combatants may pledge to join the APRP yet continue to support the Taliban sporadically thus jeopardising local security.

The pool of former insurgents who are not accepted back into their communities (an issue which is already apparent in the pilot case of Shindand) may join large-scale public works programmes etc. as a transitional measure. However, there is no long-term plan in place to address what will happen after that. If urban areas like Kabul are made to accept groups of this type, further instability could be generated. Grievance resolution may similarly be inadequate. There are currently no trained social workers to assist

with the process and training will take time. It is acknowledged that deep reconciliation is a long-term process. This could result in intense strain on local communities which may ultimately be unable to cope.

Previous efforts at reintegration did not provide sufficient protection for former insurgents. In the post 2001 period, senior Taliban who attempted to reconcile with the GIRoA were often arrested despite receiving informal or local amnesties. The Taliban makes extensive use in its propaganda campaigns of the fact that Talibs were detained and mistreated in Afghan or US prisons such as Guantanamo or Bagram. (Examples include: Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, Rahmatullah Sangaryar and Abdul Haq Wasiq ; (See: Fontini, Christia, “Flipping the Taliban,” in *Foreign Affairs*, July-August 2009). In contrast, the APRP promises to stand by amnesties and to preserve the “honour and dignity” of “brothers” wishing to join hands with their communities. Overcoming the mistrust that resulted from previous failures will be difficult. Similarly, security and honour for former insurgents will be hard to balance against recognition of the wrongs they may have committed against their communities.

There is great anxiety surrounding the impact of reintegration on communities. This was most keenly voiced by the original designers of the NSP and officials within MRRD who worry that reintegration without effective safeguards could undermine nascent local democracy and the success of CDCs. This concern is well-grounded given the weak format of the “civic education,” “moderate Islamic mentoring” or de-radicalisation component of the APRP. There was a real lack of clarity among Afghan officials about what civic education would mean. The delivery mechanism for this which is mainly through MoHRA contracted local Mullahs who may or may not receive training from external sources is problematic. There are no controls on what is actually transmitted to former insurgents. The studies commissioned by the JS (See: Sarah Ludbury and CPAU, *Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan*, DFID, August 2009 see also Christian Dennis, *Drivers of Radicalisation*, CPAU, May, 2010) show that economic reasons alone do not drive the insurgency. Interviews with Commanders and foot soldiers show that government corruption, the perversion of justice; local conflicts, government predation, coercion, intimidation and civilian casualties are significant motivating forces. APRP to some extent addresses

economic issues and the consequences of poverty including illiteracy and lack of appropriate skills for the job market. However, its “civic education” plans and “moderate Islamic mentoring” are poor counterweights to the effective propaganda through which fighters were radicalised after joining the insurgency.

The success or failure of the APRP is closely tied with the position of regional actors, and above all, Pakistan. The recent floods have upended Obama’s Af/Pak strategy. The US and the international community are now confronted with a humanitarian crisis on a scale which exceeds that of the tsunami in 2006. Militant groups may now exploit the situation in a region which is already very unstable. In strategic terms, the disaster could affect virtually every aspect of the relationship between the US and Pakistan and could have repercussions on the war and the fragile peace process. The disaster will strongly impact on Pakistan’s economy. It is estimated that a land mass larger than that of the UK is currently under water. As a consequence, the US may be forced to re-channel parts of its \$7.5 billion economic aid package for Pakistan. The US will be confronted with a critically weakened Pakistani government and a military which has transferred its agenda from insurgents to humanitarian assistance. The Pakistani authorities have been stretched (on their own admission) to breaking point by the crisis. This leaves an opening for the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami to strengthen their hold on local populations through provision of emergency aid.

Thus far, the greatest damage has been in regions which are focal points for the Islamic insurgency. This has undermined counterinsurgency efforts. Local governments in those areas have largely collapsed creating further space for an entrenchment of the Taliban. In consultations with the JS on the APRP, ISAF articulated a lack of clarity about numbers of insurgents within Afghanistan. They were even less clear about potential numbers of replacements coming from the tribal border areas and inside Pakistan itself. President Asif Zardari has already been criticised for his slow response to the crisis and the inability of his government to address fundamental needs in the country. If the Zardari government is further weakened by the crisis a vastly expanded pool of insurgents will emerge to destabilise the prospects for peace and democracy in both Afghanistan and Pakistan.

