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PEACE AT ALL COSTS?

Reintegration and Reconciliation in Afghanistan

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Cover Photograph: Former members of the Taliban in Farah and Herat Provinces surrender their weapons to Afghan government authorities in May 2010. Photo by Fraidoon Poya (UNAMA), and reprinted under the Creative Commons 2.0 license.

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About the Author

Tazreena Sajjad has worked in the field of transitional justice, human rights and conflict analysis since 2001. She previously served with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs, Survivors' Rights International and the Carter Center. Between 2005 and 2006 she served as the Global Rights Program Associate for Afghanistan. She is the author of "These Spaces in Between: The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) and its Role in Transitional Justice," published in the *International Journal of Transitional Justice* (2009). Her research on post-conflict reconstruction, transitional justice, human rights and gender in conflict has been published in several scholarly journals and books. She is currently completing her doctoral dissertation on questions of justice and impunity at the School of International Service at American University in Washington DC.

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Tazreena Sajjad
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Acronyms

AIHRC	Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
ANP	Afghan National Police
APPF-VS	Afghan Public Protection Force - Village Stability
APRP	Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme
ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
CDC	Community Development Council
CDI	Community Defense Initiative
COIN	counter-insurgency
CRS	US Congressional Research Service
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
GMIC	Government Media and Information Center
GoA	Government of Afghanistan
HRW	Human Rights Watch
IAG	Illegally Armed Groups
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISI	Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence
MAIL	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHRA	Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoLSA	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs [Martyrs and the Disabled]
MoPW	Ministry of Public Works
MRRD	Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development
NCPJ	National Consultative Peace Jirga
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NSC	National Security Council
NSP	National Solidarity Programme
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Countries
PAG	Policy Action Group
PTS	Strengthening the Peace Program
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNSCR	United Nation Security Council Resolution

Executive Summary

Afghanistan is at war. The rising insurgency, the war-weariness of the international community and the mounting pressure on the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) to respond to the current turbulent climate has stakeholders scrambling for effective answers to an increasingly complex and escalating conflict. In recent times, there has been an increasing awareness of the need for a military-aligned and civilian-resourced strategy that would, through a two-pronged approach, reintegrate rank and file Taliban fighters while seeking a political solution to the current situation through reconciling with the top leaders of the insurgency. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP) that has been developed to address the rising insurgency was signed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai in June 2010 and is being presented as an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led process, with the most comprehensive reach of any reintegration and reconciliation program that has been implemented in Afghanistan since 2001.

The current APRP is an ambitious strategy that responds to some of the criticisms of the previously implemented and not highly successful reintegration and reconciliation programmes, such as the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) and the Strengthening the Peace Programme (PTS). It awards greater leadership roles to Afghan institutions, subnational governance structures, local actors and communities. It also devotes significant attention to the communication and coordination between different implementing partners, includes concerns about individual and community security and grievance resolution, and makes an effort to understand and address the reasons behind why men join the insurgency.

This research focused on capturing the current reflections and concerns in Afghanistan about the strategy as well as key stakeholders' perspectives on the prospects and challenges for reintegration and reconciliation processes in the country. The data was gathered from semi-structured interviews and unofficial conversations with various Afghan and international stakeholders in Kabul and Washington DC from April-May 2010 and existing documents and media reports on the strategy until July 2010.

This research reveals several concerns. The APRP strategy is based on the assumption that reintegration will lead to a de-escalation of conflict, will take place within the context of good faith between the parties involved and will, because of disarming insurgents, result in better security conditions and a corresponding strengthening of the rule of law. Simultaneously, it is also based on the premise that insurgent leaders will be interested in "reconciling" with the GoA because of the incentives being offered, such as amnesties and third-country settlement. These assumptions are flawed. Reintegration and reconciliation may not be mutually reinforcing (i.e. a campaign to disarm soldiers is not necessarily conducive to the building of trust required to engage the political leadership at the negotiating-table, nor are political negotiations alone likely to result in rank and file soldiers disarming in large numbers, given the complexity of the conflict). Unless adequate support for the reintegrating combatants is provided, and the need to transform highly antagonistic relations between the insurgency leadership and the GoA to a more civic one through generating trust and confidence on both sides (as required for political reconciliation) is properly addressed, neither reintegration nor reconciliation will be achieved.

Further, offers of economic opportunities and political dialogue in the current APRP fall notably short of adequately addressing the complex range of factors that have caused the current insurgency, including failure of the GoA to deliver on its promises, resentment toward the international military forces, the radicalisation of insurgent recruits, the patron-client relationships that develop within the ranks of the insurgency, and the involvement of external actors in funding, planning and participating in the insurgency. While the GoA and the major international stakeholders, including the United States, appear to have arrived at a shared understanding of the terms "reintegration"

and "reconciliation," there remains disagreement among them regarding the sequencing of the two processes. The GoA is operating from the belief that both disarming the insurgents and initiating political dialogue with the insurgency need to take place simultaneously to bring the conflict to an end. In contrast, international stakeholders, particularly the United States, appear willing to support disarmament of rank and file soldiers but are far more cautious about supporting political dialogue with the senior leadership of the insurgency, mainly because of political sensitivities on the domestic front about negotiating with what they have defined as "the enemy" since 2001. There is also the belief, stemming from a military point of view, that political negotiations can and should take place only when the insurgency has been weakened significantly. For the APRP to be nominally successful given the current volatile climate, there is a critical need to reconcile the two positions regarding the sequencing of the processes.

On an operational level, interviewees expressed a significant degree of scepticism about the capacity, mobilising power and political commitment of the current Afghan administration to implement this type of comprehensive and complex operation. The level of secrecy and hesitancy around the strategy among respondents to this research further underscores not only the absence of a unified approach but also a lack of trust and confidence among and between the different stakeholders, many of whom will be directly involved in funding and/or implementing the project.

This research also unveiled a common perception among both national and international actors that the APRP is a desperate bid by the international community to support any quick "winning strategy" that will get their troops home. This is combined with a growing sentiment that the APRP is not an Afghan-owned and led strategy, but a component of the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy and is hence under the control of the international military forces. Consequently, research respondents expressed that while the strategy would sell well with the donor communities, it was inadequate in addressing specific contextual factors and thus might not yield the anticipated results on the ground.

Finally, this report recognises that the current political situation creates numerous pragmatic constraints. Indeed, with the implementation of the APRP, one can foresee different factions and individuals continuing to hedge bets, forge alliances and attempt to undermine government authority. It also observes that an overt focus on "making peace" and "reconciling" with insurgents has meant that the strategy falls short of effectively addressing demands of the victims of the conflict. Without sufficient attention to the multidimensional aspects of justice, which the Afghan people demand and attention to which is required for a "true" process of reconciliation, the APRP strategy may be perceived as yet another act of political expedience.

Based on the findings of this research, the following seven broad recommendations are offered to those engaged in proceeding with the APRP and with the broader issues of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan:

1. Increase transparency and ensure coordination

A concerted effort must be made to make the processes around the strategy transparent and to develop a more coordinated approach between the different stakeholders. The international community must refrain from sending mixed signals about what is possible and what they are willing to support. The US Military and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) as a whole also need to fall in line with the different actors of the strategy and stop functioning independently of the civilian administration.

2. Establish stringent standards for the GoA to implement the APRP

Donors need to set specific conditions for the financial commitments they will be making to support the Peace and Reintegration Fund, and the GoA needs to establish specific and strict benchmarks to ensure that the different bodies involved in the process meet their strategic objectives as effectively as possible. Greater uniformity among the donors would go a long way to ensuring that the APRP's implementation and output is more effective and sustainable.

3. Recognise local realities and manage expectations

The demands being placed on the Afghan government to deliver are enormous, but the reality is that the state is far too weak to respond to the laundry list of expectations in a context of ongoing conflict. It is critical for stakeholders to mitigate the anticipated potential of the APRP and political reconciliation in general and manage expectations accordingly.

4. Develop a strong, inclusive negotiation strategy, strengthen the GoA's negotiating capacity, and consider a role for an effective mediator

The international community has to continue to perform a tenuous and sensitive balancing act that recognises the GoA's weakness in potential negotiations without overshadowing its course of action. An overt insistence from the international community about the setting of preconditions could mean that the insurgent leadership will refuse to negotiate with the GoA. Perhaps a more effective line of engagement would be to help define the parameters of a strong negotiating strategy, identify a timeline with specific indicators for political negotiations, and begin immediate concerted work to strengthen the GoA's negotiating capacity. The international community can also insist that an inclusive, clear strategy must include the participation and consensus of human rights and women's rights organisations. These organisations are deeply concerned that, in their absence, their recent achievements will be compromised.

The UN should appoint an envoy or a team of experts to work together with the GoA and the international community to develop options and a framework for effective negotiations and assist in identifying a reliable and effective mediator who can deliver on the political front, both in the dialogues between the insurgents and the GoA and, when necessary, between the GoA and external state actors

The international community needs to continue to act as a watch-dog over these critical developments, put sustained pressure on the negotiation process and continue to support civil society actors to strengthen their position within the emerging context.

5. Articulate the regional strategy and address the role of external actors

The lack of a clearly articulated regional strategy is generating speculation, anxiety and suspicions about Afghanistan's role and position in US foreign policy. For the US, navigating the treacherous political waters could mean developing a diplomatic relationship with Iran, paying attention to India's and Pakistan's concerns about each other's involvement in Afghanistan and putting pressure on them to curtail their proxy war about Kashmir on Afghan soil.

6. Consider the demands of conflict victims

The international community needs to step up its pressure on the GoA to address questions of justice in a transparent, inclusive manner; take necessary steps to avoid exploitation of conflict survivors and abuse of power in the implementation of the APRP program; and remove from positions of authority those who continue to exploit the system to serve the interests of the powerful. The existing Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice in Afghanistan is a substantive document that captures many of the demands of victims while focusing on how effective institution-building can take place. The GoA needs to revisit its commitments to this document and deliberate on how it can deliver on the promises made. Efforts need to be made for a truth and accountability mechanism. This would both reflect the commitments of the National Action Plan as well as the widespread demands for such a mechanism among the Afghan population.

7. Prepare for a long-term commitment to Afghanistan

Despite pressure to "bring the troops home" and an eagerness to bring an end to the conflict, there needs to be a proper evaluation of the extent to which the international community can afford to—and afford not to—continue its commitment to the country. A strong Afghan state cannot be built in one or two years and expectations need to be tempered. Further, rather than a complete withdrawal, there needs to be a long-term commitment to the country to assist it to advance politically, economically, legally and socially.

1. Introduction and Background to the Study

2010 marks the ninth year since the fall of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The increasing complexity of the current conflict and its rising economic, military and human costs have ushered in a sense of urgency, particularly within the international community, about how to mitigate the situation. Furthermore, the Karzai administration has come under increasing international pressure (particularly since the controversial 2009 presidential election) while facing growing disenchantment among the Afghan population for its failure to deliver on many of its promises and for the rising levels of corruption and violence in the country. Partly generated by a shift in US administration, policies within and toward Afghanistan have entered a phase of renewed focus on how to effectively address the issue of rising insurgency.

Indeed, the most recent initiative, the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), proposed at the London Conference on 28 January 2010, comes at a critical point for Afghanistan, in US-Afghanistan relations, and in the relationship between Afghanistan and countries in south and central Asia as well as in Europe. The APRP is the latest in a series of efforts since 2001 to disarm insurgents and reintegrate them into Afghan society, and to bring an end to the violence. Previous efforts include the Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP)'s Disarmament and Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) and, since 2005, the Afghan-led Strengthening the Peace Programme (PTS). Other initiatives have included below-the-radar diplomatic efforts by the National Security Council (NSC), high profile efforts such as factional outreach to Hizb-i-Islami,[1] the 2006 Musa Qala Accord,[2] Karzai's invitations to Mullah Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to join the Afghan government, the 2007 Afghan-Pakistan Peace Jirga, and the 2008 establishment of "reconciliation" principles by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the Policy Action Group (PAG). Further, there have been political outreach efforts by provincial governors as well as US Military and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) initiatives to strike deals with individual insurgents or insurgent groups for intelligence on extreme hardliners or for the renunciation of violence against foreign military forces. Despite the diversity of these initiatives, all have been met with limited success, mainly because of their uncoordinated and ad hoc nature, the manipulation of incentives in some cases, corruption, inconsistent and untimely information sharing, a declining security situation, suspicion between different implementers and, ultimately, the glaring absence of a comprehensive, nationwide approach. In fact, some of these efforts—particularly those initiated by the military—have been heavily criticised for undermining the GoA and reversing the efforts of projects such as DDR and DIAG through the rearmament of certain non-state groups and by providing support to warlords to bolster military efforts.

While efforts to end conflict in Afghanistan have varied over the years, a notable trend has been national actors initiating political arrangements between adversarial parties for the cessation of hostilities. The most notable of these pre-2001 was Najibullah's *Aasht-i-Milli* (National Reconciliation) when opposition groups were encouraged to lay down weapons and were co-opted within the existing political structure. In other times, including that of the Taliban, various forms of political accommodation were also established, marking small areas of political autonomy. Several of these initiatives since 2001 have also been described in the country as "reconciliation." In short, in the Afghan

1 Hizb-i-Islami (Islamic Party) was initially one of the guerrilla groups in Afghanistan receiving financial assistance from the United States to fight against the Communist regime. Following the Soviet withdrawal, Hizb-i-Islami and President Burhanuddin Rabbani's party Jamiat-i-Islami were rivals for political influence in Afghanistan. The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) initially supported Hizb-i-Islami to dislodge the Rabbani government. Today Hizb-i-Islami, still led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, is active in at least four provinces in eastern Afghanistan and parts of the north.

2 The September 2006 Musa Qala Accord was signed between the governor of Helmand and the district's tribal elders. See Section 1.3 for a more detailed discussion of the Accord.

context both pre- and post-2001, reconciliation has generally amounted to different forms of deal-making and political arrangements for stability, or at the very least, for a temporary cessation of hostilities; it has never focused on questions of accountability, justice, or official truth-telling, which are now established components of a formal and comprehensive transitional justice process, designed to provide a historical documentation of the conflict and its impact, strengthen the rule of law, address root causes of the hostilities, and respond to demands of survivors regarding atrocities committed against them.

Discussions on the APRP in Kabul and Washington DC indicate that there are continuing gaps in information about what the program will include, and differences between stakeholders on how the processes of reintegration and reconciliation should be operationalised in the Afghan context. There is also substantial concern about their expected results and the risks of failure.

This report serves twin purposes. Firstly, it is an analysis of the finalised APRP, examining the current reflections and concerns in Afghanistan about the strategy and presenting broad recommendations to the international community and GoA. This analysis is informed by existing literature on conflict resolution and peacebuilding. Secondly, it presents key stakeholder perspectives on the ongoing process, including their assumptions about reintegration and reconciliation and implications for Afghanistan's stability, the confusion and secrecy around the APRP, and broader discussions on issues surrounding "reconciling" with the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Specifically, this report examines the following: 1) the literature in peacebuilding and conflict resolution on reintegration and reconciliation, 2) the provisions of the APRP, 3) the stakeholders' understandings of "reintegration" and "reconciliation" and 4) the critical issues beyond the APRP that would influence the "reconciliation" project in Afghanistan.

1.1 Methodology

The research aimed to address these issues through a mix of sources, including: data gathered from reports on the emerging reintegration and reconciliation strategy, semi-structured interviews with different Afghan and international stakeholders, primary documents regarding the APRP strategy, media reports, unofficial conversations held in Kabul and Washington DC between 14 April and 17 May 2010, and political developments in the country up until July 31 including the National Consultative Peace Jirga (NCPJ) held from 2 to 4 June 2010.[3] At the heart of this analysis lies the APRP, of which the executive summary was released by the GoA to the donor community in late April 2010.[4] In conducting this research, this report recognises both the preliminary nature of the findings and the fluidity and sensitivity of the issues involving the strategy.

A total of 52 semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with government officials, diplomats, politicians, analysts, officials, civil society representatives, community, tribal and religious leaders, representatives of international organisations, and private Afghan individuals in Kabul and Washington DC. The responses and primary data gathered were then analysed to discern patterns of questions, confusion and concerns raised regarding the current developments. Given the highly sensitive nature of the topic, most respondents did not speak on behalf of their institutions or their affiliations. Consequently, the report rarely discloses the identity of sources. Every effort was made to substantiate claims and assertions made during the interviews.

There were several constraints to the writing of this report. Firstly, it was challenging to identify

3 The jirga (Dari: *Jirga-i-Milli-Mashwarati-i-Sulh*, Pashto: *Da Sole Meli Mashwarati Jirga*), held on the grounds of the Kabul Polytechnic University, assembled approximately 1,600 Afghans for one of the largest ever gatherings of Afghan citizens called to deliberate the future of the country. Most importantly, it approved the government's framework for attempting to reconcile with insurgents, including the Taliban.

4 As of September 2010, the final APRP had been finalised but was not publicly available.

when exactly the current conversation on reintegration and reconciliation began, and how and when it became a two-pronged project, on the one hand tackling the issue of rank and file soldiers—defined as "reintegration"—and, on the other, "reconciliation," understood as political talks with the more senior leaders of groups, particularly the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami. Secondly, the lack of access to the formal, finalised version of the strategy for much of the period of research posed a serious barrier. Thirdly, there were several discrepancies in the accounts of the process and the involvement of different actors in it. Finally, gaining access to some of the individuals and institutions related to the APRP proved difficult, and when interviews did occur, there was significant hesitation to discuss reintegration and reconciliation processes and considerable restraint in speculating on what it could involve and what it would mean at the implementation stage. Nevertheless, these challenges and subsequent knowledge gaps are significant in themselves because they paint a picture of the general secrecy, confusion and sensitivity that surrounds the various dimensions of the APRP.

1.2 Literature review

For clarification and as a point of reference when reading the paper, a brief review of the key assumptions, conceptual differences and activities around reintegration and reconciliation processes in conflict resolution and peacebuilding literature is first provided.

A successful peacebuilding program ideally includes "election monitoring, economic reconstruction, development assistance, DDR programs, demining, refugee repatriation and reintegration, building civil society institutions, training of police forces and judicial bodies, establishment of the rule of law and respect for human rights, the prosecution of war criminals and trauma and reconciliation workshops."[5] Within literature on peace and conflict resolution, therefore, reintegration and reconciliation are critical components of postconflict peacebuilding.

Reintegration is the last stage of the applied strategy of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). Whereas disarmament entails the physical removal of the means of combat from ex-belligerents (weapons, ammunition, etc.) and demobilisation entails the disbanding of armed groups, reintegration describes the process by which ex-combatants gain civilian status and sustainable employment. Reintegration is essentially a social and economic process with an open timeframe, primarily taking place in communities at the local level.[6] DDR processes in general are based on a range of assumptions, including the provision of a means through which combatants can lay down their weapons without creating the impression of "surrender," begin the process of establishing trust between former combatants and civilians (which in turn allows for other peace processes to move forward), and initiate the process through which former soldiers establish their identities as civilians. The operations within reintegration assume that without a formal process, former combatants may not become integrated into mainstream society, that inclusion into civilian society is a permanent shift, and that they will also be welcomed back into a civilian lifestyle, reducing the possibility of future violence. In reality, reintegration alone cannot eliminate the possibility of a return to conflict, ensure the good faith of the parties involved, and be a substitute for other peace enforcement mechanisms such as strengthening the rule of law, security sector reform, or the effective implementation of the conditions of a peace agreement, which are critical for a successful transition.

Reconciliation, on the other hand, has a very different genesis and philosophy compared to those of reintegration. In its broadest terms, it involves: developing a shared vision of an interdependent and fair society that values different opinions

5 Wendy Lambourne, "Justice and Reconciliation: Postconflict Peacebuilding in Cambodia and Rwanda," in *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, ed. Mohammed Abu-Nimer (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2001).

6 Nicole Ball, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration: Mapping Issues, Dilemmas and Guiding Principles" (The Hague: Center for International Policy, Netherlands Institute of International Relations, August 2006), http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/HVAN-6UFKQR/$file/cling-ddr-aug2006.pdf?openelement.

and political beliefs; acknowledging and dealing with the past through providing the mechanisms for justice, healing, restitution and reparation; building positive relationships; significant cultural and attitudinal change; and substantial social, economic and political change. It is both an outcome and a process and requires, in the best circumstances, a cognitive change in beliefs, ideology and emotions.[7] This is in keeping with the transformation of relationships between formerly hostile parties and a need for broad approaches beyond narrow, short-term, time-bound programs that are isolated from one another.[8]

Lederach argues that reconciliation "requires looking outside the mainstream of international political traditions and operational modalities [and] comprises of four essential components: truth (acknowledgement of wrong and validation of painful loss), mercy (the need for forgiveness and acceptance), justice (the search for individual and group rights for social restructuring and restitution) and peace (the need for interdependence, well-being and security."[9] Rigby reiterates the importance of these components, stressing the importance of healing and closure of the trauma for both victims and perpetrators. He notes that "imperfect reconciliation occurs when the new political leaders can settle for an imperfect process lowering their aim for achieving social harmony but victims are expected to forfeit their claim to restitution."[10] Given its multidimensional nature, reconciliation may also be seen as the meeting point between the philosophical-emotional and the practical-material. Gardner-Feldman argues that these components are interwoven since they involve "co-operation and confrontation between the government and societies: the long-range vision and short-term strategy; between political support and opposition."[11]

This premise—the necessary role of the government and the opposition to establish the parameters of a new relationship—brings into focus a far more narrowed understanding of reconciliation, defined as "political reconciliation," which involves processes through which an inclusive platform is created for politics for formerly hostile parties, particularly political institutions and actors.[12] Historically, forms of political reconciliation have included France, Germany and the United States after World War II. Economic initiatives have played a significant role in transforming some of these formerly antagonistic relationships; offers of amnesties too have played a critical role including in places like Namibia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Italy, Peru and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, there are certain prerequisites that have emerged in the practices of post-conflict relationship building, even for the most narrowed practice of political reconciliation. Grovier and Verwoerd have suggested that building trust is crucial for political reconciliation "because people are unable to cooperate with each other and work together unless their relationships are characterised by trust."[13] As trust presupposes truth-telling, promise-keeping, and social solidarity, reconciliation in terms of trust provides a tangible way of defining political reconciliation.[14]

Emerging transitional justice norms informed by international legal customs, while accommodating amnesties for the purpose of political accommodation, nevertheless do not allow for

7 Bar Siman-Tov, "Israel-Egypt Peace: Stable Peace?" in *Stable Peace Among Nations*, ed. A.M. Kacowicz, Y Bar Siman-Tov, O. Elgstrom and M Jerneck (Boulder, USA: Rowman Publishers, 2000), 220-238.

8 See the works of John Paul Lederach, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Andrew Rigby, Joseph Montville and Johan Galtung, among others.

9 John Paul Lederach, "Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies" (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998).

10 See Andrew Rigby, *Justice and Reconciliation: After the Violence* (Boulder, USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001).

11 Lily Gardner-Feldman, *The Special Relationship Between West Germany and Israel* (Boston, MA: Allen and Unwin, 1984).

12 In the context of Afghanistan, as this report highlights, reconciliation follows more the parameters of political reconciliation, given that it alludes to political negotiations between antagonistic parties rather than involving communities for the processes of healing, truth-telling and transformation of relationships.

13 Trudy Govier and Wilhelm Verwoerd, "Trust and the Problem of National Reconciliation," *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 32 (2002).

14 Mark R. Amstutz, *International Ethics: Concepts, Theories and Cases in Global Politics*, 2nd edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2005).

general amnesties in the instances of crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.[15] According to Schapp,[16] political reconciliation must be both retrospective (in coming to terms with the past) and prospective (in bringing about social harmony) and, therefore, must involve striking a balance between the competing demands of these temporal orientations. Consequently, in societies divided by a history of political violence, political reconciliation depends on transforming political enmity into a civic friendship.[17] In such contexts, the discourse of recognition provides a ready frame in terms of which reconciliation might be conceived. However, Schapp also recognises that political reconciliation is related to four issues: confronting polities divided by past wrongs, constitution of political association, the possibility of forgiveness within politics, collective responsibility for wrong doing, and remembrance of a painful past. Each of these components echoes with the more expansive understandings of what constitutes an effective and comprehensive reconciliation process.

As we turn to an analysis of the APRP, it is useful to keep in mind the relevance of reintegration in peacebuilding and the understandings of reconciliation, in particular the requirements of political reconciliation in a transitional environment. However, before we examine how these concepts are being understood and operationalised within the Afghan context, it is useful to have an overview of what reintegration and reconciliation have historically meant in Afghanistan.

1.3 A background to reintegration and reconciliation efforts in Afghanistan

Reintegration of former combatants was institutionalised as a critical element of peacebuilding after the fall of the Taliban in 2001. Launched on 6 April 2003 as a component of the overall security sector reform policy, the UNDP-managed ANBP was designed to target the needs of combatants and entice them away from combat. The DDR component of the ANBP was based on the recognition that current armed groups needed to be disarmed before a government-controlled army could be sovereign, and that the new army needed to be built proportionate to the disarmament to fill the potential security vacuum created by the neutralisation of the armed factions.[18] It emphasised three major actions—cantonment of heavy weapons, destruction of anti-personnel mines and ammunition stockpiles, and the disbandment of illegally armed groups (IAGs). It was also intended to weaken support for senior commanders by disengaging lower-level commanders and troops through individualised counseling, vocational training, and jobs creation and placement. The ANBP claimed success at all stages of the process. By the end of its three-year mandate, 70,000 weapons were purportedly collected from 63,380 ex-combatants and 259 military units were decommissioned.[19] DDR was, however, plagued by a limited timetable and was vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation by militia commanders, local strongmen and participants who were not genuine former combatants.

At the conclusion of DDR, ANBP launched the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) project on 11 June 2005, in response to the problem of IAGs, which remained outside the framework of DDR. In addition to the disarmament and disbandment of

15 See Michael Scharf, "The Letter of the Law; The Scope of the International Legal Obligation to Prosecute Human Rights Crimes," *Law and Contemporary Problems* 59, no. 4 (1996); and also Christine Bell, "The 'New Law' of Transitional Justice Study" (Nuremberg: International Conference on Building a Future on Peace and Justice, 25-27 June 2007), http://escolapau.uab.cat/img/programas/derecho/justicia/seminariojt/tex01.pdf.

16 Andrew Schaap, *Political Reconciliation* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

17 Andrew Schapp, "Political Reconciliation Through a Struggle for Recognition?" *Social and Legal Studies* 13, no. 4 (2004): 523-540.

18 The five pillars of the security sector reform were only interconnected in theory. In reality, there was no connection between them. The problem was, however, later addressed in the peace process and the connection between the two pillars of DDR and the Afghan National Army has been described as the most successful of the five pillars.

19 United Nations Development Programme-Afghanistan, http://www.undp.org.af/media_room/press_rel/2006_07_01_DDR.htm.

IAGs, DIAG also "included development projects in DIAG-compliant districts."[20] Still in operation, its "main objective is to extend the authority of the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) by developing its capacity for effective local governance and creating the conditions for a secure population."[21] "DIAG also aims to strengthen public support for the lawful organs of government and raise the public awareness about the destabilising effect of IAGs."[22] The first quarterly report of 2010 claimed that the total number of IAGs disbanded thus far is 704, total number of weapons collected is 47,551 and the total number of DIAG compliant districts is 95.[23] As of 2010, the project also claims six completed district development projects. Although slated to officially end in March 2011, it will continue to provide support to the Disarmament and Reintegration Commission within the framework of the new APRP. Till today, DIAG has faced a slew of challenges including lack of national and international will to consistently support its programs, slow pace of program implementation and instances where programs have yet to be implemented.[24]

The notion of "reconciliation" is not new to the Afghan conflict. Michael Semple, in *Reconciliation in Afghanistan,*[25] pays particular attention to the PDPA era (1978-1992); the clandestine and semi-clandestine links that were established by the intelligence-domain with the mujahideen opposition, the signing of the protocol between Ahmad Shah Masood's Shura Nizar and the GoA in 1984,[26] the Geneva Accords of 1988,[27] and perhaps the most well-known initiative of the period, Najibullah's aforementioned *Aasht-i-Milli,* which included a cease-fire, a general amnesty, a plan for a more broadly-based and nationally united government as well as an invitation for refugee return.[28] Semple also provides quite an extensive discussion on "reconciliation" during the period of 1992-2001, i.e. during the period of the mujahideen and the Taliban. Among these initiatives were the Peshawar Accord of April 1992, political negotiations by the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), joint Pakistan-Saudi initiatives including the Islamabad Accord of 1993, oaths taken by mujahideen factions in Mecca, the Nangarhar Shura's efforts to bring party leaders together for negotiations in 1993, and a series of local efforts on various fronts to negotiate with antagonistic parties.[29]

Since 2001, in the aftermath of the initial military successes of Operation Enduring Freedom, there have been a series of local initiatives launched by several Afghan ministries, departments and provincial governors' offices to accommodate what became termed as the "moderate"[30] Taliban. These have included President Karzai's announcement of an amnesty for the Taliban on 6 December 2001, his plea on 6 January 2007 to Mullah Omar and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to end the insurgency, the National Security Council's (NSC) below-the-radar diplomacy, and several provincial governors' political outreach efforts. Karzai's actions are not something new; he was eager for some form of compromise even before his first election. Much of this could be attributed to his "close relationship with many Taliban figures

20 United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Afghanistan Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG), First Quarter Report," 2010, http://www.undp.org.af/Projects/Q1.ProgRep.2010/ANBP_DIAG_QPR_Q1_2010.pdf, 7.

21 UNDP, "DIAG, First Quarter Report," 8.

22 UNDP, "DIAG, First Quarter Report," 8.

23 UNDP, "DIAG, First Quarter Report."

24 Author interviews, national and international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010. Also see Matt Waldman, "Golden Surrender? The Risks, Challenges, and Implications of Reintegration in Afghanistan" (Afghanistan Analyst Network, 22 April 2010), http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/2010_AAN_Golden_Surrender.pdf, 4.

25 Michael Semple, *Reconciliation with Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: USIP, 2009).

26 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

27 The Geneva Accords failed to address the power-struggle between various groups in conflict. The negotiations were based on an incomprehensive agenda to bring about a political settlement to the crisis. For a more detailed discussion, see Barnett R. Rubin, *The Search For Peace in Afghanistan: From Buffer State to Failed State* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 1995).

28 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

29 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

30 According to Thomas Ruttig's comments on a draft of this report (27 July 2010), there were also suggestions to define these Taliban more precisely using terms such as "pragmatic" or "politically thinking."

during the 1990s; [and] in the aftermath of his election in 2002, his interest in reaching out to the disaffected Pashtuns, who provided the manpower for the defeated Taliban regime, only became more evident."[31] Indeed, Karzai did not address any of the critical categories for transforming an antagonistic relationship to a civic friendship, such as making painful compromises, acknowledging differences and mistakes, or addressing demands of the different marginalised communities and factions. Rather, analysts both within Afghanistan and abroad have viewed these efforts as strategic calculations for political expediency.[32] The actual developments on the ground since 2002, including the frequent harassment of Afghans and their families for their alleged connections to the Taliban or al-Qaeda, and the hunt for, attacks against and arrests of former Talibs by international military forces and by government armed forces, indicate little concerted effort to create an environment conducive to generating trust among the insurgent groups toward the GoA and the international military forces.

Despite these glaring discrepancies between rhetoric and reality, the theme of reconciliation continued in Afghan politics. In April 2003, before a gathering of the National Ulema Council in Kabul, Karzai said a "clear line" had to be drawn between "the ordinary Taliban who are real and honest sons of [Afghanistan]" and those "who still use the Taliban cover to disturb peace and security in the country."[33] Further, Karzai emphasised that "no one had the right...to harass or persecute anyone 'under the name Talib/Taliban' from that time onward."[34] This speech, which garnered little attention at the time, was an announcement, albeit an informal one, of the launch of what has come to be known as his reconciliation policy toward the Taliban and an effort to break their ranks into "good" and "bad" Talibs (see Section 2). Since the announcement, Karzai has articulated the issue of "reconciliation" further, essentially stating that, "...100 to 150 former members of the Taliban regime are known to have committed crimes against the Afghan people; all others, whether dormant or active within the ranks of the neo-Taliban, can begin living as normal citizens of Afghanistan by denouncing violence and renouncing their opposition to the central Afghan government."[35] Despite long-standing requests by the Afghan media and politicians to publicise the specific list of the unpardonable former Taliban members, this list was only recently made public. Moreover, comments made by the former President of Afghanistan and head of the PTS initiative, Sibghatullah Mojaddedi[36]—which were initially supported by Karzai—transformed the issue of who cannot be pardoned into a contentious political problem.[37] Mojaddedi stated that the amnesty offer was open to all Taliban leaders, including Mullah Mohammad Omar, the head of the regime.[38] Both Mojaddedi and Karzai have since backed off of those statements, and the issue of reconciliation was overshadowed by the international focus on the developments in the Iraq war and a string of endeavours since the ANBP to deal with (albeit unsatisfactorily) the insurgency.

In May 2005, *Proceay-i Tahkeem-i Solha* (the Strengthening Peace Programme, or Peace and Reconciliation Commission), known as PTS, was established by a presidential decree and headed by Mojaddedi. The aim was to reopen reconciliation talks with the opposition, including the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami. Its primary goal was to encourage and provide former enemy combatants with an

31 Ashley J. Tellis, "Reconciling With The Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan" (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2009), http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/reconciling_with_taliban.pdf.

32 Author interviews, international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

33 Amin Tarzi, "Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program," *Prism* 1, No. 4 (2010): 68, http://www.ndu.edu/press/lib/images/prism1-4/Prism_67-78_Tarzi.pdf.

34 Amin Tarzi, "Recalibrating the Afghan Reconciliation Program," 68.

35 Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan: Is Reconciliation With The Neo-Taliban Working?," *Radio Free Europe*, 2 June 2005, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059087.html.

36 The speaker of Meshrano Jirga (upper house of parliament).

37 Amin Tarzi, "Afghanistan: Is Reconciliation With The Neo-Taliban Working?"

38 RFE/RL Afghanistan Report, 17 May 2005.

opportunity to recognise the GoA as legitimate, to accept the constitution, and to lead normal lives as part of wider society.[39] However, from the start, PTS suffered from weak management, insufficient resources and a lack of political will.[40] According to some, the program also suffered from a consistent lack of monitoring and follow-through, and despite some handover of weapons to the DIAG[41] and interfacing with ISAF, did not work in conjunction with DDR or DIAG. It has also been alleged that the PTS program has been plagued by corruption, through which Mojaddedi provides patronage to his political and tribal followers.[42] Few believe that those who have been reconciled were high-ranking or influential,[43] while many were never "genuine" insurgents.[44] In fact, Semple states that PTS does not have a formal evaluation of its program and "a perusal of the PTS records indicates that almost no previously known insurgents have participated in the program."[45] Despite its claims to have extensive relations with senior figures in the insurgency, it has not been able to substantiate them or provide empirical evidence for such connections. Such weaknesses led the UK, in concert with the Dutch and US, to end their support for PTS in March 2008.[46]

A PTS representative cited several challenges that have undermined the potential impact and effectiveness of the programme.[47] The first is the issue of the budget, which has limited the programme's reach across the country. In addition, there has been frustration arising from the unmet expectations of those who have reconciled:

> *The people who joined always expect employment from us, while we are unable to have employment for all of these 9,000 people. We would like to have vocational trainings for them in tailoring, carpet weaving, or computer training, so we can keep them busy and so they also have an income to support their families. This has been impossible to do given our budgetary constraints.*[48]

A second complaint was the allegation that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)[49] outcompetes PTS by providing a host of facilities and resources to newly joined Talibs, which is a far more attractive alternative for those seeking to support their families. The PTS representative also alleged that Pakistani authorities have used threats and intimidation against former insurgents and their families, and PTS has not been able to provide

39 According to Michael Semple, PTS aimed to serve three important functions: (i) be a symbol of an official commitment to the president's public gestures and consistently stress on encouraging insurgents to lay down their arms and reintegrate; (ii) provide a vehicle for accommodating within the system and dispensing patronage to those directly associated with the leadership of the commission; and (iii) provide a public forum for welcoming back significant figures who have been reconciled through other channels, such as the National Security Council (NSC). See Michael Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

40 Matt Waldman, "Golden Surrender?"

41 PTS claims that 3,500 of those reconciled submitted their light and heavy weapons to PTS, which were then submitted to the Ministry of Defense and DIAG. Author interview, 29 April 2010.

42 Author interviews, national and international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

43 See the defection of Mullah Salam, a low-ranking commander in Musa Qala in Helmand Province in late 2007, in US Congressional Research Service, "Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and US Policy," 26 November 2008. It is notable that although some former high-ranking Taliban figures have been "reconciled," such as Mullah Zaeef or Mawlawi Wakil Ahamad Mutawakel, this was a condition of release from US or Afghan custody. See also Joanna Nathan, "A Review of Reconciliation Efforts in Afghanistan," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 8: (2009).

44 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, "Information relating to British financial help to Afghan Government in negotiations with the Taliban" (released under the Freedom of Information Act), 8 July 2008, http://foi.fco.gov.uk/content/en/foi-releases/2008a/1.1-digest. The representative of PTS claimed that their meeting with the son-in-law of Hekmatyar jumpstarted the conversation for reintegration and the approaching of the government to develop a strategy to bring them to the table. Another example offered is that of Arshala Khan, who currently serves as a senator and who, in the past, worked at the Ministry of Hajj and during the Taliban era was vice president. Interview, 29 April 2010.

45 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

46 Email correspondence between the author and the UK Embassy, May 2010.

47 Author interview, PTS representative, Kabul, 29 April 2010.

48 Author interview, PTS representative, Kabul, 29 April 2010.

49 The Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (also Inter-Services Intelligence or ISI) is the largest intelligence service in Pakistan. It is one of the three main branches of Pakistan's intelligence agencies.

sufficient security and safety for the reintegrees.[50] Yet another complaint was a lack of coordination with and support from ISAF forces, so that individuals who had renounced their association with the insurgency have nevertheless been harassed and sometimes arrested by international forces.

One of the more recent efforts at reconciliation[51] was the Musa Qala Accord, signed in September 2006, by the governor of Helmand and the district's tribal elders. Consisting of fourteen points, it ordained that the jirga would nominate fifty men to be recruited into the Afghanistan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP), and that the local administration would provide security for NGOs and civilian departments and the safe transit of national and international military forces. Initially, for the first five months, there was a lull in the fighting in Musa Qala.[52] However, lack of coordination, failure to deliver on promises made, a controversy generated by an erroneous National Directorate of Security (NDS) document and overall communication breakdown quickly dissolved the accord and led to Taliban reoccupation of the area.[53]

The most recent national undertaking emerged in November 2009, when the controversially re-elected Karzai called upon all Afghans to come together, emphasising the importance of national reconciliation at the top of his peace-building policy. He stated: "We welcome and will provide necessary help to all disenchanted compatriots who are willing to return to their homes, live peacefully and accept the constitution. We invite dissatisfied compatriots, who are not directly linked to international terrorism, to return to their homeland. We will utilise all national and international resources to put an end to war and fratricide."[54] The momentum for a comprehensive strategy to address the insurgency was thus formally launched.

Centering on these commitments, the subsequent APRP that has been developed and approved claims to address the demands of both reintegration and reconciliation. The following section takes a detailed look at the APRP in terms of its promises for both and provides an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses.

50 Author interview, PTS representative, Kabul, 29 April 2010.

51 It is important to keep in mind that when talking about reconciliation, the term is used to indicate political negotiations rather than address the larger requisites of all that reconciliation entails.

52 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

53 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*.

54 Hamid Karzai, "Unofficial Translation of the Inaugural Speech by H.E. Hamid Karzai" (Office of the President), http://www.president.gov.af/Contents/72/Documents/960/President_Karzai_s_Inaugural_Speech_Nov.pdf.

2. An Analysis of the APRP

The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme (APRP), with a total budget of US$783,951,711, was signed by President Karzai in June 2010, following months of debate and pressure from Afghan and NATO officials, as well as "what one NATO official said was a recent phone call to Mr. Karzai from the incoming American military commander, Gen. David H. Petraeus."[55] An executive summary was shared with the international donor community in late April 2010 which followed on the heels of the "interim guidelines," a six-page document laying down the skeletal framework and announcing that a "number of anti-government forces have shown interest through various channels in joining the peace process and have either put down their weapons or are in the process of negotiating with local authorities."[56]

The APRP aims to include all members of the armed opposition and their communities who are willing to renounce violence and accept Afghanistan's constitution. For planning purposes, the GoA has defined four categories of members who could be reintegrees: 1) those who reside in their home villages and operate close by; 2) those who operate in combatant groups distant from their villages; 3) those whose families are outside of Afghanistan; and 4) those who are part of the political/military leadership of larger combatant networks.[57] In short, it is available to all Afghans who renounce violence and commit to respect Afghan laws and clearly underscores that it will not extend its benefits to any foreign fighters. It is built on three pillars: strengthening of security and civilian institutions of governance to promote peace and reintegration; facilitation of the political conditions and support to the Afghan people to establish an enduring and just peace; and enhancement of national, regional and international support and consensus to foster peace and stability.[58] To that end, the APRP has been divided into two general levels of operation:

1. The tactical and operational level, which focuses on the reintegration of foot soldiers, small groups, and local leaders who form the bulk of the insurgency. This will include: promoting confidence-building measures; seeking *afwa* (forgiveness) among the GoA, ex-combatants, and communities; providing support for demobilisation; removing names from target/black lists; granting political amnesty; arranging local security guarantees and longer-term processes of vocational training; providing Islamic and literacy education; creating job opportunities and resettlement options on a case-by-case basis; and offering independent mediation and facilitation services when requested.[59]
2. The strategic and political level, which focuses on the leadership of the insurgency and includes addressing the problem of sanctuaries; constructing measures for removal of names from the UN sanction list; ensuring the severance of links with al-Qaeda; and securing political accommodation and potential exile to a third country.

The peace and reintegration component of the APRP is broken down into three stages.[60] Stage 1 will involve activities for social outreach, confidence building, negotiations involving government and NGOs, and the mobilisation of local *shuras* (councils) to reach out to communities that demonstrate intent to join the peace process. In addition, the program commits to funding technical and operational assistance for

55 Richard A. Oppel, Jr., "Karzai Approves Plan for Taliban Reintegration," *New York Times*, 1 July 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/02/world/asia/02afghan.html.

56 Interim Guidelines, AFGP-2010 ISAF, Disarmament and Reintegration Commission, Correspondence No. 59/29, 18 April 2010.

57 Interim Guidelines, AFGP-2010 ISAF.

58 D&R Commission, Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "APRP Strategy" (Kabul: June 2010).

59 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy.

60 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy.

developing peace-building capacity at the national, provincial and district levels, assessments and surveys in priority areas, strategic communications, oversight, monitoring and evaluation, grievance resolution, human rights monitoring, an early warning mechanism to mitigate impending conflict, and free and responsible debate.[61] Finally, Stage 1 will involve civil society groups and existing traditional mechanisms (including Afghan conflict resolution NGOs), religious and community leaders, members of the Ulema Council, and the Ministry of Border and Tribal Affairs, for the process of grievance resolution. Stage 2 will involve a 90-day demobilisation process whereby a disarming combatant will be registered in the Reintegration Tracking and Monitoring Database managed by the Joint Secretariat, be provided with an identification card guaranteeing freedom of movement, and be given amnesty. While it is expected that many combatants will return home, the APRP commits to addressing relocation and resettlement requests. Regarding questions of security, using a Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD)-developed system modeled on the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) cluster or community-wide method for Community Development Council (CDC) elections, communities will vouch for individuals who will reintegrate. Further, local Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), with support from ISAF, will assist provincial and district governors to plan community security. Stage 3, designed for "consolidation of peace and supporting community recovery," comprises of offering a "menu of options" based on capacity, security and diversity of needs of different communities.[62]

Overall, the APRP strategy is based on the assumption that reintegration and reconciliation can be pursued simultaneously and that providing economic incentives for rank and file soldiers while engaging the insurgency leadership in dialogue will pave the way for long-term stability. It suggests that reintegration will lead to a de-escalation of conflict, will take place within the context of good faith between the parties involved and will, because of disarming insurgents, result in better security conditions and a corresponding strengthening of the rule of law. Simultaneously, the strategy is also based on the premise that insurgent leaders are interested in "reconciling" with the GoA because of the incentives being offered such as amnesties and third country settlement. These assumptions are flawed. Reintegration and reconciliation may not be mutually reinforcing (i.e. a campaign to disarm soldiers is not necessarily conducive to the building of trust and good faith required to engage the political leadership at the negotiating-table, nor are political negotiations alone, given the complexity of the conflict, likely to result in rank and file soldiers disarming in large numbers). Further, offers of economic opportunities and political dialogue fall notably short of adequately addressing the complex range of factors that have caused the current insurgency, particularly given the worsening political climate in Afghanistan.

The APRP strategy presents a range of issue areas that warrant closer analysis:

1. The scale and scope of the project and the emphasis on Afghan ownership
2. Dimensions of security
3. Classifying insurgents based on their motivations (ideology versus economic incentives)
4. "Transitional" training programs for Islamic education
5. Grievance resolution, amnesty and the question of human rights
6. Diversity of programming for affected communities
7. The role of stakeholders in the implementation, monitoring and coordination of the strategy and a timetable
8. The issue of context-specificity

Each of these issues will now be discussed, with particular regard to concerns raised by stakeholders in interviews conducted in Kabul and Washington DC and drawing on experiences from Afghanistan's DDR, DIAG and PTS programs.

61 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy.

62 For a detailed discussion, see Section 2.6.

2.1 The scale and scope of the APRP and the emphasis on Afghan ownership

The GoA and the international military forces present the APRP strategy as an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process, with the most comprehensive reach of any reintegration program that has been implemented since 2001. The final version particularly claims to have been developed on the basis of the recommendations of the 1,600 broadly representative Afghan delegates to the NCPJ of 2-4 June 2010. While it is irrefutable that the strategy will have the largest mandate yet,[63] neither in its degree of local ownership, nor in its scope can it claim to be entirely new.

The tented Peace Jirga venue, with signs featuring former Afghan kings Zahir Shah and Habibullah Khan (L-R)

With regards to ownership, two key points should be noted. Firstly, the APRP is an entirely foreign-financed program, raising the question of whether it truly is locally owned. In fact, in terms of financing, it very closely resembles DDR and DIAG, which have both been foreign-financed and largely foreign-run projects, although they both included national actors in the operation of the programs. In contrast, PTS, although also financed by external sources, has had a large degree of Afghan ownership and control over its implementation since its inception and continues its work (albeit not very successfully) as an Afghan entity. Secondly, the strategy's claim to legitimacy is based heavily on its responsiveness to a broad-based Afghan consensus generated as a result of the NCPJ. However, the process surrounding the NCPJ has garnered well-founded criticism for its lack of transparency, non-representation, internal politicking, and absence of substantive engagement with the concerns of women representatives. Critics further noted a heavy presence of Karzai's supporters among NCPJ invitees, which was seen as an effort to bolster support for his government and to generate legitimacy for reconciliation initiatives.[64] Further, they indicated that important decisions about Afghanistan's stability were taken prior to the "consultative" process and the NCPJ was merely a public endorsement of an already decided strategy.[65]

As for the scope, the strategy estimates that there are 32,000 to 40,000 combatants in Afghanistan with 8,000 to 10,000 full-time fighters. However, these numbers do not include illegal networks and criminal gangs. A few interviewees noted a tendency among policymakers to understand the insurgency only in terms of the Taliban, thereby simplifying the complex landscape of actors in the conflict. Some respondents expressed concern that

63 DDR's mandate could not accommodate evolving militia groups and DIAG does not focus on the Taliban

64 Author interviews, national civil society actors and international analysts, Kabul, April-May 2010.

65 Author interviews, national civil society actors and international analysts, Kabul, April-May 2010.

the sweeping label of "Taliban" allows criminal actors who in actuality are not driven by ideology or religious conviction to use it to legitimise their activities.[66]

In terms of geographic scale and sequencing, proponents of the APRP have argued that the strategy will cover more ground than any previous initiative, with particular attention to areas that have been most impacted by violence. It notes: "the immediate priority provinces for introduction of the program will be Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Khost, Baghlan, Badghis, Kunduz, and Herat. However, the program is flexible and response to emerging opportunity in any other province depends on the availability of resources and capacity."[67] This raises several concerns and critical questions. Is the institutional capacity in these priority provinces sufficient to deliver services and provide security once the program is implemented? An international analyst suggested that insurgents might seek to derail the program by staging attacks within these provinces.[68] This risk is increased by the absence of government and ISAF control in these vulnerable areas.[69] A substantive number of interviewees commented that a reintegration package targeting the Pashtun belt would allocate greater resources there and could lead to a sense of disenfranchisement among other communities, provoking ethnic and regional tensions. A few interviewees suggested that Karzai might direct facilities and resources through the programme to consolidate his hold among Pashtuns. Others raised the concern that seeing the bulk of the package benefiting the south would provide perverse incentives for other provinces to take up arms and "cross over the border and join the insurgency for a few months to claim the benefits package."[70] In response to such criticisms, those most involved in designing the APRP have reiterated that it focuses on any and all insurgents willing to renounce violence in all parts of the country and across all ethnic groups and insisted the strategy will not contribute to regional or ethnic tensions.[71]

2.2 Dimensions of security

The APRP describes the creation of an Afghan Public Protection Force — Village Stability (APPF-VS) by the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in coordination with the security sector ministries to "guard against the creation of militias and other illegally armed groups that are not under the control of the Government."[72] The APPF-VS will support village-level security under the direct supervision and command of the MoI. It will draw from members of the local community and possibly include some vetted ex-combatants but will not assume the duties of the Afghan National Police (ANP). While some of these communities may have reintegrees, APPF-VS is not designed exclusively for such areas. Security for the villages and districts participating in the APRP will be provided mainly by ANSF and ISAF.[73]

The APPF-VS bears a strong resemblance to Community Defense Initiative (CDI), operationalised in late 2009. US and Afghan officials had agreed on a new nationwide strategy that would funnel US$1.3 billion in foreign aid to villages to form CDIs to bolster local security. In simple terms, the plan was to provide an incentive for Afghan tribal leaders to form their own militias and guard against Taliban insurgents under US military oversight. A NATO official described it as a program to assist the local population to provide their own security with

66 Author interviews, local and international actors, Kabul, May 2010.

67 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy.

68 Email communication with an international actor, 28 July 2010.

69 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 4 May 2010.

70 Author interview, local Afghanistan analyst, 16 April 2010.

71 Author interviews with national and international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

72 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 5.

73 The idea of a local security apparatus, called the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF), was initially promoted by ex-ISAF commander David McKiernan. The APPF was piloted in Wardak Province and involved the rigorous vetting of recruits, who were then given basic training and a uniform and came under the authority of the Afghan police; it was curtailed because it was considered too slow and resource intensive. But the idea of using local forces outside the ambit of the ANP remained.

defensive "neighbourhood watch-type programs," through creating "pockets of tribal resistance" to the Taliban.[74] The strategy involves US Special Forces embedding themselves with armed groups, including disgruntled insurgents, who are then given training and support. In return for stabilising their local area, the militia gains development aid for their local communities, although according to military officials they do not receive arms. The CDI initiative is based in part on the Sunni Awakening in Iraq (also known as Sons of Iraq), in which the US military and the Iraqi government paid groups to lay down their arms against coalition forces, patrol neighbourhoods and fight against other Sunni insurgents.

The CDI program has come under severe criticism from Afghan government ministers, military analysts, and many in the international and human rights communities in Afghanistan.[75] The Karzai government had previously declined to sponsor such militias on a large scale, fearing they might pose a threat to its authority. Thomas Ruttig, co-director of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), said the US risked losing control over groups which have in the past turned to looting shops and setting up illegal checkpoints when they lose foreign support.[76]

In addition to the CDI programme, the US military has been running ad hoc reintegration initiatives. Anecdotal reports describe how the military in different provinces has been striking deals with individuals to provide them with weapons to fight against the more radical insurgent groups, holding symbolic "trials" of insurgents in the presence of village elders, and generating social pledges to ensure that the young men would not return to the insurgency.[77] Many interviewees voiced the concern that the military has been executing these highly sensitive initiatives without adequate transparency or coordination with either the GoA or international civilian administration. Such uncoordinated activities ultimately undermine the Afghanistan government. The formalisation of the APPF-VS and its streamlining into the APRP strategy serves to address, in part, these concerns regarding coordination and government ownership. Nevertheless, questions about the monitoring, evaluation and sustainability of such a program remain. The APPF-VS is disturbingly reminiscent of failed efforts by the former Soviet Union during its occupation of Afghanistan and opens the potential for new militia groups to form (despite assurances that rearmament will not be allowed). Such groups would weaken the already limited rule of law and central authority of the Afghan government, and further risk human rights violations.

In addition to the APPF-VS, the APRP takes a number of measures to address security concerns of both the community and the individual disarming combatant. In considering the safety of insurgents who would be required to disarm, it firstly commits to reviewing requests for relocation and resettlement, particularly for commanders and those who have not been forgiven for their crimes. Secondly, it considers a "reintegration pact" through which the community will publicly accept the former combatant back and provide security for him, including security against personal vendettas.[78] Further, the APPF-VS and the local ANSF, with assistance from ISAF, are to assist provincial and district governors to "plan for community security."[79] Despite these assurances, many interviewees, both national and international, assessed the vulnerability of recently disarmed insurgents and their families to being threatened or intimidated when they defected as a key weakness

74 Jon Boone, "US Pours Millions into Anti-Taliban Militias in Afghanistan," *Guardian*, 22 November 2009, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/nov/22/us-anti-taliban-militias-afghanistan.

75 Spencer Ackerman, "Afghan Human Rights Official Criticizes McChrystal 'Tribes' Initiative, Skeptics Fear Program to Aid Local or Tribal Leaders Could Lead to 'Warlordism'," *Washington Independent*, 1 December 2009, http://washingtonindependent.com/69131/afghan-human-rights-official-criticizes-mcchrystal-tribes-initiative; and Max Fisher, "Will Militias Save Afghanistan or Doom It?," *Atlantic Wire*, 23 November 2009. Also based on author interviews with civil society actors and analysts in Kabul, May, 2010

76 Jon Boone, "US Pours Millions into Anti-Taliban Militias in Afghanistan."

77 See for example, Elizabeth Buhmiller, "U.S. Tries to Reintegrate Taliban Soldiers," *The New York Times*, 23 May 2010, www.nytimes.com/2010/05/24/world/asia/24reconcile.html.

78 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 3.

79 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP strategy, 10.

to the program.[80] Community protection for former combatants is a noteworthy step, but the likelihood that APRP implementation can contain retributive action is questionable. Further, former combatants could face retribution during the reintegration period not only from the community, but also from the implementers of the strategy. It is difficult to imagine how a military fighting against an insurgency will simultaneously run a reintegration program and generate trust among disarming combatants. One analyst stated: "[Insurgents] can't defect because they might be killed by foreign intelligence forces or others."[81] For higher-level insurgents, this fear is more pronounced. While the potential offer of relocation and resettlement is a step forward in addressing these fears, it is limited by the fact that it is not guaranteed and is made on a case-by-case basis without considering the security needs of the combatants' families.

Past experiences from disarmament and reintegration programs highlight a further security risk for lower-ranking combatants. The 2003-5 DDR program generated mixed results with a low record of weapon handover,[82] and problems of "abuse and manipulation by local commanders, falsification of official ANBP computerised identification cards and specific requests from civilians to the commanders to be introduced into the process...Whenever cash was handed out to 'ex-combatants,' much of it ended up in the pockets of their commanders."[83] The full extent to which commanders and warlords still influenced the socio-political and economic fabric of Afghan society despite DDR became painfully clear with the 2005 parliamentary elections, when "at least 90 out of the 249 elected were militia commanders or their close associates."[84] Irrefutably, a weak rule of law and an absence of legitimate political leaders contributed significantly to the weakness of the reintegration component of the DDR. The current APRP does not seem to adequately address these valuable lessons learned about commanders' capacity to manipulate such programming.

A discussion on security is incomplete without assessing the reach and potential impact of this program in the targeted areas. As this report indicates, the APRP identifies provinces with high levels of insurgent activity as priority areas for implementation. While such an approach may appear logical, it raises serious questions about how the programme will be realised in the very areas where insurgents have most control and where government presence is weakest. Indeed, the ambitious nature of the project places heavy demands on both government capacity as well as the activities of the international military forces. The recent setting of a timetable for international military troop withdrawal adds to these demands. US troop withdrawal is projected to start in 2011 and the British military withdrawal is targeted for 2015. Several experts believe these timetables put both troops and the future stability of Afghanistan at risk.[85] Indeed, with a few NATO countries beginning to draw up schedules for withdrawal at a time when the insurgency is growing in strength, the possibilities for a successful implementation of the APRP in the most insecure areas seem low. Past patterns of attacks in the country suggest that insurgents will likely target those who are involved in the APRP process so as to destabilise the program.

The grim reality is that the APRP will be operationalised within a widening climate of conflict and political instability. Donors and implementers of the APRP must take into account past reintegration experiences and limited government capacity to assess what critical issues are not reflected in the current strategy and what is realistically feasible.

80 Author interview, PTS official, Kabul, 29 April 2010.

81 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 24 April 2010.

82 "DDR in Afghanistan: When State-building and Insecurity Collide," Small Arms Survey 2009, http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/sas/publications/year_b_pdf/2009/ENG/Chapter-9-summary.pdf.

83 Simonetta Rossi and Anthony Giustozzi, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan: Constraints and Limited Capabilities" (London: Crisis States Research Center, London School of Economics, 2006), 5.

84 Simonetta Rossi and Anthony Giustozzi, "Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan," 19.

85 James Kirkup, "Nato Chief: Afghanistan Timetable puts British Troops at Risk," *Telegraph*, 13 July 2010.

2.3 Classifying insurgents and addressing their motivations

A fundamental assumption identified in the APRP is that economic disempowerment within Afghanistan is the central driver of the rising insurgency. In fact, the strategy seems to distinguish between the "ideologically motivated" and the "economically motivated" fighters. Consequently, much of the strategy centres around the provision of economic and employment opportunities for newly "reintegrated" insurgents and for the communities that they will re-enter. However, this strong focus on providing local economic incentives is based on an oversimplification of the factors that fuel the insurgency. It fails to respond to at least three main factors underlying the insurgency: firstly, foreign involvement in the insurgency; secondly, varied motivations behind why men join the insurgency; and thirdly, the ways in which, through relationships and identity, they continue to be part of the insurgency.[86]

Firstly, a common refrain among many Afghans, in interviews and in informal conversations, was that the "Taliban are not Afghans, they are Pakistanis." Indeed, there is substantive evidence for foreign involvement; since 2001, the Taliban movement has grown and various accounts of non-Afghans joining the insurgency exist.[87] In 2007, Seth Jones, noted "small numbers of Arabs, especially Saudis, Libyans, Egyptians, and also Uzbeks, Chechens and some other Central Asians have joined the Taliban. But the bulk of these are Pakistanis, including Pakistani Pashtuns."[88] Evidence of foreign infiltration in the Taliban movement has only grown since then. In October 2009, Defense Minister General Abdul Rahim Wardak told lawmakers in a speech: "The enemy has changed. Their number has increased...about 4,000 fighters, mostly from Chechnya, North Africa, and Pakistan have joined with them and they are involved in the fighting in Afghanistan."[89] Further, there is growing acknowledgement of foreign presence within the Taliban network, not only in the form of rank and file soldiers but higher foreign operatives who fund and influence the network. In 2008, Jones argued: "There is some indication that individuals within the Pakistan government—for example, within the Frontier Corps and the ISI—were involved in assisting insurgent groups."[90] Again, in 2010, Jones noted that by mid-2008, "the United States collected fairly solid evidence of senior-level complicity [in ISI support to the insurgents]."[91] In 2009, a US Congressional Research Service (CRS) report stated:

> *Many analysts believe that Pakistan's intelligence services know the whereabouts of...Afghan Taliban leadership elements and likely even maintain active contacts with them at some level as part of a hedge strategy in the region. Some reports indicate that elements of Pakistan's major intelligence agency and military forces aid the Taliban.*[92]

In a June 2010 report, Matt Waldman argued that there is a "significant underestimation of the current role of the ISI in the Afghan insurgency"[93] and that "according to Taliban commanders the powerful role of the ISI is 'as clear as the sun in the

86 Thomas Ruttig, "How Tribal are the Taleban? Afghanistan's Largest Insurgent Movement between its Tribal Roots and Islamist Ideology" (AAN, 29 June 2010), http://aan-afghanistan.com/index.asp?id=865.

87 For example: "More Foreign Fighters Reported Aiding Taliban in Afghanistan," *Voice of America*, 14 November 2007, http://www1.voanews.com/english/news/a-13-2007-11-14-voa25-66526307.html; "Official: Foreign Fighters Helping Taliban, Defense Minister Requests More International Troops, Says Thousands Bolstering Taliban Insurgency," *CBS News*, 10 October 2009, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2009/10/10/world/main5376458.shtml; Seth Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," RAND Counterinsurgency Study 4 (2008); Seth Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009); Alan K. Kronstadt, "Pakistan-US Relations," US Congressional Research Service Report (February 2009); and Matt Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky: the Relationship Between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan Insurgents" (London: Crisis States Research Centre, LSE, 2010), http://english.aljazeera.net/mritems/Documents/2010/6/13/20106138531279734lse-isi-taliban.pdf.

88 "More Foreign Fighters Reported Aiding Taliban in Afghanistan," *Voice of America*, 14 November 2007.

89 "Official: Foreign Fighters Helping Taliban," *CBS News*.

90 Jones, "Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan."

91 Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan*.

92 Kronstadt, "Pakistan-US Relations."

93 Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky," 3.

sky.'"[94] He concluded that "there is thus a strong case that the ISI and elements of the military are deeply involved in the insurgent campaign, and have powerful influence over the Haqqani network."[95] In late July 2010, the release of leaked military documents provided further confirmation of the engagement of the ISI with the Taliban.[96]

The APRP strategy has made some effort to recognise and address the presence of foreign troops on Afghan soil by enabling state security institutions to vet potential re-integrees and issue legitimate candidates with a reintegration ID card containing biometric data.[97] This, insisted one interviewee, "will ensure that the benefits of the APRP program will not go into the hands of foreign fighters. Also, the communities know who are the Afghan Talibs and who are outsiders so this will also help in the vetting process."[98] The APRP strategy also states that amnesty will not be provided for foreign fighters.[99]

However, these efforts do not go far enough to address the realities on the ground, including the nature of the Taliban, the constituents of its network, the sources of its funding and operations, and the nature of its external relationships. Moreover, it fails to recognise the fluidity of identities (especially across the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan), the ease with which fighters move in and out of the two countries, and the little relevance they attach to the labels of being "Pakistani" or "Afghan." An international analyst succinctly described the problem as follows:

> *Who are being classified as the "Afghan" Talibs?...there are those whose families have grown up in Pakistan and who have more connections to Pakistan than Afghanistan... they report to their own commander, who reports to a higher commander and so on and in the end they end up reporting to the Pakistani ISI. Where do you draw the line between the Afghan and Pakistani Talibs?*[100]

Secondly, the APRP's focus on employment attempts to split insurgents into clean categories of those who are ideologically motivated and those who are economically driven. This is a cosmetic response and highly unrealistic, given the complex interplay of reasons as to why thousands have joined insurgent movements and how they relate to the ideology of the conflict itself. This was a limitation, however, that many research respondents were aware of. Matt Waldman identified more immediate reasons as to why men join the insurgency, arguing that "...some of these are tribal, community and group exclusion or disempowerment; leverage in local rivalries, feuds and conflicts; government predation, impunity, or corruption; criminality, disorder and the perversion of justice; civilian casualties and abusive raids or detentions; resistance to perceived Western occupation or suppression of Islam; the hedging of bets; and as reaction to threats, intimidation or coercion."[101] The insurgency also provides a sense of purpose and belonging to men in addition to providing them with a source of income. Ladbury in her 2009 report underscores this issue: "Some young unemployed men do join Taliban forces to earn an income, but also to increase their status; they know how to fight and it is better than sitting idle."[102] Despite such attractions, the decision to join a life of violence also involves personal sacrifices and a life of absolute uncertainty. "Do you think," asked one interviewee, "that economic incentive is the sole reason that these men accept lives of personal discomfort, moving constantly, being away from

94 Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky," 4.

95 Waldman, "The Sun in the Sky," 21.

96 For an analysis see, Robert Dreyfus, "The WikiLeaks Papers and the Pakistani Intelligence–Taliban Connection," *The Nation*, 26 July 2010, http://www.thenation.com/blog/37941/wikileaks-papers-and-pakistani-intelligence-taliban-connection. Also see Peter Galbraith, "WikiLeaks and the ISI-Taliban nexus," *The Guardian*, 26 July 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jul/26/wikileaks-isi-taliban-nexus.

97 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 10.

98 Author interview, representative of DIAG, Kabul, 21 April 2010.

99 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 17.

100 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 18 April 2010.

101 Matt Waldman, "Golden Surrender?"

102 Sarah Ladbury and Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU), "Testing Hypotheses on Radicalisation in Afghanistan," 14 August 2009, 29, http://d.yimg.com/kq/groups/23852819/1968355965/name/Drivers%20of%20Radicalisation%20in%20Afghanistan%20Sep%2009.pdf.

their families and sleeping in different locations every night to avoid getting killed?"[103]

Thirdly, the APRP, with its overtly economic-oriented approach, glosses over the issue of relationships developed over time among insurgents, including the Talibs and the role of these networks in their lives. Once inside the movement, many of these men are provided with a sense of purpose and comradeship. Trust and relationships are built, as are a sense of self and empowerment. Former UN Special Representative Kai Eide acknowledged that "while it may not be difficult to buy a young man out of unemployment—even if this could also be unsustainable—it is difficult to buy him out of his convictions, sense of humiliation or alienation from power."[104]

Ruttig argues that it is critical to view and respond to the Taliban as a tribal movement rather than a primarily political movement with political aims.[105] This emphasis brings back the question of the driving forces behind the insurgency. "What do the Taliban want?" said one civil society actor: "Theirs is a straightforward demand—the withdrawal of foreign troops, the non-Muslims, and the implementation of the Sharia. Can either of those demands be met? No. Will they drop their demands? No. Then what can this reintegration and reconciliation be about?"[106] To date, however, there is little clarity on a united, official position of the Taliban on the efforts for reintegration and reconciliation. Without significant buy-in from the insurgent leadership and adequate framing of the political and relational dimensions of the conflict, the economic platform of the APRP seems to portray a one-sided effort from the GoA. Until this state of affairs changes, the questions raised in this section about the limitations of the APRP will remain.

2.4 "Transitional" training in Islamic studies

Closely linked to the varied reasons behind why men join the Taliban and other insurgent groups is the question of radicalisation, which serves as a premise for distinguishing between the "radical" and the "moderate" insurgent. In an interview with the New York Times on 7 March 2009, US President Barack Obama expressed hope that "US troops can identify 'moderate' elements of the Taliban and move them toward reconciliation."[107] Indeed, this reiteration of the "radical" classification in contrast to the "moderate" label has worked itself into the APRP strategy and presents itself as a key component of the "literacy, vocational training, Islamic education, civic-Islamic exchange programs."[108] Several dimensions of these transitional packages demand discussion. The APRP notes: "Standardised literacy materials and training for teachers and messaging packages for mullahs will be offered in districts where reintegration occurs by the Literacy Department of the MoE [Ministry of Education] and the MoHRA [Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs]."[109] Further, "proposals for Afghan madrassas to provide civic education and mentoring for ex-combatants and high-risk youth in communities will be considered...this objective provides an alternative to education in foreign madrassas where young Afghans are vulnerable to radicalisation."[110] In addition, the strategy proposes study visits for selected ex-combatants (e.g., to Turkey, Egypt and Malaysia) to promote civic education teachings in support of the peace process.[111]

On this issue, the final version of the APRP has undergone a significant revision from the earlier

103 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 22 April 2010.

104 Kai Eide, "Commentary," *Telegraph*, 22 February 2010.

105 Thomas Ruttig, "How Tribal are the Taleban?"

106 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 18 April 2010.

107 Helene Cooper and Sheryl Gay Stolberg, "Obama Ponders Outreach to Elements of Taliban," *New York Times*, 7 March 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/08/us/politics/08obama.html.

108 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 1, 8, Annex VIII.

109 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 1, 8, Annex VIII.

110 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 1, 8, Annex VIII.

111 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 11.

executive summary. Indeed, the reconfiguration of what was termed "de-radicalisation packages" in the executive summary to what is in the final version labelled "Islamic education and exchange programs" is a notable shift.[112] The final strategy no longer promotes "psychosocial counselling" to address the issue of radicalisation of the youth. Both these approaches were problematic because they tend to view radicalisation as a "disease" and adopt a clinical approach for its "cure." Instead, the focus on exchange programs and a more regulated approach to Islamic education curriculum and madrassas that would attempt to reduce dependency on foreign madrassas could be seen as an important step to address one of the causes of violent radicalisation.

However, the educational element of the APRP does not address grievances related to weak governance, failure of the international community, and a climate of impunity, patronage and nepotism, which are all factors motivating the insurgency. Furthermore, based on past experiences in imposing different programming in Afghanistan, such a transitional package may be seen as an external imposition. In any case, any potential impact of such programming would be long-term and therefore requires a sustained commitment. The likely success of such programmes will be complicated by the broader context of conflict.[113]

2.5 Grievance resolution, offers of amnesty and the question of human rights

Several provisions within the APRP strategy deal with different aspects of "reconciliation" including grievance resolution, offers of amnesty and third country settlement. For grievance resolution, the APRP offers the possibility of the use of mediators chosen by affected parties (combatants, men, women, minorities and victims). When grievances are against the GoA, it recognises that the aggrieved parties, whether combatants or communities, may prefer to nominate a *shaks-i-sevoomi* (mediator). In areas where the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG)'s Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP) is being implemented, the strategy considers the ASOP shura as a suitable mediator. Otherwise, the APRP suggests that a district shura dedicated to peace and reintegration can be established with the support of IDLG. By recognising that grievance resolution requires time, the APRP creates the scope for such ongoing grievance resolution processes to take place in parallel with demobilisation and long-term community recovery.

Regarding the question of political pardons, the strategy states that the GoA will construct a legal framework for political amnesty and forgiveness. A legal team in the Joint Secretariat is charged with aligning the terms of amnesty and grievance resolution with the constitution and existing legislation.[114] According to the strategy, "ex-combatants who agree to live within the laws of Afghanistan and renounce violence and terrorism will be granted political amnesty and receive an APRP ID card guaranteeing their freedom of movement and freedom from arrest for past political actions."[115] A second provision allows for potential exile in a third country to the political leadership of the insurgency. It also states that the Joint Secretariat's legal team will advise the GoA on the delisting of Afghan citizens from the United Nation Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1267 list.[116] The call for delisting some individuals was earlier supported by Kai Eide, former Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Afghanistan. In March 2010, the UN committee decided to remove the record of the names of de-listed individuals and entities from its website. A few interviewees noted this as a sign of the UN softening its position toward

112 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, Executive Summary.

113 This is analogous to critiques of alternative livelihoods programmes that attempted to do "development in a drugs environment." See David Mansfield and Adam Pain, "Alternative Livelihoods: Substance or Slogan?" (Kabul: AREU, 2005).

114 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 14.

115 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 10.

116 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 14. The list referred to is the blacklist drawn up by UN's al-Qaeda and Taliban sanctions committee under Resolution 1267, passed on 15 October 1999. Those on the list, including Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, have had their assets frozen, are blocked from international travel and are subject to an arms embargo.

Taliban and insurgent groups to aid a political negotiation for the settlement of the conflict. In late July, the committee then removed five Afghans from the Taliban list, although two were reportedly deceased.[117]

The question of amnesty is important because it is directly related to human rights and justice. Amnesty is essentially a form of forgiveness granted by governments for crimes committed. Arguments in support of amnesty include the importance of making a clean break with the past, or of creating a common starting point for all members of society from which a better future may be created. The complexity of the conflict in Afghanistan and the pragmatic constraints on state-led action, especially retributive action, supports these arguments, particularly for rank-and-file soldiers.

However, a rights-based perspective raises the concern that transitional amnesties damage longer-term democratic prospects by sacrificing justice to transient political interests.[118] Given the history of impunity in Afghanistan and the implications of Afghanistan's 2009 National Reconciliation and Stability Law (the "amnesty law"), civil society organisations and human rights actors, both national and international, are wary of the extent of amnesty provisions within the APRP. Some interviewees drew a clear link between the loss of momentum on transitional justice, the current direction of reconciliation, the 2009 amnesty law and the current strategy.[119] According to them, the timing of the publication of the law and the renewed focus on reconciliation was not coincidental. Several expressed deep-seated frustration and anger regarding the question of amnesty: "These have been crimes against humanity. There shouldn't be a general amnesty. There should be some kind of limits. How can you guarantee amnesty when people have not yet given up their arms?"[120] A common refrain was that the amnesty law will be instrumental in enticing insurgent groups and their leaders to come to the table through generating assurances that no action, retributive or otherwise, will be taken against them for their actions in the years of conflict. Some interviewees saw the passage of the amnesty law and its sweeping nature—it potentially forgives past, present and future crimes—as a tactic Karzai adopted to assist in his presidential election bid. "Of course there is a link," noted an interviewee: "Why do you think Dostum, Sayyaf [both ex-mujahideen leaders with highly questionable human rights records] and the others supported Karzai?"[121]

A few interviewees, however, pointed out that while the amnesty law might serve as a tactical device, its purpose and audience are different from that of the APRP. "The law," noted one analyst, "was enacted to appease the jihadists. It was not aimed at the Taliban, although of course it might be used to generate confidence in the process for the insurgents."[122]

The APRP does little for victims of war crimes. While the strategy is peppered with the term "victims," it does not contain any specifics about funds or policies for them.[123] The term "human rights" appears only in relation to a loosely defined "human rights monitoring" initiative[124] and to state that the APRP will be transparent and compliant

117 United Nations Security Council, "Security Council Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee Approves Deletion of Five Entries from Consolidated List," 30 July 2010, http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2010/sc9998.doc.htm.

118 Ruti Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

119 Author interviews, Kabul, April-May 2010.

120 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 27 April 2010.

121 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 4 May 2010.

122 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 23 April 2010.

123 Over the years there has been a growing demand for a unified and systematic mechanism for providing condolence payments for damage or loss caused by military operations by the international military forces. In general, the processes for dispensing condolence payments have been ad hoc, opaque and varied from nation to nation. The problem of the lack of compensation for victims of international military airstrikes is further compounded by the lack of information about the few existing funds and the difficulty in accessing them. There is no funding for victims who have suffered at the hands of the Taliban, other insurgent forces and government forces; further, the APRP offers no such provision for compensation to survivors of attacks and atrocities.

124 See for example, D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 6.

President Karzai, pictured here speaking in Kunduz Province, ignited the current reconciliation and reintegration effort during his inauguration speech in November 2009. Photo by ISAFmedia.

with the constitution "in order to ensure protection of human rights."[125]

Justice, the second important factor in relation to amnesties, merits further discussion. An Afghan political actor argued, "The current reconciliation process empowers the Taliban while denying a voice to the much larger population of alienated Pashtuns and other ethnic groups who do not identify with the Taliban. How can there be a discussion of reconciliation with a few when thousands of Afghans don't want this? Where is their justice?"[126] This concern was more broadly shared, despite a diversity of understandings of what constitutes justice for survivors. The concern for justice was also evident at the civil-society organised Victims' Jirga held in Kabul on 9 May 2010.[127] Key issues discussed during the event included: Do the people of Afghanistan want reconciliation? If so, with whom and how? What do they mean and understand by "reconciliation"? Outcomes of these discussions included demands for the prosecution of perpetrators of war crimes and serious human rights violations, social and economic support for victims through reparations, support for disabled victims, transparent and fair reconstruction efforts and aid delivery to conflict-affected populations, and the creation of more spaces for victims to express their demands. Some breakout groups also recommended the removal of perpetrators from government, and the prevention of future crimes through comprehensive disarmament and the freezing of perpetrators' assets. Demands on the international community included asking for support in locating and documenting mass graves and other atrocity sites, and to strongly support the transitional justice process.[128] These recommendations reflect the findings of the small but growing number of reports published by organisations such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Afghanistan Watch, Human Rights Watch (HRW) and AREU, which have indicated that victims' demands for justice vary from forgiveness and acknowledgement of crimes committed to legal retribution and compensation. An assertion that cuts across these reports is that the lack of a justice agenda undermines prospects of long-term stability. As one civil society actor stated: "Unless all leaders confess and apologise to the people of

125 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 5.

126 Author interview, Afghan political actor, Washington DC, 17 May 2010.

127 Fearing that the voices of victims would not be heard at the NCPJ, a coalition of 25 civil society organisations working on issues of transitional justice in Afghanistan organised the "Victims' Jirga for Justice" in Kabul on 9 May 2010. It was an unprecedented event, hosting over 100 victims, newly formed victims' groups and civil society organisations from across Afghanistan in an effort to ignite public debate on reconciliation, peace and justice.

128 Victims' Jirga for Justice, Afghanistan Watch, Transitional Justice Core Group (TJCG), 10 May 2010, http://www.watchafghanistan.org/article023.php.

Afghanistan, the fighting will not stop...there will never be peace in this country. Never."[129]

2.6 Diversity of programming for affected communities

Proponents of the APRP claim that it offers a comprehensive package to war-affected communities, providing security and grievance resolution mechanisms while also helping former insurgents make the transition from a life of war to the life of a civilian. Approaches focus on all community members rather than individual insurgents and include: "community recovery (extending to 4,000 villages in 220 districts identified as priorities by the Joint Secretariat and led by MRRD); integration to the ANSF (MoI, MoD [Ministry of Defense]); vocational and literacy training (MoLSA [Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs], MoE); religious mentoring and education (MoHRA); and enrollment in a Public Works Corps or Agriculture Conservation Corps (MoPW [Ministry of Public Works], MAIL [Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock])."[130]

While the scale of these economic projects will be extensive, this is not the first time employment opportunities have been provided for reintegrating former combatants. The DDR provided agriculture and livestock packages, opportunities to join demining corps, support to start small businesses, public infrastructure building activities, teacher training courses, vocational training opportunities and literacy courses. However, as Waldman points out, such training was "of variable quality and relevance; employment depended largely on local economic conditions; and projects were not adequately coordinated with local government and communities, or other peace-building and reconstruction efforts..."[131] The opportunity to join the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the ANP also made an appearance in the DDR program, as it does in the APRP. However, the APRP does not mention whether the Afghan security forces can manage to integrate so many of these men. Like DDR, DIAG has offered infrastructure and alternative livelihood development projects in DIAG-compliant districts, but these projects have largely not materialised because the "programme has lacked national and international resolve."[132]

The APRP also claims to distinguish itself from previous efforts by integrating the community into the process and providing incentives for the communities into which the former combatants are reintegrated. Specifically, the APRP plans to extend economic benefits to victims' families and general communities in addition to former insurgents. This appears to build on earlier attempts of DIAG to generate greater legitimacy for the programme by building strong linkages with influential local actors, including religious leaders, tribal elders and shura members. Given the operational issues related to coordination, transparency and effective organisation and communication that have plagued DDR and DIAG, a key question for the APRP is about whether, within its implementation, it draws on the lessons learned from these experiences. If these central issues of effective strategy implementation and sustainability are not addressed, the APRP will, in all likelihood, continue to face the same kinds of challenges.

2.7 Implementing the APRP

For regulatory purposes, implementing the strategy first requires two presidential decrees—one to launch the national, provincial and district reintegration structures and another to establish the Reintegration Trust Fund for the accelerated release of funds. The APRP will appoint a High Peace Council (HPC) comprising prominent "Afghan state and non-state actors"[133] to provide strategic direction, generate national political will, and form nationwide delegations to promote peace. The Joint Secretariat, also appointed by presidential decree, will be comprised of ministry representatives and "chair

129 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 4 May 2010.

130 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 6.

131 Waldman, "Golden Surrender?," 4.

132 Waldman, "Golden Surrender?," 4.

133 Just prior to publication, the 70 council members were announced with former President Prof. Burhanuddin Rabbani appointed as chairman.

regular meetings with senior advisers and deputy ministers to advance the APRP and address issues and challenges to program implementation."[134] It will be managed by a CEO, with the assistance of three deputy CEOs for administration and logistics, program delivery, and local conflict resolution and reconciliation. An expert legal team under the deputy CEO for local conflict resolution and reconciliation will advise the Joint Secretariat and HPC. The same deputy CEO will also oversee the delivery of plans for capacity building in peace building and conflict resolution, and coordination with the Government Media and Information Center (GMIC) and IDLG on outreach.[135] ISAF and UNAMA have been requested to provide assistance with information, security operations and strategic communications, and to augment government delivery down to the local level. Other actors include line ministries, provincial councils, development committee members, heads of provincial *ulema* (religious scholars), shuras and community elders. PTS and DIAG will be merged under the national and provincial structures of the APRP. Former DIAG structures will be dedicated to assisting the GoA in demobilisation (focusing on name vetting, disarmament, weapons management and registration, and data collection) and former PTS structures will be focused on supporting the provincial peace and reintegration committees as appropriate.

The APRP has an ambitious mandate. It sets out an aggressive timetable for five years including specific targeted goals for the first 100 days after the completion of the NCPJ. While the yearly objectives provide useful indicators of the kind of activities in which the HPC and other ministries and organisations (such as the GMIC and IDLG) will be involved, it is questionable whether these deadlines will be met given the current political climate and the existing capacity of the GoA. As of the writing of this report, within the first 100 days of the NCPJ, Karzai has approved and signed the strategy. Independent of these developments, as noted previously, the UN Security Council has also delisted some of the key Afghan actors from the UNSCR 1267 list.

Based on the experiences of implementing previous programs, a few cautionary observations can be made. The APRP involves a large number of implementing actors, greater than or comparable to the number involved with the DDR process. Most of these actors are national, and some care has been taken to avoid duplication of efforts. With so many actors, effective coordination and information sharing becomes a great challenge. Indeed, one criticism of DIAG was its lack of transparency and information sharing about illegal armed groups and their activities between the different stakeholders and the absence of strong coordination between them, including between the MoI and the NDS. The PTS program has also been subjected to much criticism in areas of coordination, information and management and has been subjected to criticisms of patronage.

In the face of such recent experiences, many national and international respondents questioned the GoA's capacity to effectively implement and manage the APRP while avoiding similar issues of corruption, nepotism and communication and coordination failures. The existing mechanisms within government institutions including the MRRD, MoI and IDLG that will be used to implement the APRP have the advantage of demonstrated potential. Yet they have also been plagued, to varying degrees, by corruption and organisational and communication problems. An effective reintegration process requires a more robust platform of communication and coordination, among line ministries delivering the programme and also between international actors, particularly ISAF.

2.8 The issue of context-specificity

Officials involved in the design of the strategy assert that the APRP draws on Afghanistan's own experiences as well as best practices of other post conflict countries, including the Balkans, Northern Ireland and Iraq.[136] However, others have expressed concerns that while the strategy may sell well with the donor community, it would not necessarily yield

134 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 15.

135 D&R Commission, GoA, APRP Strategy, 15.

136 Author interviews, national and international actors, Kabul, April-May, 2010

"The design of the APRP appears limited by a broader tendency in Afghanistan to design programs within a crisis mode and thus disregard the very nuances that would perhaps allow more than nominal success."

the anticipated results on the ground. Specific components of the APRP echo some aspects of the US military strategy in Iraq, which has been (perhaps prematurely) deemed successful. But this tactic of mirroring the Iraqi experience has some critics, who argue that it must be the situation in Afghanistan that informs strategy, rather than a modification of an existing model elsewhere. "Why don't you look at the country first and devise the package around it? It's all about Iraq, Iraq, Iraq. Comparing Iraq to Afghanistan is like comparing Cambodia to Mogadishu. What are you doing?"[137]

Several international analysts as well as international diplomats whose embassies had pledged to support it expressed concerns about the APRP's responsiveness to the situation in Afghanistan. For example, one international actor commented, "When I first came here, I thought creating jobs for the insurgents would solve many of these problems. I realised after coming here that for sustainable peace we need political negotiations...we don't know what the end result of these political negotiations will be."[138] Another said: "The reality is not as simple as you can see in the laboratory—this ideology versus economic-based classification does not reflect the actual reality on the ground."[139] A third interviewee concluded: "These complexities have not been thought through. Frankly speaking, I don't think they care."[140]

137 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 22 April 2010.

138 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 3 May 2010.

139 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 3 May 2010.

140 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 22 April 2010.

The design of the APRP appears limited by a broader tendency in Afghanistan to design programs within a crisis mode and thus disregard the very nuances that would perhaps allow more than nominal success.

2.9 Concluding remarks on the APRP

The APRP strategy has made an effort to incorporate some of the concerns that have been raised over the years regarding how to deal with insurgents. On the positive side, it has expanded on the DDR and DIAG mandate, given more scope for Afghan institutions, subnational governance structures, local actors and communities to take greater leadership roles, and focuses on communication and coordination between the different implementing partners. Lessons learned from DDR, DIAG and PTS are also reflected in its design, including concerns of individual and community security and grievance resolution for both victims and insurgents. As such, the APRP is broader and does not end with weapons verification and submission, but breaks the traditional mould of disarmament and demobilisation, while also focusing on the reintegration element DDR and PTS could not deliver effectively.

Nevertheless, the anticipation surrounding the strategy should be significantly moderated, particularly because the program will be implemented within a volatile political climate where weak institutions and actors persist. Further, the anticipated success of this program itself hinges on three flawed assumptions: firstly, that the necessary precondition of interest in the APRP exists among the insurgent groups; secondly, that they have the adequate confidence and good faith in the GoA and the international military forces to deliver on their promises, and thirdly, that reintegration and reconciliation processes will be mutually reinforcing.

Without confidence in the institutions and the processes involved in the program, however, the APRP strategy seems to be compromised even before it materialises. Equally troubling is the fact that it also fails to address the political nature of the insurgency and the patron-client relationships which have been exploited in past programs.

By not adequately addressing how power and position can be wrested from former commanders and their networks, it opens the possibility for institutionalising existing power structures on one hand, while creating local, independent security networks on the other, and thereby undermining state authority. The APRP strategy also falls short of addressing some of the nuances and complexities that are critical for understanding the nature of the conflict, particularly the varied motivations that exist for men to join and stay in the insurgency. The suggested education programmes are not fully adapted to the current Afghan context, given that ties between insurgents and their leaders have been fostered over years of close contact and cannot be easily erased.

Finally, the plan's overt focus on forgiveness and grievance resolution overshadows various human rights and justice concerns, particularly regarding the rights of victims, and raises questions about the extent to which abusers would be granted immunity through the amnesties.

This section has provided an analysis of the APRP draft strategy as a whole. The following section will delve into one of the key findings of this report, which is how the different stakeholders, national and international, understand "reconciliation" and "reintegration" in the Afghan context and the critical issues they have raised in discussing prospects for a successful implementation of the strategy.

3. Critical Issues for Reintegration and Reconciliation in Afghanistan

An examination of the current discourse on reintegration and reconciliation in Afghanistan, stemming from the APRP and the volatile context within which it will be implemented, generates questions about the institutionalisation of the strategy as well as the processes, dynamics and actors involved in its implementation. It also gives rise to questions and concerns about how the terms "reintegration" and "reconciliation" are being understood by the different stakeholders and what such processes could mean given the current political climate in Afghanistan. However, before engaging with these findings, it is important to point out that the process of investigation for this report revealed a high level of secrecy surrounding the APRP's development and contents, the agenda for the NCPJ (which was supposedly aimed at developing a national consensus on the framework for reconciliation with the Taliban), and stakeholder positions on "reintegration" and "reconciliation." A significant challenge was to gain access to and hold frank and detailed interviews with several of the stakeholders and have them comment on the dynamic developments in the country. Many interviewees themselves noted that the environment in Afghanistan is extremely tenuous, expressed frustration at the pace of progress on the ground, observed the worsening of the political and security climate, and expressed confusion and concern about the lack of information and communication between the different actors, national and international, in the country.

This level of secrecy and frustration is clearly a result of the volatile and highly politicised climate that shrouds Afghanistan, resulting in mutual distrust. Such a context appears to limit prospects for ongoing and future projects in Afghanistan that demand cooperation, coordination, information-sharing and transparency. Without effective information-sharing and trust, the results have often been duplication of programmes and unnecessary competition between actors who could work more effectively through consultative programming.[141] With respect to the APRP, this level of secrecy also suggests an intention among certain authorities to maintain control over the programme without the genuine knowledge or consent of the Afghan public.

Moving beyond the issue of secrecy and distrust in the country, the following section examines both the understandings of the terms "reintegration" and "reconciliation" by the different stakeholders as well as specific issues relating to the implementation and perceived effectiveness of the APRP strategy.

3.1 Stakeholders' understandings of reintegration and reconciliation

The GoA, members of the international community and non-state local actors had varying views of the purpose and potential effectiveness of the APRP strategy. An overview of discussions on reintegration and reconciliation in policy circles and the media in Afghanistan and the US indicated that for a period of time, the terms "reintegration"

141 See for example, Shahmahmood Miakhel, "The Role of Development Aid in the Afghanistan Campaign," March 2010 speech at Wilton Park Conference, http://www.usip.org/resources/the-role-development-aid-in-the-afghanistan-campaign; Shahmahmood Miakhel, "A Plan to Stabilize Afghanistan," The Center for International Governance Innovation, No. 4, May 2010, http://www.operationspaix.net/IMG/pdf/CIGI_PlanStabilizeAfghanistan_2010-05-11_.pdf; "Better coordination of efforts to help Afghanistan priority for new UN envoy," 9 April 2008, UN News Center, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26263&Cr=afghan&Cr1; Office of the Special Inspector-General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Afghanistan's High Office of Oversight Needs Significantly Strengthened Authority, Independence, and Donor Support to Become an Effective Anti-Corruption Institution," 16 December 2009, http://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR20Audit-10-2.pdf; International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: New U.S. Administration, New Directions," Asia Briefing No 89, 13 March 2009; Oxfam Great Britain, "Afghanistan: Development and Humanitarian Priorities Contents," January 2008, http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/downloads/afghanistan_priorities.pdf; International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve," Asia Report No 145, 6 February 2008; Arne Strand, "Aid Coordination in Afghanistan," Commissioned by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Bergen, 13 December 2002, http://www.cmi.no/publications/file/1766-aid-coordination-in-afghanistan.pdf.

and "reconciliation" were used synonymously. This was especially true among Afghans, including civil society actors, who until the completion of this research had little knowledge of the content of the APRP, mainly because they were not included in its planning and design, and/or had not had access to the strategy or the main stakeholders. The interchangeability of meanings between the terms "reconciliation" and "reintegration" is an indication of the level of confusion that existed in Afghanistan, and the perplexity among actors about the intended goal and mandate of the APRP. One interviewee commented: "Maybe this level of confusion about what will comprise of reintegration and reconciliation was not a political choice...but these terms have been used synonymously and now it's taken on a shape and form all on its own...the whole discussion has gone out of control."[142]

The confusion about what the terms mean and what they would involve in the Afghan context appears to have dissipated among the major stakeholders and a general consensus, at least tacitly, on a distinction between reintegration and reconciliation appears to have been arrived at over the period of this research. Both the GoA and international stakeholders, which included international diplomats, generally understood reintegration as a bottom-up approach focusing on the rank-and-file soldiers, while reconciliation was seen as a top-down political process, which involves dialogue with senior insurgency leadership. While there thus seems to exist a shared understanding of the terms "reintegration" and "reconciliation" between the GoA and international stakeholders, the key distinction lay on the question of sequencing of the two processes and their understanding of what is feasible in Afghanistan within the current context.

Within the GoA, interviewees tended to view the APRP as a two-pronged initiative, involving the cooptation of rank-and-file soldiers within Afghan society (reintegration) while at the same time opening dialogue between the GoA and key leaders associated with the insurgency, such as members of the Quetta and Peshawar Shuras (reconciliation). In short, the GoA position is that the APRP comprises effective and adequate bottom-up and top-down initiatives to bring about the reintegration of rank and file soldiers while simultaneously pursuing negotiations and potential settlement with top leaders of the insurgency.

The international interviewees, on the other hand, generally tended to classify reintegration and reconciliation as independent, rather than interrelated, processes, anticipating a level of sequencing for them to be effective. The reason generally provided for this separation was that such a division was important for "operational purposes."[143] However, the motivation appeared to be more political than logistical; a programme focusing exclusively on reintegration appears more suited for generating international buy-in and legitimacy, as this approach sidesteps some of the clear political sensitivities about negotiating with top-level insurgents. These sensitivities are particularly salient regarding negotiating with the Taliban because it raises questions about the geopolitical implications of international troop withdrawal and concerns about whether human rights would be compromised in the ensuing political arrangement for peace.

International support for reintegration was evident at the 2010 London Conference. Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Lawrence Cannon said: "We support the reintegration in principle...we'll look at the parameters."[144] US Special Representative Richard Holbrooke also expressed support for the draft reintegration plan on the eve of the conference[145] and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said the US military had been "authorised to use substantial funds to support the effort,"[146] although she did

142 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 4 May 2010.

143 Author interviews, national and international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

144 "Time running out for Taliban insurgents: commander," *CBS News*, 28 January 2010, http://www.cbc.ca/world/story/2010/01/28/afghanistan-conference.html.

145 "US Backs Afghan Plan to Reintegrate Taliban," *Voice of America*, 27 January 2010, http://celebrifi.com/gossip/US-Backs-Afghan-Plan-to-Reintegrate-Taliban-1722238.html.

146 "Hillary Clinton's Remarks at Afghanistan: The London Conference," 28 January 2010, Video & Text, http://still4hill.

not say how much the US would contribute to the fund.[147]

In contrast, the findings of this research indicate that several international stakeholders, particularly the US government, have remained ambiguous and highly cautious regarding the question of reconciliation, mainly because of the aforementioned political sensitivities.[148] Even within the US administration, there appears to be different opinions about reconciliation as a whole, and disagreements on whether or not to deal with high-level insurgents, such as, for instance, Mullah Omar. The US administration is extremely sensitive to the issue of public perception, and talking to the very individuals who are perceived to be responsible for a conflict that has demanded the sacrifice of American lives would be a very difficult sell to the US constituency. One international respondent stated: "The US now has a problem with the narrative it adopted...9/11, Osama, how the Taliban treated women—they have such black and white pictures at home that it's now difficult to talk about reconciling with the Taliban."[149]

Most interviewees also suggested that there is possible disagreement between the UK, EU and US on the issue of reconciliation, with the UK being more open to the idea of political negotiations and wanting to take it much further and possibly playing the role of mediator.[150] This kind of ambiguity in US and UK policies towards Afghanistan, however, is not new. "Since the conflict began in 2001," argued Joanna Nathan at an expert group meeting on 5 November 2009, "there has not been a unified approach in determining who among the insurgents is to be targeted, who should be isolated, or who is reconcilable. It really points to the lack of coherence in national and international strategy."[151]

Afghan actors interviewed for this study were quite aware of the reluctance of the US government to officially express a unified position on reconciliation and expressed disagreement with the continuous effort by the international stakeholders to clinically detach the processes of reintegration and reconciliation.[152] Sebghatullah Sanjar, Karzai's policy chief, has expressed concern over this issue: "It is questionable why the United States just wants to reintegrate the low level of the Taliban and not the leadership...That's something they are concerned about, but from the Afghan side, we are trying to include everyone in negotiations."[153] These concerns expressed by Afghans are rooted in past experience. In fact, one of the key lessons that should have been learned from DDR, DIAG and PTS is that patron-client relationships between "lower-level" and "high-level" insurgents cannot be easily broken. Attempts at reintegrating foot soldiers in isolation of a broader political strategy cannot address the ongoing ability of key powerbrokers to exert influence that will drive the conflict.

3.2 Capacity of the GoA

One of the reiterative themes that emerged in the research was the capacity and commitment of the GoA and the pervasiveness of nepotism and corruption in the different bureaucracies as critical areas of concern for the implementation and effective management of the ambitious APRP strategy. Firstly, as many of the policy reports and commentaries that have been issued since 2001 have stressed, there has been a lack of sustained political will, coordination, information sharing and transparency between the different stakeholders,

wordpress.com/2010/01/28/3245.

147 The section on the fund provides detailed information about the individual contributions of many of the countries present at the London Conferences and it provides a clear picture of Japan and Australia leading the pledge table.

148 Author interviews, international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

149 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 25 April 2010.

150 Author interviews with international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

151 Center for American Progress, "Reconciliation and Insurgency," 5 November 2009, http://www.americanprogress.org/issues/2009/11/reconciliation_taliban.html.

152 Author interviews with national actors, Kabul, April-May, 2010.

153 Joshua Partlow, "Karzai's Taliban reconciliation strategy raises ethnic, rights concerns at home," *Washington Post*, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/02/03/AR2010020303737.html.

national and international. For example, one reason for the limited success of DDR, DIAG and PTS was the lack of political will and the absence of adequate coordination and information sharing within and between the different implementers. Further, such programmes have been undermined by nepotism and political deal-making with warlords, military commanders and militia leaders. In addition, there continues to be a lack of trust between Afghan civil society, the GoA and international military forces, required for any extensive program implementation.

A second, and perhaps more disquieting, concern regarding government capacity is the government's ability to establish preconditions for the possible talks and to negotiate effectively with the high officials in the insurgency. One interviewee expressed a common perception: "Is this government really serious about making this strategy work? I don't think so...this would involve cleaning up your government act and taking action against government officials and militia commanders who abuse their position, but this government is not ready for that at all."[154]

A 2009 International Crisis Group report on Afghanistan warns against the move to hold political negotiations when the GoA operates from a position of weakness: "Numerous peace agreements with *jihadi* groups and networks, in Pakistan and in Afghanistan, have broken down within months. In each case they have enhanced the power and activities of violent insurgents while doing nothing to build sustainable institutions."[155] The APRP indicates that the GoA has shown a willingness to accommodate insurgent interests through pushing, for example, for the removal of names from the sanctions list. Conversely, there is little solid evidence that the insurgency leadership is indeed willing and serious about political negotiations. Although some Talibs are reportedly open to discussions, particularly in the reintegration elements of the program,[156] anecdotal evidence indicates that insurgents overall continue to be highly suspicious and distrustful of the GoA and the international military forces and that they may not have good faith in the intentions and promises of the strategy itself. What is clear, however, is that one of the galvanising factors for the Taliban is the perception of the GoA as being weak, untrustworthy and predatory. Talking to the media after the conclusion of the Peace Jirga, Taliban spokesperson Qari Muhammad Yousuf Ahmadi stated: "Neither the offers of the Jirga are acceptable to us nor the invitation of Karzai. All these efforts are aimed at prolonging the stay of foreigners."[157] Such comments indicate a one-sided interest in political dialogue and underscore the GoA's position of weakness vis-à-vis its presumed counterpart. This is a critical point that the APRP does not seem to recognise. These tensions—the overt willingness of the GoA to negotiate with insurgency leadership on the one hand, and the absence of substantive evidence about an equitable level of interest on the part of insurgency to come to the table, draws attention to the dire need for the GoA to seriously think through its negotiating capacity, its position of authority, and to consider the role of a strong third-party mediator. It also draws attention to the existing challenges within the GoA that have also contributed to the fueling of the insurgency and that demand immediate attention. Ultimately, unless the GoA makes significant progress in reducing the levels of corruption, patronage and nepotism, and the GoA together with the international military forces makes a concerted effort to generate a degree of trust through not only rhetoric but by action, it is unlikely that the APRP strategy itself will be considered even nominally successful.

3.3 The issue of Hizb-i-Islami

On 19 February 2010, Hizb-i-Islami published *Da Zhghorene Milli Misaq* (National Safety Pledge) and submitted a copy to the GoA. The fifteen

154 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 27 April 2010.

155 International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: New U.S. Administration, New Directions."

156 Author interviews, international analyst, Kabul, 5 May 2010. This issue was also raised in interviews with several national analysts and civil society actors in Kabul.

157 "Afghan Taliban rejects Karzai, Peace Jirga's demand to shun violence," *Thalndian News*, 5 June 2010, http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/south-asia/afghan-taliban-rejects-karzai-peace-jirgas-demand-to-shun-violence_100375455.html.

point principles included demands of: 1) a pullout of foreign troops from Afghanistan within six months, 2) the establishment of a neutral interim government and 3) the holding of impartial, free and fair elections, and 4) the handover of all security functions to the ANA and ANP. The letter followed an increased interest demonstrated by Hizb-i-Islami in political talks with the GoA. These developments (and speculation about who would attend the NCPJ) brought renewed focus on Hizb-i-Islami and the role of its leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. An analyst confided: "There is a scenario where the Taliban and Hizb-i-Islami enter into some kind of a deal and you get a slightly more authoritarian regime where a lot of the grievances are not addressed; but because they are not being supported and equipped you won't have a strong insurgency so you get more stability but not more justice...in the end you lay the ground for future instability."[158]

The re-entry of Hizb-i-Islami as a prominent player in the current political discourse prompts two immediate observations. Firstly, an overview of Karzai's position in the last several years indicates a growing level of conservatism, which could be understood to be a tactical tool to gain friends within an increasingly unstable political climate; an alliance with Hizb-i-Islami could bolster Karzai's declining legitimacy and help him garner more support. Secondly, such an alliance would also serve the interests of Hekmatyar and position him as an important power-broker in the political landscape of Afghanistan. This possible reconfiguration of Hizb-i-Islami as an emerging stakeholder in the reintegration and reconciliation processes indicate, according to some interviewees, that in areas where it has strongholds, Hizb-i-Islami will position itself to take significant advantage of the benefits offered by the APRP.

While for some the bolstering of Hizb-i-Islami, and indeed Hekmatyar, through a political deal could be seen as a painful but necessary compromise in comparison to the alternative possibility of a Taliban-dominated government, this focus on the potential role of Hizb-i-Islami raises significant concerns. After all, Hizb-i-Islami played a significant role in the bloody civil wars in Afghanistan and perpetrated some of the most notable war crimes in Afghanistan's history, paving the way for many Afghans who suffered during those years to welcome the emergence of the Taliban. Hekmatyar himself is notorious for his very poor human rights record and has a history of being supported by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, with links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban as well as a tumultuous relationship with Iran.[159] In fact, according to an international analyst, Hizb-i-Islami remains unpopular because of their role in Afghanistan's bloody history.[160] Even in recent history, Hizb-i-Islami has had a turbulent and antagonistic relationship with the GoA. With increasing strongholds in places like Kunar and Nangarhar, it has launched attacks on Kabul and as late as April 2008 attempted to assassinate President Karzai. Consequently, the possibility of the GoA relying on Hizb-i-Islami as a significant ally and viewing Hekmatyar as a negotiating partner is worrying, especially given the doubts about the current administration's ability to dictate terms and conditions for a political alliance and Hekmatyar's own proven unreliability as a trusted political partner.

3.4 ISAF and the counter-insurgency strategy

Neither the US military nor ISAF has a clear position regarding political reconciliation in Afghanistan. At a House Appropriations defence subcommittee hearing in March 2010, Robert Gates announced: "... it's when they begin to have doubts about whether they can be successful that they may be willing to make a deal. And I don't think we're there yet."[161] Yet, in a May 2010 article, Lt General Graeme Lamb, the former Deputy Commanding General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq and currently heading the reconciliation effort within ISAF in Afghanistan,

158 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 22 April 2010.

159 For a detailed overview of Hekmatyar's career, see "Profile: Gulbuddin Hekmatyar," *BBC World News*, 23 March 2010, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/2701547.stm.

160 Email correspondence with international actor, 28 July 2010.

161 House Appropriations Defense Subcommittee Hearing, Robert Gates, 23 March 2010.

stated: "In my view, yes, the time is about right. We started the dialogue, saw what the opportunities were. I believe those opportunities are real, [and] very much then fits in with what President Karzai and many Afghans have been saying for some time, which is, 'We want to do this.' My view is we now have a convergence of interest."[162]

Whatever the case regarding the position of ISAF—ambivalence or a slow warming to the idea of reconciliation—three main observations about its position and authority emerge from this study. Firstly, it raises the issue of whether and to what extent APRP and the counter-insurgency (COIN) strategy in Afghanistan are linked. Secondly, and closely related to the first point, is the question of who is actually driving the APRP. Thirdly, it brings attention to the consequences of the implication of a link between APRP, ISAF and COIN.

The counter-insurgency approach should theoretically support the APRP both by pressuring insurgents militarily and by supporting the legitimacy of the Afghan government, thereby encouraging insurgents to switch sides. Further, the international military naturally tends to see the APRP in military terms, in relationship to its broader COIN strategy. From such a perspective, it is better that the APRP be viewed as an Afghan-led strategy so that it garners greater acceptance and legitimacy among the Afghan population. However, both these positions—that of the APRP's link to COIN and the perception of the APRP's heavy reliance on ISAF—are highly problematic. International military forces, despite COIN, have limited support for their operations across Afghanistan and are often seen to be dictating to the government. Consequently, a close association between the APRP and COIN could undermine the current strategy for reintegration and reconciliation in the eyes of many Afghans, who would be suspicious of an initiative led by the very institution that has defeated insurgents military. Undoubtedly, it is also bound to raise doubt and distrust among the general population about the likely security of reintegrees.

The perception of whether the APRP is an Afghan initiative or is directed by outside forces is important. Interviewees in this research expressed a general sense that the Afghan government is taking cues from the international military forces and that without their approval it would not be able to independently implement the APRP. Further, the interviews also revealed a concern that without approval from the international military forces, the GoA will not begin the process of political reconciliation. If indeed the APRP is being driven by ISAF, it is possible to understand why, outside of the issue of political sensitivities, the idea of sequencing reintegration and reconciliation is attractive, and to identify ISAF as the main proponent of such an approach. From a military standpoint, the possibility of effective negotiation with insurgency leadership can only emerge when the insurgency is being soundly defeated and its leadership is in a position of weakness. Interviews conducted with international actors during this research indicated that ISAF, however, is very careful about how its role and position regarding the APRP is being understood.[163] ISAF does not claim to hold a position regarding political negotiations that may be undertaken and deflects reconciliation to the GoA. Further, ISAF as well as individuals within the GoA dismiss the impression that international military forces are driving the APRP; instead they draw attention to and underscore the international military's *supporting* role for implementing the reintegration component of the APRP in coordination with, and because of requests from, the GoA.

The extent to which ISAF could be involved in driving and implementing the APRP also draws attention to the existing tensions between the military and civilian administrations, both international and Afghan, recently evidenced by the resignation of General Stanley McChrystal in June 2010.[164] These tensions in civilian-military relations have been ongoing since 2001, given that the international military forces have become increasingly involved in

162 "Obama May Accept Plan to Reconcile with Taliban," *The Americano*, 14 May 2010, http://theamericano.com/2010/05/14/obama-may-accept-plan-to-reconcile-with-taliban.

163 Author interviews with international actors, Kabul, April-May 2010.

164 General McChrystal's disparaging remarks about the Obama administration and other US civilian actors, published in *Rolling Stone*, resulted in his immediate forced resignation.

development and political reconstruction efforts in the country, often not working in coordination with national and international civilian bureaucracies and at times overshadowing them. This involvement has also extended to ad hoc reintegration and reconciliation efforts at local levels such as the operationalisation of CDIs (discussed in Section 2), which have been largely independent of civilian institutions. In general, the military has tended to be impatient with slow, and sometimes weak, civilian bureaucracies, whether Afghan or international, and at times makes immediate decisions on the ground that are not necessarily in harmony with broader policy. The questions surrounding who is the driving force of the APRP and the level of influence exerted by the international military forces in Afghanistan in civilian matters has again brought out the critical importance of effectively addressing the civilian-military dimensions that are operational within Afghanistan. Indeed, a significant challenge for the implementation of the APRP is managing relations between the international military and the GoA and to take steps to ensure that the former does not overshadow or dictate terms and conditions to the latter.

3.5 The role of other external actors

As indicated in section 2.3, there is an important international dimension to the Afghan conflict. The country's security and stability is heavily dependent on the developments within, and foreign policies of, its neighbouring countries, particularly Pakistan, India and Iran. Given the complex nature of the conflict, it is extremely unlikely that political negotiations for reconciliation with the high-level leaders of the insurgency will be possible without the cooperation of these countries. Within the US administration, there has been increasing emphasis on addressing the role of Pakistan in the conflict, with President Obama stressing this link in his Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy in 2009 and emphasising the need for greater US-Pakistan coordination in the fight for stability in the region. Regarding the potential role of Pakistan in reconciliation, some interpreted the arrest of Mullah Baradar in early 2010 as a clear signal from Islamabad that high-level negotiations about Afghanistan need to go through them. However, some interviewees thought that Pakistan's ISI might not allow some of the reconciliation talks to take place. "It is important to be highly cautious in our optimism when Pakistan shows these recent signs of cooperation...It is difficult to predict whether ISI would allow the talks to be successful...or how it would interfere."[165]

India is another critical player in Afghanistan, securing itself as the biggest regional donor with a 2010 pledge of $1.3 billion for the country's reconstruction projects. Its gradual but notable presence in Afghanistan over the last several years indicates that the country is increasingly seeing itself as an important stakeholder in the current political context, with an eye to Pakistan's involvement in the same. Indeed, it is possible to argue that India's policy toward Afghanistan is very much tied to its relationship with Pakistan and the ongoing issue of Kashmir. "We all know," stated one interviewee, "Afghanistan is where India and Pakistan are fighting out their proxy war. And if you really want to solve the problem in Afghanistan, you would have to address the conflict in Kashmir."[166]

The current developments in Afghanistan, including the APRP and the discussion of reintegration and reconciliation, evidently carries weight for India. Given the terrorist attacks on India in recent years, several interviewees observed that India is, like the US, uncomfortable with reconciling with the top-level leaders of the insurgency, despite being open to the idea of rank and file reintegration. It is possible to suggest, then, that India's position on political negotiations with senior levels of the insurgency will be influenced by the role and level of involvement of Pakistan in the process.

While this research could not access the official position of Iran regarding the discussions on reintegration and reconciliation, interviewees, both national and international, strongly underscored that a political development in Afghanistan, particularly relating to top-level political negotiations with the

165 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 27 April 2010.

166 Author interview, local civil society actor, Kabul, 26 April 2010.

senior leadership of the insurgency, will not take place without some level of involvement of the Iranian government. "It is possible," noted an international actor, "that some level of back-door negotiations are taking place between the US authorities and the Iranian government regarding Afghanistan, but at this point in time it is not clear what the outcome of such deliberations could be, and what Iran's position and role would be in influencing such political talks."[167]

This uncertainty about the roles of Pakistan, India and Iran, whether they will deem it in their interest to help or hinder the process of political negotiation, and questions of what kind of leverage they will exert in the different stages of political dialogue that may ensue underscore the external dimension of the Afghan conflict and the need to engage with and put pressure on these external actors, who have emerged as crucial stakeholders in Afghanistan's future.

3.6 Generating political capital and the build-up to an exit strategy

The APRP and the surrounding discussions on reintegration and reconciliation raise the question of the political interests of all the major stakeholders involved, both national and international. Within Afghanistan, the current trend toward reconciliation can be interpreted as part of a larger process of high-level politicking. From this perspective, Karzai chose to revisit "reconciliation" with the insurgents in the run-up to the 2009 presidential election to gain support during a time when his administration was under heavy criticism for failure to deliver on security, good governance and development.[168] Tellis argues: "By stoking attention to a possible compromise with the Taliban...the president reached out to the shura while simultaneously deflecting criticism of his regime's poor performance during the past seven years."[169] Seeking compromise with the Taliban could arguably further Karzai's political support base among Pashtuns especially, drawing on Afghan nationalism and the growing frustration and antagonism with the international military forces and the international community.

For troop-contributing countries, and especially the US and the UK, supporting the APRP can be seen as a part of a build-up toward an exit strategy. Interviewees noted that the reintegration package particularly has been designed with foreign constituencies in mind, to demonstrate to the international community that concrete measures are being taken to end the insurgency in Afghanistan and generate a perception that the GoA, with heavy international military assistance, is "winning the war." Almost ten years of continued military and political involvement by troop-contributing countries has taken a heavy toll on foreign constituents. Despite the billions of dollars poured into Afghanistan since the defeat of the Taliban, the loss of military and civilian lives and news of the worsening of the insurgency have made European countries and the American public increasingly frustrated and impatient to see an end to the conflict. With pressure building on the European and US governments to end an increasingly unpopular war and "bring the troops home," the APRP presents an attractive opportunity for a possible exit strategy. Undeniably, support for the APRP also brings into question the issue of reconciling with the political leadership of the insurgency. While, as this report points out, the positions of some of the major stakeholders have remained unclear for the period of research, there is a growing possibility that the need to engage in political negotiations with the insurgency will be deemed an uncomfortable but necessary measure to be taken. "The international community is desperate," said one interviewee, "and the situation is deteriorating so fast we have to do something...will this be successful? I don't know, but we need to get on board or we lose the chance we are seeking."[170]

167 Author interview, international actor, Kabul, 22 April 2010.

168 President Karzai's Inauguration Speech, Permanent Afghanistan Mission to the United Nations in New York, 19 November 2009, http://www.afghanistan-un.org/2009/11/president-karzai%E2%80%99s-inauguration-speech.

169 Ashley J Tellis, "Reconciling With the Taliban? Toward an Alternative Grand Strategy in Afghanistan" (Carnegie Report, April 2009), 6.

170 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 18 April 2010.

3.7 Linking theory to practice: Reconciliation, co-option, accommodation or appeasement?

Before turning to the section on recommendations, it is important to assess the current discussion of reconciliation in Afghanistan in light of the theoretical framework outlined in Section 1.2, in order to tease out what is actually unfolding in the country. This will help clarify the assumptions and possible outcomes of the current scenario within the broader context of how reconciliation is understood in conflict resolution literature.

Historically, there has never been a formal nationwide effort in Afghanistan to tackle reconciliation in its most comprehensive form, which would include the four dimensions of truth, mercy, forgiveness, and justice.[171] Instead, past efforts can be categorised as a minimum form of political reconciliation. These have included top-down political approaches initiated by individuals in positions of power to negotiate a truce or arrangement that would further solely military or strategic political objectives. These neither addressed the grievances of the past, nor did they result in reformed economic, cultural and political relationships.[172]

Against this historical backdrop, how do current discussions of "reconciling" with insurgents compare? The APRP includes both the potential for amnesties and for engaging with the leadership of armed opposition groups, which are common forms of political reconciliation. However, comprehensive reconciliation processes would further require that concrete steps be taken to transform antagonistic relationships into durable civic partnerships, establish sustainable political associations, and acknowledge past wrongdoings and collective responsibility for commission of crimes.

There are different forms of political reconciliation, varying according to how much power the government retains and how much it cedes. Semple defines "co-option" as a negotiated settlement in which a fighter will reconcile "without securing any privilege but accepts the status quo in return for liberty or amnesty."[173] "Accommodation" involves "negotiated concessions [to] win cooperation or end the hostilities of the nonstate actor."[174] Finally, "appeasement" means that state actors make major concessions on vital interests, rolling back on principles for partial concessions from the non-state actor.[175]

Given that the APRP makes a number of commitments in order to entice the political leadership of the insurgency to agree to engage in the process, including offers of amnesties and third country settlements, it is critical to underscore how these offers could play out in a context where the GoA is weak and where democratic developments in the country are still fledgling at best. In the likely scenario of political reconciliation, one of the major concerns expressed by civil society actors particularly is that women's rights, human rights, media freedom and other forms of freedom will be sacrificed in political negotiations to accommodate the demands of the insurgency leadership. To some extent, the potential of this scenario has been highlighted by the growing insistence from the international community and Afghan civil society that insurgents must respect the constitution, women's rights, human rights and media freedoms. Such demands and growing pressure from civil society and national and international stakeholders, including the US, indicate that appeasement, at least, appears unlikely. However, legitimate concerns remain about the outcome of such political negotiations. One possible scenario, feared by civil rights activists, is that verbal commitments from reconciled parties would allow Karzai to present himself as an effective leader, prompting the international community to laud the advances made in moving toward a peace settlement in Afghanistan, while in reality

171 Lederach, "Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies," 25-30.

172 As has been emphasised by Louis Kriesberg.

173 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, 9.

174 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, 9.

175 Semple, *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, 9

such a process would be an exercise for mere public consumption and could pave the way for Afghanistan to lose the modest gains made in human rights since 2001. These fears are legitimate and need to inform the decisions and actions of stakeholders involved as the APRP begins to be implemented. Ultimately, the only real protection against such a scenario is a genuine and sustained commitment to the principles of human rights and democratic freedoms.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has examined the latest emerging efforts to end the long-running conflict in Afghanistan, focusing on questions, concerns and confusions surrounding the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Plan. It identified the key components of the strategy, the actors involved, and the developments thus far in the discussions in the national and international arenas. The research provided a glimpse of the politics surrounding the APRP, encountering both a degree of hope among policymakers and decision-makers and a significant level of distrust and cynicism among Afghans and others immediately outside of the process about the prospects and promises of this program.

The international stakeholders in Afghanistan are facing increasing pressure from their domestic constituents to find a solution and "bring the troops home." As there is international consensus that the conflict in Afghanistan cannot be resolved solely through military means, international stakeholders are seeking the ideal political solution, a "winning strategy" to an intractable conflict. Within Afghanistan, several developments too have fuelled the push for this effort. Firstly, the length and unpopularity of the current conflict has made the situation ripe for experimenting with a new strategy. Secondly, Afghan nationalism made a strong appearance in Karzai's 2009 re-election campaign, as did the issue of self-sufficiency. Both these factors heavily underscore the deep-seated frustration and disengagement Afghans have felt in the years of heavy international military and civilian presence in their country. Karzai's harnessing of these sentiments also indicate that the current climate is ripe for thinking more strategically and effectively about how to address the demands, concerns, fears and hopes of the Afghan people and engage them in matters in their own state. Thirdly, criticisms of international engagement and the stress on the withdrawal of foreign troops have become very pronounced among many Afghans who have reaped little, if any, benefits since 2001. Karzai is therefore under severe pressure to demonstrate his independence from international actors and accordingly is adopting a nationalistic stance to strengthen his political base among the Afghan population.

Emerging in the context of an ongoing troop surge, the APRP is viewed as a way to address some of the root causes of the complex insurgency. However, the strategy identifies economic factors as the primary cause and solution to the current conflict, and is founded on the belief that the war can be brought to a close by pummelling the insurgents into a corner militarily while also offering "carrots." Moreover, the APRP raises questions of what reintegration and reconciliation are understood to mean in the Afghan context and how the sequencing of the two processes should be devised. The many uncertainties that surround the APRP as it enters its implementation phase are cause for concern. Central to this concern are questions about a continued international commitment to Afghanistan, what the reintegration process and reconciliation with insurgents would look like, what compromises might be made for the sake of peace, and what role and influence Afghanistan's neighbours will have in the reintegration and reconciliation processes.

Opinions vary significantly in terms of how to best move forward on reintegration and reconciliation, given the current political climate and logistical constraints. This report offers some preliminary recommendations for the international community and GoA regarding the APRP and political negotiations with the leadership of the insurgency. These recommendations fall under seven broad categories:

1. Increase transparency and ensure coordination
2. Establish stringent standards for the GoA to implement the APRP
3. Recognise local realities and manage expectations
4. Develop a strong, inclusive negotiation strategy, strengthen the GoA's negotiating capacity and consider a role for an effective mediator

5. Articulate the regional strategy and address the roles of external actors
6. Consider the demands of conflict victims
7. Prepare for a long-term commitment to Afghanistan.

4.1 Increase transparency and ensure coordination

There is a sense among many that there is a high level of deliberate vagueness and secrecy built into the public discussions on reintegration and reconciliation. Such ploys give rise to a sense of isolation among the Afghan population and many of the national stakeholders from what is actually going on in Afghanistan, and generates suspicion and hostility toward the process, in which important decisions are, as a rule, taken by only a few key players. There has to be a concerted effort toward transparency to generate a sense of legitimacy, ownership and trust in decision-making mechanisms. Moreover, the strategy itself perpetuates the assumption that reintegration and reconciliation in Afghanistan are mutually reinforcing. It is critical to remember that this is not necessarily the case in the Afghan context, particularly given the complexity of the conflict, the role of external actors, the hedging of bets that is part of the Afghan conflict landscape, and the different motivations that fuel the insurgency. The interviews carried out for this report, along with anecdotal evidence, highlight that individuals within the insurgency and individuals outside of the planning and implementation process view the emphasis on reintegration as a clear demonstration that the US is not seriously interested in high-level negotiations. While the rhetoric on reconciliation is constantly shifting and is currently suggesting a greater possibility than before of political negotiations with the insurgency, the absence of a clear and unified position, particularly from the major stakeholders, has allowed for a significant amount of speculation, fear and suspicion about how the process could move forward. It is critical, then, that the international community be coordinated and transparent in their decisions about what is possible and what they are willing to support.

Further, the US military and ISAF cannot continue to function independently of the civilian administration. The current state of affairs contributes to the existing problems of coordination, creates further confusion on the ground about who is the central authority, and perpetuates a common perception that the US military is in charge of reintegration and reconciliation and is the real decision-making body in Afghanistan. Indeed, a significant level of confusion is being generated by the US military's individual efforts to reintegrate and reconcile with local Taliban and their leadership, particularly in the south. Although immediate decisions are necessary and inevitable in a context of war, long-term implications of such manoeuvres must nevertheless be recognised and addressed.

4.2 Establish stringent standards for the GoA to implement the APRP

In general, there needs to be far more stringent benchmarks and performance indicators when developing, implementing and assessing the outcome of donor-driven projects in Afghanistan. Pressure on the GoA to meet these standards at the risk of losing funding could result in more effective performance. Specifically, donors need to set specific conditions for the financial commitments they will be making to support the Peace and Reintegration Fund. Further, the GoA needs to establish specific benchmarks to ensure that the different bodies involved in the process meet their strategic objectives as effectively as possible. The APRP mentions the efforts that will be made to avoid duplication and this needs to be monitored carefully to avoid undermining the coordinated efforts.

There also needs to be institutionalised assurances for the monitoring and coordination from the different donors such that there is greater uniformity in setting conditions for financial packages. A problem in Afghanistan is that when one donor sets conditions for financial packages, it is possible to negotiate with another potential donor who demands less stringent benchmarks for a similar funding package. Greater uniformity among the donors about setting conditions for

contributions would go a long way to ensure that APRP implementation and output is effective and sustainable.

4.3 Recognise local realities and manage expectations

The APRP strategy presents an oversimplified understanding of the integration of rank and file soldiers and focuses on economic incentives as an effective and sufficient means to address the causes of insurgency. Its proponents have emphasised that the APRP is different from past initiatives in its attempt to involve the community, provide grievance resolution programs and establish "transitional training" programs. These commitments indicate an overestimation of the potential of the program, given that the circumstances and context of the conflict have been worsening and neither the capacity nor the political will of the government have generated a sense of confidence among international actors or the Afghan population that the GoA can meet the goals to which it has committed.

It is also important to recognise that the reintegration process would be taking place within the context of an ongoing conflict fuelled by a complex insurgency. A resounding theme in the research was an underestimation of the Taliban in terms of how the movement could be broken with military means and economic incentives: "The Taliban is a far more cohesive movement and yet it is far more loosely coordinated," noted an observer, "and a short-term policy of disarmament will not work here. There will always be arms in Afghanistan and the Taliban are not looking for reintegration packages."[176] A rush to fund the reintegration project will build on a common perception in Afghanistan that this is part of the beginning of the international community's exit strategy from the country and that international stakeholders are not committed to an effective and sustainable process that will bring about genuine reintegration and reconciliation. Additionally, the demands being placed on Afghanistan to deliver on the democratic platform are enormous, but the reality is that the state is far too weak to respond to the laundry list of expectations. An examination of the optimism surrounding the current APRP strategy, particularly from the international community and the GoA, emphasises this trend. It is critical for both international donors and the national proponents of the strategy to mitigate the anticipated potential of the APRP and manage expectations accordingly.

4.4 Develop a strong and inclusive negotiation strategy, strengthen the GoA's negotiating capacity, and consider a role for an effective mediator

Currently, top level military officials within ISAF, the US administration and national civil society actors demand that political negotiations take place only when the insurgent leadership accepts the Afghan constitution, the rule of law and human rights. However, given that the rule of law in the country is extremely weak and interpretation of the constitution can be quite loose and vague, such demands do not guarantee their protection. Moreover, the pressure for laying down such preconditions ultimately would not be sufficient if Karzai himself is bargaining from a position of weakness. It must be underscored that the international community will, in this case, as in all others, continue to perform a tenuous and sensitive balancing act. An overt insistence from the international community about the setting of preconditions could very well mean that the insurgent leadership will refuse to negotiate with the GoA. Perhaps a more effective level of engagement would be to define the parameters of a strong negotiating strategy, identify a timeline with specific indicators for political negotiations, and begin immediate concerted work to strengthen the GoA's negotiating capacity such that it is considered both effective and having sufficient clout to engage with the insurgent leadership. Further, it is imperative that such an inclusive, clear strategy is developed through a series of genuine consensus and consultative processes, including human rights and women's rights organisations who have pressing concerns about the compromises that may be made in their absence from the negotiating

176 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 26 April 2010.

table. However, even if there is commitment made to protect these rights during the talks, it does not necessarily mean that they will be honoured in the post-negotiation period. Such fears are prescient and legitimate. Some of those interviewed have portrayed an alarming scenario where they believe that opening the constitution for revision or offering parts of Afghanistan as a political settlement is within the realms of probability given the desperation of the current government, the volatility of the political climate and the position of strength from which the Taliban leadership in particular can bargain from. Such fears may be allayed with a commitment toward including non-state actors in the development of the negotiation strategy and concerted efforts are required to build confidence about the GoA's negotiating capacity.

While Afghan leadership is important, what Afghanistan needs is a committed, capable and trustworthy mediator who can deliver on the political front, both in the dialogues between the insurgents and the GoA and, when necessary, between the GoA and external state actors. Simultaneously, the international community needs to continue to act as a watchdog over these critical developments, put sustained pressure on the negotiation process and continue to support civil society actors to strengthen their position within the emerging context. The international actors must go beyond just financial commitment.

4.5 Articulate the regional strategy and address the role of external actors

A key finding of this research is that international and national actors are genuinely concerned about the current state of security in Afghanistan. Without the presence of a clearly articulated regional strategy, the reintegration and reconciliation question is developing in a vacuum and generating speculation, anxiety and suspicions within Afghanistan about its role and position in US foreign policy. For the US, navigating the treacherous political waters would mean developing a diplomatic relationship with Iran on the issue of Afghanistan, paying attention to India's and Pakistan's concerns about each other's involvement in Afghanistan, and putting pressure on India and Pakistan to curtail their proxy war about Kashmir on Afghan soil.

This pressure and cooperation needs to be built on such that the ISI in particular does not disrupt or derail the current developments toward a peace process in Afghanistan. The international community must devise a sensitive balancing act that also takes into consideration India and Iran's interests in Afghanistan's reintegration and reconciliation process.

There is also a role for the UN in the current political developments regarding reconciliation. The UN should appoint a special envoy or a team of experts who would work together with the GoA and the international community to develop a framework for effective negotiations and assist in identifying a reliable and effective mediator for the political negotiations when required.

4.6 Consider the demands of conflict victims

While stressing economic incentives and grievance resolution, the APRP has effectively marginalised the multivaried demands of victims and issues of justice. While pragmatic constraints upon the Afghan state and necessary political calculations need to be factored into developing a platform for peace and stability, the demands of survivors of the three decades of conflict cannot be completely ignored. The APRP focuses on the Afghan culture of forgiveness and grievance resolution for the purpose of reconciliation. What it ignores is the equal focus in Afghan culture on issues of justice in order to aid reconciliation.

Afghanistan is no stranger to the practice of compromising justice for political expedience. However, the concerns expressed during the course of this research and the Victims' Jirga of 2010 indicate that while victims' groups are still weak, disparate and highly disorganised, their demands for justice are alive and pressing. Given Afghanistan's fragile state and its multidimensional commitments, it may not be possible currently to

pursue retributive justice. But this does not imply that justice in its other forms cannot be delivered. The international community needs to step up its pressure on the GoA to address the questions of justice in a transparent, inclusive manner that resonates with Afghan culture and practices; take necessary steps to avoid exploitation of conflict survivors, and abuse of power in the implementation of the APRP program; and remove from positions of authority those who continue to exploit the system to serve the interests of the powerful. The existing Action Plan on Peace, Reconciliation and Justice in Afghanistan is a substantive document that captures many of the demands of victims while focusing on how effective institution-building can take place. The GoA needs to revisit its commitments to this document and deliberate on how it can deliver on the promises made. Efforts need to be underway to implement a truth and accountability mechanism. This would both reflect the commitments of the National Action Plan as well as the widespread demands for such a mechanism among the Afghan population.

4.7 Prepare for a long-term commitment to Afghanistan

To move forward, it is critical that there is an honest assessment of what is expected from Afghanistan and what the international community can actually deliver. As such, despite pressure to "bring the troops home" and an eagerness to bring an end to the conflict, there needs to be a proper evaluation of the extent to which the international community can afford to—and afford not to—continue its commitment to the country. A strong Afghan state cannot be built in one or two years. Further, rather than a complete withdrawal there needs to be a long-term commitment to the country to assist it to advance politically, economically, legally and socially. An interviewee concluded: "To note a change in this country, decades-long commitment to the country is required, more civil and political investment is required—there are no quick fixes."[177] A long-term commitment in Afghanistan would mean a reversal of the trend that has dominated Afghanistan policies and practices for almost a decade and the adoption of a slower, more gradual approach. It would mean an actual commitment to roll back on the knee-jerk responses to emerging crises in the country and focusing energy and resources on a few key goals (for example, effective means of tackling corruption within all sectors, greater transparency, rooting out some of the most ill-reputed human rights abusers from positions of authority, and establishing means of paying compensation that all stakeholders can agree upon and that can be implemented through coordinated efforts). The pursuit of these goals should be linked to, and be dependent upon, concurrent high-level political negotiations committed to the establishment of a genuine peace agreement.

The road to political stability in Afghanistan indeed has no quick fixes. The political morass today is the result of a culmination of complex, long-standing factors that will not dissipate with a troop surge or greater financial commitment alone. However, there are some flickers of hope. The US administration's renewed focus and commitment to Afghanistan is both critical and timely, and the recognition of the regional dimension of the problem is a step in the right direction. The development of the APRP within this context and its effort to capture the multidimensional aspects of the rising insurgency and how address them is commendable. An overview of the strategy also reveals a concerted effort to learn from the experiences of DDR, DIAG and PTS and involve existing national actors and structures for the effective implementation and reach of the program.

Nevertheless, legitimate concerns remain. The APRP's focus on simplifying the insurgency to a poverty-induced movement does not address the disenchantment of the Afghan people with the failures of the GoA and the mistakes of the international community. Neither does the APRP have the scope to address the international dimensions of the conflict, which are critical to its solution. The question of political reconciliation too raises legitimate concerns about the capacity of the GoA, the existing absence of communication and coordination between national and international actors, and what could perhaps be compromised in

177 Author interview, international analyst, Kabul, 2 May 2010.

the desperate bid for peace. As the GoA and the international community move forward to approve, implement and expand this program, realities on the ground should give stakeholders and experts some pause. Unless expectations are mitigated and precautions are taken, the temptations of political expediency will continue to overshadow any prospects of peace in Afghanistan and the nation will remain precariously poised on the brink of an unending conflict.

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