

STATE-BUILDING FOR PEACE: AFGHANISTAN FROM BONN 2001 TO BONN 2011

PROF NAYANI MELEGODA

Introduction

It is now over a decade that the US-led coalition forces ousted the Taliban regime in Kabul. During the past several years an Afghan-led US-initiated statebuilding exercise to establish positive peace in the country has continued. It has not been an easy task to change the war-torn society and get it to engage in democratic practices to establish peace. Afghanistan can be considered a prime case study where major peacebuilding agencies began emphasizing construction or strengthening legitimate governmental institutions or what is called “statebuilding” in order to build peace. This ambitious programme for sustainable peace in Afghanistan which in turn would contribute to peace in the world has been a costly task for the United States and its allied western governments. The venture has earned no credit from their war-weary voters. Neither the Afghans nor the United States traditional friend in the region, Pakistan, seem to be happy at the current turn of events. The United Nations experiment of its “light footprint” approach in post-conflict peacebuilding in the country failed miserably.

Already in preparation for the forthcoming presidential elections in the United States, the Obama administration is talking about early retreat from Afghanistan. As in the US, in France the outgoing leadership ran its re-election campaign projecting itself as the government that was bringing the boys home. The Afghan exercise — statebuilding for peacebuilding — cost the American taxpayers \$119 billion in 2011.⁽¹⁾ The US secretary of defense announced on 1 February 2012 that he hoped American troops in Afghanistan would be able to withdraw from combat to an ‘enabling’ role soon after the middle of next year,

Prof Nayani Melegoda teaches International Relations at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka, and is presently researching on peacebuilding options in Afghanistan as a Japan Foundation fellow affiliated to the Institute of Peace Science, Hiroshima University, Japan. *Regional Studies*, Vol. XXX, No.3, Summer 2012, pp.68-88

which would be 18 months earlier than the existing plan for the drawdown. It seems that US President is now bent on a speedy drawdown and further announcements are expected in the summer of 2012 prior to November 6th elections in US.

The reason for President Obama's change in Afghan policy is partly attributed to the forthcoming presidential election, and partly to the realization that the US has overstayed the welcome. Burning of the copies of the Quran at a US military base in Afghanistan early this year (there was a similar incident by a US pastor in April 2011) that sparked off the recent chain of violence only highlights the fact that the involvement in that country without an understanding of its culture was a mistake. Ten years is also a long time for foreign troops to be tolerated in a country.

America's main ally in South Asia since the early 1950s, Pakistan, is now considered as hostile in most American writings on Afghanistan. Since the killing of Osama bin Laden in a hideout near Pakistan's elite military academy in Abbottabad in May 2011, Pakistan's relations with the US got strained and deteriorated further when 24 Pakistani soldiers were killed and 13 others injured in a NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) airstrike on a checkpoint which occurred on a confused night of fighting which the Americans called an accident in November 2011. An angry and disillusioned Pakistan government announced that it would boycott the 2011 Bonn conference on Afghanistan. These events have put Pakistan's civilian government under undue pressure from its army in the months leading up to national election. Already the Pakistan Supreme Court has found fault with the Prime Minister's action over an incident dubbed as Memogate.⁽²⁾ A high-level diplomatic repair mission was sent by Washington to Pakistan in April 2012 to ease the strains and restore their former good relations.

Since most NATO partner countries are not keen to prolong their stay in Afghanistan, expediency in drawdown before its previously decided deadline is now a reality. Yet the lessons from the past must be kept in mind as the abrupt departures ignite civil wars. In the case of Afghanistan the Soviet withdrawal left behind an ill-equipped government to deal with the mujahedin which resulted in thousands of civilian deaths. Afghanistan deserves better. Perhaps now the time has come for South Asian neighbours who unlike the western coalition countries understand the local conditions of Afghanistan to take the lead in positive peacebuilding there.

Defining statebuilding and peacebuilding

Statebuilding is defined, by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), as a purposeful action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between the state and societal groups (the emphasis is on state-society negotiations). It further says that legitimacy will be a principal outcome of the effectiveness of such a process over time, although legitimacy may also be embedded in historical identities and institutions. Together, capacity and resources, institutions, legitimacy and an effective political process combine to produce resilience. Successful statebuilding will

almost always be the product of domestic action, but it can be significantly enabled by well-targeted and responsive international assistance.⁽³⁾

Those who devise and pursue statebuilding strategies need to appreciate the fact that states are comprised of more than formal institutions. To understand any contemporary state requires understanding the historical movements and moments that have shaped it, recognizing that the nature of the state is dynamic, and appreciating that the bargains and relationships that affect comparative weakness, fragility or failure are continually shifting and renewing.⁽⁴⁾

According to Roland Paris, who won the Grawemeyer award for ideas for improving world order (he won two other awards for the same work) for his famous work *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict*, peacebuilding is action undertaken at the end of a civil conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of fighting. He further defines peacebuilding as nothing less than an enormous experiment in social engineering aimed at creating the domestic conditions for durable peace within countries just emerging from civil wars.⁽⁵⁾

In his landmark 1992 United Nations policy statement, *An Agenda for Peace*, former UN secretary general Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in the aftermath of civil strife, with the ultimate goal of preventing a relapse into conflict.”⁽⁶⁾

Michael Barnett and Christoph Zurcher say that peacebuilding is statebuilding. Ultimately, peacebuilding aims at building: human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security. This multidimensional and highly intrusive undertaking involves a reconstruction of politics, economics, culture, and society, leaving no stone unturned. Standing behind peacebuilding is statebuilding.⁽⁷⁾

Afghan-led statebuilding in UN 'light-footprint' approach

At the defeat of Taliban as a result of the US-led operation 'Enduring Freedom' in 2001, a conference took place in Bonn to map the future of Afghanistan. Eighteen countries, including Afghanistan's neighbours, acted as observers. After nine days of intensive negotiations, the UN-sponsored talks in Bonn culminated in the signing of a series of agreements on Afghanistan, pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions. The Bonn 2001 Agreements, officially negotiated and signed under the auspices of the UN and endorsed by United Nations Security Council (UNSC), outlined the work of statebuilding in Afghanistan targeting international community's twin goals in Afghanistan's future: statebuilding and peacebuilding.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks on the United States, the motive of statebuilding in Afghanistan was to combat international terrorism, building the state as antidote of reversion of warfare as stated by Francis Fukuyama. It must be noted here that the Bonn agreements were victor's agreement and not a peace agreement, since if it was a peace agreement then the Taliban should have been

invited for talks as well. Also, the defeated Taliban were not invited to participate at Bonn discussions since the Afghan negotiators who attended the conference were selected by the US and not the UN.

It is remarkable that even after over two decades of war, weak and highly fragmented Afghanistan still had state institutions or previous experience of such institutions. Therefore, the Bonn 2001 conference decided that the statebuilding for peacebuilding in Afghanistan would be nationally led with international cooperation and funding. The Bonn participants also agreed that Afghanistan statebuilding for peacebuilding would be done in the way of new approach — “light footprint” — adopted by the United Nations the previous year.⁽⁸⁾ The Brahimi report, released in October 2000, provides the main frame of reference for discussion and reform of peacekeeping capacities within the UN, where the UN Secretariat successfully argued for a more modest role in the ‘means’ and ‘ends’ dimension of UN operations.⁽⁹⁾ In making the case for a limited UN role, Lakhdar Brahimi, appointed special UN envoy to Afghanistan in October 2001, resisted calls for a large and complex peacekeeping force to be sent to Afghanistan (like the ones sent to Cambodia and East Timor), arguing that the council should “not ‘rush’ into Afghanistan with a peacekeeping force that lacks the political and financial support required to succeed.”⁽¹⁰⁾ Therefore, the UN mission to Afghanistan in 2001 adopted the strategy, relying on Afghans with few international staff to assist so that transitional government run by the Afghans would have greater credibility.

The UN’s central principle in ‘light footprint’ approach was to rely on Afghan capabilities in statebuilding, so that the UN would work through the Afghan government providing more legitimacy in statebuilding with more civilians than military. It also meant no UN transitional administration in Afghanistan unlike other peacebuilding exercises undertaken by the UN.

Another reason behind the UN light footprint approach would also be that the UN during the decade of 1989-1999 deployed 33 peace operations across the world, more than double that the organization conducted in the previous four decades. It was also performing more complex and less familiar tasks.

From mid-1988 to early 1990 the UN Good Offices Mission in Afghanistan and Pakistan (UNGOMAP) operated in Afghanistan with staff not exceeding 50 military observers.⁽¹¹⁾ The United Nations Special Mission to Afghanistan (UNSM) was established by the UN General Assembly with a mandate to get negotiations between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance resumed in an attempt to broker a ceasefire, thus first and foremost a diplomatic mission, and was supposed to be neutral between the various parties to the conflict. It was later directed by Lakhdar Brahimi, followed by Frances Vendrell in 2000-1.⁽¹²⁾

Further, in March 2002, UNSC resolution 1401 established United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) with a mandate to ensure full-scale implementation of Bonn agreements. The UNAMA mandate, as it developed over time, included constitutional reform, reconstruction, initiatives

on gender issues, and new human rights institutions.⁽¹³⁾ The above are the main UN commissions operating in Afghanistan in the ‘light footprint’ approach.

With the escalation in violence and with elusive peace, doubts are raised on the viability and effectiveness of the light footprint approach. In a country where physical geography, traditions and culture separate its citizen from the centre of power, light footprint administration was not able to reach the people in remote areas, in the drug trade or to prevent Taliban regrouping from their hideouts. As early as 2004 Roland Paris wrote that the light footprint approach was ineffective.⁽¹⁴⁾ The modest role of the international agencies did not prevent the warlords from remaining in control. The light footprint approach to peacebuilding in Afghanistan seemed by its very nature to be incapable of addressing this problem.⁽¹⁵⁾

Establishing democracy

The Bonn agreement provisions included establishing institutions like the judiciary, the army and the police force, the constitutional commission, the election commission, banking, the drug enforcement directorate and disarming and demobilizing militias, drafting of a new constitution, fighting terrorism, drugs and organized crime, repatriation and resettlement of refugees, and other related subjects. The agreement sought to find a solution to the country’s monetary crisis by authorizing the establishment of a new central bank capable of accounting procedures for the issuance of currency. For the first time in history Afghan authorities were required to establish a human rights commission. The entire process aimed at supporting to establish a multi-ethnic, fully representative government, elected through free and fair elections by the people of Afghanistan.

Thus the Bonn agreement laid the foundation for statebuilding for peace in earnest in introducing mechanisms to establish security, legitimacy, public finance and economic policy making and justice and the rule of law. An Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) was established upon the official transfer of power on 22 December 2001. Having proven to the Afghan delegation his capability and sincerity, Hamid Karzai became an acceptable candidate to head the AIA; of course he was selected by the US and supported by Pakistan.

The main task of the AIA was to convene an Emergency Loya Jirga (ELJ) or the Grand Council of Elders to decide matters of political and national importance. It is also important to note here that for the first time in its history women entered the political life of Afghanistan — among the 1000-strong delegates of the ELJ, 200 selected were women. The task of the ELJ was to select an Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA) to run the country until the national elections were held. Behind the scene the US officials worked to ensure that the former king of Afghanistan, Mohammed Zahir Shah, made way for Karzai to be reconfirmed as head of state at the ATA.

Next was the appointment of the Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ) to draft a new constitution. It convened its first meeting on 14 December 2003 and used the 1964 Constitution as the basis for drafting a new constitution. The 502-member CLJ presented a 162-article Constitution which provides for a

presidential form of government with bicameral legislature, Meshrano Jirga (upper house) and Wolesi Jirga (lower house).⁽¹⁶⁾ An independent Election Commission (IEC) was also established under Article 156 of the Constitution. The 2004 Constitution defined the parameters for national elections, the final stage of Bonn 2001.

The presidential election date was set for 9 October 2004. The UNAMA was given the responsibility of the election process and its supervision together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and together they managed all resource mobilization and donor relations for the presidential election followed by parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005. UNAMA also facilitated some two million refugees in Pakistan and Iran to vote in the presidential elections. Hamid Karzai was elected President with 56 per cent of the vote from nearly 70 per cent turnout of the registered electorate.⁽¹⁷⁾

The Bonn 2001 process ended with the parliamentary elections, the road map was successful on the above. A democratically elected government was in place. As the general assumption of peacebuilders (western) is that democratization and marketization would foster domestic peace, the Afghans were on their way to establishing sustainable peace.

Steps towards disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration

The key to statebuilding for peace is DDR — disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In late 2001 all Afghans had grown war-weary and the Taliban appeared to be defeated. There was a window of opportunity to commence DDR activities. Yet the Bonn agreements did not accord demilitarization a central status (keeping up with light footprint strategy). The DDR was painfully slow to commence. As noted before, a UNSC resolution authorized ISAF, a non-UN led international security force, to provide security for the political process until Afghan security institutions could be developed. Its presence stabilized the capital Kabul but this security was not shared by the rest of the country. The call for a greater ISAF went unheeded until August 2003 when NATO assumed control of ISAF in its first New NATO beyond European theatre operation.

A comprehensive vision of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) considers it as a holistic, long-term development process rather than a discrete and time-bound activity with disarmament as a logistical component. This vision of the DDR has led some analysts and practitioners to suggest a new definition of DDR which focuses on finding alternatives for weapons possession and use, and improving community security by enhancing livelihood opportunities through social and economic investment in the community. This broader conception of DDR opens a range of options to violence reduction strategies that go beyond the physical collection of weapons.⁽¹⁸⁾ The fundamental goal in DDR is to breakdown military formations and initiate reintegration to provide basic tools for former combatants to re-enter civilian life. Demilitarization is the key to peacebuilding but it is a highly

politically sensitive process. Hence it is a political exercise which demands political will of all parties concerned to succeed.

The Afghans themselves were keen on demilitarization. The first donor conference to fund DDR held two years after the Bonn conference in Tokyo in 2003 titled “Consolidation of Peace (DDR) in Afghanistan — Change of Order from Guns to Plows.”⁽¹⁹⁾ DDR was initiated in February 2003 with Japan as the lead nation (Japan had no prior experience in DDR except maybe rebuilding its own country after World War II). Implementation of the programme started in October 2003 through pilot projects and became national by May 2004. DDR had two main goals: to break the historical patriarchal chain of command existing between the former commanders and their men and to provide the demobilized personnel with the ability to become economically independent — the ultimate objective being to reinforce the authority of the government.

However, the DDR programme in Afghanistan was never mandated to disarm the population per se or provide direct employment but to assist militants in transition from military into civilian occupations.⁽²⁰⁾ The total amount of funding was \$141 million, out of which the lead donors, Japan and the US, committed \$91 million.⁽²¹⁾ It goes on record as being one of the most ambitious and expensive DDR programmes in history. It was named the “Afghan New Beginning Programme (ANBP)” project designed by the UNDP and was accompanied with Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) in 2004. The implementation of the ANBP was carried out by Japan and the UNDP.

The DDR process in Afghanistan was completed in July 2006 — in time and within costs (US\$ 141 million). In addition, as the reintegration phase was brought to an end, 25 per cent of the ex-combatants have found a long-term and sustainable activity.⁽²²⁾ The statistics shows a positive picture, but a few years later the insurgency was seen to be on the rise again.

There was a delay in the start of the DDR programme and as a result by 2006 the Taliban reignited the insurgency from their safe havens in the borderland tribal areas resulting in many illegal armed groups (IAGs) everywhere. A RAND study identified several groups of insurgents apart from the revitalized Taliban. They were the Hezb-i-Islami (HiG), the Haqqani network, foreign fighters and local tribes.⁽²³⁾ The RAND study by Seth G. Jones, also gives reasons for the re-emergence of the insurgency as the failure in building competent and legitimate Afghan security forces. The Afghan Police, which was corrupt, incompetent, under-resourced and loyal to local commanders than to the central government was one reason. Secondly, the local governance in the south and east was ignored for security reasons.

In 2006 the insurgent attacks included suicide bombings, a tactic previously not known in Afghanistan and late May 2006 was recorded as the deadliest week in the country in five years. The Taliban became strong in the provinces of Oruzgan, Helmand, Zabol and Kandahar. Resurgent Taliban, Al Qaeda and HiG insurgency appeared to be to force the US military to fight the war according to the “Taliban game plan.”⁽²⁴⁾

Mark Sedra attributes the failure of DDR to the lack of political will of the Afghan government, the donor community and the local power-brokers. The

key success to DDR would have been from the local ownership, and the programme should have been carried out by local government actors with the support and mentoring of external actors.⁽²⁵⁾ The Ministry of Defence resisted demobilization insisting on demobilization of the reserves than full-time soldiers and withdrew from the process fairly early. Sedra further says the design of the DDR was flawed with no comprehensive needs assessment nor effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism. The role of the United States too undermined the DDR when the US undercut the demilitarization activities in the mobilization of militia proxies in south and east to support its anti-Taliban operations.⁽²⁶⁾

Japan as the lead donor or lead nation (an arrangement that encouraged sector ownership, ensured commitment but the division of responsibility did not guarantee that donor strategies would be collaborative) undertook the DDR implementing a technically proficient programme with the UNDP with Tokyo having no prior experience in DDR activities. Though its ministry of foreign affairs says that the DDR in Afghanistan is successful it does not really elaborate and enlighten on the matter or talks of its DDR experience in Afghanistan.

Instead the second Tokyo conference congratulated all stakeholders on the completion of DDR in June 2006. The DDR programme disarmed 63,380 ex-combatants, demobilized 62,044 and provided reintegration programmes for 55,804 that also contributed to the creation of a new, unified and professional national army for Afghanistan. The conference paid special tribute to those Afghan and international stakeholders who had made great efforts for the success of the DDR programme. Among others, ANBP was particularly commended for the excellent service it had rendered in this regard.⁽²⁷⁾ It further examined the current status of implementation of the DIAG programme. The conference was not entirely satisfied with the progress made thus far and requested that Afghan and international stakeholders further enhance their efforts so that DIAG might be completed by the end of 2007. In particular, the conference stressed the need for robust engagement in the DIAG process by the Afghan security organizations, namely, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the National Directorate for Security.⁽²⁸⁾

The failure in DDR, deep ethnic tensions in the Afghan Army and American distraction of the Iraq war reignited the insurgency. In this backdrop the surge took place when newly elected US President Obama ordered 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan in late 2009.⁽²⁹⁾

It is worth noting that from the Japanese government's point of view their attempt at DDR in Afghanistan was not such a great success as the Japanese government and its taxpayers would have hoped for.⁽³⁰⁾ A young Japanese volunteer wrote that the reintegration through vocational training and community development projects overwhelmingly concentrated on children (back-to-school campaigns and school reconstruction) with little attention paid to the youth.⁽³¹⁾

Security sector reforms (SSR)

The five pillars of security sector reform (SSR) were managed by a lead donor country: Japan for DDR, the United States for training of the Afghan National Army (ANA), Germany for training the Afghan National Police (ANP), Italy for legal reform, and the United Kingdom for counternarcotics. ANA was created replacing the AMF which was formed at the fall of Taliban with a collection of factional militias on MoD payroll.

Although Afghanistan has a relatively long tradition of having a national army, it has a much longer tradition of tribal militias. The aim of ANA was to provide the central government with a loyal and professional armed force.

In the initial stages of the process, the AIA and the United States, as lead nation, needed to decide whether to build the new ANA from scratch or to build on some of the existing structures. This decision was postponed until September 2003 when they decided to commence the process from a “tabula rasa,” meaning that all structures from the MoD to the ground units were to be built from scratch.⁽³²⁾ The United States encountered recruiting problems, high absentees without leave, issues with ethnic balance, and poor unit discipline and quality. But by 2005 the ANA was emerging as a relative success.

By 2008 ANA had recruited nearly 79,000 soldiers, and the goal of 122,000 personnel plus an additional 12,000 in training, transient, holding, and student status seems possible, even if it is somewhat difficult.⁽³³⁾ An enduring concern is the ethnic makeup of the ANA. Developing an ethnically balanced army was one of the key goals of the training programme. After years of civil war and mistrust among various groups in Afghanistan, achieving an ethnic balance has been a significant challenge.⁽³⁴⁾ A priority is to get more recruits to ANA from the Pushtun-speaking parts of the south. The top leadership in ANA is currently heavy with northern Tajiks.

The people of Afghanistan view the army positively. While the overall perception of security has declined recently, the ANA is seen as a positive force in providing security. The perception of the police is, however, much less positive.

After years of training and other support offered by international sources, under German coordination and Indian training, by 2005 some 50,000 trained officers were inducted into the newly reconstructed ANP.⁽³⁵⁾ The training improved the quality of policing and the accompanying pay raise has helped boost their morale. However, shortage of professional administrators and keeping the corrupt factionalized police commanders in their posts are factors that have made the ANP a much less success compared to ANA. Hence the ANP is seen as less well trained, frequently corrupt and often guilty of human-rights abuses. In a survey done in 2009 it was estimated that 60 per cent of the ANP in Helmand province were drug addicts.⁽³⁶⁾

In his inaugural speech after his re-election in 2009, President Karzai emphasized the need for ANA and ANP taking up lead roles in providing security and stability. In the backdrop of drawdown and transition which started in 2011 with the withdrawal of 10,000 American troops and a further large

number expected to leave before the US presidential elections in late 2012, President Karzai sought a 10-year strategic partnership agreement with the United States and got it.⁽³⁷⁾

The Italian-led judicial reforms and the attempt to establish the rule of law in Afghanistan was another of the biggest challenges facing statebuilding efforts. The judiciary was destroyed in the 23 years of conflict and abuse of power. Instead of the rule of law, it was mostly the rule of the gun that prevailed. In practice, most disputes were settled by the *jirgas* (elders councils) using both local customs and Islamic Sharia as the sources of law. During the Taliban period it was rough justice for most people.

Therefore, in 2001 Afghanistan had only a handful of trained lawyers and little physical infrastructure with no record of country's law. Successive regimes imposed traditional, informal justice practices most of the time for political ends with no protection for the right of the individual to a fair trial. The challenges in rectifying the situation were enormous in the face of insecurity, rampant corruption and bribery and intimidation of judges and prosecutors.

The Bonn 2001 agreements saw to the establishment of independent commissions to oversee the rebuilding of the judiciary (Judicial Reforms Commission), drafting of the constitution (discussed above) and monitoring of human rights (Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, AIHRC). Unfortunately for the Judicial Reforms Commission, neither the Office of the Attorney General nor the Ministry of Justice want to cooperate with it. Judicial reforms also suffered from the Italian initiative depending on foreign experts unfamiliar with the Afghan context and its aim of modernizing the Afghan judiciary without due consideration paid to tribal and traditional institutions.

The process also suffered at the hands of Fazal Hadi Shinwari, the 80-year-old Islamic scholar who was Afghanistan's chief justice from 2001, reappointed by President Karzai in 2002 (despite the stipulated age of 60 laid down in the constitution) to serve until 2006. The International Crisis Group (ICG) reported in 2003 that Shinwari put all political allies in key positions expanding the number of Supreme Court judges from 9 to 137 with no proper educational qualifications. Since he was an ally of the Saudi-backed fundamentalist leader Abd-al-Rasul Sayyaf there was fear that the hardliners had taken over the judicial reforms before the people could express their will in a democratic process.⁽³⁸⁾

In a 2010 report the ICG had this to say: "Afghanistan's justice system is in a catastrophic state of disrepair. Despite repeated pledges over the last nine years, the majority of Afghans still have little or no access to judicial institutions. Lack of justice has destabilized the country and judicial institutions have withered to near non-existence. Many courts are inoperable and those that do function are understaffed. Insecurity, lack of proper training and low salaries has driven many judges and prosecutors from their jobs. Those who remain are highly susceptible to corruption. Indeed, there is very little that is systematic about the legal system, and there is little evidence that the Afghan government has the resources or political will to tackle the challenge. The public, consequently, has no confidence in the formal justice sector amid an atmosphere

of impunity.”⁽³⁹⁾ To date the progress in building the foundations of the rule of law has been disappointing. Most women lack access to justice and are still severely restricted by cultural norms.

In contrast to judicial reforms, the AIHRC has emerged as a strong national advocate for human rights of the people. It is the principal human rights body in Afghanistan. It works with the UNAMA. Though the Afghan parliament passed an amnesty law in 2007 preventing the prosecuting of past war crimes, the AIHRC continues its work as a strong national advocate for human rights with authority. It has worked to inform all government and non-government organizations, civil societies, and the national and local media about human rights and formally advocated human rights principles. In 2009, the AIHRC intensified its efforts to increase its overall effectiveness and impact in the protection, promotion and monitoring of human rights. As a result its four-year Strategic Plan (2009-2013) was developed.⁽⁴⁰⁾

Afghan economy

Afghanistan like its counterparts in South Asia is an agricultural country. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. There are two main challenges that are to blame for the failure in its agricultural economy. One is the weather, extreme drought conditions that result in poor harvest; and the other is opium poppy cultivation which had been difficult to eradicate despite the efforts of the British counternarcotics programme conducted under SSR spending \$180 million as the lead donor to eradicate the cultivation with the US, too, spending another \$120⁽⁴¹⁾ The concentration of effort has been on eradication with little input on establishing alternative livelihoods. The eradication programme had negative impacts when the reduced opium supply benefited the suppliers who profited more from higher prices. This fuelled the spread of cultivation.

The Afghan government has not yet been able to control the booming illicit agricultural economy based on harvesting opium poppies for the drug trade, with the profits financing the insurgency and violent extremism. Promoting the growth of legitimate agriculture would have positive effects including providing jobs, encouraging economic growth, and slowing the drug trade which now serves as a major source of funding for the Taliban.⁽⁴²⁾ At present it is the poppy cultivation and drug trafficking that constitute a large part of the country's economic activity. Afghanistan's illicit opium trade had an estimated value of \$2.8 billion in 2009, equivalent to one-quarter of its GDP.⁽⁴³⁾

The world's largest poppy production is in Afghanistan. Opium poppy is then refined to produce more potent heroin and morphine. The illegal drug economy is a complicating factor in statebuilding as the state institutions have neglected their responsibility by not providing security, border police within local administration. The nexus between drugs, insecurity, warlords, and weak government is a profound threat to sustainable peace.

The World Bank says that since 2002-03 the country has seen average growth rates in the double digits, but with great volatility because of its heavy reliance on agriculture. Even with an uncertain and deteriorating security

situation, strong output was driven by increased donor spending — a 24 per cent increase in core budget donor grants and about US\$ 4 billion in off-budget donor funding — and recovery from the severe drought of 2008-09. Last year's harvest led to agriculture output growth of 36 per cent (constant 2002-03 prices) and the non-agricultural component of 14 per cent. Afghanistan's real GDP growth in 2009-10 was at 22.5 per cent which was a record.⁽⁴⁴⁾

Though statistics paint a positive picture, the ground reality is contrasting. Many Afghans live on less than \$1.25 a day, and it is one of the two fragile states in South Asia and the poorest country outside Africa. Out of 187 countries in the HDI (Human Development Index) of the UNDP, Afghanistan ranked 172 in the low human development category in 2011.⁽⁴⁵⁾

Public finance which is taxing and spending activities of a government and their influence on the allocation of resources and distribution has been limited mainly to the external assistance given to Afghanistan since Bonn 2001. The Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority was created to track the flow of resources from donors to the government. The progress achieved in most aspects of public finance management so far is fragile and excessively dependent on unsustainable external capacity. A new central bank was established to oversee the monetary policy. One of the biggest challenges faced by the government is generating and self-sustaining the revenue levels.

Public finance suffers from the extremely low revenues and is a big concern. Afghanistan's revenue to gross domestic product (GDP) ratio (below 5 per cent) is one of the lowest in the world — it would be even lower if the opium economy were included in the GDP — well below half the level achieved by most poor countries. Only around 8 per cent of total budgetary spending is covered by domestic revenue. This constitutes a major constraint and liability for the country.⁽⁴⁶⁾

A taxation policy styled after the US system was introduced since Bonn 2001 but the tax collection system remains completely broken down. Though the tax laws are in existence, there is no proper enforcement where government could collect its revenues.

Challenge to democracy in 2009

The first cracks in the statebuilding venture appeared in the presidential election of 2009 which was marked in contrast with the 2004 presidential election. The first problem that popped up was the date of the election. The date that should have been in May 2009 but was postponed by the IEC in view of the resurgence of Taliban terrorist activities and the security risk provoked controversy. The IEC therefore fixed the election date to 20 August 2009, a few months after the expiry of President Karzai's term, though constitutionally it should have been 60 days before the end of the five-year term. The Supreme Court extended Karzai's term until a new leader got elected. The next issue that arose was that all the Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran were facilitated to vote in the 2004 election while in 2009 the IEC failed to make that arrangement citing lack of funding as a reason. The new Constitution stipulates that the winning candidate should have more than 50 per cent of the vote.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Hence the

absence of the refugee vote would make an impact on the outcome, it was argued.

The Independent Election Commission noted that there were 17 million registered voters.⁽⁴⁸⁾ The major parties were: the National United Front of Afghanistan (UNF); National Democratic Front (NDF); Payman-e-Kabul, comprising former Leftist and Maoist groups, and the Afghan Social Democratic Party (Afghan Mellat). It may be correct to assume that the main objective of most of these parties was to strengthen democracy. According to IEC there were 44 candidates.⁽⁴⁹⁾ The top two were Hamid Karzai and Dr. Abdullah Abdullah.

Both Karzai and Abdullah claimed victory having obtained 50 per cent of the vote. There were allegations and counter-allegations of vote rigging, fake polling stations where no one voted and other fraudulent activities. As a result a serious crisis developed and with allegations and complaints mounting the international actors had no option but to get involved to avert a disaster in the newfound democracy. Hotline diplomacy got started between the US and Afghanistan and the UK and Afghanistan and there were visits by American and French top diplomats who met the two leaders and at the end it was decided to go for a run-off in November 2009 considering substantiated proofs of fraudulent conduct of the polls.

On 1 November, Dr. Abdullah withdrew from the run-off leading to IEC cancelling the run-off and declaring Hamid Karzai President for the second time. Abdullah's announcement threw the election into disarray, with some analysts describing the situation as "a shocking failure" of efforts by the west and other international communities to build a democracy in Afghanistan.⁽⁵⁰⁾ Going from bad to worse, the parliamentary election the following year was also hit by a fraud and irregularity crisis. President Karzai has insisted that he would not run for presidency in 2014. So as Roland Paris says the rapid liberalization without adequate attention to the building of effective institutions is a risky strategy. In Afghanistan the efforts in this direction remain relatively insubstantial.⁽⁵¹⁾

‘Exit Afghanistan’ plan

In the list of agents of peacebuilding Roland Paris names the world's leading international organizations. He also says that almost all are predisposed to adopt strategies promoting liberal market democracy as a remedy for conflict. One such is the NATO which in 1992 decided to reorient its activities to support conflict resolution and in 1994 established the "Partnership for Peace" programme.⁽⁵²⁾ The Washington Summit in 1999 established the "new" NATO capable of operating beyond the European theatre to combat emerging threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Afghanistan is NATO's first "out of area" mission beyond the European theatre. Its mandate in Afghanistan was stabilization and reconstruction. In the pursuit of that objective it leads the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) which at present comprises 130,000 soldiers of whom 90,000 are American.⁽⁵³⁾ The huge American military presence created suspicion among the Muslim fundamentalists and also in Iran which has its own problems with that country.

Hence when the insurgency resurged midway through the statebuilding for peace process many NATO members had doubts and worries over the security of their troops. At the same time the economic crisis that struck the US and Europe also saw the public turning away from international commitments to demand their governments to solve the immediate problems of finances at home. President Obama made two statements in March and December 2009 to say that there would be a boost in American troops in Afghanistan but he also mentioned in December 2009 that the US would also start withdrawing its troops in 2011. The Dutch troops were the first to quit Afghanistan in August 2010.

Just before that in July 2010 Wikileaks published thousands of classified US military documents relating to Afghanistan. A new NATO commander, General David Petraeus, was appointed.

To discuss the exit plan for ISAF/NATO a conference was held in Kabul on 20 July 2010. Dubbed the “Kabul Process,” the international conference discussed the future of Afghanistan setting the date for exit in 2014. The communiqué issued on the conference stipulates that the Afghan government would take over the full responsibility for country’s security by the end of 2014.⁽⁵⁴⁾ The conference was the critical stepping stone of the “Kabul Process” of transition to full Afghan leadership and responsibility.

Next, the discussion on the future of Afghanistan in a regional setting took place in Istanbul, Turkey, on 2 November 2011 titled the “Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for a Secure and Stable Afghanistan.” The countries that called themselves the “Heart of Asia”⁽⁵⁵⁾ took part in the conference. The US and other Bonn signatories welcomed the declaration of the Istanbul process which supported the transition of responsibilities for providing security in Afghanistan from ISAF/NATO to ANSF in the framework of the “Kabul Process,” and remained convinced that progress to be made between now and 2014 when transition will be completed.⁽⁵⁶⁾

NATO’s heads of states, who met in a Lisbon summit on 20 November 2011 to discuss NATO’s future course, took up the issue of strategy and transfer of security responsibilities to Afghan forces and confirmation of withdrawal in 2014. The Lisbon summit declaration, paragraph 4, recorded that “the process of transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership in some provinces and districts is on track to begin in early 2011, following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision. Transition will be conditions-based, not calendar-driven, and will not equate to withdrawal of ISAF troops. Looking to the end of 2014, Afghan forces will be assuming full responsibility for security across the whole of Afghanistan.”⁽⁵⁷⁾

In this backdrop the Bonn 2011 was held in December, almost a decade after the first. The conference aim was to commit the international community’s support to Afghanistan after 2014 in a number of areas including prevention of violence from reaching intolerable levels again, to help the government develop its capacity to provide the services that its citizens depend on, in particular a less corrupt and more efficient system of administering justice, to create scope for economic progress including exploitation of the country’s plentiful mineral and energy resources and, finally, to send a clear message to Afghanistan’s

neighbours that the country is not going to be abandoned as happened in the past.⁽⁵⁸⁾

Prior to the conference some incidents that occurred (as mentioned in the introduction) severely strained the relations between the US and Pakistan, its friend and ally in South Asia. Therefore Pakistan boycotted the Bonn 2011. The Americans also invited the Taliban for talks about opening of an office in Qatar with no indication of this to Pakistan which supported the US war on terror in Afghanistan.

The year 2012 started with rapid deterioration of trust between NATO/ISAF forces and the Afghan people. Among many incidents that contributed to this situation was the incident of burning of the Quran at the Bagram airfield in February, killing of American advisers in a joint-command centre at the interior ministry, the killing of 16 Afghans that included nine children by an American soldier who went on a murderous rampage in Kandahar (the incident was reminiscent of the My-Lai massacre in Vietnam) resulted in Taliban suspending their talks on 15 March⁽⁵⁹⁾ and President Karzai calling for NATO-led forces to keep out of Afghan villages.⁽⁶⁰⁾

So despite the NATO's Lisbon statement on a conditions-based rather than a calendar-driven drawdown or the Bonn 2011 commitment on not abandoning Afghanistan like before (meaning after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989) it looks that the NATO is now stepping up the withdrawal of its troops in view of the violence that is taking place as well as the forthcoming presidential election in the US. The feeling in NATO countries is that Afghanistan is a hopeless case, too dangerous to help. The feeling in South Asia is that it is the liberal peacebuilding that does not work but there is hope for hybrid peace in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

In the exercise of Afghan nationally-led statebuilding for peace with great hopes for South Asia, the western countries ventured into Afghanistan by committing large amounts of aid with great hopes in one of the biggest statebuilding exercises for peace in world history with \$286.4 billion investment by 2010.⁽⁶¹⁾ External assistance became the main source of income in post-Taliban Afghanistan but the large-scale corruption at almost all levels of government, the tribal rivalries, militia groups, warlords and the centuries old opium economy were the challenges that the donors did not easily understand.

As Roland Paris notes, a more sensible approach to post-conflict peacebuilding would seek, first, to establish a system of domestic institutions that are capable of managing the destabilizing effects of democratization and marketization within peaceful bounds and, second, to phase in political and economic reforms slowly over time, as conditions warrant. To do this effectively, international peacebuilders will have to abandon the notion that war-shattered states can be hurriedly rehabilitated.⁽⁶²⁾

Yet development goals of education, health sector reforms, establishing democratic form of government all were readily welcomed by the Afghan people. In the process media freedom and television have now become a part of

life. Women became free once again to access education, and taking part in policy-making and in running government. Therefore the fading hope for democracy is not because the Afghan people themselves were not genuine in their quest for peace but rather a case of trust being broken. Among the Afghans there is determination to avoid a relapse into civil war. A big test will be in 2014 to see whether President Karzai will keep his promise not to run for presidency.

The US and its western allies rushed into Afghanistan; similarly, now they are rushing out of it; the NATO is not very clear on its strategy anymore except that American, British and French leaders are keen to point out that an end to their commitment to Afghanistan is in sight. Now it is time for Afghanistan's neighbours to take the necessary steps to build sustainable peace in that country. In this context Pakistan will have a major role to play in future statebuilding ventures for peace in Afghanistan. It is necessary for peace and stability of Pakistan too.

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