Enhancing the Footprint: Stakeholders in Afghan Reconstruction

Bas Rietjens

Myriame Bollen

Masood Khalil

Sayed Fazlullah Wahidi

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BAS RIETJENS, MYRIAME BOLLEN, MASOOD KHALIL, and SAYED FAZLULLAH WAHIDI

"As Afghanistan is so clearly demonstrating, one reconstructs during conflict and stabilization, not after it. Reconstruction is in many ways the essential process that bridges conflict and stabilization."[1] The necessities of reconstruction have frequently drawn the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) into activities that go well beyond its originally intended mission of providing direct security. Examples include contributing to security sector reform such as restoring the rule of law or training the national police and army; delivering essential services such as health care, education, or food; and supporting the functioning of the Afghan authorities.

Although most military forces would readily agree that they are not the appropriate actors to be performing nonsecurity-related tasks within the traditional humanitarian domain, in many areas such as the southern Afghan provinces of Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan, tenuous security conditions prevent humanitarian organizations from establishing a presence. In some instances these organizations are deliberately targeted by insurgent groups in an effort to prevent them from gaining a foothold or becoming effective in assisting the local populace.[2] In such situations, the debate on specific domains[3] becomes less relevant, and military involvement in nonmilitary activities is necessary to provide a temporary gap and gain momentum for reaching the primary military goal: the creation of stability.[4]

Based on his deployment as commander of the Australian Reconstruction Task Force in Uruzgan, Lieutenant Colonel Mick Ryan stresses:

> Consultation with local officials and other interested parties will be a critical aspect . . . . It is worth establishing a formal mechanism, involving all stakeholders, to facilitate community and government consultation. This interaction should include regular meetings with officials and local inhabitants to work out the details of individual projects, ensuring that what will be delivered is what the locals need.[5]

The issue of participation by local stakeholders in ISAF's stability and reconstruction activities will be the main focus of this article. As the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are typically tasked "to cover" reconstruction within ISAF, they form the basis of this analysis.[6] Since other ISAF units are also confronted with local participation, however, their experiences are to a lesser extent included. This article's objectives are threefold. First, to explain why participation of local stakeholders is essential for the overall success of the ISAF mission. Second, to identify the challenges ISAF encounters in local participation. Third, to formulate measures to improve future participation.

Local Participation

Reconstruction is a fluid process, where social relations and the meaning of institutions are renegotiated while people carefully probe their room for maneuver, waiting to see if the conditions of relative peace will hold.[7] It is a process driven by local actors: residents, government employees, organizations, and businesses; reestablishing relations; and reconfiguring hierarchies. Within this context, experts distinguish four related areas of meaning regarding participation, namely: (1) participation as a right to be involved in decisionmaking, (2) participation as autonomous action, (3) participation as a development based on local knowledge, and (4) participation as a transfer of power.[8] These four elements seem to merge in the World Bank's definition of participation as "a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them."[9]

In reality, the extent to which local stakeholders do influence and share control over areas that affect them varies between almost none to full participation, as illustrated in Figure 1, an example of different types of participation by farmers in an agricultural project.[10] From this participation ladder it becomes clear that not just any type of involvement will meet the World Bank's definition.

> **More Participation**
>
> Farmers are in control.
> ⬆
> Farmers jointly manage.
> ⬆
> Farmers are consulted.
> ⬆
> Farmers are informed.
> ⬆
> Farmers are persuaded.
> ⬆
> Farmers are excluded or coerced.
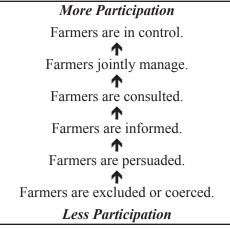>
> **Less Participation**

Figure 1. Participation Ladder

Apart from ranking the intensity of participatory types of behavior on a participation ladder, one may also examine local participation by distinguishing the motives underlying that participation. Six motives can be identified for local stakeholders to participate in their own development, e.g., reconstruction activities:[11]

- Local ownership.
- Capacity-building.
- Sustainability.
- Increased security.
- Legitimacy of the local authorities.
- Alignment of local perceptions with those of external drivers.

To explain why participation of local stakeholders is essential to the overall outcome of the mission, the six motives will be examined within the context of ISAF's reconstruction activities. The first motive underlying local participation is the enhancement of local ownership. Reconstruction initiatives should meet the Afghans' needs and address the peoples' problems as they perceive them.[12] Local ownership occurs when the Afghan people view reconstruction as belonging to them instead of the international community. As a result, a community invests itself in a project and the citizens will defend, maintain, and expand the project long after the international community has departed. If, on the other hand, what is left behind makes no sense to a local community, does not meet their needs, or is not felt to belong to them, the projects will be abandoned as soon as the international community leaves, whether they are ISAF or humanitarian organizations.

Second, local participation is necessary for capacity-building. This involves the transfer of technical knowledge and skills to individuals and

institutions so they might acquire the long-term ability to establish effective policies and deliver competent public services.[13] One of capacity-building's most important by-products is that the host nation increases its ability to retain, absorb, and facilitate economic investment, whether from donor assistance or private sources.[14]

Sustainability, the third motive underlying local participation, refers to the impact that endures beyond the conclusion of outside activities. It also encompasses the idea that a nation's resources are finite and reconstruction should ensure a balance between economic reconstruction, social reconstruction, and democracy and governance. Based on the sustainability motive, aid managers are forced to consider whether the technology, institutions, or services they are introducing will have a lasting effect on society.[15]

Fourth, local participation contributes to an increase in security. Establishing trustful relationships with affected populations can ensure access to critical security information, thereby increasing the organization's security.[16] Local participation can be a way of gaining access to areas or groups that would otherwise remain inaccessible to foreign organizations.

Fifth, participation of local authorities in ISAF's reconstruction activities enhances their legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Visible involvement of local authorities increases trust and confidence of Afghans in their government.

The sixth and final motive underlying local participation is to reduce the perception gap. A study done by the Feinstein International Center in 2005 identified a major disconnect between how outsiders—such as aid agencies or the military—and local communities understand the meaning of peace and security.[17] Such disconnects could imply the expectations of the local stakeholders would not match ISAF's. Local participation contributes to aligning mutual expectations, or what General David Petraeus described in Iraq as managing expectations.[18]

Challenges and Measures for Improvement

Although the motives underlying local participation are widely acknowledged, seven challenges need to be overcome in the field to facilitate participation of local stakeholders in ISAF's reconstruction activities.[19] To address the identified challenges and improve participation of local stakeholders, several measures can be taken. The challenges are listed below, with commentary on the measures necessary to accomplish them.

Military Culture and Reconstruction Dynamics

Generically, military cultures attach great value to unity of command and control, top-down hierarchy, discipline, and accountability.[20] The military's approach to problemsolving is directive and coercive, demonstrating a can-do mentality that enhances effectiveness in combat. The question remains whether a dominant military culture will enhance effectiveness during reconstruction processes.

Although reconstruction processes take place in many different contexts and situations,[21] Sultan Barakat's comparative research concluded that there is a recurrent pattern in the reconstruction processes of using too short a time horizon, of reducing reconstruction to a technical fix instead of a process of reordering state-society relations and power, and often leaving locals out of the equation.[22] Existing reconstruction processes are often too oriented to achieving national-level reconstruction. This orientation runs the risk of overlooking the localized threats to individual security or the reconstruction effort itself.[23] Framing the problem in Afghanistan as a conflict against the Taliban may, for example, overlook the localized dynamics of a complex ethnic rivalry compounded by competition over land.[24] Localized security needs can vary widely. Whereas national security may dictate a need for army reform, local women may place greater emphasis on the development of a reliable police force or the restoration of a credible court to resolve property disputes.[25]

Compounding these reconstruction dynamics, from a western perspective, Afghan society and culture appear difficult to understand, a circumstance which would favor a demand-driven approach and emphasizing local participation to accomplish the reconstruction processes. A new cultural understanding and mindset are required on the part of the international community, including the military. In his paper on "post-modern challenges for modern warriors," Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely, Director of the Defense Academy of the United Kingdom, argues that such a change requires the recognition that "the end-state that matters most is not the military end-state, but the political one . . . . Operational success is not achieved primarily by the application of lethal firepower and targeting; and that sufficient resources do not lead inexorably to campaign success."[26] To paraphrase Kiszely, for purposes of this article, "the end-state that matters is the societal one; operational success in reconstruction is determined and achieved primarily by stakeholders in afflicted societies."

To accomplish this cultural shift within the military, specific training and education programs are required. During the initial education of

officers and noncommissioned officers, the differences between military and civilian actors in humanitarian, stability, and reconstruction missions should be stressed. Topics to address include organizational differences, humanitarian imperative, development studies, gender, counterinsurgency, and participatory approaches. During predeployment preparations, military members should receive orientation and training on assistance strategies in their particular areas of responsibility. Several organizations such as the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and NATO, through the Civil-Military Co-operation Center of Excellence and the NATO School, offer integrated courses to deploying personnel.

The careful selection of military personnel, a second measure, is also necessary if one is to accomplish a cultural change. Competencies should include communication and negotiation skills, creativity, flexibility, and sensitivity.[27]

A third measure of developing and adjusting doctrine based on previous experiences is essential. An example of these lessons learned is found in a manual produced by the US Marine Corps titled *Countering Irregular Threats: A Comprehensive Approach*.[28] The NATO doctrine on civil-military cooperation (AJP-9), which is currently under revision, should also include guidelines on local participation.

Expertise within Military Forces

In its handbook for practitioners the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action states, "An understanding of the social sciences and expertise in communication techniques are essential for the implementation of meaningful participatory approaches, especially in volatile and dangerous environments."[29] Within ISAF, the level of expertise on participation strategies differs among military personnel.

Due to mission involvements, levels of international military experience increase dramatically, leading to improved knowledge and outcomes. In most military training and education programs, however, both predeployment programs and initial education for officers and noncommissioned officers largely focus on skills and drills and include reconstruction only to a limited degree. Therefore, new members of the force often experience a knowledge gap, as became apparent during the deployment of the Dutch PRT in Baghlan province. This force largely consisted of personnel of the Royal Dutch Air Force, and few of them were acquainted with land-based support operations. Several of the (deputy) mission team commanders had only functioned as air traffic controllers or Patriot fire-unit commanders. Prior to their deploy-

ment they engaged in a five-week training course to prepare them for their "new" jobs; the lack of experience made it very difficult for them to successfully operate in theater. To deal with such issues, the Dutch and Canadians, as well as a number of other military forces, introduced extensive role-play exercises that allowed their personnel to become accustomed with the local environment and stakeholders. These exercises are considered quite beneficial in preparing new participants for future deployments.

A special note is appropriate on the preparation of the Australian Reconstruction Task Force in Uruzgan province. In their domestic operations, particularly in the Northern Territory, the Australian military engineers frequently are involved with indigenous Aboriginals. In their domestic operations these engineers rely heavily on local participation, and such exposure benefits them greatly during deployments to locales where cooperation with area residents is essential.

One way to deal with the limited military expertise regarding participation strategies has been to attach civilians to ISAF units. These include members of such departments as Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation, donor organizations such as the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. Compared to the approximately 55,100 ISAF military members in theater in January 2009, however, the number of civilians is very limited.[30]

The most commonly used organizational model in US-led PRTs consists of approximately 100 military personnel and three civilians representing USAID, the State Department, and the Department of Agriculture, in addition to an Afghan Ministry of the Interior police officer.[31] The German PRT in Kunduz, currently the largest, consists of some 485 personnel of which 15 are civilians.[32] As for the third example, the Dutch/Australian Task Force Uruzgan consists of approximately 2,400 personnel; the number of civilian political and developmental advisers in this task force has gradually increased to 12. Apart from these civilians, a small number of so-called functional specialists (military reservists) are deployed. These reservists are deployed for a short term, typically two months. Based on their civilian expertise, functional specialists are mainly assigned project management activities, such as irrigation management or installing rule of law. Until the winter of 2008-2009, the number of functional specialists varied between two and five.

In their research Hekmat Karzai and Professor Julian Lindley-French identified two contrasting dilemmas generated by the imbalance between civilian and military personnel:

First, the over-militarization of the presence on the ground which prevents the subtle management of necessary and complex change. Contacts with key tribal elders too often take place within a military context, rather than a development context. When relationships are going well much can indeed be achieved. However, when Afghans are killed in friendly fire incidents the collective nature of Afghan society rapidly turns an ISAF uniform from an emblem of solidarity into a symbol of threat. Second, decisions are taken in distant capitals that have more to do with western political correctness than local needs and which lead to projects that the Afghan people regard with at best disdain and more likely contempt. The most notorious example was the creation of a $1 million Women's Park. This was understandably met with derision by local people and undermined all-important credibility. Still, a box was ticked in London.[33]

Addressing the question of expertise on participation strategies within military forces is rather straightforward. A first measure is to include the topic in the various **training and education modules. Second, the ratio of civil**ian personnel should be increased. Contributing nations need to ensure that programmed civilian positions within ISAF units are filled and their numbers steadily increased. Additionally, as the focus of reconstruction efforts shifts to government capacity-building and security-sector reform, the number and expertise of civilians provided to ISAF should evolve accordingly.

Motives Underlying Activities

The third challenge to local participation is linked to military motives. Many military respondents have stated that activities to increase the safety of their own forces were often favored over projects aimed at improving grass-root security for the Afghan population. In Baghlan province, the Dutch carried out a number of activities for the direct benefit of the community. A considerable number of these activities, however, were conducted in close proximity to the military compound. This was often referred to as the "six-mile rule," describing the tendency to positively influence those communities located within six miles of the compound. Military motives based on force protection may thus create inequality in addressing the needs of the population living in a confined area, both quantitatively and qualitatively.[34] Many Afghans remain doubtful about ISAF's intentions, a fact which hinders local participation.

In response to the challenges related to motive, campaign plans and concepts of operations should be operationalized to more effectively guide deployed military forces in the execution of their activities. If not already in existence, measures of effectiveness and end-state objectives should be

established to assist personnel in determining the duration of their commitment and the focus of their activities.

Second, transition processes should be devised to assist civilian agencies in progressively assuming PRT functions. The PRT Executive Steering Committee should continue to develop and implement this process. As soon as the security environment allows, PRTs should shift their emphasis from quick-impact projects to local capacity-building—that is, "Afghanization."

Time Perspective

Civilian organizations, especially development groups, often expect to remain in the area of operations for a period of five to ten years, whereas military missions are planned on a much shorter timeline. Consequently, civilian and military agencies face synchronization problems, for instance, to what degree would an organization expect and accept "reasonable" progress during a particular timeframe.[35] Military units have primary responsibility for providing security. Whenever the security situation deteriorates, reconstruction projects might come to an abrupt halt.[36]

Most ISAF units rotate their personnel every four to six months, which many civilians regard as too short a timeframe; as one representative stated, "As soon as you have learned enough it is time to return home." Due to this rapid turnover of military personnel, systematic, long-term monitoring and followup projects are lacking, especially if they do not fall within the normal range of competency for those involved.[37] Short rotations can be advantageous, as long as they permit enough time to improve the operation while still preventing the military from getting stuck in a "seen-it-all, done-it-all" attitude. If the new replacements function well, a continuous improvement of the operation could result. The successful rotation of personnel requires sufficient time, along with the storage and sharing of information and intelligence in ways that make it accessible.[38]

The time constraints imposed by the limited duration of military deployments has the very real possibility of endangering local participation.[39] Participation requires confidence and trust. The amount of time required to establish relationships depends on individual attitudes and skills, along with the manner in which ISAF personnel are perceived by the local populace.

Answering the question of "What happens if the military leaves?"[40] a number of experts believe the transition to local capacity and management should be executed at the earliest possible moment.[41] According to Garland Williams, the goal of every reconstruction intervention is to build capacity and support implementation of local control. The "outside" organizations, whether they are military or humanitarian, can never lose sight of the fact

A number of successful initiatives have increased governance in Afghan provinces.

that the purpose of external assistance is to aid the host nation in developing its own capabilities, along with public and private institutions.

The military perspective related to time clearly implies a need for a defined end-state[42] and an exit strategy[43] to prevent any long-term military involvement in the mission, as well as continued civilian dependency on military resources.[44] In practice, however, the timeframes are difficult to control. Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said that the length of ISAF's stay would depend upon "the security situation on the ground, the decisions made by the Loya Jirga after its convening, and the establishment of a functioning police force. When these are all achieved and the scourge of terrorism is rooted out once and for all, only then would their mission be completed."[45]

One measure to increase the effectiveness of the time element is extension of military deployments. Short-duration assignments are counterproductive and should be avoided. For military personnel involved in reconstruction activities, a tour length of one year should be the minimum period of service.

Second, at the start of the deployment a robust "hand-over, take-over" is essential to raise awareness and to prevent duplication of previous activities. Because many personnel, military and civilian alike, regularly transfer, a hand-over, take-over becomes essential to ensuring continuity. A "reach-back" function such as an office back-up and the creation of civil-military organizations to communicate and share information can contribute to heightening awareness during deployments.

Third, if at all possible, time should be allocated during the actual deployment, and more importantly during the post-deployment phase, for personnel to record lessons learned. Lessons learned in any operation should not only be put to practice the next time around, but should also be widely disseminated. Such actions are not just about recording lessons learned, however; the challenge is to make certain the trove of experience is utilized in future missions and integrated into all phases of training and exercises. Often, the most direct and best way to accomplish this is to gather individuals from the various sectors and exchange experiences.

Governance

The fifth challenge to local participation in Afghanistan is the vulnerability of governance in a number of the provinces. Good governance is a prerequisite for the development and maintenance of security, stability, and economic recovery. While the central government holds extensive constitutional authority over the provinces, Kabul's limited ability to intervene and its accommodation of power brokers have left factional chiefs in control of local governments.[46]

In areas where the Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program was implemented and warlords were disarmed, ISAF units have been hiring these same warlords as private contractors. Ever since, the warlords have been gaining strength with the assistance of international funding, consolidating their power, and dominating the local populace. Such events illustrate a major pitfall related to local participation. If, and when, the backgrounds of local stakeholders are not verified, their participation can elicit unintended negative outcomes, such as bolstering the status of local power brokers.

Apart from the questionable backgrounds of a number of civil servants, there are other reasons for insufficient governance. They include, but are not limited to, the mimimal level of education on the part of Afghanistan's civil servants, the lack of proper wages, an absence of accountability systems, and the illicit narcotics trade. The lack of good governance is noted in a 2007 report of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, which states that "roughly 52 percent of men and 26 percent of women feel that they do not have a voice in reconstruction efforts. In interviews most Afghans corroborate that the central government is not listening or responding to their needs or demands. Civil society, business associations, and traditional elders are slowly becoming more organized and effective at lobbying the government."[47]

To address this issue, the most effective PRTs work in close collaboration with provincial and community institutions to plan and implement activities.[48] These organizations permit local officials to serve as the focal point for project initiation, discussion, and approval. Germany has established a Provincial Development Fund from which local Afghan communities, often acting through Community Development Councils (CDCs), can apply for financial assistance for projects. The proposals are then jointly evaluated by an eight-member committee comprised of provincial-level officials and one representative from each of the four German ministries represented in the PRT. These collaborative relationships have been effective at linking com-

munities with provincial structures, building the capacity and legitimacy of provincial governments and CDCs, and reinforcing existing initiatives such as the National Solidarity Program.[49]

There have been a number of successful initiatives that have increased governance in various provinces. To optimize the added value of local stakeholders in reconstruction activities and minimize negative effects (corruption), it is necessary for military units and personnel to be aware of the background of the various stakeholders. A key-leader engagement plan, which is currently being utilized in a number of Afghan provinces, can ensure greater clarity. A second measure is based on the ability of Afghan government entities to exercise greater responsibility for coordination of assistance. This program has already been instituted by some provincial governors. Finally, it is important to build capacity. To accomplish this, the training and education of Afghan civil servants need to improve. The assignment of liaison personnel from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior and the National Police, for example, can enhance the Afghan government's ownership of programs and the local capacity to govern successfully, while promoting the principle of civilian control over the military. PRTs should never be viewed as replacing the link between national and local government.

Gender Sensitivity and Inclusion

Research indicates that women and men perceive conflict—and the associated coping mechanisms—in different ways.[50] This distinction poses important challenges to actors dealing with conflict-affected societies. Gender sensitivity typically will benefit understanding of the local environment. Based on increased gender sensitivity, military personnel can strengthen their relations with local populations, enhance their ability to respond to specific security needs, bolster planned responses, and further their role in upholding international standards and human rights.[51] This approach is a matter of engaging women as well as men in the process of conflict resolution, rebuilding institutions and societies, and achieving sustainable peace.[52] Promoting good governance means ensuring women are voting and running for office; judicial reform means aligning legislation and procedures with international standards for women's rights; preventing conflict means engaging the commitment of men in cultures where masculinity is associated with aggression; and successful DDR also means addressing the specific challenges of disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating female combatants.[53]

Gender analyses related to conflict and human security, as well as a gender-balanced representation of peacekeepers, are essential components

in a bias-free perspective on reconstruction.[54] Many strategy documents have included references to gender following the rise to power of the Afghan transitional government in early 2002. Local knowledge and ownership of these strategies, on the other hand, are limited, mainly because they were developed by international consultants and never translated into Afghan languages or dialects. Moreover, a number of the objectives of these documents reflect a western perspective related to gender equality, a perspective almost certain to clash with Afghan values, particularly those prescribed by Islam.[55] In Afghanistan, "anytime you need to do something for women," the head of an international organization explained, "it was all about handicrafts and tailoring . . . . In a way it reinforced the social construction of women's roles . . . as if there is no other thing that women can do."[56] The market in Kabul is saturated with female tailors unable to find employment. Gender continues to be viewed as a "women's issue," and advice from experts to the effect that in Afghan society it is essential to include men in any gender development effort has largely gone unheeded.[57]

With regard to a gender-balanced representation among peacekeepers, a more equitable gender ratio based on an increased number of female civilians, police, and military peacekeepers is likely to have a positive influence on peace support operations.[58] This result is mainly due to the fact that women possess much-needed knowledge and capabilities, essential in communicating with local communities and leaders.[59] Local citizens, especially women, appear to be more comfortable approaching female military members, especially regarding issues of assault, domestic violence, or requests for assistance.[60]

Before addressing the needs of specific groups, it is important for military units to understand these groups and their role in local society. To facilitate interaction with female stakeholders in the local area it is necessary for military units to increase the number of female members at every rank. A similar approach is currently under way to involve more Muslim military in ISAF units. These changes in gender, ethnic, and religious participants are specifically used to bridge the cultural gap and improve understanding of local stakeholders.[61]

Civilian Attitudes toward ISAF

The final challenge refers to the civilian attitudes toward ISAF and how they apply to local Afghan actors as well as to members of humanitarian organizations, both Afghan and international. As the Afghan co-authors point out, it is dangerous for local Afghans to be seen talking to or exchanging information with ISAF forces. There are numerous examples of villag-

ers being threatened, injured, or even killed following any interaction with foreign forces. This risk clearly has a negative impact on the willingness of local Afghans to participate in ISAF activities. Compounding this fear, the anti-poppy rhetoric of western leaders is not popular with the local farmers or with the warlords and their political supporters who profit from cultivation of poppies.[62] Alternative programs for the poppy farmers have been difficult to institute and, so far, none of these programs have proven as lucrative as opium production. Again, this has a negative influence on the local attitude toward ISAF and their willingness to participate in its programs.

With regard to interaction with ISAF at the operational level, international humanitarian organizations generally regard humanitarian principles as strict guidelines governing conduct of their programs. These guidelines have been codified in a policy brief by the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief, stating that if ISAF is working in close cooperation with or proximity to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), local power brokers and militants will no longer be able to distinguish between military programs and civilian-implemented assistance.[63] At the operational level, not only will such activities blur the roles of organizations, they can also have a negative impact on the relationship between NGOs and the local communities. The real fear is that this blurring of roles may pose security risks to humanitarian organizations if they are perceived as collaborating with the military or channeling intelligence to it.

At the tactical level, these humanitarian principles are considered critical to governing the humanitarian organizations' conduct. At the same time, members of these organizations are often forced to take a more pragmatic approach, and depending on various motivations, they will have to interact with ISAF. These motives are normally part of the complementary coping capacity ISAF can provide, such as ISAF's assessment capacity, financial resources, technical knowledge, and the direct or indirect security military forces can provide.

Author Antonio Donini asks whether the blurring of roles really matters to Afghans at the grass-roots level.[64] Does it matter if assistance comes in a military truck or under the auspices of an NGO? Based on several studies Donini concludes that the answer is "no." What seems to be important is "what" is provided, not "who" provides it. These conclusions are consistent with a Dutch study commissioned by the Cordaid relief group that questioned whether, at the local level, the Afghan people actually distinguish between who provides assistance.[65]

Our co-authors Khalil and Wahidi believe the Afghan NGOs are pragmatic regarding working with the military. Additionally, they believe

there is a feeling among a number of indigenous NGOs that they are being used as cheap laborers to implement programs by the larger international NGOs. Local agencies feel excluded from the decisionmaking processes. Accordingly, the co-authors believe: "This is a severe mistake as indigenous NGOs are close to the local people and they are aware of the local society, its structures, and relationships because they have been part of these societies all their lives." The Cordaid study reinforced the co-authors' beliefs with findings regarding "a rift" that has emerged between local NGOs and international agencies on how closely military and civilian organizations should associate.

> Some of the local agencies denounce the principled stance of international NGOs . . . while ignoring the massive needs on the ground. Most communities long for security and are eager to receive assistance. Humanitarian principles and the maintenance of distinctions between military and development interventions are not at the top of people's lists.[66]

Military forces need to be extremely cautious when interacting with local stakeholders and national and international humanitarian organizations in public. Isolated locations, removed from public scrutiny, such as PRT headquarters or chai/tea houses, should be utilized for meetings or individual contact. Another equally important measure is the guideline that no reconstruction activities should be implemented without significant involvement on the part of local organizations.

Conclusion

In the 1990s, reconstruction activities were believed to have too much of an influence over the unrelenting push for the introduction of democratic government.[67] Since then, reconstruction strategies have shifted to a more balanced institutional approach aimed at simultaneously advancing recovery in governance, security, justice and reconciliation, and socio-economic development. Establishing successful programs for integrated reconstruction is not an easy task, especially when peace and security are achievable at the beginning of the process but are meant to be the outcome or objective of the reconstruction process. This is certainly the case in Afghanistan. Successful reconstruction requires excellent relationships between diplomatic, developmental, and military actors and programs.

Overlooking localized dynamics in reconstruction activities could lead to a failure of knowledge of the forces that originally created the requirement for peace. The majority of conflicts concluded in the past decade did so by means of a negotiated settlement, not military victory. Another fact often

ignored is that in a number of cases the local people who helped to forge the peace felt excluded from the associated reconstruction processes. This lack of understanding on the part of outside agencies and governments often leads to the underestimation of local resources available for reconstruction. Many ISAF units use the slogan "Put an Afghan face on everything" to indicate the need to involve local stakeholders, thereby advancing the credibility of local authorities. Although this is an encouraging sign it often only establishes credibility for a short time and never fully equates to total participation on the part of the locals. The authors have emphasized that participation implies more than an Afghan face; it requires total involvement on the part of Afghan stakeholders throughout the entire reconstruction process, not simply in marketing the final product. Such total participation, however, requires time to develop, or as several local observers commented, "An Afghan face equals an Afghan pace."

It is only recently that a trend has emerged related to the development of localized reconstruction programs.[68] According to Professor Thea Hilhorst, the longtime lack of attention regarding localized reconstruction is partly related to the assumption that societies stop functioning during a crisis or become totally immersed in the logic of conflict. Those responsible for the conduct of research into the underlying tenets of reconstruction and local participation would do well to heed such assumptions regarding crisis and conflict.

Bas Rietjens is an Assistant Professor at the Netherlands Defense Academy. He holds a Ph.D. in civil-military cooperation during peace support operations and is a reserve officer in the Royal Netherlands Military Forces, involved in managing the deployment of Dutch civil-military officers to Afghanistan and Bosnia.

Myriame Bollen is an Associate Professor at the Netherlands Defense Academy and a Visiting Professor at the Baltic Defense College in Estonia. She wrote her Ph.D. dissertation on civil-military cooperation during humanitarian operations and is involved in officer education and research on civil-military cooperation.

Masood Khalil is the Program Manager of the Baz Consultancy Unit for the Rehabilitation of Afghanistan and has worked as Executive Director of an umbrella organization, the Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB). He has more than 14 years of experience in nongovernmental organization management.

Said Fazlullah Wahidi is the Director of the Afghan General Help Coordination Office and Chairman of the ANCB. He graduated from the University of Kabul and has more than 25 years experience in the humanitarian field, civil society, and nongovernmental organization management and policymaking.

NOTES

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