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Afghanistan: Recon- struction and Peace- building in a Regional Framework



Kompetenzzentrum Friedensförderung (KOFF)
Schweizerische Friedensstiftung (SFS)

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Swiss Peace Foundation (SPF)

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Note on authorship

Barnett R. Rubin drafted an earlier version of this paper for the Swiss Federal Government, whose support is gratefully acknowledged. While drafting, he consulted Ashraf Ghani, whose longstanding ideas about reconstruction and peacemaking form the basis for many of the recommendations. The Swiss sponsors solicited comments from Ahmed Rashid and Olivier Roy, which have been taken into account in the revisions. Ashraf Ghani and William Maley provided additional comments and suggestions for the final version. While the authors may disagree on some points, they all endorse the strategic approach recommended.

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KOFF Peacebuilding Reports is a series of studies published by

Center for Peacebuilding (KOFF) • Swiss Peace Foundation (SPF)
Kompetenzzentrum Friedensförderung (KOFF) • Schweizer Friedensstiftung (SFS)
Centre pour la promotion de la paix (KOFF) • Fondation Suisse pour la paix (FSP)
Centro per la promozione della pace (KOFF) • Fondazione svizzera per la pace (FSP)

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KOFF Peacebuilding Report 1/2001
June 2001

© Kompetenzzentrum Friedensförderung (KOFF) – Schweizerische Friedensstiftung (SFS)
ISBN 3 – 908 230 – 47 - 0

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1. Introduction

The conflict in Afghanistan has matured into a relatively stable social system that menaces the lives of millions of people. This conflict forms the core of a regional conflict formation, including the continuing challenges in Tajikistan, the growing conflict led by the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan involving several states, processes of political decay in Pakistan, challenges to political order in Iran, and the insurgency in Kashmir. It is linked to long-distance organized crime through both the drug trade and smuggling originating in Dubai. The expanding drug trade has led to the rapid transmission of HIV/AIDS in the region through intravenous drug use.

Given the long-standing and regional character of the conflict, it would be a mistake to analyze it solely or even primarily in terms of the political differences between the current protagonists, the Taliban, led by Mullah Muhammad Umar, and the forces of the United Front, led by Ahmad Shah Massoud. It is unlikely to be settled by a negotiated agreement between these forces. The fact that this conflict has continued for over twenty years, despite repeated changes in the identity of the antagonists and the issues apparently at stake, indicates that its causes transcend such transient manifestations. Nor should one analyze the policy objective simply as “peace” or “ending the war.” A more desirable policy goal would be reconstructing the country as part of the interstate and economic structure of an entire region. The usual notion of a peace process in a civil war within a national framework includes an end to outside interference; a negotiated cease-fire perhaps monitored by peacekeepers; an interim government; a process for establishing long-term governance; and, finally, reconstruction. Such a process will not work in a case such as Afghanistan. The war is not a civil war but a transnational one. The transnational links are too deep to be untangled and will have to be transformed.

Economic and social issues such as education cannot await a political settlement. The absence or weakness of institutions is one of the causes of the conflict and makes any purely political settlement difficult if not impossible. Hence efforts at reconstruction and institution building need to precede and act as a catalyst for political agreements, rather than the reverse. Conditional planning for reconstruction can function as an incentive for both Afghan and regional actors and is likely to be more effective than sanctions alone. All of these issues need to be tackled within a regional framework, integrating areas usually separated as parts of Central and South Asia, as well as the Middle East (or West Asia).

The recent UN mission to West Africa, as well as the Security Council mission relating to the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo, represent the scope of action needed and the necessity of integrating the political, economic, humanitarian, and human rights components of international action.

If the situation remains unchanged, this entire region (Afghanistan, southern Central Asia, Pakistan, Kashmir, maybe parts of Iran) could become a battleground for decades, like the Great Lakes region of Central Africa. Millions of people could be uprooted, impoverished, and killed by war, famine, and epidemics. Central Asia will have even greater global consequences than Central Africa, since it will be the home to expanding global terrorist groups. The effect on Pakistan could lead sympathizers of these terrorist groups to gain access to nuclear weapons.

2. Conflict Analysis

2.1 Background

2.1.1 State Formation and Imperial Collapse

The conflict in Afghanistan is the core of a struggle over the reconstitution of political and economic relations in southwest Asia in the aftermath of the collapse first of the British and then of the Russian empire. The partition of the British Empire in South Asia left behind Pakistan as an existentially insecure state, whose insecurity increased after the loss of its eastern portion in 1971. Pakistan sees its main security task as obtaining parity with India, a country almost eight times larger, which has resulted in the ruination of Pakistan's economy due to excessive military spending, the use of "asymmetric strategies" such as support for insurgencies and extremist groups (techniques learned from the US during the Afghan war), and the quest for "strategic depth" – links and alliances with parts of the Muslim world to the west. The quest for "strategic depth" has defined Pakistan's policy toward Afghanistan and then Central Asia for decades.

Afghanistan became a weak buffer state between the US and Soviet-led alliance systems, successors of the British and Russian empires. The collapse of the Russian empire in its Soviet form led to the dissolution of the Soviet-supported Afghan army, the core of the state. Pakistan saw opportunities for further "strategic depth" in a reconstitution of a now-stateless Afghanistan, bordered to the north by weak, ill-defined nominally Muslim, nominally sovereign republics.

Afghan political elites and economic actors maneuvered in this context. First the British and then the Soviets supported the formation of centralized military power in an Afghan state dominated by the royal regimes of the Muhammadzai lineage of Durrani Pashtuns. This

dominant lineage remained more or less neutral in international affairs, though it came to depend on Soviet aid for the core of its coercive power, since the army was Soviet-trained and supplied from 1955. The Pashtun ethnic group – with as many or more members in NW Pakistan as in Afghanistan, in a sense considered Afghanistan “its” state, as “Afghan” means both “Pashtun” and “citizen of Afghanistan.” Afghanistan under the Muhammadzais pursued a revanchist policy toward Pashtun areas in Pakistan (Pashtunistan, or the Pashtun question). Neutralizing the Pashtun question became part of Pakistan’s quest for strategic depth.

After the overthrow of the Muhammadzais in 1978, the Soviets supported a narrow Communist group. The US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia responded by arming several previously marginal Islamist extremist groups, which predominated among the mujahidin organizations that fought the Soviets and Afghan Communists. The combination of these approaches led to the final collapse of the Afghan state in 1992. Both the Soviet-supported communists and the US-supported Islamists attacked and destroyed the educated elites that had ruled the country and provided it with some coherence, setting the stage for the advent of the Taliban.

2.1.2 Struggles in a Stateless Country

After the collapse of the army in April 1992, mujahidin and some former government militias coalesced into several ethno-regional political-military coalitions. The dissolution of the Pashtun-dominated central state, combined with the vast, uncontrolled supplies of weapons from both sides, provided an opportunity to assert either autonomy from the center (elites of the Hazara and Uzbek ethnic groups) or greater control over it (Tajik elites). Though relatively homogeneous solidarity groups led these coalitions, they did not engage in mass mobilization around an explicit ethnic discourse or project (Hazaras excepted to some extent). The origin of the war is not ethnic, and the

solution will not be ethnic, but the conduct of the war is ethnic, which has had corrosive effects on the potential for national reconstruction.

Pashtuns were fragmented. Pakistan, which after 1979 increasingly sought a kind of indirect hegemony over the Pashtun areas, was determined to prevent reestablishment of a Pashtun nationalist force that would ally with India or other hostile powers to challenge its control over Pashtun populations and territories in Pakistan. With the collapse of the USSR and the Afghan state, however, and the failure to secure power of its chosen Afghan surrogate, the Hizb-i Islami of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, Pakistan saw a new opportunity in the Taliban.

This group appeared in southern Afghanistan in the fall of 1994. Pakistan ultimately sought to create a corridor to Central Asia by reuniting Pashtuns under the Taliban, a purely religious (not tribal) leadership that did not support nationalist demands, would not ally with non-Muslim powers, and that was dependent on Pakistan through a variety of networks that had developed over twenty years of war and dispersion. Pakistani support for a Pashtun group, combined with that group's extensive intertwining with networks within Pakistan, changed the meaning of the Pashtun question for Pakistan and has led to a violent rebalancing of ethnic power in Afghanistan in favor of Pashtuns, who had temporarily lost power to the newly armed non-Pashtun groups.

2.1.3 Formation of a Regional Conflict Complex

The conflict in Afghanistan is now at the core of a region including conflicts in that country, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Kashmir. Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan derives from its quest for security from India (see below), and its intelligence services use Afghan territory to train fighters for Kashmir. The war in Afghanistan introduced massive quantities of small arms into Pakistan and provided capital for investment in smuggling. Creation of an Afghan and

Pashtun diaspora reaching into the Persian Gulf (Dubai includes the third largest urban Pashtun population after Peshawar and Karachi) facilitated trade and smuggling throughout the region. Illicit trade, not only by Pashtuns, includes the drug trade, transborder trade in consumer goods, and commerce in emeralds. The drug and transborder trades are linked to organized crime groups operating throughout the Indian Ocean periphery, the former Soviet Union, and Europe. The transborder trade undermines Pakistan's fiscal integrity and funds corruption, thereby contributing to the crisis of legitimacy of Pakistani institutions, of which the 1999 coup was only a symptom. That crisis could be intensified by the return of tens of thousands of Pakistani Taliban from Afghanistan to a country drifting into a combination of financial and political crisis and increasingly risking international stigma and isolation.

Afghanistan provided sources of weapons and refuge (facilitated by cross-border links among Tajiks) that helped intensify the war in Tajikistan, set off by the Soviet collapse. The drug trade also penetrated Tajikistan and its neighbors, drawing in the Russian mafia and corrupting the Russian border guards, as well as all Central Asian governments. Members of a repressed Islamist group in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley fled to Afghanistan and Tajikistan in 1992. Some of the Uzbek fighters, reorganized as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, established bases in opposition-controlled areas of Tajikistan as well as in Afghanistan. Since the implementation of the Tajikistan peace accord, members of this group have sought to fight their way back to Uzbekistan directly from Tajikistan and across southern Kyrgyzstan, taking hostages and setting off international crises. Some of their fighters received training in the same Pakistani madrasas (religious schools) that gave birth to the Taliban. They have recently reorganized as the Islamic Party of Turkistan, making explicit that their agenda includes the whole region.

Uzbekistan also supported a militia from Tajikistan (led by Mahmud Khudaiberdiyev, an ethnic Uzbek from that country) that trained in

Uzbek areas of north Afghanistan and staged an uprising in Northern Tajikistan in November 1998. Sectarian killings in Pakistan (reflecting the region-wide politicization of Sunni-Shi'a relations sparked by the Iranian revolution and Iran-Pakistan competition in Afghanistan) and the insurgency in Kashmir are also linked to Afghanistan, where Sunni extremists have bases and have participated in fighting along with the Taliban, including against Afghanistan's Shi'a. Drug traders from Afghanistan threaten order in several Iranian provinces through which they have established smuggling routes.

Massive displacements caused by both war and drought have placed all the neighboring countries under pressure once again, but now, unlike in the 1980s, Afghan refugees are not welcome anywhere. Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Iran, all in different ways and for different reasons are rejecting them, refusing to register them or forcing them to return. A first generation of Afghan refugees with no education but rudimentary madrasas gave birth to the Taliban. A second generation of Afghans is now growing up displaced and abandoned, with no education but a smattering of simplistic religious training for the few, in an impoverished environment awash in weapons and criminal enterprises. One can only imagine to what uses these children will be put in ten to fifteen years.

2.1.4 Role of the Taliban

The Taliban movement initially responded to some needs felt by Afghan people and received some popular support in Pashtun-dominated areas during its initial advances in 1994-95. The collapse of the state and wide distribution of weapons had fostered anarchy and criminality, especially in the Pashtun tribal belt. Numerous armed checkpoints blocked trade and travel, markets could not function, and continued fighting among various groups destroyed much of Kabul and other cities. The Taliban presented themselves as an Islamic solution to the problems of a failed state by establishing a common au-

thority, collecting weapons, and establishing order through enforcing sharia. Had they stopped when they had brought order to the Pashtun areas of southern Afghanistan, they might have formed an interlocutor for negotiating a federated form of Afghan statehood with about five other ethno-regional coalitions that existed at that time. Besides the numerous other obstacles, however, such a state did not meet the needs of Pakistan, which wanted a centralized state that would reliably control the territory in its interests. At that time interest by several international corporations in oil and gas pipelines through Afghanistan also increased incentives for a centralized force to impose order. Hence Pakistan supported the Taliban's growing aspirations to reconstruct a centralized state.

Though the leadership of such a state by ulama (Islamic scholars) is unprecedented, the underlying structure reproduces a historic pattern: the state is dominated by an ethnically Pashtun small solidarity group, in this case Qandahari Deobandi mullahs, dependent on foreign aid and taxing foreign trade (commercial agriculture, now mostly illegal drugs, and foreign trade, now mostly smuggling) for its resources. The increasingly despotic, reactionary, and obscurantist policies of the Taliban have intensified resistance to this project from other groups in Afghanistan, who have won increasing support from neighboring states that felt threatened by Pakistan's aspirations.

2.1.5 Conflict-Promoting Structural Factors

Pursuit of armed conflict in Afghanistan is greatly facilitated by two variables: the low cost of recruiting fighters and the availability of lootable or taxable resources to finance military and other despotic activity. Though statistics are poor, the country appears to have the highest infant, child, and maternal mortality rates, the lowest literacy rate and life expectancy, and one of the two or three lowest levels of per capita food availability in the world. It also appears to have one of the highest proportions of disabled people, among the highest rates

of injury due to land mines and the highest per capita number of personal weapons. It would be strange indeed if such a country were at peace. The cost of maintaining a soldier is approximately one meal per day, more than many could otherwise obtain. Though some communities in Afghanistan nonetheless resist conscription, the Taliban can easily find replacements elsewhere, including in Pakistan, a country with a much larger population of impoverished, undereducated youth. Similar phenomena facilitate recruitment by the IMU in Central Asia.

Furthermore, Afghanistan became (at least until this year) the source of most of the world's opium, a ready source of cash, mainly for the Taliban (as well as for peasants, who could make up their food deficit with the cash incomes from poppy, which paid for imports). Supporters of the Taliban may also be involved in joint ventures in heroin refining and, perhaps, marketing. The Taliban's ban on growing opium poppy has not extended to trade, and some wholesalers have made windfall profits on overstocks from last year as supply has dropped. The security of road transport the Taliban have established has made possible a flourishing smuggling business in consumer goods from Dubai (a free port), imported via either Iran or Turkmenistan and trucked across southern Afghanistan to Pakistan, complementing the other smuggling route via the port of Karachi. Goods for export to Afghanistan can transit Pakistan duty-free under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement (ATTA). Many of the goods imported under ATTA are sold illegally in Pakistan, largely by Afghan and Pakistani Pashtun truckers and traders.

The area of northeast Afghanistan controlled by Ahmad Shah Masoud also produces opium, and a number of important northbound export routes traverse it. But his main income seems to derive from the export of the emeralds of his native Panjsher Valley. Since 1999 he has had a joint venture agreement with a Polish company. Hence there are plentiful resources available to finance the war, in addition to direct foreign assistance.

2.2 Afghan Actors

At present there are two principal fighting forces in Afghanistan: the Islamic Movement of Taliban, controlled by a group of Qandahari mullahs, which dominates (without necessarily controlling on a day-to-day basis) most of the country through its Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), and the United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (UF), which leads the internationally-recognized though administratively non-existent Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). The UF includes several groups, but in practical terms it mostly consists of the Tajik forces led by Ahmad Shah Massoud in the far northeast of the country and some Shi'a forces in the Central region (Hazarajat). Several leaders of the UF from other regions and ethnic groups have recently returned to Afghanistan; it remains to be seen if they will be able to raise significant military forces.

2.2.1 The Taliban

The Islamic Movement of Taliban (*Da Afghanistano da Talibano Islami Tahrik*) represents an indigenous Afghan network that has become integrated with transnational networks through the past 23 years of war and dispersion and is in turn organized, strengthened, and manipulated to serve the Pakistani military's concept of national and regional security. The Taliban developed from the network of teachers and students from private, rural-based madrasas in southern Afghanistan and the neighboring Pashtun-populated areas of Pakistan. Despite their expansion beyond their original home base, the Taliban leaders remain a group of mainly Qandahari mullahs trained in madrasas affiliated with the Deobandi movement in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. This leadership thus has both a regional and ideological component. They also represent a kind of social revolution: the sons of poor families from junior tribes and clans (neither Mullah Umar, the amir, nor Mullah Rabbani, head of the government until

his recent death, are Durranis) have used their madrasa education and foreign aid to overthrow the tribal aristocracy that used to dominate life in southern Afghanistan. They have also displaced the wealthy, university-educated, largely Persian-speaking elites that dominated Kabul.

The formal IEA ruling structure is headed by an amir (Mullah Muhammad Umar), who is assisted by shuras, or consultative bodies. He apparently has the final say on all matters. Subordinate to him is the Kabul shura, effectively a cabinet of ministers, as well as a shura of ulama and a military shura. The IEA has appointed provincial governors and administrators of districts, cities, towns, and precincts from the center, following the administrative divisions of former Afghan governments. As in most such governments, the administrators are invariably natives of areas other than the ones they govern, and have been regularly shuffled between areas.

Most of the Taliban's resources and efforts go to the war effort and to maintaining security in the areas under their control. They have reduced checkpoints on the roads to a minimum, and petty crime has diminished. They have also established a new security service, the Ministry of Enforcement of Virtue and Suppression of Vice (al-amr bi al-ma'ruf wa al-nahi 'an al-munkar). This ministry is responsible for the enforcement of all Taliban decrees regarding moral behavior, including the decrees restricting women's employment and dress, enforcing men's beard length and mosque attendance, regulating activities of UN agencies and NGOs, commanding destruction of "graven images," and requiring the labeling of religious minorities.

Mullah Umar and all but one member of the Supreme Shura are Qandahari Pashtuns.¹ All the members of the military shura whose ethnic and regional origins are known to the authors are Qandahari Pashtuns. The Kabul shura is also predominantly Qandahari but includes

¹ "Qandahari" here denotes the broad region with Qandahar at its center, including several provinces in addition to the modern province of Qandahar.

more Eastern Pashtuns, a couple of Persian speakers, and at least one Uzbek. All without a single exception are Sunni mullahs trained in private madrasas.

The Taliban's political structure and methods of governance have deteriorated over the past few years. Until 1996-97, Mullah Umar was at the apex of a consultative process amongst the Pashtuns. The Supreme Shura in Qandahar would meet often and include the military and Kabul shuras as well as non-shura members such as military commanders, mullahs, traders, businessmen, and representatives of local tribal groups.

Now, however, decision-making has become totally centralized and secretive. Shura meetings are no longer held, and the Kabul ministers are rarely consulted about key decisions. Mullah Umar has become much more isolated. The core group around him includes some Qandahari ulama and judges of the Supreme Court of Qandahar (who are all above 70 years old, have never traveled outside Qandahar, and are extremist and simplistic in their views); a few powerful, hard-line individuals from the Taliban structure such as Mullah Nuruddin Turabi, Minister of Justice and head of the Religious Police, Chief of Army Staff Mullah Mohammed Hasan, and Commander Dadullah; individual Afghans working in Umar's office who were educated in Pakistani madrasas and have a strongly expansionist and jihadist view of the Taliban's role in the Muslim world; Usama Bin Ladin and other Arabs who advise Umar on foreign policy (some Afghans from Qandahar even claim that Bin Ladin is consulted on domestic issues such as the Buddhas); and Pakistani ISI officers. These groups now all use Umar's position as Amir al-Mu'minin (Commander of the Faithful) to provide legitimacy for increased centralization. Many of them believe that all non-Islamist foreigners, including NGOs and journalists, should be expelled from Afghanistan, as manifested in the expulsion of the BBC correspondent and the recent attacks on humanitarian agencies.

At the same time the Taliban's periodic purges of the bureaucracy in Kabul's ministries, now filled with young, barely-educated Taliban, have further worsened day-to-day governance. The relatively moderate Taliban Foreign Minister Wakil Ahmad Muttawakil, whose appointment the international community welcomed, appears to have little influence over decision-making. He functions more as an envoy for Mullah Umar than as a key formulator of foreign policy. Since the January 2001 imposition of further UN Security Council sanctions the Kabul ministers have become virtually redundant even in dealing with day-to-day problems faced by Western NGOs in Kabul. Key decisions such as the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas are attributed to what is euphemistically called "The Council of Ulama," which is supposed to be made up of 400 mullahs from across the country. It rarely meets in plenary, however, and leaves decision-making and the issuing of fatwas to the small group of Qandahari ulama around Mullah Umar. On the Buddha issue, none of the shuras or the Kabul ministers were consulted. Religious fatwas seem to be replacing government instructions or orders.

Pakistan, rather than strengthening internal governance and bringing more practical moderate elements to the forefront, has allowed this deterioration to take place, because it is easier for Pakistan to influence decision making with a few key players rather than larger shuras. Pakistan has spent no effort or money on training an appropriate Taliban bureaucracy, (in contrast to what it attempted to do, with US support, for the mujahidin based in Peshawar during the Soviet war). This deterioration in internal governance and centralization with an even more obscure process of decision-making makes it virtually impossible for the international community, UN agencies, and the UN mediator to interact with the present Taliban leadership. This presents a major impediment to any peace process, humanitarian aid, or attempts to moderate the Taliban.

The Taliban are effectively a transnational organization, reflecting the multifaceted links that have grown up over the last twenty years be-

tween Afghan Pashtuns and many parts of Pakistani society. Their military advisory structure includes Pakistani officers. Their decision-making process includes routine consultation with Pakistani Deobandi religious leaders. Their foreign relations depend on Pakistani advice and logistical assistance. Their military force recruits fighters from Pakistani madrasas, whose students are estimated to form as much as 20-30 percent of the total. Extremist Pakistani Deobandi organizations (Sipah-i Sahaba, Lashkar-i Jhangvi, Harakat-ul-Mujahidin) have bases in areas under their control. Their economic base depends on economic networks linked to the Pashtun diaspora in Karachi and Dubai, as well as the Pakistani administration in the NWFP and Baluchistan. The Pakistani rupee is so widely used as a currency in areas under Taliban control that the Pakistan banking authorities have launched an investigation of its impact on their economy. The integration of Pakistani elements into the Taliban and IEA at all levels is not simply a result of a policy of the Pakistani government or military. Rather, the latter use and respond to pressures from these transnational links, which reflect deep changes in the social and political structures of the region.

The Taliban are also linked, increasingly as their isolation from the global mainstream grows, to the transnational fringe of global Islamist politics, including Usama Bin Ladin. They also provide a haven to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, some Chechens and Uyghurs, and assorted militants from other countries. While these links began opportunistically, as they persist, they too become complemented with various forms of structural integration.

The Taliban began with Afghan Islamic goals: restoring peace to the country by imposing their conception of sharia. The events of the past few years have brought them into increasing confrontation with the mainstream international community, which they did not anticipate (having little or no direct knowledge of the entities that compose it), and increasing contact and collaboration with radical Islamic groups with which they previously had almost as little contact. The

result has been a conflict between their national and ideological goals, which most recently played itself out in the internal conflict over the destruction of statues. Is their main goal to rebuild Afghanistan under their leadership, which would require engagement with international forces who can assist that effort, even at the expense of ideology? Or is it to establish an uncompromising Islamic state in alliance with Islamist transnational extremists? Mullah Umar recently was quoted as saying that half of Afghanistan was already destroyed, and that he was willing to destroy the other half to protect Usama Bin Ladin. This contradicts the Taliban's original goals. The process of escalation between the Taliban and the mainstream international community has strengthened the radical elements, which now appear to be in full control with the backing of both Mullah Umar and the relevant portions of the Pakistani military.

2.2.2 Anti-Taliban Groups

A number of the groups arrayed against the Taliban form a nominal alliance called the National Islamic United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan (*Jabha-yi Muttahid-i Islami-yi Milli bara-yi Nijat-i Afghanistan*), the political force that supposedly exercises authority over the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA). Though the ISA holds Afghanistan's UN seat and claims to rule the entire area outside of Taliban control, it never controlled a coherent state structure, a major reason it lost to the Taliban. This group includes:

Jamiat-i Islami Afghanistan (JIA)/Supervisory Council of the North (SCN)

This group, primarily composed of Tajiks, is nominally led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the more or less defunct party *Jamiat-i Islami* and President of the more or less defunct ISA. The most powerful leader of this group is Ahmad Shah Massoud, the commander of the Panjsher Valley and founder of the older Supervisory Council of

the North, who is officially Rabbani's deputy and Minister of Defense. Both are Sunni Persian-speakers (hence Tajiks) but from different subregions and with different bases of support. Reports claim that the forces of Ismail Khan, trained in Iran, will join Massoud's on the front this year (airlifted to Dushanbe and thence to Afghanistan). Ismail Khan, the Amir of Herat, was ousted by the Taliban in 1995, captured by them in 1997 and escaped from their prison in Qandahar last year. He was thereafter based in Iran and is reported to have returned to Western Afghanistan. Thus far, however, Massoud is the only leader who counts in this group and has increasingly surrounded himself solely with Panjsheris. These include some of the most talented people still in Afghan politics in Afghanistan, but they have an extremely narrow ethnic and political base. They are succeeding, however, in increasing their international support (Massoud was received by the French government and European parliament in April 2001) through campaigns against the Taliban, which the latter have obligingly facilitated. In private conversations, Massoud's top officials admit that they do not believe they can rule Afghanistan, but that they intend to resist the Taliban until an alternative Pashtun leadership with whom they can work emerges.

National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (Junbish-i Milli-yi Islami-yi -Afghanistan - NIMA)

This group brought together Northern, mostly Uzbek, former militias of the Communist regime. It has lost all territory under its control, and many of its commanders have defected to the Taliban. Its founder and principal leader was Abdul Rashid Dostum, based in Turkey at least until spring 2001. Dostum returned to Afghanistan and met Massoud and supposedly has proceeded to a base area to raise troops. His principal rival, Abdul Malik Pahlawan, thought to be responsible for the massacre of thousands of Taliban prisoners in Mazar-i Sharif in June 1997, seems to be based in Mashhad, Iran.

Islamic Unity Party of Afghanistan (Hizb-i Wahdat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan)

The principal Shi'a party in Afghanistan with support mainly among the Hazara ethnic group, this group was originally formed under Iranian sponsorship in order to unite eight Shi'a parties. Its leader, Muhammad Karim Khalili, is now based in Iran. It lost control of most of its base in Hazarajat in August 1998, though it continues to hold out in some pockets and occasionally recaptures some territory. The party split, with one major leader (Akbari) joining the Taliban. Besides Massoud, this party (together with the Shi'a Harakat-i Islami) forms the only anti-Taliban military forces still operating in Afghanistan.

Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (Harakat-i Islami-yi Afghanistan)

Harakat is a Shi'a party that never joined Wahdat, originally led by Ayatollah Muhammad Asif Muhsini, and long allied with Jamiat. Its relations with Iran are strained, and it split within the past year. Its leadership is mostly non-Hazara Shi'a. One faction of this party constitutes the mainstay of the successful resistance to the Taliban in Dara-yi Suf district.

Islamic Union of Afghanistan (Ittihad-i Islami-yi Afghanistan) – Sayyaf

Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf, also a Kharruti Pashtun (from Paghman, near Kabul) was the leader most favored by Saudi Arabia in the jihad, and was known by Afghans as "Wahhabi." He has stayed allied with Burhanuddin Rabbani, with whom he worked at Kabul University in the 1970s, and has a small base in Kapisa province.

Council of the East (Shura-yi Mashriqi)

This faction regroups some former leaders of the shura of Jalalabad, notably Haji Abdul Qadir. Abdul Qadir and his Arsala clan, major landlords and tribal khans in the area around Jalalabad, fought as mujahidin against the Soviets under the nominal leadership of Deobandi clerics who now support the Taliban. After they took power in Jalalabad in 1992, they made millions of dollars through smuggling consumer goods from Dubai to Pakistan and involvement in the drug trade, of which his province became one of the centers. Usama Bin Ladin originally sought refuge in their area. Some small groups in the East are still said to be loyal to this group. Together with Sayyaf, this group enables the UF to claim it is not exclusively composed of non-Pashtuns.

Aims of United Front Members

These groups had somewhat different aims. Wahdat and Junbish articulated the need for regional autonomy and power sharing among various groups in Afghanistan. Hazara groups in particular insisted on control over their own areas and recognition of Shi'a law (fiqh-i Ja'afari) in their own affairs. Jamiat's articulated plans for the future Afghan state seemed as centralized as the Taliban's, though the ISA was less successful in implementing such plans. Massoud is said to have developed a plan for a quasi-federal system based on nine regions.

*Islamic Party of Afghanistan (Hizb-i Islami-yi Afghanistan)
- Hikmatyar*

This radical Islamist party, led by Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, a Kharruti Pashtun from Northern Afghanistan, favored by Pakistan until 1994, now controls few military or political resources other than the infamy of its leader. Hikmatyar apparently still has much of the US and Saudi money he was given for jihad, however, which he could use to disrupt developments he opposes.

2.3 International Actors

The combined effects of the war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union have restored Afghanistan's previous status as a country with open borders crossed by trade routes and subject to the conflicting ambitions of regional powers. The relevant international actors now include not only states in Afghanistan's neighborhood and the US, Russia, and China, but also international oil and gas companies, Islamic movements based in the Middle East, the United Nations, including

both its political department and humanitarian agencies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), both Western and Islamic.

2.3.1 States

Pakistan

The state with the closest ties and strongest links to Afghanistan is Pakistan. It is a proactive rather than reactive player. Pakistan's military rulers saw the war in Afghanistan as an opportunity to reverse Pakistan's antagonistic relations with Afghanistan over Pashtunistan, providing it with "strategic depth" in its confrontation with India.

Hence successive governments, regardless of ideology, supported only Islamist rather than nationalist groups in Afghanistan, as the former opposed ethno-nationalist claims against a fellow Muslim state, or at least did not raise them so loudly. The deep involvement of Pakistan in the war also helped incorporate many ethnic Pashtuns more firmly into key military and civilian elites there. As a result the Pashtun question changed for Pakistan. Previously, Afghan nationalist governments had used Pashtun border tribes to raid or exert pressure on Pakistan, which had consequently been hostile to Pashtun rule in Afghanistan.

Now, however, Pakistani Pashtun elites, well integrated into the Pakistani state, could exercise clientelistic control or influence over religiously oriented Pashtun groups in Afghanistan, while nationalist groups and their tribal base had become weakened. Pashtun rule of the “right” kind in Afghanistan thus became an instrument of Pakistani influence, rather than a security threat through the Pashtunistan question. The opening of Central Asia led some in Pakistan also to see trade and pipeline routes through Afghanistan to Central Asia as a key to the country’s future security and well-being. These would add yet greater “strategic depth.”

Since 1994 the government and military of Pakistan have provided comprehensive assistance to the Taliban, including military supplies, training, assistance with recruitment of Pakistani and Afghan madrasa students, seconding of military advisers, financial support, diplomatic representation and advocacy, and, according to several governments, regular military units for key offensives. The Pakistani Directorate of Interservices Intelligence (ISI) also uses bases in Afghan territory for some training of Pakistani extremist groups who supply many of the non-Kashmiri fighters in Kashmir. These links constitute a major contradiction in Pakistani policy: some of the same groups the ISI uses in Kashmir are responsible for sectarian terrorism in Pakistan itself. Half-hearted attempts by elements of the Pakistani military regime to get the Taliban to hand some of these over have failed.

But the Taliban's links to Pakistan do not end (and did not begin) with the government. As mentioned above, the Taliban derive much of their religious inspiration from the Deobandi movement in Pakistan. Virtually all of the Taliban leaders were refugees in Pakistan for several years and studied in madrasas there affiliated with one branch or another of the Deobandi political party Jamiat ul-Ulema-i Islam (JUI). These links remain important and provide thousands of new recruits (both Afghans and Pakistanis) to the Taliban.

The Taliban also receive support from traders based in Quetta, Peshawar, and Karachi who benefit from the Taliban's improvement of road security. Afghan, Pakistani, and Arab traders based in the UAE have also contributed to the Taliban. They are linked to the local administrations of NWFP and Baluchistan, who are remunerated for permitting smugglers' markets to continue. Officials of these provinces also benefit from the system of permits in force for the export of food and fuel to the Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan. The Taliban thus have a broad set of links to Pakistan's society and polity.

At the same time, the economy of smuggling, drug production, terrorism, and illegality that has grown up in Afghanistan and flourished under the Taliban directly menaces the alleged reformist goals of Pakistani Chief Executive General Pervez Musharraf. Some of the harshest "sanctions" against the Taliban have been imposed not by their political enemies but by their greatest supporter, Pakistan, as it tried to gain greater control over the ATTA, cross-border trade, and wheat exports. Forcing Pakistan to confront this contradiction (rather than easing it through weakly-conditioned IMF loans) should be high on the international agenda.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia appears to have continued to fund much of Pakistan's policy in Afghanistan through both official and unofficial channels until mid-1998, when relations broke down over Usama Bin Ladin. Private Arab groups in the Persian Gulf may continue to supply support.

Iran

Iran's links to Afghan groups have changed and deepened over time. Iran's policy is dictated by a combination of solidarity with the Shi'a in Afghanistan (and in Pakistan) and strategic concerns over the US embargo, access to Central Asia, and rivalry with Saudi Arabia. Hostility to the Taliban deepened when forces fighting alongside the latter (apparently Pakistanis from Sipah-i Sahaba) murdered eight Iranian consular officials and a journalist in Mazar-i Sharif during the August 1998 Taliban takeover. Iran is a major supplier of arms and ammunition to the UF and serves as a base for meetings among the UF's various feuding factions. Iran has mounted a significant military effort against drug traffickers from Afghanistan, who present a significant security threat in some provinces. Some forces in Iran, notably the Foundation of the Shrine of Imam Ja'afar in Mashhad, have invested in the transit trade and thus have economic links with Afghanistan and, indirectly, the Taliban. Iran and the Taliban have renewed the traditional Afghan-Iran dispute over the Helmand river waters, intensified by the current drought.

Russia

Russia has taken the lead in seeking sanctions against the Taliban in the UN Security Council. Moscow sees the Taliban as central to a network of Islamist groups, including Usama Bin Ladin, undermining security in Russia itself, as in Chechnya and Daghestan, and elsewhere in the former Soviet space, in particular Central Asia (as through the

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan). Afghanistan now plays a central role in Russian policy in the region as the main argument for returning Central Asia to Russian military hegemony. Russia has also played an important role in selling arms to the northern groups, especially Massoud. Russia has granted Massoud access to an air base in Kulab, home of Tajikistan's Russian-supported ruling clan. Within the region Russia plays both an Islamic card (aspiring to be the protector of Central Asia from fundamentalists) and an ethnic card (protecting Tajiks from both Pashtuns and Uzbeks). The contradiction of these two roles accounts in part for its complex relations with Uzbekistan.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan also supported resistance to the Taliban but was more strongly attached to Dostum, who helped it with its goals in Tajikistan. It refused to provide assistance to Abdul Malik Pahlawan after the latter had ousted Abdul Rashid Dostum in May 1997. Uzbekistan is also alarmed by the Tajikistan peace agreement, which brings Islamists into the government, excludes the Uzbekistan-sponsored party in northern Tajikistan, and keeps Russian forces on Uzbekistan's borders. Threatened both by an Islamic insurgency led by exiles from the Ferghana Valley (IMU) based in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and by Russia's reassertion in the region, Uzbekistan vacillates between sounding the alarm about the Taliban and trying to reach an accommodation. It hopes to meet the IMU threat without increasing Russian military presence in Central Asia.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan alone of the Central Asian states professes to feel no threat from the Taliban and determines its policy solely on the basis of economic interest. Turkmenistan's overriding foreign policy goal is the search for international markets for its oil and natural gas, and the Davlatabad gas field just northwest of Afghanistan could be profitably connected with the Pakistani gas network in Baluchistan via a pipeline

through western Afghanistan. Creating conditions for construction of this pipeline was one of the original purposes envisaged for the Taliban by their international supporters. Construction of this pipeline (and, to a lesser extent, a complementary oil pipeline along the same route) remains the lodestar of Turkmen policy. Though Turkmenistan has not broken with the international and Central Asian consensus by recognizing the IEA, it maintains friendly relations and often advocates the Taliban's case in international forums. In line with its policy of neutrality, it has not joined in CIS military cooperation, the Shanghai Five, or any other security alliance involving Central Asian states.

China

China played a major though largely unacknowledged role as a (paid) arms supplier to the mujahidin during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Until the Soviet withdrawal, it cooperated quietly with the US, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia in this operation. Since then, in line with its generally realpolitik approach, it lowered its interest, but it has recently become concerned with possible support for Uyghur separatists and Islamists from international Islamist networks in Taliban-controlled areas. China has both held talks with the Taliban and sent a number of warning messages to Pakistan, such as abstaining on the Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on the Taliban. China has not yet fully used its considerable leverage with Pakistan over this issue, as the difficulties in Xinjiang remain manageable, and other geopolitical factors outweigh it, but that could change.

United States

Current US policy toward Afghanistan has been almost completely dominated by concern over the Taliban's harboring of Usama Bin Ladin, whom DCI George Tenet characterized as the single greatest threat to US national security. The US together with Russia pushed the sanctions resolutions through the Security Council despite doubts articulated by many members – none of whom, however, wished to

risk political capital with the US over the Taliban. The US has also officially classified the IMU as a “terrorist organization.” It has not yet so classified the Taliban. “Terrorism” is increasingly emerging as the major threat to US interests as conceived in Washington, and the current administration is likely to strengthen that trend. Nonetheless, the administration has engaged with Afghanistan’s humanitarian crisis, pledging \$43 million in new humanitarian aid, and is evaluating the Taliban’s efforts at eradicating poppy cultivation to see what response is required. The predominant mood seems to be toward rethinking existing sanctions and complementing them with incentives, without backing off from a hard line on Bin Ladin. The administration is also likely to attempt more engagement with Pakistan.

2.3.2 International Organizations

The United Nations operates in Afghanistan largely without other inter-governmental organizations. On occasion the UN has worked together with the Organization of the Islamic Conference, but the OIC’s role has been largely symbolic. The World Bank has a “watching brief” for Afghanistan and, at the suggestion of UNSMA head Francesc Vendrell, has recently proposed planning preliminary studies for reconstruction.

It is only a slight exaggeration to say that the UN is currently pursuing at least three (maybe four) mutually conflicting policies in Afghanistan. The UN Security Council, led by Russia and the United States, focusing nearly entirely on Usama Bin Ladin, has imposed sanctions on the Taliban only, including a ban on military assistance, financial transactions, foreign travel by high officials, international flights, and the import of materials for refining heroin (thus seeming to grant a monopoly on heroin refining to the neighboring countries). The only condition for lifting the sanctions is the handing over of Usama Bin Ladin for trial and the closing of terrorist training facilities, which are not defined, but presumably include all facilities used by Chechens

and the IMU, among others. This policy treats the Taliban's policies as a threat to international peace and security and implicitly favors Massoud, whom one of the resolution's supporters (Russia) is arming.

The UN Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) is primarily charged with mediating between the Taliban and the UF to promote a cease-fire and formation of a broad-based government as well as other measures related to peacemaking. UNAMA's mission is largely defined by General Assembly resolutions and statements of the "six plus two" group of countries (Afghanistan's neighbors plus the US and Russia). Unlike the Security Council resolution, which imposes an arms embargo only on the Taliban, the General Assembly Resolutions and six-plus-two declarations call for an end of military supplies to all warring parties (nearly all of the external military support, of course, comes from members of the group issuing the declaration, which effectively calls on its issuers to reverse their own policies). UNAMA's mission requires impartiality or neutrality among the warring parties and defines the threat to peace and security as the war, rather than the Taliban per se.

The UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Afghanistan (UNOCHA) has as its mission to deliver "rights-based" humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people through principled common programming (PCP) of all UN agencies under the strategic framework. This mission requires negotiated access to the Afghan population through the de facto authorities, mainly the Taliban. Since it operates on the ground, UNOCHA benefits from Taliban security (the lack of which often made operations in UF areas completely impossible) and the lower level of corruption, especially compared to Junbish and Wahdat. Hence, despite its many, and increasing, conflicts with the Taliban, primarily over issues of women's employment, education, and access to assistance, UNOCHA is often perceived as more "pro-Taliban" by other parts of the UN system.

The negotiation in May 1998 of a Memorandum of Understanding

signed by the Taliban and a UN relief official, which stated “women’s access to health and education will need to be gradual” heightened this impression. UNOCHA’s activities are hindered by donors’ reluctance to contribute: as of March 2001, donors had pledged (not provided) only eight percent of a \$254 million humanitarian appeal for 2001, which aid officials in any case consider a bare minimum.

The UN Human Rights Commission, through the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, Kamal Hussain, reports on “violations of human rights” in Afghanistan, a legal category that currently covers most political and military activities in that country. Under current human rights standards, many Afghan leaders should be arrested and tried as war criminals, a measure that would probably be quite popular with most Afghans.

3. Peace Process

3.1 UN Peace Efforts

The only official actor that mainly defines its mission as making peace in Afghanistan is UNSMA. The UN humanitarian mission has also sought to undertake peace building through community-based programs. The core of UNSMA's mission, as defined by the General Assembly and the "six plus two", has been to offer good offices and mediation to help the Afghan parties to the conflict seek a negotiated settlement, leading to a broad-based government, cease-fire, and, ultimately, reconstruction. UNSMA occasionally also defines its mission as offering good offices and mediation to the various foreign powers involved in Afghanistan, in the hope that, if they settled their differences, it would facilitate agreement among the Afghans. These powers mostly prefer to handle such issues directly, without UN involvement.

There has not been any ongoing "peace process" in the conventional sense of the term since the fall of Najibullah in April 1992. There was not even a UN political mission on Afghanistan from April 1992 until the end of 1993. Since then successive envoys have tried a variety of tactics. Envoy Mahmud Mestiri, who commenced his work before the emergence of the Taliban, started consulting the Afghan public through a variety of meetings, but reverted to consultations with armed factions. Envoy Norbert Holl, who started his work after the Taliban had taken control of southern Afghanistan, met with the various factions and alienated them all with his penchant for lecturing them. Lakhdar Brahimi, the longest lasting thus far, created some processes of discussion, which led to the Ashkhabad talks in 1999. He also engaged all the regional powers in discussion and concentrated much of his work on seeking to understand and deal with the clash between Pakistan and Iran over Afghanistan. He succeeded in averting an Iranian attack on the Taliban in the aftermath of their killing of

the Iranians in Mazar-i Sharif in August 1998.

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of the various envoys, the basic problem of UNSMA has been the mandate to mediate negotiations over the formation of a broad-based, representative government in a country without a state. This is not really a very meaningful or sensible sequence of events. The imagined goal seems to be some kind of coalition government in which members of opposing factions would share power by gaining different portfolios in the government. But since there is little or no state structure, giving up commanding an armed group in order to become a minister amounts to abandoning power rather than sharing it. The UNGA and “six plus two” mandates have thus failed to address the fundamental problems of the country and have been based on a mistaken definition of the problem.

Among various options discussed in the “six plus two” group of countries has been an arms embargo on all parties (aiming at peace in Afghanistan, as opposed to the Security Council resolution which embargoes only the Taliban, aiming at the arrest of Usama Bin Ladin). Pakistan claims to support a Chapter 7 embargo on all arms going to Afghanistan, while the other members of the group claim to support a political process leading to voluntary ending of arms supplies. This discussion is based on the fallacy that arms are what keep the war going, whereas fuel, ammunition, spare parts, and cash are more crucial. Taliban offensives against Massoud depend in particular on aviation fuel and recruits from Pakistani madrasas. Pakistan’s position illustrates the fundamental bad faith of the argument. It would be much easier to monitor supplies going to the UF, which depends on a few airfields and bridges, than to the Taliban, who can use numerous roads and trails, and who have a much greater stockpile. Pakistan is unlikely to respect any such embargo (as it is currently violating the Security Council sanctions against aid to the Taliban, allowing if not instigating madrasa students to cross the border and fight). The US and Russia at one time produced a joint “non-paper” on the technical requirements for embargoing arms, which has been posted on

www.afghan-politics.org.

Before the imposition of the latest round of anti-Taliban sanctions, UN envoy Francesc Vendrell had obtained written agreement from both the Taliban and Massoud to engage in an open-ended process of negotiation, which they would pursue until reaching a satisfactory conclusion. Vendrell was trying to draft a broad agenda for this discussion, including the key issues of state building and relations with neighbors, when the Security Council sanctions envenomed UN relations with the Taliban and caused them effectively to withdraw from the process. Vendrell has also been pursuing second-track approaches among the key outside countries. The main aim of such approaches is to answer the question that UN envoys kept asking: “What does Pakistan want?” So far no clear or satisfactory answer has been forthcoming, other than, “complete victory by the Taliban.”

Vendrell also recognizes that peace will not come under current economic and social conditions, and that the peacemaking process requires incentives, not only sanctions. Hence he has requested the World Bank to augment its watching brief with an actual beginning of planning for reconstruction. The World Bank has written to the IEA requesting permission to conduct a household survey, which alarmed the Taliban with its implication of interviewing (and hence employing) women, but they may have slightly relented before the imposition of the Security Council sanctions caused them to freeze cooperation and close UN political offices outside Kabul.

Pursuant to the Security Council resolution, passed in November 2000, the UN has established an expert group to examine compliance with the embargo on military assistance to the Taliban and the establishment of “terrorist” facilities. Following its mission to the region, it proposed establishment of a monitoring body in Vienna, which would particularly focus on aircraft fuel, artillery and anti-tank ammunition, and the recruitment of foreign fighters, especially from Pakistani madrasas.

3.2 Regional Peace Efforts

From time to time Pakistan and Iran (encouraged by Brahimi) engaged in a dialogue over Afghanistan and even staged a couple of joint missions to the Afghan parties. These have now completely collapsed, as there is such a high level of distrust between these two countries, which regard each other as antagonists and rivals in both Afghanistan and Central Asia.

3.3 Afghan Exile Peace Efforts

A number of Afghans in exile have launched their own peace processes, with the help and support of foreign governments, including the Rome process focused on the former king, Zahir Shah (funded by Italy and indirectly supported by the US) and the Cyprus process supported by some factions in Iran. (The previous Bonn process, which had received some support from companies interested in the pipeline, has merged with Rome.)

The Rome process is the most serious of these. Since 1983 Zahir Shah periodically articulated the idea of resolving the Afghan conflict through the traditional means of convening an Emergency Loya Jirga. The Loya Jirga (Great Council) was a traditionalist institution of the Afghan state (i.e. one that reflected a state-constructed tradition) corresponding to a tribal legitimation of the regime. Afghan nationalist intellectuals retrospectively construed gatherings that called the tribes to jihad when there was no functioning legitimate state (as during the two British occupations) as an Emergency Loya Jirga. These plans languished, since Zahir Shah and his advisers had no resources to implement these plans. They finally obtained some when the US turned against Pakistani policy in Afghanistan in the last few years and en-

couraged the Government of Italy to provide support.

Afghans living in Afghanistan appear to retain a sentimental attachment to Zahir Shah, and the concept of legitimating a new government through a Loya Jirga still appeals to many, but many appear puzzled as to how an assembly of venerable exiles will seize power from the well-armed groups that control today's Afghanistan. Afghan economists associated with the Rome process are preparing a reconstruction plan, which could prove useful. An alliance of the Rome process with Massoud or an emerging Pashtun challenger to the Taliban, or a shift in Pakistani policy, might make such an event more likely. It is possible, if not probable, that, in the event of a crisis, an insecure power holder might invoke entities formed through the Rome process to legitimate a new regime. But this would require overcoming Pakistan's resistance, among other obstacles.

3.4 Structural Obstacles to Peace Processes

There are several reasons that a peace process is so difficult:

- **Lack of stalemate.** According to one theory, fighters agree to negotiate when they believe they cannot achieve more through war, i.e. when they reach a "hurting stalemate". In transnational wars like Afghanistan, however, access to external aid and international markets (drugs, gems, smuggled consumer goods), international volunteers or recruits from refugees, a diaspora, or allied states, provides replenishable resources. The parties are never exhausted. In this case Pakistan and the Taliban believe they can win, and Massoud believes he can obtain a more advantageous position by building international and domestic political support. Neither side depends on the exhausted Afghan population for any resource. Despite economic hardship,

the Taliban have encountered resistance to recruitment from local communities even in their core areas, but their ability to recruit from the much larger population of Pakistan compensates for this problem. To disrupt such linkages often requires a very high level of determination from powerful states, which may, however, see the theater of conflict as remote from their short-term interests.

- **Spoilers with an interest in conflict.** Some powerful interests, which may even have lobbies within some governments, may not want to end the war. Some actors (spoilers) can become rich and powerful by exercising violence in a lawless environment, and they will attempt to subvert any peace process. Those benefiting from the drug trade, smuggling, and gem trade could fall into this category. Such spoilers are typically few in number, but they have clear interests and resources to pursue them, while the much larger number of people suffering from the conflict lack resources and organizational capacity.
- **Lack of security guarantees.** Even when the parties sign an agreement sincerely, it is very difficult to implement without guarantees of security from either law-bound state institutions or third parties. Any negotiated settlement to a civil war involves some disarmament and integration of formerly hostile armed forces and the participation by former combatants in a common political space (e.g. in institutions located in the capital city). Without security guarantees (such as peacekeepers), no one is willing to risk such a transition. The levels of interpersonal trust between key actors are far too low to support the concessions required to transform the nature of the conflict. For instance, try to imagine Massoud taking up a position in a coalition government with the Taliban. Who is responsible for his security in Kabul? There is no national army or security force that is even slightly independent of its leader. No one will

trust his security to anyone else's forces, and it will be very difficult to convince third parties without a direct interest to send forces to Afghanistan, though it may become necessary at some stage.

- **Conflicting international interests.** International actors agree on “peace” as a goal when they care less about the outcome of a conflict than about the process of violence. That is less and less the case in Afghanistan. Pakistan seeks victory by the Taliban. The war increasingly pits Pakistan against all of Afghanistan's other neighbors, as well as, indirectly, the US and Russia, which increasingly seek to defeat or at least coerce the Taliban.

4. Options for Policy

No Immediate Solution to the Crisis

The US and Russia seek to force the Taliban to change major policies through sanctions against a country whose economy is already almost entirely illegal. A UN-led negotiating process over formation of a “broad-based government” is meaningless in the current environment. The Taliban are seeking to meet those international conditions they have identified as acceptable by pursuing war to gain full control of Afghan territory and forcing peasants to halt opium production. The result of all of these policies, together with the drought (besides genuine reduction in opium growing and, as usual, plenty of killing), is to drive people off the land into IDP camps in Afghanistan, islands in the Panj river (since Tajikistan will not admit them), and camps in Pakistan that are more like concentration than refugee camps.

There is no immediate solution to this crisis. In the absence of an accepted state structure, negotiations cannot lead to a coalition or interim government. The usual sequencing that the UN and others have in mind involves: an end to external involvement; a cease-fire; formation of an interim government; an election or constitution making process, simultaneous with the start of reconstruction; and “return” to normalcy (a state remembered by less than half of the population). But the extensive links between Afghan and Pakistani populations and institutions cannot be broken: at best, they can be transformed.

The composition of a government cannot resolve the problem. The Taliban are not a political group that took over an existing government; they are a movement that is building a weak but centralized state. The Ashkhabad talks in 1999 failed over the issue of qiyadi (leadership): the Taliban offered Massoud and his supporters virtually any position in the government, providing they accepted the existing structure of the IEA, and hence the “leadership” of Mullah Umar.

From the Taliban's point of view, the alternative is the continued existence of a state within a state with its own separate army; from Masoud's point of view, such an agreement amounted to surrender, not a peace deal. Since there is no autonomous state structure (army, administration, etc.) that both sides accept, there is no purely political mechanism for power sharing.

Alternative Thinking Needed

Hence the international community might have to reverse the usual order of first seeking agreement among immediate actors and then working to transform and strengthen institutions, using such an offer as an incentive to transform current unacceptable behavior. Institutions might have to come first, in order to provide both incentives and capacities for actors to build peace. International donors and political powers should provide a genuine set of incentives for Afghan leaders and people to reorient their policies toward peace-building. The main role of UNSMA would be to hold discussions with Afghan actors about options for institution-building and reconstruction and about the international conditions for assistance.

In their somewhat disingenuous message about the reasons for destroying the Bamiyan and other statues, the Taliban indirectly exposed the problem: they claim that the council of ulama of the IEA decreed the destruction after a UNESCO delegation offered aid only for cultural preservation and not for starving people. Obviously, destroying the country's (and the world's) cultural heritage did not feed anyone either (quite the contrary), but this incident shows the need to complement existing sanctions with a major donor effort to show that, *under the right conditions*, substantial levels of funding will be available for reconstruction. The plan prepared by those associated with the Rome process should strengthen this effort. Indeed both the drought and the ban on poppy should provide the occasion for direct engagement with Afghans (Taliban, UF, and many others) on how to rehabilitate the country and its people.

Towards a Broad Reconstruction Process

Such engagement would have to take place at several levels and would require that the idea of reconstruction be made concrete, comprehensible, and credible for political actors. Such an effort could perhaps focus around the World Bank planning process that UN envoy Francesc Vendrell has helped to initiate. As he envisages, such a process would both provide UNSMA with much more leverage than it now has and help it transform its agenda in a more realistic direction.

To be effective politically, such a planning process should not consist solely of a technical effort involving a few experts in confidential meetings. The UN, World Bank, and major states should launch a public diplomacy process on reconstruction. The World Bank/UNDP meeting in June and the ASG meeting that follows should focus on incentives for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. They should lead to immediate efforts to support education for Afghans, male and female, in Pakistan, Iran, and, where possible, within Afghanistan; Afghans increasingly regard the destruction of education as one of the gravest crises they face and appear genuinely frightened by the future prospect of generations of illiteracy.

These meetings should also lead to the establishment of working groups involving Afghan and foreign experts (this is an appropriate role for elements of the Afghan diaspora intelligentsia and could perhaps follow the lead of the economic group associated with the Rome process) on important aspects of reconstruction. These working groups, including significant numbers of Afghan women, should meet in the region, and their meetings should have a component of public consultation. The issues in their deliberations should be communicated to the Afghan public through readily available channels: the Persian-Pashto service of the BBC and the Dari and Pashto services of VOA. These stations would probably be willing to incorporate such discussions into existing programming, possibly into the popular BBC show "New Home, New Life."

The conditions for assistance have to be clarified and discussed with all Afghan actors - the Taliban, Massoud, and the other components of the UF, but also with society more broadly - as part of this debate. The conditions would include elimination of support for terrorism in a way that respects Afghan traditions of asylum and international norms against refoulement, an acceptable minimum of gender equity and human rights, and satisfactory security for all groups and regions. The process must include Afghan women at all levels. International actors should make clear that they will respond to opium eradication with support for crop substitution and employment creation.

Donors need to make such discussions credible by mobilizing sufficient resources and targeting them to programs that lead to sustainable peace and development. As the Mine Action Program for Afghanistan has demonstrated, Afghan NGOs working under a UN umbrella can both deliver significant reconstruction achievements, and provide a venue for the rebuilding of trust between persons of diverse background. Money could even be placed in an escrow account pending acceptable conditions and pooled to ensure effective coordination. The same could apply to potential income from pipelines. Corporations that have now fled the scene should be enticed back, but this time not as rogue operators on an anarchic scene, but as participants in an international effort with a clear framework of political principles. International financial institutions now have considerable experience with special trust funds for oil and other rentier revenues to assure that they are used for socially beneficial purposes rather than corruption and war making. The same effort should be applied to those firms now engaged in the emerald business with Massoud. The UN's Global Compact could provide one forum for enlisting corporate cooperation.

No Solution Without Pakistan

This can work only if Pakistan too sees an interest in supporting such a process and it is expanded to a regional scope. Pakistan may be lured into changing its Afghan policy if key decision makers also see incentives for doing so emanating from a reconstruction fund for Afghanistan from which Pakistan could reap economic benefits. It should be made clear to it that it will *not* receive such support under present conditions, and the international community should reinforce the contradiction between Pakistan's Afghan policy and its economic needs by incorporating such considerations into conditionality. This is legitimate because of the smuggling through Afghanistan that benefits the Taliban also undermines the fiscal basis of the Pakistani state.

The sequencing of pressurizing Pakistan, however, is important in order to avoid a backlash from pro-Taliban Pakistani Islamic parties and Islamist elements within the military. Such pressure should follow and not precede the launching of an international fund for reconstruction for Afghanistan. If Pakistan faces more sanctions, and pressures without an incentive, it is likely to lead to a stubborn rejection of international pressure which will only strengthen Islamist forces in Pakistan and increase anti-Westernism. International institutions must tell Pakistan that *if* it helps create the conditions for reconstruction in Afghanistan, Pakistan will also benefit in a major way. Contracts will go to Pakistani firms, trade will resume, and, indeed, Pakistan will link up to Central Asia through an Afghanistan that is not a client state, but that does not threaten Central Asia either. Pakistani experts and economic actors should also be involved in these discussions and processes, and their public should also be informed and engaged through the press, including, very importantly, vernacular press and radio. These would be aimed at transforming, not eliminating, Pakistan's deep involvement in Afghanistan.

As noted, however, not only Pakistan, and not only Pakistan's decision-makers are involved in the conflict processes. The region-wide

conflict formation requires a region-wide response. Unfortunately, unlike West Africa, the Great Lakes region, or the Andes, there is no name or bureaucratic niche for the region including Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and the post-Soviet Central Asian states, as well as Western China, and Kashmir, with links to the Persian Gulf. Nonetheless, this constitutes the region whose problems need to be addressed in an integrated way as part of the pursuit of reconstruction and peace in Afghanistan.

A starting point could be a joint inter-agency UN mission to all of these countries (and others, such as Russia, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and India) to evaluate the interlocking elements of conflict, as the recent mission to West Africa did. This could be followed by a higher-level mission, of the Security Council, aimed at forming a political consensus on the interrelations of problems and on the provision of resources to deal with them. Both the political and financial institutions of the international community (international organizations as well as major states) need to develop programs and institutions capable of conceptualizing and acting on this problem in an appropriate regional framework, politically, economically, and in humanitarian action.

Towards a Regional Approach

Among the conclusions of such a consultation would be, in all likelihood: the need to reinforce Tajikistan's precarious peace process, especially through economic assistance; the need for targeted assistance and conflict monitoring in the Ferghana Valley, including Batken; consultations with the IMU concerning their conditions for laying down their arms; confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan; assistance to and support for Iran's efforts to secure itself against the disruptive effects of drug trafficking; a regional approach to humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees and displaced people; economic planning for legitimate commercial crops and products in Afghanistan that could be marketed regionally, such as animal prod-

ucts, cut flowers, lavender products (the plant grows wild in several regions), and others; as well as emergency measures to meet the education crisis in Afghanistan and, to a lesser extent, Pakistan.

Such a process would transform the context in which discussions now take place between international and Afghan actors (as well as Pakistan and Central Asia). This process could affect the balance of forces within the Taliban and elsewhere in Afghanistan, as well as in Pakistan, just as the sanctions have (though in a negative direction, strengthening extremists in the Taliban). The Taliban and Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan are not homogeneous. Neither are the Pakistan military and other relevant elites. The Islamic Emirate includes a broad coalition, most of which is not fully committed to the Taliban ideology. The destruction of the Buddhas deeply offended many within the Taliban power structure itself. Private or purely verbal offers (such as the US reportedly made during discussions with the Taliban over Usama Bin Ladin and as the EU did recently) are too vague and not credible. Nor do they necessarily reach the right people – since we do not necessarily know who they are.

Once agreeing on such an approach, major international actors (financial institutions, the UN, donors) can set up an institutionalized focal point for the process, whether in an existing institution or the proposed Strategic Recovery Facility that is currently the subject of work by the Center on International Cooperation (employer of one author, Rubin) with the governments of the UK and Norway. This focal point would establish technical working groups involving Afghans and non-Afghans and mobilize resources for the reconstruction effort. Representatives of all Afghan groups, including the Taliban, the UF, NGOs, and others, including women, would be invited to participate in or observe this planning and reconstruction process. The resultant plans would be the subject of discussions with the UN and other multilateral and bilateral contacts.

States seeking to influence the Taliban and other Afghan and Pakistani actors would certainly refer to this opportunity/process in making various arguments about why Afghan actors should lay down arms and agree to rejoin the international mainstream. Such arguments would strengthen those within the Taliban who want to argue that a more cooperative approach would be rewarded; as of now, those who argue that the whole world is against them are in the ascendant. In addition, if it became clear that the rigid policies of the Taliban were blocking an existing plan for reconstruction, disgruntled actors now on the Taliban side would have a much greater incentive to take risky actions to change the situation, perhaps with the aid of sympathizers within the Taliban. How to provide greater capacity for such actors without becoming involved in covert actions, especially more military assistance, constitutes a key challenge. Such processes could interact in unpredictable ways with Massoud's policies, the Rome process, and other events that may not be known to outsiders. No one will be able to predict what will happen any more than anyone predicted the appearance and rise of the Taliban. Nevertheless, an effort to create a robust set of incentives for peacebuilding will certainly alter the calculus of many actors.

Strong International Commitment Required

The sanctions should be fine-tuned to convey the message that just as destructive behavior will win no favor, constructive cooperation will be rewarded. Anything that affects the civil economy (in particular the ban on flights and on legitimate official IEA financial transactions) should be removed, especially in the context of serious planning for reconstruction. Future political negotiations should not be primarily focused on the composition of the central government (broad-based or otherwise) but on the need for an impartial (and small) single army and decentralized security arrangements that will enable all groups and regions to participate in a common Afghanistan. Indeed, the structure of state institutions should be part of the debate that the planning process launches. Such a discussion will be much more fruit-

ful if it takes place in answer to questions about what institutions serve development and human security rather than solely what institutions serve the need for political domination. The US, UN, and other leading international actors can help create conditions where such discussions can take place.