

Issues Paper Series

Strategic Coordination in Afghanistan



Nicholas Stockton



Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit

August 2002

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Funding for this study
was provided by the
European Commission
Humanitarian Aid Office.

August 2002

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This issues paper was prepared by independent consultants with no previous involvement in the activities evaluated. The views and opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the views of the AREU.

About the Author

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About the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU)

The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) is an independent research institution that conducts and facilitates quality, action-oriented research and analysis to inform policy, improve practice and increase the impact of humanitarian and development programmes in Afghanistan. It was established by the assistance community working in Afghanistan and has a management board with representation from donors, UN agencies and NGOs.

Fundamental to AREU's purpose is the belief that its work should make a difference in the lives of Afghans. AREU is the only humanitarian and development research centre headquartered in Afghanistan. This unique vantage point allows the unit to both produce valuable research and ensure that its findings become integrated into the processes of change taking place on the ground.

Current funding for the AREU has been provided by the European Commission (EC) and the governments of the Netherlands and Switzerland. Funding for this study was provided by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO).

Acknowledgements

I am beholden to all the staff of the AREU for their quite outstanding support, and in particular to Andrew Wilder for sharing his knowledge, wisdom and contacts. This study also owes much to a long friendship and education provided by Antonio Donini and Norah Niland, although they may not thank me for expressing that debt. Mark Duffield has been a constant although distant critic without whom this study would have plumbed even greater depths of banality. As a member of the “headquarters team” under Hugh Cholmondeley’s leadership, I was sent to facilitate the Afghanistan Strategic Framework process in 1997. This present study has provided me with an opportunity to reconsider that initiative in the light of the experience of those left to struggle with it long after the rest of us returned to the relative tranquillity of jobs where strategic coordination is someone else’s problem. It has been a salutary experience, and one which convinces me that the richness of Cholmondeley’s vision has yet to be fully realized. Tragically, Mrs Abdi’s trust in the “system” remains unrequited. Others who provided vital assistance, crucial information and important insights are too many to be named individually, but without their help this study would have been impossible, and I thank them all. Of course while I might be tempted to blame others for its failings, final responsibility for the contents of this report rest entirely with the author.

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Executive Summary

This study was prompted by the proliferation and growing complexity of the arrangements to coordinate aid for Afghanistan in the wake of the Bonn Agreement, the creation of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, (UNAMA) the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul, and the establishment of the Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority (ACA) by the Afghanistan Interim Administration (AIA). In addition, the deployment in Afghanistan of the Coalition Joint Civil/Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF), and the arrival of many new actors such as the World Bank, has added to the crush of more recently arrived non-government organisations (NGOs), donors and private sector organisations. The purpose of the study, as discussed in Section 1 below, is to identify issues relating to the “strategic coordination” of the international assistance effort for Afghanistan at a relatively early stage in its renewal and expansion. The study is based upon consultations with more than 70 people, carried out in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States during April and May 2002.

The methodological and conceptual problems encountered in the course of the study are described in Section 2. As this study does not purport to be an evaluation of either the impact of international assistance or of the process of coordination, objective verification of the often contrary views of the effectiveness of the assistance effort has not been attempted. However, it is clear that opinion was divided about what the strategy for international assistance actually is. There are also unresolved arguments about what it should be, and what it is capable of achieving. Likewise, there were widely differing views expressed about the effectiveness of strategic coordination, although many observed that it was too early in the lives of UNAMA and the AIA and its successors, to make a fair judgement. The study took place at a time of rapid change associated with the abolition of the former aid coordination architecture, and of growth following the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan (also known as the Tokyo Ministerial Meeting). Whether the major aid institutions are merely exhibiting superficial, chameleon-like adaptive characteristics or a more profound phoenix-like transformation is therefore yet to be determined. Nevertheless, the common incidence of inter-

agency and inter-personal fractiousness does give cause for concern as it can not bode well in terms of the extra demands that it must place upon already overworked personnel. In addition, at the time of this study, there was still no mechanism in place for making reasonably objective judgements about the strategic impact of the international assistance strategy. This suggests that the system is unlikely to learn strategic lessons as it proceeds.

In Section 3, it is noted that there are a multiplicity of strategies being pursued by various foreign governments, donors, NGOs and multi-lateral agencies in Afghanistan, not necessarily all sharing coherent or even complementary objectives. Therefore, the strategic coordination of international assistance is about the attempt to bring greater coherence and complementarity to quite literally hundreds of different strategies, every one of which is being pursued by a largely independent entity. This contrasts with the classical notion of strategic coordination where a single strategy is supported by a set of operations, each one managed within the framework of an integrated management hierarchy. The study therefore challenges the view that strategic coordination, which must attempt to encompass the whole strategic diversity of the international assistance effort, is in fact an achievable outcome. The brief review of the strategic coordination literature argues that the conventional definition of strategic humanitarian coordination does not recognise the possibility of irreconcilable assistance strategies and also misleadingly proposes that an “element of discipline” can be injected into the coordination function. It also fails to acknowledge that investment in coordination must be subject to diminishing returns, and that it is therefore sensible to judge the point at which too much effort is being put into coordination. This is clearly necessary because a coordinated outcome for international assistance can never be guaranteed on the one hand, and because the opportunity costs of wasted effort and resources can be equated with human welfare benefits foregone on the other. Furthermore, by appearing to assume that strategic coordination as an end can be achieved through the process of harmonising international assistance strategies, the international assistance community also risks being held to account for matters over which it has no control.

It was as impractical for this study to analyse every national and organisational strategy as it is impossible to coordinate them all. For this reason, and in recognition of the high priority given to Afghanistan by the UN Security Council, its policies are analysed in section 4 because they represent the most credible proxy for the strategic objectives of the international community. Section 4 begins with a brief summary of the essential elements of the relevant Security Council resolutions, which are then compared with the international assistance strategies described by the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme (ITAP), Pillar Two of UNAMA and the National Development Framework (NDF) of the AIA. While the strategic objectives of these entities are largely consistent with each other, the conditions attached by the Security Council to the provision of international assistance are not reflected in the respective strategies of ITAP, UNAMA and the AACA. It is also noted that critical differences exist between these actors concerning the status of humanitarian assistance, human rights and gender policy. This section concludes with an elaboration of the key assumptions upon which the international assistance strategy rests. In terms of substantive programme policy, a model of “aid-induced pacification”, reinforced by Security Council imposed human rights and security conditions, is the main distinguishing feature of the strategy for international assistance. For the United Nations, it is noted that a structural approach to improve effectiveness has again been adopted as the principal change management strategy in the establishment of UNAMA.

In Section 5, the strategic coordination issues that were raised in the course of the interviews are summarised. While it is impossible to be certain whether these reflect an unusually high degree of dissatisfaction about coordination on the part of most interviewees, or whether it reflects the especially complex and trying context in which assistance is being delivered, it is nevertheless clear that the assistance effort is perceived by those involved in it to be characterised by internal argumentation, inter-agency rivalry, weak cooperation and strategic disarray. Overall, some 19 strategic coordination issues, reported in the course of the interviews are presented. While this study is not able to verify the validity or seriousness of these issues, they present an important agenda for further analysis because they were raised by actors who are relatively well informed and close to the strategic heart of the assistance effort. This list is therefore in essence a critical mirror reflecting

deep, varied and in many cases troubling concerns expressed by those designing or delivering aid for Afghanistan. It is recommended that the performance of the international assistance effort is evaluated with regard to these strategic issues. A modified version of the multi-agency evaluation of the 1994 Rwanda crisis would serve as a useful model.

It is acknowledged in Section 6 that the failure to deploy ISAF beyond Kabul may ultimately undermine the most important working assumption of the international assistance effort, although this is a failure of political will rather than a matter concerning strategic coordination. The remaining part of this section discusses seven strategic issues in more detail and makes recommendations for their resolution. In summary these are:

1. Building “strategic” alliances. The study concludes that the actual lack of authority of the United Nations system over donors, NGOs and the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) will almost inevitably mean that the UNAMA reforms, which confer considerable notional powers upon the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), will have little real impact over the outcome of the strategic coordination process. In fact, this approach might even make matters worse through provoking suspicions that one of UNAMA’s purposes is the manipulation of humanitarian agencies for political ends, and by encouraging fears that it is attempting to undermine the independence of NGOs. In reality, the remit of the SRSG’s legal authority does not extend very far even within the UN system, and therefore the attempt to practice “coordination by command” is futile, distracting from the more important task of building voluntary and consensual strategic alliances between “like-minded” nations and agencies.

Instead, the coordination arrangements as practiced appear to generate dysfunctional inter-agency transaction costs, especially with regard to the integration of humanitarian and political objectives into the remit of a single assistance coordination structure. This creates inter-agency gridlock in coordination processes, to the detriment of all concerned and probably at some cost to public welfare objectives in Afghanistan. Thus, less coordination rather than more is indicated, and the disaggregation of coordination arrangements, at least for the humanitarian and the political components, would help to reduce “value-subtracting” transaction costs.

- a. UNAMA and the AIA/ATA should adopt a new strategic approach, based upon a combination of a compelling strategic argument and the identification of strategically like-minded UN agencies, NGOs and donors, organised through the principle of voluntary complementarity rather than structurally imposed integration. To begin with, UNAMA and the AIA/ATA should distinguish between the humanitarian agencies that wish to remain politically on the fence or are obliged to be neutral by mandate, and those which are willing and able to support the political/peace-building strategy, and then pursue strategic coordination with these two groups through separate processes.
- b. The ambiguous position of the World Bank should be resolved. By statute the World Bank is obliged to be non-political, but in Afghanistan it will implement what is perhaps the most politicised of any of the international aid programmes. Officially in denial of having political objectives, the World Bank is thus constrained as a player within any formal strategic coordination process, to the frequent consternation of others. To a lesser degree perhaps, this argument also applies to UNHCR and WFP. If these institutions continue to be formally prevented from undertaking political tasks, then they should not be funded for such purposes.
- c. Strategic coordination efforts should focus upon the ten to twenty percent political additionality that could be crafted by the agencies, NGOs and donors, instead of pursuing vain attempts to convert all assistance organisations to support the political/peace-building agenda.
- d. The label “NGO” disguises enormous institutional diversity in terms of scale, objectives and governance arrangements. ATA/AACA, UN and donors should redirect the management energy currently being wasted in anguished debate about how to “control the NGOs,” towards a more effective process of inter-agency cooperation based upon strategically critical characteristics such as size, reach and function.
2. Communications - a strategic vacuum. UNAMA’s lack of a genuine communications strategy leaves a serious vacuum in this mission-critical policy dimension. In the vacuum, donors and agencies seek to enhance their domestic profiles, inadvertently raising unrealistic public expectations in Afghanistan about the peace-dividend. This is counter-productive of the political strategy of UNAMA, which is expected to build public confidence and support for the peace process, in part, through the contribution of international assistance in the provision of public goods and services. Furthermore, as public opinion is not systematically consulted or polled, international assistance programmes are more often than not based upon flimsy hypotheses concerning the political utility of particular aid priorities, or upon “business as usual” supply-side aid agency behaviour.
- a. UNAMA should invest in the full range of modern political tools to support its strategy. Most obviously, the international aid effort requires a genuine communications strategy (instead of just a public relations policy) which is capable of distilling public opinion, measuring attitude trends and identifying popular priorities drawn from realistic policy options.
- b. Donor governments should draw from their domestic political expertise (for example, in the technique of focus group research methods) to enhance the capacity of UNAMA and the AIA/ATA to understand and respond to public opinion in the formation of international assistance and national development strategies.
- c. A study of the political/peace-building utility and disutility of agency/donor signboards, mounted in great profusion upon every object that can be construed of as a product of assistance, should be carried out with some urgency.
3. Transition from *de jure* to *de facto* government coordination. It is noted that the key strategic objective of transferring authority to the AIA/ATA is a highly complex process. However, the absence of a realistic timetable for the AIA/ATA to acquire the necessary capacity to exercise *de facto* authority allows the misleading impression that the effective exercise of authority is simply a matter of a *de jure* decree. The confusion and ill will concerning this matter is probably due in large part to the absence of a comprehensive and realistic organisational development plan for the transition process, rather than the manifestation of a more fundamental conflict of interests with some agencies.

- a. A comprehensive organisational development plan for the transition process, disaggregated by function and geography, should be developed.
 - b. Simple critical success indicators of capacity building targets, appropriate human resource standards, and vital events or milestones should be negotiated with all the relevant parties.
 - c. The organisational development plan, the capacity-building targets and human resource standards adopted for the transition process should be genuinely transparent. This quality will not be achieved through the use of the internet alone. Much more accessible communication channels need to be used.
 - d. The process of transition should allow for some degree of flexibility and, with regard to certain strategically vital activities, it should be conditional upon agreed levels of capacity being acquired by the AIA/ATA, and reversible in the light of unexpected events that significantly reduces capacity below an agreed critical mass.
4. Human rights and aid conditionalities. The consternation generated by the contrary positions of the Security Council and UNAMA regarding aid conditionalities is having an especially deleterious effect on the credibility of both, and perhaps upon the protection of human rights in Afghanistan too. The confusion concerning the human rights monitoring arrangements and lack of progress on the establishment of the Independent Human Rights Commission warrants urgent attention.
- a. The UN Security Council and UNAMA should clarify their strategies on human rights and aid conditionalities. It is quite conceivable that there may be irreconcilable differences between the Security Council and UNAMA, and between UN agencies, donors, NGOs and the AIA/ATA. It is better that these are acknowledged and then managed on an “agree to disagree” basis, than to allow critical amounts of senior management time to be swallowed up in the politics allowed by the current confusion.
 - b. The independence of the Human Rights Commission should be reviewed. If it is to be in fact a government led commission, it is inappropriate for it to be called “independent”. If instead the spirit of the Bonn Agreement is to be upheld, the composition of the Commission needs reconsidering and adequate international support should be availed rapidly.
 - c. The human rights monitoring arrangements are confused and unsatisfactory. The decision to place the human rights monitoring function in Pillar One, reporting to the SRSG’s office should be reviewed. The possibility of merging the two monitoring capacities under a revitalised and genuinely independent Human Rights Commission should be considered.
5. Gender policy confusion. There is a significant difference between the gender policies described in the NDF and those contained in the Pillar Two Management Plan. Policies that promote gender equity are likely to produce very different outcomes from those just pursuing gender sensitivity. It is not clear how the NDF and the UNAMA policies are meant to be applied, nor how far these are negotiable. A process that can resolve these differences where possible, and manage disagreements where not, is required.
- a. A strategic gender policy review should be conducted jointly by the ATA, AACA and UNAMA with donor, IFI and NGO participation. This should also seek to promote a well informed public debate and involve a more systematic sampling of public opinion on the issue of gender based rights and gender-sensitive public policies.
 - b. While opinions may vary sharply about strategic policy options, the obligations of the ATA in terms of its treaty obligations, perhaps particularly regarding the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), should be used a benchmark for policy development and in coordinating the international aid effort.
6. Humanitarian issues. The policy confusion concerning the political status and utility of humanitarian assistance needs resolving. The Security Council’s recognition of the requirement that humanitarian aid is provided on an impartial basis of need stands in contrast to the policy of the National Development Framework which implies that humanitarian aid should be contingent upon its contribution to an over-riding political objective. The adoption of humanitarian language and other humanitarian symbols by the Coalition civil/military operation (CIMIC) may also be

generating new threats for the humanitarian agencies.

- a. The ATA/AACA should concur with the principle that humanitarian assistance is given solely on the basis of need (and in accordance with the other Red Cross principles) in the revised NDF.
 - b. UNAMA/AACA should establish a separate humanitarian coordination mechanism, the sole strategic objective of which would be to prevent excess morbidity and mortality. Some mutually agreed forums for information exchange between humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors should be continued.
 - c. The adoption by CJCMOTF of the language and the symbols of conventional humanitarian actors should be ended forthwith. CJCMOTF's "hearts and minds" and ISAF's "force protection" objectives can be pursued with equal effect without recourse to the use of civilian, humanitarian trappings.
7. The "light footprint". The policy of the "light footprint" confuses operational means with strategic ends, and has become a damaging, albeit well-intentioned, hostage to fortune.
- a. The light footprint policy should be demoted from its status as a UN strategic objective to and re-designated as an operational

guideline. In spite of this well-intentioned and much-needed initiative to control agency management costs, it should still be acknowledged that there are yet no objective standards for measuring the "weight of institutional footprints."

- b. However, transparency concerning the costs of management and coordination should be adopted as a reporting principle by all assistance organisations.
- c. A management system and culture that rewards organisational development policies that promote achievement over effort, and management information over data, should be encouraged as an alternative to the "light footprint" policy.

Finally, it is argued that most studies of strategic coordination have suffered from their use of a "standard" definition of coordination that erroneously assumes common strategic objectives on the part of all aid organisations, and which fails to recognise that coordination has a cost, which is, in effect, a levy upon the extremely scarce resources allocated to the poorest and most desperate people in the world. It is recommended that a thorough evaluation of the strategy of "aid-induced pacification" and a study of the costs as well as the benefits of aid coordination in Afghanistan should take place.

“While it is expected that the Government will further consolidate its position in the months ahead, it is critical that key projects in those parts of the country that are peaceful receive assistance immediately, in the expectation that economic stability will contribute to political stability”

*David E Lockwood
Resident Coordinator
United Nations, Kabul
25 October, 1993*

“Implementation should commence whenever and wherever possible, in as many regions as possible without further delay. Rehabilitation work would itself enhance and accelerate efforts to normalise and stabilise national security.”¹

United Nations Development Programme, 1993

1. Introduction

These words, written by a former head of the United Nations in Afghanistan, might well have been produced in 2002 to summarise the ambitious strategy of the international assistance effort, and its implicit working hypothesis of “aid-induced peace-building.” In the past six months, Afghanistan has been subjected to more externally commissioned academic, journalistic and aid-driven investigations, than probably at any time in its history. Yet, in spite of this flurry of research, appraisal and evaluation activities, and the unprecedented international interest in Afghanistan, there is still a tendency towards being trapped in the eternal present, a condition David Keen once memorably ascribed to the humanitarian aid effort in Africa.² There have been at least two major UN peace-building initiatives in Afghanistan since the end of the Soviet occupation.³ By the very existence of this third one, one can but assume that the two previous peace-building strategies must have failed, or perhaps more fairly, have been insufficiently successful. Yet, what is remarkable is that the current strategy of the international aid system and the coordination arrangements put in place to deliver its programmes are little

different from its predecessors. Of course the context has changed, most notably in terms of the intervention of the United States-led Coalition Military force, and the deployment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Kabul. However the basic policy instruments of the international assistance effort in Afghanistan are otherwise arrayed in the familiar form of diplomatic, humanitarian, human rights and development agencies. If they are to triumph on this occasion through making a demonstrably significant strategic contribution to the building of a just, prospering and sustainable peace in Afghanistan, then effective strategic coordination is likely to have played a key part. This study was prompted by the concern that excessive coordination processes might be getting in the way of, rather than promoting efficient strategic coordination of international assistance in Afghanistan. The research, undertaken at an early stage in the history of the new United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), has been commissioned by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) and made possible by the support of the European Commission Humanitarian Office (ECHO).

¹ UNDP 1993, *Afghanistan Rehabilitation Strategy: Action Plan for Immediate Rehabilitation*, Vol. 1, Executive Summary.

² David Keen, *The Benefits of Famine: the Political Economy of Famine in South-Western Sudan, 1985-1988*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

³ See the *Afghanistan Rehabilitation Strategy*; and *United Nations Strategic Framework for Afghanistan: Toward a Principled Approach to Peace and Reconstruction* (New York: United Nations, 1998).

2. Methodology

AREU, the successor to the Strategic Monitoring Unit (SMU), commissioned this study on strategic coordination of assistance efforts in Afghanistan. The task was to “prepare an issues paper.... that documents and analyzes the current coordination situation, draws out key lessons and conclusions, highlights initiatives and “best practice” examples to build on, makes recommendations for policy makers, and stimulates debate.”⁴ The study is based mainly upon interviews and discussions held with some 70 persons variously from the UN, aid donor countries, the Afghanistan Interim Administration (AIA), the ISAF, the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) and non-government organisations (NGOs).⁵ In addition, numerous documents provided by AREU and by many of the interviewees provided the basis for the more formal description of the context and organisational landscape upon which the subsequent analysis rests.⁶ The study is therefore intended to be a kind of annotated “snapshot” of the situation as it prevailed in April/May 2002 during which the author visited Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Islamabad, New York and Washington, D.C.. While I had privileged access to many of the key actors involved in the provision of international assistance to Afghanistan, and, in almost all cases, frank responses to my questions, the report needs to be read with some caution for at least four reasons.

2.1 The photographic analogy used above may give the misleading impression of an undisputed and singular “truth” revealed by the study. In reality, the author has had to contend with a wide range of often very sharply differing opinions about strategic coordination, both in generic terms and specifically with regard to Afghanistan. Of course, all realities are, in a sense, socially

constructed, and the degree to which this study captures any objective reality must remain open to question. It depicts, as faithfully as the author could manage, a complex reality fabricated from many diverse and often conflicting perceptions. Arguably, the picture that emerges becomes more

Whether the major aid institutions are merely exhibiting superficial chameleon-like adaptive characteristics or a more profound phoenix-like transformation is perhaps the most critical issue of all.

three dimensional, more “real”, when seen from this multiplicity of perspectives, even though the individual accounts may have little in common. If the report serves any purpose at all, it will do so mainly

through allowing the readers from the main constituencies of the international aid system to obtain a glimpse of themselves from the perspective of some of the other principal actors.

2.2 This study is neither an evaluation of strategic coordination, nor of international assistance to Afghanistan. Such an undertaking would be both premature and, for a single researcher working within a 4-5 week remit, quite impossible to fulfil.⁷ Furthermore, the strategic context in Afghanistan would appear to be highly dynamic, if not unstable, and the institutional adaptations, at least at the formal level and especially within the UN system and the AIA/Afghanistan Transitional Administration (ATA), means that it is a study of several rapidly and independently moving targets.⁸ Whether the major aid institutions are merely exhibiting superficial, chameleon-like adaptive characteristics or a more profound phoenix-like transformation is perhaps the most critical issue of all. In one of my final interviews in Afghanistan, a highly influential senior official in the AIA expressed the view that after fifty years of mixed fortunes and achievements, the international aid system is embroiled in a profound crisis of confidence. Therefore, perhaps Afghanistan is more important as a “last chance” opportunity for the international

⁴ The full terms of reference can be found in Appendix A.

⁵ A list of interviewees can be found in Appendix B.

⁶ Much of the background documentation for this study was collected and summarised by Kathleen Campbell in *The A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance*, (Kabul: AREU, 2002).

⁷ The most common judgement upon strategic coordination ventured by interviewees was that “it is too early to tell.”

⁸ For example, between the short period when the terms of reference for the study were finalised and the arrival of the author in Kabul, several coordination bodies and instruments designated as objects of the study; such as the Afghanistan Programming Body (APB), the APB Standing Committee, the Regional Coordination Bodies (RCBs), and the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG) had reportedly been abolished, transformed or were in the process of being “folded” into other groups.

aid institutions than international aid is for the future of Afghanistan. However, while the jury is still out in terms of any final verdict about the efficacy of international aid in delivering either to the new security agenda or to its long-standing poverty eradication objectives, it may be that such judgements will soon be made and that its performance in Afghanistan might constitute a significant part of the determining evidence. Following the demise of the architecture of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan, the absence of any objective strategic monitoring capacity in the new aid coordination arrangements is all the more surprising.

Perhaps Afghanistan is more important as a “last chance” opportunity for the international aid institutions than international aid is for the future of Afghanistan.

2.3 Much is contested in Afghanistan, and the meaning of the term “strategic coordination” is no exception. If there is any consensus, it is probably only to the point of agreeing that it is an imprecise concept. For aid officials with a long involvement in Afghanistan, a discussion about strategic coordination is not entered into without the baggage of a politically controversial history.⁹ This creates considerable room for misunderstandings, for misapprehensions and, most problematically from a researcher’s point of view, for politicking, thereby adding an additional layer of atmospherics for the analysis to penetrate. Taken at face value, one might have concluded rather early on in the research process that cut-throat inter-agency rivalry is the primary driving force that conditions the behaviour and attitudes of aid officials. A weakness of this single-case study is that it can make no direct comparative judgement about the degree to which this dynamic departs from the norm. However, on the basis of other studies and the author’s prior experience elsewhere, it is probably fair to state that inter-agency rivalry typically follows a seasonal pattern, with increased competitiveness and inter-agency tension during the principal fund-raising and resource allocation exercises (the “mating” season, as it were), followed by a more equable period of programme implementation.¹⁰ It was perhaps unfortunate therefore that the study coincided with the immediate aftermath of two key events. The first, the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan, (also known as the Tokyo Ministerial Meeting), took

place in January, during which donors pledged US \$4.1 billion (\$1.8b for 2002). In July, much of this was still awaiting allocation to the agencies.

The second event was the Security Council Resolution 1401 of 28 March 2002, which established UNAMA and provided for an unusually high degree of authority for the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General (SRSG) over all UN activities in Afghanistan.¹¹ This was intended to subject the UN agencies in Afghanistan to increased formal control under the SRSG. The detailed implications and consequences of Resolution 1401 were being intensively negotiated and speculated about during the period of research. Much, both in terms of authority and funds, was up for grabs, and perhaps this does account for some of the more vituperative inter-agency criticism heard in the course of the study. In the final analysis, at least for this piece of research, it is reasonable to assume that the private lambasting of agency peers to an independent researcher is one part posture, one part therapy and only one part substance. However, this general tendency to disputatiousness frequently clouded the very heart of the study matter, and while it may be the case that inter-agency rivalries always peak during planning and resource allocation processes, the discord generated must surely bode ill for the effective and efficient practice of strategic coordination.

2.4 Finally, and perhaps most critically, I am aware that this study is very prone to the ethnocentricity of the international aid system. This is reflected in the fact that the great majority of interviewees were not Afghans, and those Afghans I did speak to have become used to dealing with and perhaps acculturated by the international aid agencies. The study therefore is built mainly upon the perceptions of expatriate aid agency officials who have a tendency to place the aid community at or very near to the centre of events. This leads to an over-estimation of the strategic significance of aid and contributes to the sense that the assistance community is less in touch with the aspirations of ordinary Afghans than it should be, for its own, as well as for Afghanistan’s good.

⁹ For an excellent overview of the history of coordination arrangements in Afghanistan see Mark Duffield, Patricia Gossman and Nicholas Leader, *Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan*, (Kabul: AREU, 2002).

¹⁰ Nicola Reindorp and Peter Wiles, *Humanitarian Coordination: Lessons From Recent Field Experience*, (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2001).

¹¹ See Appendix C for the full text of the resolution.

3. Defining Terms: “Strategic Coordination” and “International Assistance”

Early on in this study, it became evident that the rather neat sounding phrase, “the strategic coordination of international assistance,” is actually highly problematic as an analytical device. There is no standard usage, either for the phrase as a whole, or for any of its constituent parts. It is worth noting that previous studies of the strategic coordination of international aid have also faced similar difficulties, with one reporting that “the topic of investigation was ill-defined and unfamiliar.”¹²

Beginning with what is understood to constitute “international assistance” in the Afghanistan context is obviously contingent upon who is giving the assistance, who is receiving it, and, most important of all, who is describing the transaction. Afghanistan has been the object of very many forms of international assistance during its turbulent history, by far the largest proportion of which has been, and still probably is, military in kind. Much of this sort of “assistance” was supplied for diametrically opposed political ends by the Soviet Union and the USA during the Cold War, while more recent “assistance” given by Pakistan, Russia, Iran and less regular sources such as al Qaeda, has been in pursuit of diverse and conflicting objectives. In Afghanistan, one nation’s assistance is another’s unwarranted interference. The International Coalition against Terrorism and ISAF are currently providing massive, albeit undisclosed, sums of “international assistance” for the new regime in Kabul. Presumably it is likely, as in all recent phases of Afghanistan’s history, that other non-state Afghan actors are receiving “international assistance” to oppose this new political dispensation. That international assistance is very much defined in the eye of the beholder, especially so in

Afghanistan, makes the determination of what constitutes it, a very complex and highly politicised matter.

Although there is consensus that “strategy” has something to do with the future, there exists amongst the providers of assistance to Afghanistan plans without strategies, strategies without plans and, in some cases, strategies with plans.

“Strategy” is another ambiguous term, used to describe both the means and the ends of assistance. Some documents refer to sustainable peace as a “strategy,” others speak

of the “strategy” to defeat the Taliban and al Qaeda, while others discuss organisational development “strategy”. Although there is consensus that “strategy” has something to do with the future, there exists amongst the providers of assistance to Afghanistan plans without strategies, strategies without plans and, in some cases, strategies with plans. Many aid agency representatives were able to describe their programme or project objectives, but a substantial proportion could not identify their organisation’s strategy for Afghanistan. In fact, several representatives positively argued that their organisations had no strategy, since “strategy is by definition political.”¹³ To add to the confusion about what strategic coordination might entail, a senior government official insisted that UN agencies and NGOs should not be allowed to have strategies since this level of planning is now the exclusive preserve of government.

Lastly, “coordination” is another slippery term. For some it is simply about the voluntary sharing of information, while for others it is an authoritarian form of control. Confusingly, the term is used as a noun to refer to an outcome as well as a verb to describe a process. For most, it is a positive value-laden term; being “coordinated” is seen as a desired state of affairs. For others, the word is pejorative, referring to a time-consuming process of pointless meetings and inconsequential discussions, or, as a mechanism

¹² S. Lautze, B. Jones and M. Duffield, *Strategic Humanitarian Coordination in the Great Lakes Region 1996-97*, (New York: United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 1998).

¹³ Both UNHCR and WFP have “non-political” mandates.

for illegitimate control that serves to undermine much cherished agency independence.

Given this degree of disagreement over the meanings of the key terms for this study, a short review of the strategic coordination literature is provided below. This serves both to locate the Afghanistan experience in the wider academic debate and, hopefully, to make a contribution towards improving the conceptual approach to future studies of strategic coordination.

3.1 Aid coordination - a brief literature review

It has become something of a convention for studies about international aid coordination to adopt Larry Minear's definition which he used to study UN humanitarian coordination during the Gulf Crisis. Minear described humanitarian coordination as:

*"the systematic utilization of policy instruments to deliver humanitarian assistance in a cohesive and effective manner. Such instruments include: (1) strategic planning; (2) gathering data and managing information; (3) mobilizing resources and assuring accountability; (4) orchestrating a functional division of labour in the field; (5) negotiating and maintaining a serviceable framework with host political authorities; and (6) providing leadership. Sensibly and sensitively employed, such instruments inject an element of discipline without unduly constraining action."*¹⁴

This description of coordination has had considerable influence over both coordination practice and academic studies on the topic. For example, the IASC similarly "defines" strategic coordination as the process of:

- setting the overall direction and goals of the UN humanitarian programme;
- allocating tasks and responsibilities within that programme and ensuring that they are reflected in a strategic plan;

- advocacy for humanitarian principles;
- negotiating access to affected populations;
- ensuring correspondence between resources mobilised and established priorities;
- monitoring and evaluating the overall implementation of the programme; and
- liaising with military and political actors of the international community, including those of the UN.¹⁵

Although often referred to as "definitions" of the process of coordination, what Minear and the IASC propositions actually both provide is a value-judgement combining the hoped for outcome of coordination with a particular and clearly favoured approach to the process of coordination. These constructs are built upon an assumption that by enacting the list of proposed coordination tasks, "effective" coordination will result. In this respect, the IASC and Minear models would be more appropriately referred to as observed models of "best-practice." Coordination is after all a process which attempts to achieve mission cohesion and effectiveness, but which surely can not by definition guarantee a coordinated outcome. Minear's and the IASC's lists of coordination functions may, or indeed may not, actually achieve the desired outcome. Furthermore, these formulations of coordination seem to assume that those entities which will be subjected to the process of coordination share a common strategic objective. Perhaps where coordination is solely concerned with saving lives this may (in a pinch) be true, but when applied to the whole gamut of self-styled "assistance" activities in Afghanistan, this equally can be assumed to not be the case.

As Antonio Donini observed in a later study, coordination as a desired outcome may be sought through the application of numerous structural variants and management styles of coordination. Donini proposed three basic types, ranging from a relatively authoritarian approach to a relatively voluntary, or laissez faire, approach:

¹⁴ L. Minear, U. B. P. Chelliah, Jeff Crisp, John Mackinlay, and Thomas G. Weiss, "United Nations Coordination of the International Humanitarian Response to the Gulf Crisis," Occasional Paper #13:3, (Providence: The Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute of International Studies, Brown University).

¹⁵ S. Lautze, et al., op. cit.

- *“Coordination by command* - coordination in which strong leadership is accompanied by some sort of authority, whether carrot or stick;
- *Coordination by consensus* - coordination in which leadership is essentially a function of the capacity to orchestrate a coherent response and to mobilize the key actors around common objectives and priorities. Consensus in this instance is normally achieved without any direct assertion of authority by the coordinator;
- *Coordination by default* - coordination that, in the absence of a formal coordination entity, involves only the most rudimentary exchange of information and division of labour among the actors.”¹⁶

Donini’s study attempts, in the end inconclusively, to establish an empirical link between particular styles of coordination process and the effectiveness of coordination outcomes. This same approach, in essence the search for best-practice in strategic coordination, has been pursued by many subsequent studies. For example the study of UN strategic coordination of the Great Lakes crisis of 1996/97 by Sue Lautze, Bruce Jones and Mark Duffield also adopted the Minear definition.¹⁷

They noted the importance of the use of information and the critical role that political and economic analysis can play in enhancing the effectiveness of coordination, thereby expanding rather than challenging the basic Minear hypothesis of best practice. Marc

Sommers also adopted both Minear’s definition and Donini’s ideal-typology in his study of the Sierra Leone and Rwanda crises. Sommers concluded that structural institutional arrangements, as opposed to individual leadership qualities, are more important than is often

That organisational development processes, such as coordination and structural integration, may have financial and political costs is almost never considered either. Therefore, the common-sense view expressed by many aid workers that aid coordination can be wasteful of time, effort and resources is, rather remarkably, a hypothesis which is never examined in such studies.

acknowledged, and he also came down in favour of, “the importance of incorporating a command element into the practice of humanitarian coordination and establishing a clear role in coordination for the national authorities.”¹⁸

What all these studies seem to have in common is they assume that an effective coordination outcome can only be achieved through the application of ever more hierarchical structural integration and ever greater degrees of authoritarian control. That failed coordination outcomes may be due, for example, to the absence of a universal strategic objective amongst assistance agencies, or to weak or dysfunctional policy instruments, are possible explanations that are overlooked or ignored. That organisational development processes, such as coordination and structural integration, may have financial and political costs is almost never considered either. Therefore, the common-sense view expressed by many aid workers that aid coordination can be wasteful of time, effort and resources is, rather remarkably, a hypothesis which is never examined in such studies. Consequently, as a cost-free good, there seems to be no limit to the amount of coordination recommended by the literature. In this spirit, in a recent comparative study, Nicola Reindorp and Peter Wiles, also starting with Minear’s definition, arrive at very similar

conclusions to Sommers and Donini, although they recommend even more far-reaching and fundamental UN structural reform to grant that vital extra bit of commanding authority, in addition to a wide range of proposals to ensure that the UN

Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) might wield its extra powers responsibly and effectively.

Some explanation for this rather one-sided tradition of the study of aid coordination is necessary. In the Afghanistan case, it is rather

¹⁶ Antonio Donini, “The Policies of Mercy: UN Coordination in Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda,” Occasional paper #22, (Providence: Thomas J Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University).

¹⁷ S. Lautze et al., op. cit.

¹⁸ M. Sommers, “The Dynamics of Coordination,” Occasional Paper #40. (Providence: Thomas J Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University).

essential that it is understood because, as will be shown below, the model of aid coordination adopted by the Security Council and subsequently developed by the United Nations in Afghanistan appears to be based upon making the UN coordination process relatively authoritarian in nature, leaning towards Donini's "coordination by command" model. UNAMA's authority to coordinate is ascribed through the legislative means of UN Security Council resolutions, which also prescribe a structurally integrated hierarchy to control all the UN agencies and their partners in Afghanistan. In terms of the coordination literature, this approach comes close to matching the ideal-type recommended by Minear and almost all subsequent writers on the subject. This is perhaps hardly surprising once the provenance of the terms "strategic" and "coordination" are examined more closely.

The words "strategic" and "coordination" both have their origins in military science. A standard definition of strategy describes it as the,

*"art of employing all elements of the power of a nation or nations to accomplish the objectives of a nation or an alliance in peace or war. Tactics, on the other hand, are the dispersing and manoeuvring of forces to accomplish a limited objective or an immediate end. Strategy involves the use and close integration of economic, political, cultural, social, moral, spiritual, and psychological power. Strategy can be formulated only after the objectives to be accomplished have been determined."*¹⁹

In its origins therefore, strategic coordination is concerned with the vertical connections between a single over-arching strategy and its subsidiary tactical operations. Thus, the classical task of strategic coordination is to ensure that tactics are sub-ordinate to and supportive of strategy even, for example, where this might involve

incurring a tactical defeat in the interests of gaining overall victory.²⁰ In contrast, operational coordination concerns the management of the horizontal linkages between tactical operations, primarily focusing therefore upon logistics and information exchange. Both strategic and operational coordination are, in their military context, indelibly linked to a command and control model of management and organisational design, where individual and group discipline is the cornerstone of effective and efficient strategic management. Minear's best practice model of aid coordination offers a clear echo of this when he approvingly refers to an "element of discipline" as the hallmark of effective coordination. In trying to clarify a conceptual framework for the study, the "classical" definition of strategic coordination suggests two initial issues.

3.2 A multiplicity of strategies - shared objectives?

The first arises from the classical notion that "strategy" is the exclusive preserve of nations or groups of nations, an assumption which is still often made by students of international relations.²¹ However, in addition to the obvious fact that NGOs prepare strategic plans beholden to boards of private trustees rather than to states, it is also clear that the supra-national mandates of multilateral and UN agencies have, in reality, such indefinite links to member states' interests that they in effect constitute distinctive strategic entities in their own right. These agencies as a rule also produce their own country strategic plans.²² In addition, certain nations, such as the United States, simultaneously pursue multiple "stovepipe" strategies, sometimes in apparent competition with each other.²³ Thus, aid coordination as a process must contend with not one, but with a multiplicity of self-designated "strategies" operating both bilaterally and multilaterally, and designed by supra-state, sub-state, non-state as well as state entities. In the

¹⁹ Encarta® Encyclopedia 2002. © 1993-2001.

²⁰ C. von Clausewitz, *Principles of War*, (London: Stackpole, 1942).

²¹ J. Macrae and N. Leader, *Shifting Sands* (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2000).

²² For example, UNDP's Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF); OCHA's Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP); the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) and Country Assistance Strategies (CAS) of the World Bank, though in Afghanistan's case, there is as yet no CDF, CAS or PRSP.

²³ The USA seems to have three "strategies" operating largely independently of each other in Afghanistan, founded upon three powerful bureaucracies: the State Department (Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department of Defence. A senior US Government official referred to the existence of "stove-pipe policies."

classic sense, for strategic coordination to function effectively, all of these institutions would be required to operate in a subordinate relationship with a higher authority whose overall strategic objective was undisputed by all parties. The task of examining all of the

strategies of this huge array of organisations well exceeds the capacity of this study, and thus an important issue for the study must remain unanswered. However, it is highly improbable in the hotly contested political environment of Afghanistan that all of the nations and organisations that provide assistance do so for purposes that are universally coherent or complementary. This raises critical questions about the conceptual validity as well as the practical efficacy of the conventional concept of strategic coordination of the international aid system. In fairness to Minear and others who have recommended variants of his original best practice model, it is necessary to point out that the original strategic coordination model was designed for the more modest task of coordinating UN humanitarian assistance, not for the whole array of international assistance activities and players to whom the authoritarian and structurally integrated model of coordination is now being applied.

The foregoing discussion might seem rather arcane, but it has important implications for the actual practice of strategic coordination, as well as creating problems for the study of it. If the positive value of bringing “harmonious integration” to the activities of a group of nations and

This study found no widely held consensus on shared objectives, no sense of national or organisational subsidiarity to a universal international strategy and no a shared understanding of the locus of strategic coordination. This does not augur well for the achievement of harmony and coherence either within the international assistance effort or across the totality of the instruments of international relations in Afghanistan.

organisations that share a common objective is given, then logic also dictates that the members of the group should have a shared understanding of what their objective is; how their particular task contributes to the overall strategy; and the nature of the entity,

whether collegiate or more hierarchical, charged with responsibility for coordination.²⁴ If there is no common agreement on these matters, it could be argued that, by definition, “strategic coordination” can not be realised as an outcome and that whatever inter-agency relations do exist, these will constitute nothing much more than basic information sharing. This study found no widely held consensus on shared objectives, no sense of national or organisational subsidiarity to a universal international strategy, and no shared understanding of the locus of strategic coordination. This does not augur well for the achievement of harmony and coherence either within the international assistance effort or across the totality of the instruments of international relations in Afghanistan.

3.3 The strategic/operational conundrum

The second issue arising from this review of its classical origins, is that a study of strategic as opposed to operational coordination, should logically focus upon the vertical linkages between strategy and tactical operations, rather than upon the horizontal linkages or operational coordination process. The problem here lies with the looseness with which the term “strategy” is applied within the international

A risk of aspiring to strategic status is that those so designated will be expected to perform at the strategic level, whether or not they actually have the capacity to deliver. By accepting strategic status without having any control over critical strategic policy instruments, the international assistance effort must simply hope that those other strategic tools over which they have little or no influence deliver fortuitous results. This could be characterised as operating in a state of strategic hubris.

²⁴ A definition of coordination provided in Collins Dictionary, 1995 ed., s.v. “coordination.”

assistance context. Arguably, “international assistance,” in the narrower but commonly used sense of international development and humanitarian aid, is in its totality just one operational component in a larger array of strategic instruments of international relations, that also include diplomacy, peacekeeping, trade and international law. In this sense, the term strategy would be applied only to the overall plan of the international community (in whatever form this might take), and the job of bringing harmony to the various elements of international assistance would be relegated to the category of operational coordination, and thus not the object of a study of strategic coordination. Although this may be a reasonable argument, in contemporary usage within the international aid context (including the terms of reference for this study) the term “strategic coordination” is intended to refer to the exercise of bringing harmonious integration to the “sub-operational” or “tactical” elements of the international assistance operation. In other words, in current aid discourse strategic coordination refers to an incomplete set of operational components of international relations, most notably excluding international military forces, trade relations and great swathes of international law. By ascribing the label “strategic” to the rather limited set of activities and actors that is commonly understood to comprise the international assistance effort in Afghanistan, a grossly inflated expectation of what might be achieved by improved coordination of this group is encouraged. As the assistance community in fact excludes the most powerful instruments of international relations, the status of it can hardly be described as strategic. A risk of aspiring to strategic status is that those so designated will be expected to perform at the strategic level, whether or not they actually have the capacity to deliver. By accepting strategic status without having any control over critical strategic policy instruments, the international assistance effort must simply hope that those other strategic tools over which they have little or no influence deliver fortuitous results. This could be characterised as operating in a state of strategic hubris.

3.4 Strategic coordination: managing without a definition

This short review of the established tradition of strategic coordination studies provides three

Most basically, this study rejects the view that coordination as a process will necessarily lead to coordination as an outcome.

crucial observations relevant to the study of aid coordination in Afghanistan. First, while the term “strategic coordination” is widely used, it is in many senses a vanity that the providers of international assistance can at best only aspire to, at least that is, while the “strong” instruments of international relations are excluded from the normal definition of assistance and practice of strategic coordination. Second, the trend towards ever more authoritarian means of coordination, as widely recommended in the literature, is rooted in a questionable value-judgement that coordination is an unmitigated good, a coordinated end therefore justifying authoritarian means. This conventional view conceals the possible existence of coordination opportunity costs, mainly by obfuscating the existence of genuine strategic competition or conflict between different assistance actors. It also fails to acknowledge that investment in coordination is bound to be subject to the law of diminishing returns, and that it is therefore sensible to judge the point at which too much effort is being put into coordination. This is clearly necessary because a coordinated outcome for international assistance can never be guaranteed on the one hand, and because the opportunity costs of wasted effort and resources can be equated with human welfare benefits foregone on the other. Therefore, this study rejects the commonly held assumption that coordination is by definition an unequivocal good. It also challenges the view that strategic coordination is a realistic outcome for a coordination process as it only involves “weak” assistance providers. Instead the study adopts a critical view of coordination, which is seen as a tradition engaged in by a self-selected group of assistance providers which may, or may not, bring about a harmonious integration of their organisational strategies. Most basically, this study rejects the view that coordination as a process will necessarily lead to coordination as an outcome.

3.5 What comprises the international assistance effort?

As this research is supposed to analyse the strategic coordination of assistance efforts, a term which seems to encompass the entire range of internationally sponsored activities that are deemed to be of assistance to Afghanistan, the identification of the strategic objectives of

international assistance is a complex and major undertaking. To review every self-styled assistance strategy would require an examination of all bilateral aid agencies, multilateral aid agencies, the UN humanitarian and development agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and every NGO. It would possibly include the ISAF for Afghanistan and the CJCMOTF. In terms of commonly accepted usage, it would probably exclude the combatant elements of the Coalition Military force in Afghanistan.

However, it is still remarkably difficult to convert this framework into a comprehensive list of agencies, organisations and nations actually involved in the assistance effort. For example, while the 15 donor nations plus the European Union (EU) formally belong to the Afghanistan Support Group (ASG), 61 countries attended the International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan in Tokyo in January 2002.²⁵ In turn, this conference established the Implementation Group (IG) to which thirty five nations were invited, while actual attendance is normally achieved only by those donor nations with a substantial presence in Kabul or Islamabad. During the course of the study, one donor reported that the ASG and the IG had been merged, while another stated that both had been abolished and replaced by a Consultative Group (CG) based upon the standard World Bank format for donor coordination. In addition, there are also other nations involved in the UN-sponsored political process, for example in the Six-Plus-Two group, made up of Afghanistan's six neighbours plus the USA and Russia.

As well as the difficulty associated with specifying the nations actually involved in assisting Afghanistan, there are also similar problems in being precise about which organisations should

be included as assistance agencies. While the head of UNAMA is mandated by the Security Council to have "full authority.... over the planning and conduct of all United Nations activities in Afghanistan," it is in fact very hard to establish exactly what this entails in terms of UN organisations on the ground.²⁶ The difficulty of such an apparently simple task as finding a list of UN agencies working in Afghanistan however, is nothing by the side of trying to establish even an approximate estimate for the number of NGOs operating in the country.²⁷ The clearest it is possible to be is that the study must contend with the strategies guiding the assistance efforts of some 20, a dozen or so UN agencies, at least three IFIs, scores of international NGOs and hundreds of local NGOs.²⁸ Together, this constitutes a formidable number of actors involved in providing assistance to Afghanistan.²⁹

3.6 Is there a common international assistance strategy?

There is no common perception about who is in charge of defining strategy, nor by extension, what constitutes the international assistance strategy in the Afghanistan context. The great majority of representatives and organisations interviewed in the course of this study expressed fealty to their immediate organisational objectives. For example, when senior governmental and non-governmental aid workers were asked how binding Security Council decisions and strategies are upon their own work, the question was invariably answered either with a look of incomprehension or one of mild amusement. Yet, supposing for a moment that the Security Council was in charge of setting strategic objectives for international assistance and relations more widely in Afghanistan, then an effective outcome of strategic coordination would be reflected in a

²⁵ The ASG was formed from a core of donor nations who attended a UN-organised "strategic framework" planning meeting in Ashkabad in 1997. Current members are Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Germany, Switzerland, France, Belgium, Italy, UK, USA, Canada, Russia, Japan and the EU.

²⁶ UN Security Council, Resolution 1401, 4501st Meeting, 28 March 2002 (see Appendix C for the full text of the resolution).

²⁷ At the time of writing (June 2002) the Web site for the UN Information Centre in Kabul was listed as "temporarily inactive." The Afghanistan Information Management System (AIMS) Web site provides a list of agencies working in the country which was manifestly inaccurate (e.g. ECHO, FAO and ISAF were all listed as "local NGOs," while USAID appears as a "UN agency"). The most frequently cited UN agencies are UNDP, OCHA, UNHCR, WFP, FAO, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCS (Habitat), UNESCO, UNFPA (in no particular order).

²⁸ The World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank and UNDP are members of the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF).

²⁹ ACBAR has 68 NGO members. The Afghan NGOs' Coordination Bureau has 140 registered members.

commitment to Security Council resolutions first, and to organisational objectives second. Although there may be exceptions in practice, this study encountered no such expressions of organisational or national subsidiarity, or recognition of the authority of the Security Council, or indeed of any other collectivity of states, NGOs or UN agencies.³⁰

That being noted, the next task is to identify the strategy of the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, no matter how effective, or otherwise to describe what strategic coordination is in practice. After all, as argued above, not all coordination outcome failures need necessarily be attributed to the performance of the coordination function.

³⁰ However, at the very end of the research period while in Washington, D.C., it became clear that there may be yet more stones to turn over. The informal weekly telephone conference call convened by the US Department of State, involves certain major donors and heads of agencies. While having had neither access to the content of these conference calls, nor confirmation of the identity of the participants, it is clear that this is a high-level strategic coordination process, albeit involving no representatives of the principal aid deliverers, the NGOs. Nevertheless, whatever the potential of this process, it has yet to bring harmony to the assistance effort in Afghanistan.

4. The Strategic Objectives of the International Community

The practical problems involved in simply identifying the Afghanistan related strategies of every state, sub-state, non-state and supra-state actor with an interest in the country is an unrealistic task for this brief study. Instead, a working assumption has been made that the formal resolutions of the UN Security Council are a reasonable approximation of the collective strategic objectives of the UN member-states, and thus of the international community too. Wherever practicable, this assumption has been questioned, but unfortunately any attempt to “triangulate” this hypothesis is also hampered by a general lack of transparency concerning states’ strategies towards Afghanistan. While it is probable that a number of nations and non-state actors do indeed harbour objectives and are pursuing strategies that are in conflict with those of the UN Security Council in relation to Afghanistan, these do not identify themselves as such, nor are they readily available for consideration.³¹

The decision to adopt the Security Council as the primary point of reference for identifying the strategy of the international community may seem somewhat obtuse having noted above that few aid agency staff acknowledge, and fewer still volunteer, any sense of accountability or allegiance to its authority, an observation which seems to hold true at senior levels of management, even within the UN “family.” There is, however, in addition to the pragmatic case made above, a further good reason to treat the UN Security Council as the most authoritative source for a study of international strategy for Afghanistan. In the pre-11 September 2001 environment, it is arguably the case that Afghanistan, and the role played by the UN there, was of only relatively limited interest to the international community. After 11 September, Afghanistan became the highest priority for the Security Council, at least as measured by the number of resolutions it has made on the subject. In the five preceding years, Afghanistan was the subject of just six Security Council Resolutions. In the eight months since 11 September 2001, the Security Council has approved six resolutions about Afghanistan. By UN Security

Council standards, its rather ritualistic claim “to remain seized of the matter” has some real meaning. Of course this neither proves that the Security Council has acted in harmony with the strategic interests of all member states, nor that its resolutions are a reliable rendering of the strategic objectives for the international assistance effort in Afghanistan. It is however a reasonable indication of these things and, in the absence of any more authoritative claims of authorship of the international assistance strategy, the Security Council represents its most logical locus. Therefore, the key elements of the relevant UN resolutions and of the Bonn Agreement are examined below.

4.1 The Security Council and the Bonn Agreement

Although the Security Council has addressed a number of concerns in its recent resolutions, the following statement, taken from Resolution 1383 of December 2001 is repeated in subsequent pronouncements, particularly those relating to international assistance to Afghanistan. The Security Council declared that it was:

“Determined to help the people of Afghanistan to bring to an end the tragic conflicts in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights, as well as to cooperate with the international community to put an end to the use of Afghanistan as a base for terrorism.”³²

This statement echoed, and slightly expanded upon the words of determination contained in the Bonn Agreement signed the previous day. The Bonn Agreement provides for an Interim Authority that:

“shall be the repository of Afghan sovereignty, and thus represent Afghanistan in its external relations and occupy the seat... at the United Nations and in its specialised

³¹ The objectives and strategies of states and non-state actors that are against the Bonn Agreement and UNAMA objectives would be a controversial and difficult topic of study, but one which might add great value for strategic planning purposes.

³² UN Security Council, Resolution 1383, 4434th Meeting of 6 December 2001.

agencies as well as in other international institutions and conferences.”³³

Elements of the Bonn Agreement with important implications for the international assistance effort for Afghanistan include the following:

- *“The interim arrangements are intended as a first step towards the establishment of a broad-based, gender sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.*
- *The Interim Authority shall consist of an Interim Administration presided over by a Chairman, a Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga and a Supreme Court.*
- *An Emergency Loya Jirga shall be convened within six months of the establishment of the Interim Authority. The Emergency Loya Jirga shall decide on a Transitional Authority, including a broad based transitional administration to lead Afghanistan until such time as a fully representative government can be elected through free and fair elections to be held no later than June 2004.*
- *A Constitutional Loya Jirga shall be convened within eighteen months of the establishment of the Transitional Authority, in order to adopt a new constitution. In order to assist the Constitutional Loya Jirga prepare the proposed Constitution, the Transitional Administration shall, within two months of its commencement and with the assistance of the United Nations, establish a Constitutional Commission.*
- *The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission..... an independent Human Rights Commission..... a Judicial Commission... (and).. a Central Bank of Afghanistan.*”³⁴

The Bonn Agreement also commits the Interim Authority to:

- *“act in accordance with basic principles and provisions contained in international instruments on human rights and international humanitarian law;*
- *cooperate in the fight against terrorism, drugs and organised crime;*
- *ensure the participation of women as well as the equitable representation of all ethnic and religious communities.*”³⁵

Finally, the Bonn Agreement urges,

“the United Nations, the international community, particularly donor countries and multi-lateral institutions, to reaffirm, strengthen and implement their commitment to assist with the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in coordination with the Interim Authority.”³⁶
(my emphasis)

The strategy for the international assistance community, in support of these objectives, is then further developed by the Security Council in Resolution 1401 of March 2002, which established UNAMA. The Security Council:

- *“Reaffirms its strong support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and endorses his full authority, in accordance with its relevant resolutions, over the planning and conduct of all United Nations activities in Afghanistan.”*
- and
- *“Stresses that the provision of focussed recovery and reconstruction assistance can greatly assist in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement and, to this end, urges bilateral and multi-lateral donors to coordinate very closely with the SRSG, the*

³³ United Nations. Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions (Bonn Agreement). 5 December 2001. The full text of the agreement may be found in Appendix D.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

*Afghanistan Interim Administration and its successors.*³⁷

4.2 The strategic objectives of the international assistance effort

UNAMA's mandate and structure were recommended to the Security Council by the Secretary-General in his report of 18 March 2002 states that.

"the next step, to ensure that all UN efforts are harnessed to fully support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement, would be to integrate all the existing UN elements in Afghanistan into a single mission, UNAMA... the core of the mission's mandate would entail:

- *"Fulfilling the tasks and responsibilities, including those related to human rights, the rule of law and gender issues, entrusted to the UN in the Bonn Agreement;*
- *Promoting national reconciliation and rapprochement throughout the country; and*
- *Managing all humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction activities in Afghanistan under the overall authority of the SRSG and in coordination with the Interim Authority and successor administrations of Afghanistan.*³⁸

The Secretary-General then sets out some operating principles, stating that UNAMA:

- "should be a unified, integrated structure under the authority and leadership of" the SRSG.
- should ... provide support for the implementation of the Bonn Agreement processes, including the stabilisation of the

emerging structures of the Afghan Interim Authority (AIA).

- should undertake close coordination with the AIA and other Afghan actors to ensure that Afghan priorities lead the mission's assistance efforts.
- should aim to bolster Afghan capacity (both official and non-governmental), relying on as limited an international presence and on as many Afghan staff as possible... thereby leaving a light expatriate 'footprint.'
- should have a unified presence and coordination capacity in regional offices and selected high priority provincial capitals."

and that

- *"A rights-based and gender sensitive approach would be integrated fully into UN activities."*

and

- *"Recovery and reconstruction efforts cannot await the successful conclusion of the peace process, but rather their early and effective delivery are central to the success of the process itself."³⁹ (my emphasis)*

The Secretary-General's report then describes the structural arrangements of UNAMA, the essence of which is its division into two sections, or "pillars," each headed by a Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General (DSRSG) with the following respective responsibilities:

Pillar One - Political

- *"Monitoring, analysing and reporting on the overall political and human rights situation and status of implementation of the Bonn Agreement;*
- *Supporting the work of the Emergency Loya Jirga Commission;*

³⁷ UN Security Council, Resolution 1401, op. cit.

³⁸ UN Security Council, The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security: Report of the Secretary-General [A/56/875-S/2002/278]. General Assembly, 56th Session, Agenda Item 43, 18, March 2002.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

- *Maintaining contact with Afghan leaders, political parties, civil society groups etc.;*
- *Performing good offices... particularly in the fields of conflict control, confidence building and reconciliation;*
- *Providing information and guidance on political issues for the benefit of other UNAMA activities; and*
- *Investigating human rights violations and, where necessary, recommending corrective action.*"⁴⁰

Pillar Two - Relief, Recovery & Reconstruction

"The DSRSG would coordinate an integrated and principled UN assistance programme that both inform(s) and (is) informed by the political and civil affairs work conducted under Pillar One. The office of DSRSG would ensure a strategic partnership with the Interim Administration and the Afghanistan Assistance Coordination Authority in particular, and would directly assist the Administration in articulating a national development framework and in coordinating international assistance to ensure that such assistance was strategically targeted and supportive of immediate and longer-term national priorities. The tasks of the DSRSG would be:

- *To articulate a strategic vision for the UN assistance role that responds to the immediate needs of the most vulnerable populations, is supportive of national recovery and reconstruction priorities and is rights based and gender sensitive;*
- *To develop an integrated UN assistance programme that gives special attention to measures promoting women's rights and the achievement of the rights of the most disadvantaged and under-served populations and ethnic groups;*
- *To ensure that UN assistance supports capacity building in counterpart Afghan administrations and organisations.... All*

UN entities would be expected to provide technical, material and financial support to counterpart administration departments;

- *To create with the Interim Administration and other partners, an effective programme information and data management system; and*
- *To assign, in agreement with the national administration, thematic and sectoral lead coordination responsibilities to UN agencies, funds and programmes as appropriate, which would support counterpart departments to oversee and coordinate all actors - national and international - and activities in each sector, to ensure actions that are coherent and responsive to needs.*"⁴¹

Broadly speaking, the objectives of the international community, as expressed in the Security Council's brief endorsement of the Bonn Agreement and subsequently elaborated in the UNAMA resolution, are quite consistent with each other. Although, as the strategic objective is an indefinite search for the "motherhood and apple pie" of peace, security and respect for human rights, this is perhaps hardly surprising. It is not until the Secretary-General's report to the General Assembly and the subsequent passage of the "UNAMA Resolution" that the role of the assistance effort in contributing to peace and stability is more explicitly made, although once again no clear strategy is formulated. Resolution 1401 does, however, place a heavy onus upon the role that international assistance is expected to play in the peace process. While the basis for this assertion might be self-evident to many, it nevertheless begs the vital question, how can focused recovery and reconstruction assistance greatly assist the Bonn process? Tantalisingly, the Security Council provides only the merest glimpse into its thinking. This brief insight is provided where it proposes three parameters and two conditions relating to the provision of international assistance. These are embedded in the very dense

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

wording of the clause in which the Security Council:

“Stresses that although humanitarian assistance should be provided wherever there is a need, recovery or reconstruction assistance ought to be provided through the Afghan Interim Administration and its successors, and implemented effectively where local authorities contribute to the maintenance of a secure environment and demonstrate respect for human rights.”⁴²

This sentence is packed with content, and presumably for the Security Council at least, significant meaning too. This being the case, it is worth deconstructing with some care.

4.3 Security Council parameters for international assistance

The three parameters for international assistance are:

1. Humanitarian aid should be provided on the basis of need, and by implication, for no other purpose.
2. Recovery and reconstruction assistance ought to be provided through the AIA. By implication and in contrast, it would seem that the Security Council does not propose that humanitarian assistance should be channelled through, nor even necessarily coordinated by, the AIA.
3. Recovery and reconstruction assistance is required to be effective.

The distinction drawn by the Security Council between humanitarian aid and recovery/reconstruction assistance is significant, because, as we will see, both in terms of the purpose for which it is provided, and the mechanism by which it is coordinated, this parameter is neither supported by the AACA, nor by other actors on the ground.

The provision of international assistance “through” the AIA represents a quite radical departure from standard international aid practice in complex emergencies.⁴³ However, in the Afghanistan context, the contrast with the long-established practice of the avoidance, almost at any cost, of international aid being passed “through” the Taliban Administration is especially marked. Although the Security Council tends to be rather UN system-centric in its resolutions, a tendency both encouraged by and reflected within the UN system itself, it is clear that the Security Council is also addressing member states and their bilateral aid programmes for Afghanistan.⁴⁴ In Resolution 1401 for example, the Security Council,

“urges bilateral and multilateral donors, in particular the Afghanistan Support Group and the Implementation Group, to coordinate very closely with the SRSG, the AIA and its successors.”⁴⁵

The wording here reflects the fact that the Security Council has no real authority over the international aid policies and practices of member states, but in terms of the lexicon of UN resolutions, the moral pressure upon member states, especially members of the Security Council, to comply with all the relevant elements of this clause is considerable.

The requirement that assistance should be “effective” is open to a variety of interpretations, although it does seem to be directly linked to the structural reforms of the UN mission for Afghanistan introduced in the “UNAMA Resolution.” In this, the Security Council endorsed the Secretary-General’s proposition that the entire UN presence in Afghanistan needed re-structuring to achieve structural “unification” and improved “integration.” These are qualities associated with hierarchies, and their designation as objectives of the UNAMA reform suggest that the achievement of UN effectiveness was thought to be contingent upon the structural transformation from the disjointed authority or “adhococracy” of the UN

⁴² UN Security Council, Resolution 1401, op. cit.

⁴³ One highly placed bilateral aid official stated that the word “through” was actually used in error. If so the Security Council should perhaps issue an amendment to the resolution.

⁴⁴ The “UN system” refers to the UN Secretariat and the specialised UN agencies and programmes.

⁴⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 1401. op.cit.

system in Afghanistan, into a body with unitary leadership and management functions.⁴⁶ While the Secretary-General was not explicit about why the former structure needed to be replaced, he did state that unification and integration are expected to deliver greater “coherence” and “synergy” between the political and assistance pillars of the system and by implication, greater effectiveness across the whole assistance effort. It is worth noting that previous studies of UN restructuring in Afghanistan have concluded that the record of similar initiatives is controversial if not downright discouraging.⁴⁷ Nevertheless, it is clear that the UNAMA reforms were designed to induce essential behavioural changes within and beyond the UN operations in Afghanistan.

4.4 Security Council conditions for international assistance

The conditions laid down by Resolution 1401 require that assistance will be provided only where local authorities are,

1. contributing to the maintenance of a secure environment; and
2. demonstrating respect for human rights.

In searching for evidence of a UN strategy to deliver the objectives for the international assistance effort, this conditionality construct is important because, at the Security Council level, it is the only policy link made between the provision of international assistance and the successful outcome of the peace

Together, the internal behavioural change objectives embedded in the UNAMA reforms that are expected to deliver or enhance the effectiveness of the international assistance effort, and the social behavioural change objectives to be achieved through the conditional provision of international assistance, form the twin strategies of the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, as defined and endorsed by the Security Council.

process. It proposes a simple compact between the Afghan local authorities and the UN, where the maintenance of security and respect for human rights by the former will be rewarded with assistance by the latter. As the clearest indication of any sort of strategy provided by the Security Council, this policy seems to be rooted in a basic kind of Pavlovian behavioural change model in which bad behaviour is conditioned through selective punishments and rewards.⁴⁸

4.5 UNAMA Pillar Two Strategy

To understand more specifically what strategic coordination is intended to achieve, it is necessary to examine the precise behavioural changes that the United Nations expects to invoke from the conditional provision of assistance for Afghanistan.

In the course of this study, no single document has been identified which could reasonably be described as the strategic plan for the international assistance effort.⁴⁹ The closest that any comes to earning this title is the Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People 2002 (ITAP), but this is essentially a fundraising document, prepared as a functional alternative to the UN consolidated appeals process (CAP) for the Tokyo Ministerial Meeting.⁵⁰ The

report itself acknowledges that it is the product of a work in progress. In addition it has since been reviewed by the AACCA, and although some 80% of its content has been approved, its current status is now somewhat in doubt.⁵¹ Nevertheless, as the nearest thing that exists to a comprehensive overview of the

⁴⁶ Donini, *The Policies of Mercy*, 124; and Reindorp & Wiles, p. ii.

⁴⁷ Duffield et al.; N. Dabelstein. *Aid Responses to Afghanistan: Lessons from Previous Evaluations*. (Paris: OECD/DAC Senior Level Meeting, 2001); and Donini, *The Politics of Mercy*.

⁴⁸ The notion that conflict reduction can be promoted through the provision of support to “local capacities for peace” is a theory now subscribed to by many aid agencies and which has, since the inception of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan in 1997, also informed the assistance strategy of the UN in Afghanistan.

⁴⁹ There are other contenders, such as the World Bank’s Transitional Support Strategy, but this is almost exclusively focused on the activities of the World Bank.

⁵⁰ United Nations, *Immediate and Transitional Assistance Programme for the Afghan People (ITAP)*, (Tokyo: 2002).

⁵¹ This figure is approximate - various figures from 80% to 95% were given in interviews; In August 2002, UNAMA estimates that more than US \$960 million were allocated through the ITAP mechanism. The ITAP is currently being “melded” into the NDF. It is expected that the next round of resource mobilisation will likewise occur through the National Development Budget (NDB).

assistance effort in late 2001 and its claim to be “a key strategic tool to bring coherence in the assistance response,” it is reasonable to expect that it should contain clear objectives and at least a preliminary elaboration of strategy.⁵²

In fact the ITAP refers to the need for “sustained humanitarian action” and proposes a programme that will help Afghanistan “return to normal life and stability and to prepare for longer-term development.” As a means of achieving the latter, and citing the Bonn Agreement the ITAP states that:

“the critical issue will be to ensure the present and future capacity of Afghans to manage recovery and reconstruction in the best interests of all parts of their population. A vital concern will be to reverse the disempowerment of women and to support them in their efforts to rebuild Afghanistan’s society and economy. In addition, children must be central to this process of recovery and reconstruction in order to avert the recurrence of conflict and to maximise the chances for sustainable peace for future generations. A commitment for immediate assistance for reconstruction by the international community will be an important incentive. The quick and effective establishment and re-vitalization of basic social services can help engender support for political stability and peace, while political dialogue and reconciliation can help expand on access and opportunities for recovery. Prompt attention to, and action on, longstanding problems of discrimination, exploitation and violation of rights will signal the importance of ensuring all Afghans benefit from the new peace. A tangible “peace dividend” is essential for Afghans to unite around the peace process.”⁵³

On humanitarian assistance, the first guiding principle proposed in the ITAP is that:

“humanitarian assistance will continue to be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, universality, neutrality and impartiality. It will be provided on the basis of need; and cannot be subjected to any form of discrimination, including that of gender.”⁵⁴

Thus, while being broadly consistent with the overall objectives of the Security Council, it is worth noting that the ITAP contains no reference to aid conditionalities. On aid coordination mechanisms, ITAP starts with the bald statement that “coordination rests with government authorities,” and that the “UN presence is based on the concept of having a ‘small footprint’ within the country.”⁵⁵ Given that the ITAP was prepared some two months prior to the “UNAMA resolution,” the absence of references to the human rights and security conditionalities is perhaps not so surprising, although in contrast, the UNAMA structural reforms were quite accurately predicted.

The Pillar Two Management Plan subsequently produced by the DSRSG for Pillar Two, was however prepared after Resolution 1401. The Management Plan contains the following reaffirmation of the key strategic role for the assistance effort:

“United Nations agencies and their partners have a rare opportunity to help the citizens of Afghanistan, the Interim Administration and its successors, to rapidly acquire the capacity to lead, coordinate and manage both the response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the acceleration of the recovery process, and to transition from dependence on external assistance to self-sufficiency built on Afghan knowledge, skills and productivity. Such support, if extended quickly, can help Afghanistan to transition from a recent past of considerable instability and volatility to a more peaceful and stable society.” (my emphasis)

⁵² ITAP is based upon “elements from the Preliminary Needs Assessment carried out by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank and UNDP,” and upon “consultations with UN agencies as well as cost estimates from NGOs.”

⁵³ ITAP, op. cit., 6.

⁵⁴ ITAP, op. cit., 10.

⁵⁵ ITAP, op. cit., 11.

The Pillar Two Management Plan then sets out main elements of the strategy to achieve this:

“The assistance community ... now has to rapidly transition from a reliance on self-regulatory mechanisms to working with and supporting a recognised national administration that is determined to guide and direct assistance priorities. This will require review and rationalisation of the existing proliferation of coordination bodies, and their incorporation into a coordination system in which the national administration plays an active and leading role. (my emphasis)

“The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms will continue to depend on endorsement of, and respect for, the processes of shared plan development, programme harmonisation and joint formulation of strategies and plans of action for relief, recovery and reconstruction. However, these processes now have to be incorporated within the National Development Framework and national budget to ensure that humanitarian and recovery activities respond to the needs of the Afghan population and to the requirement to support the strengthening of governance structures at national and sub-national levels...Under the Bonn Agreement, the UN in particular has been given the role of stabilising and supporting the political process that is intended to result in a stable and legitimate government in Afghanistan.” (my emphasis).

“However, the humanitarian emergency is likely to continue into 2003 because of the combined effects of drought, displacement and abject poverty, as well as of continued insecurity in some parts of the country. In this context, the international community has an ongoing obligation to help address human suffering and vulnerability as rapidly as possible, as well as to undertake recovery and reconstruction activities.

“Such actions will assist the return to normalcy and will also contribute to the restoration of public confidence in the political process, to the stabilisation and consolidation of the Interim Administration and successor administrations, and to an improved security environment. (my emphasis)

To summarise, the contribution of the United Nations led assistance effort to the international community’s overall objective for a peaceful, prosperous and rights-compliant Afghanistan is based upon the dual strategies initiated by the Bonn Agreement, endorsed by the Security Council, and elaborated in the Pillar Two Management Plan. These are; 1) the transfer of *de facto* authority from the UN and the international assistance community to the *de jure* authorities of Afghanistan, and 2) the simultaneous popular legitimisation of those authorities to be in part achieved through the provision of effective international assistance. These strategies, combined with the reform of the UN mission for Afghanistan, are the essential elements of what might be called a strategy of “aid-induced pacification.”

“The demands of this new situation mean that the UN will have to develop a new approach to the coordination and management of assistance in its attempts to address both the ongoing humanitarian crisis and opportunities for reconstruction. A new approach will be required, not only to fulfil the UN’s responsibilities to the people of Afghanistan, but also if the UN is to retain the confidence of the international community and the IA and its successors.”⁵⁶ (my emphasis)

Curiously, like the ITAP, the UNAMA Pillar Two Management Plan also makes no reference to the Security Council conditions concerning Human Rights and security, and instead simply proposes as a guideline, a “commitment to rights-based programming in order that respect for human rights and promotion of gender equity are at the

⁵⁶ Office of the DSRSG for Relief, Recovery and Reconstruction, *Management Plan*, (Kabul: UNAMA, April 2002).

heart of all assistance activities.”⁵⁷ The absence of a transparent mechanism for the suspension of assistance in response to insecurity or human rights violations is an interesting omission and one, rather surprisingly, which is not explained in the plan.

To summarise, the contribution of the UN-led assistance effort to the international community’s overall objective for a peaceful, prosperous and rights-compliant Afghanistan is based upon the dual strategies initiated by the Bonn Agreement, endorsed by the Security Council, and elaborated in the Pillar Two Management Plan. These are 1) the transfer of *de facto* authority from the United Nations and the international assistance community to the *de jure* authorities of Afghanistan, and 2) the simultaneous popular legitimisation of those authorities to be in part achieved through the provision of effective international assistance. These strategies, combined with the reform of the UN mission for Afghanistan, are the essential elements of what might be called a strategy of “aid-induced pacification.” However, it is striking that the Security Council’s policy for the selective and conditional provision of assistance has not been incorporated into the UN system’s strategy for managing and coordinating the assistance effort.

4.6 The National Development Framework

In order that it is able to fulfil its responsibilities as laid out in the Bonn Agreement, the AIA is required to identify national priorities and to take over the coordination of the international assistance effort. The fourth decree of the AIA, which established the AACA, provides a legal basis for the AACA’s NDF, published in draft form in April 2002, to be considered as the official summary of the development objectives of the new sovereign authority in Afghanistan.

The drafting of the NDF took place after the Secretary-General’s fairly detailed international assistance strategy for Afghanistan had already been endorsed by the Security Council and subsequently built into the ITAP. Given that the

identification of national reconstruction priorities and the coordination of international aid are functions which are supposed to migrate from the UN and Afghan Programming Body (APB) to the AIA/AACA, this transition had the potential to signal radical changes both in the strategy for international aid and for its coordination.⁵⁸

The NDF is widely acknowledged within the international assistance community to be a remarkable document which provides a strategic vision of a new Afghanistan. However, this is a country with no obvious peers and with no familiar path for travelling from the old to the new. It offers a very bold vision of a state where growth and development is driven by the private sector, where government is light, flexible, transparent, accountable, rights based, gender-sensitive and responsive to public opinion. In the short term, the NDF is not incongruent with the UN Security Council strategy for international assistance, with three significant exceptions discussed below, and it does reaffirm the heavy burden of responsibility placed upon international assistance for the future peace and prosperity of Afghanistan.

“There is a widespread desire to retain the current international interest in our country... This desire for engagement is premised on the hope that international engagement will be an instrument for ending our poverty, the re-establishment of our sovereignty and national unity, and a foundation for sustainable prosperity. Our people’s expectations have been raised by the promises of world leaders that they will be with us for the long haul... Discussions of development, however, remain abstract. Public opinion is shaped by concrete manifestations. If the general discussions are not connected to changes in the daily lives and experiences of the people, public opinion could easily turn skeptical. Afghans have been disappointed by the International Community before. Hope could then be replaced by frustration, and frustration, in a context of raised expectations, is a recipe

⁵⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁵⁸ The APB was based in Islamabad. The membership included representatives of all the relevant actors, aid and political, and was chaired by the current chair of the ASG.

for anger, discord and finally conflict. For us to capitalise on the current consensus, then, we must deliver, and deliver soon; as words become deeds, belief in the possibility of a safe and prosperous future will grow."⁵⁹

The NDF goes on to summarise its developmental strategy, which in fact covers the whole spectrum of international assistance. It describes itself as having three pillars (not to be confused with the two pillars of the UNAMA structure).

*"The first is to use humanitarian assistance and social policy to create the conditions for people to live secure lives and to lay the foundations for the formation of sustainable human capital. The second is the use of external assistance to build the physical infrastructure that lays the basis for a private sector-led strategy of growth, in such a manner as to support the building of human and social capital. The third pillar is the creation of sustainable growth, where a competitive private sector becomes both the engine of growth and the instrument of social inclusion through the creation of opportunity."*⁶⁰

4.7 Strategic divergence?

The strategy of the AIA/ATA diverges from that of the Security Council and UNAMA in three important respects. These are in relation to the humanitarian principle of impartiality, to the application of aid conditionalities and with regard to gender policy.

An important detail of Pillar One of the NDF is its conflation of humanitarian and social development objectives. Although the NDF acknowledges that Afghanistan is still in the midst of a humanitarian crisis, it goes on to argue that;

"It is vital that we take an integrated and programmatic approach to all work in this pillar. We cannot afford sectoral and localised projects that lead to disconnects.

*So we are initiating two, large-scale, integrated programs as the foundation of much work in this pillar. Firstly we will initiate a national community development program, known as National Solidarity, which will deliver block grants to communities across the country. And secondly we have designated 10 key areas for special attention because they have been worst affected by human rights abuses and will be centers of refugee and IDP return. We are requesting the UN agencies and bilateral donors to help us develop rapidly a series of projects in these areas."*⁶¹

This part of the NDF contains an element that may represent a significant divergence from the approach of the Security Council. First, because as noted above, the Security Council clearly differentiated between humanitarian assistance and other forms of aid, and second, because that distinction obviously implied that humanitarian aid should not be instrumentalised for political purposes. The provision of humanitarian assistance should, following the Security Council's proposition, respond to need alone, and in this respect humanitarian need is very unlikely to be perfectly correlated with areas of refugee/IDP return and the locations of historical human rights violations. The intent signalled in the NDF to politically instrumentalise the humanitarian resources available for Afghanistan represents a major policy breach with the Security Council.

Another important point of divergence from the Security Council is the absence of any reference to conditionalities in the provision of assistance relating to the "maintenance of a secure environment" and "respect for human rights." This, in a country where local authorities operate almost entirely autonomously, especially with regard to the security sector, represents a potential source of frequent and substantive policy disagreement between the Security Council and the AIA. However, as noted above, UNAMA appears to be complying only minimally with this element of Resolution 1401, and Pillar Two, to

⁵⁹ AIA, *The National Development Framework: draft for consultation (Kabul: AIA, April 2002)*, 5-6. The text of the NDF (without the annexes) may be found in Appendix E.

⁶⁰ Ibid, 6.

⁶¹ Ibid, 7.

which it most obviously applies, has no mechanism in place to implement it at all.

Finally, although the Security Council makes only one brief reference to gender in its post 11 September resolutions (in sharp contrast to it being a predominant concern during the Taliban Administration), the appearance of a gender equity programming “principle” in the Pillar Two Management Plan indicates another potential source of disagreement between the international assistance effort and the AIA/AACA. The Bonn Agreement only refers to “gender-sensitivity,” and then as a note that this represents a first step in a process towards the creation of a “broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government.”⁶² Certainly the centre piece of the Bonn Agreement, the Emergency Loya Jirga, does not require the equal participation of men and women, although it does propose the participation in the Loya Jirga of a “significant number of women as well as all other segments of the Afghan population.” The NDF states that gender is a “critical issue,” but it stops a long way short of a commitment to gender equity, instead, referring to the need for “specific programs directed to enhancing the capabilities of our girls and women,” and the requirement that “all programs must pay special attention to gender, and not include it as an afterthought.”⁶³ The inconsistent treatment of gender in the various key documents is striking and is thus likely to be the subject of further debate and negotiation.

4.8 International assistance effort strategy in summary

Notwithstanding the significance of these specific points of divergence between the major actors in the setting of strategic objectives and the design of their strategic plans, two essential, albeit rather basic, points of strategic consensus would seem to tie the Security Council, UNAMA and the AIA/AACA together:

1. The authority to set national development priorities and coordinate international assistance should pass from the existing

mechanisms, most obviously the ASG and the APB, to the AIA and the AACA; and

2. The primary strategic objective for the international assistance effort should be the promotion of peace, or what could be called a strategy of aid-induced pacification.

There remain important differences between some of these actors regarding the purpose and coordination of humanitarian assistance, the approach to human rights and security conditionalities and policies concerning gender. To complete this section on the objectives and key strategies of the international assistance effort, a summary is provided below of the most critical assumptions upon which the assistance effort rests. These are linked together in a complex set of mutual dependencies and critical sequences. Some are explicitly recognised in the key documents cited above, others glossed over. The validity of these assumptions will, to a significant degree, determine the extent to which the objectives of the international assistance effort can be attained. The strategy for international assistance is based upon the following assumptions:

1. The external and internal forces of political, economic and military opposition to the peace process can be contained.
2. Public attitudinal change, resulting from the impact of assistance and capacity building, will reflect positively upon the peace/political process and in particular lend legitimacy to the Interim Administration and the Transitional Administration.
3. Pacification of Afghan warlords will result either from aid conditionalities relating to respect for human rights and the maintenance of a secure environment, or from an unconditional “peace dividend,” and conversely that violent conflict will not be fuelled by international assistance.
4. The objective of conferring de facto authority upon the AIA/ATA can be agreed, and acted upon, by donors, NGOs and UN agencies and,

⁶² The Bonn Agreement.

⁶³ The National Development Framework, 12.

conversely, that the AIA/ATA will establish a coordination process that gives an acceptable level of autonomy to the agencies.

5. Once in “the driver’s seat” the humanitarian and development approaches, including gender and human rights policies, of the AIA and its successors will not depart from the current guiding principles of the international assistance effort to an extent that becomes unacceptable to donors, agencies and NGOs.
6. The actual capacity of the AIA, AACA and line ministries to lead and coordinate the international assistance effort can be achieved in a timely fashion through a combination of capacity building and the return of Afghans from exile.
7. The donor community will support the assistance strategy in a coherent, complementary, timely and innovative manner.
8. The implementation capacity required - mainly NGO and private sector - to deliver the new assistance programme will support the strategy in a coherent, complementary, timely and innovative manner.
9. The UNAMA reforms will achieve effectiveness in the UN-led international assistance effort in general, and in particular that:

The international assistance effort in general and the UN system in particular deserve to be held accountable for the quality and effectiveness of their strategies, rather than being appraised on the basis of individual projects and programmes. Whether the eventual judgement is that the international assistance effort was a strategic success, an exercise in hubris or some mixture of both, only time will tell.

- The human rights and protection issues in Afghanistan can be addressed without major and unsustainable internal transaction costs.
- The unresolved gender equity versus special programmes and gender main-streaming debate can be managed without unsustainable transaction costs.
- The humanitarian emergency versus recovery and reconstruction divide can be managed without fatal results and unsustainable management costs.
- The international assistance programme can be delivered through a “light footprint” which will get still lighter as capacity building progresses and as Afghans in exile return.

It goes without saying that there are some risky and ambitious expectations as well as contradictory assumptions, in this list. At some near future date, the validity of these assumptions should be tested. The international assistance effort in general and the United Nations system in particular deserve to be held accountable for the quality and effectiveness of their strategies, rather than being appraised on the basis of individual projects and programmes. Whether the eventual judgement is that the international assistance effort was a strategic success, an exercise in hubris, or some mixture of both, only time will tell.

5. Strategic Coordination in Practice

While a number of important strategic assumptions and coordination issues have been identified above, the approach to these has so far been deliberately descriptive, rather than analytical. What have not yet been described are the strategic coordination mechanisms or processes themselves. This has been partly due to the simple problem that there is no entity, meeting or process that incorporates the term “strategic coordination” in its formal title, and partly because the processes of coordination were being re-invented at the time of writing. It is also due in part to the difficulty in identifying what actually constitutes strategy for the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, and who or what is responsible and accountable for it. Furthermore, the study had only limited access to strategic coordination meetings, such as those between the SRSG and his deputies. Finally, the absence of an extensive description of strategic coordination in practice is also due to the simultaneous preparation of a complementary AREU publication that summarises the history, composition and mandates of the various coordination and inter-agency processes.⁶⁴

However, it is important to note that the degree of satisfaction in the existing practice of strategic coordination, as expressed by the great majority of agency and donor representatives, was generally very low. Prior to listing the issues reported during the interviews, it is important to stress that their inclusion here does not in any way validate them as facts. It is also the case that the great majority of opinions expressed were contradicted by other respondents and not all have equal claim to be classified as strategic rather than operational coordination issues. No significance should be attached to the order in which they are presented below.

5.1 Strategic coordination - reported issues

1. Frequency of meetings: Considerable disquiet was expressed about the number of coordination mechanisms and the frequency of inter-agency meetings. As well as the regular meetings, there are complaints about too many ad hoc gatherings. Many agency staff expressed the view that coordination was getting in the way of implementation. The characteristic of coordination most favoured was “streamlined”, although there was little consensus as to what this might mean in practice.
2. Complexity of processes: “Confusion” was probably the most frequently used word when describing strategic coordination arrangements. There was nearly universal consensus that greater clarity regarding purpose, authority and membership of the various bodies is required. This applies particularly to meetings of the Emergency Task Force (ETF), the Afghan Support Group (ASG), the Implementation Group (IG) and the IG Standing Committee. As noted elsewhere, these arrangements may, by now, have been simplified.
3. Inclusion/exclusion: There were contradictory but very frequent complaints made that the coordination meetings are too inclusive, and thus unmanageably large on the one hand, and on the other, that the key policy coordination meetings are too exclusive, badly informed and poorly reported on.
4. Weak communications: Many complaints were heard about the failure of the UN to provide adequate advance warnings of meetings, of ill-prepared agendas and presentations and poor records of meetings. While it is widely recognised that the technical constraints of weak or non-existent telecommunications infrastructure, inadequate office accommodation and staffing, ever more demanding donors and the complexity of transferring authority to the AIA, there is a strong sense that poor communications are hampering coordination. There are paradoxical (although not necessarily inconsistent) complaints of information overload.
5. The bilateral/multilateral paradox: Although the rhetorical support amongst donors for

⁶⁴ Kathleen Campbell, op. cit.

multilateralism is strong, there are competing claims that actual donor behaviour is too bilateral (from UN agencies) and too multilateral (from NGOs).

6. **Competitiveness versus complementarity:** Mutual recriminations about competitive behaviour between agencies are commonly made. These are felt to mar the coordination process.
7. **Lack of leadership/slow pace of reform:** Many interviewees in April and May expressed impatience that the creation of UNAMA, and particularly the establishment of Pillar Two, was moving far too slowly. Many UN agency and NGO staff felt that there was a strategic leadership vacuum, paradoxically, in spite of the proliferation of coordination events and processes.
8. **Pillar One versus Pillar Two:** Many interviewees volunteered a view about which Pillar of the UN system was “in the driver’s seat”. There are great variations of opinion and considerable time spent in analysing which Pillar is most favoured in terms of UN support. There was also anxious anticipation about the impending announcement of appointments for the future sub-national area coordinators, and whether these will be from Pillar One or Pillar Two.
9. **The “light footprint/heavy jackboot” debate:** Almost everybody accuses almost everybody else of wearing heavy jackboots, while claiming to be very nimble-footed themselves. Many agencies simultaneously feel profoundly constrained by the “light footprint” objective and believe that their effectiveness is being undermined by this requirement.
10. **Operational coordination:** The strategic relevance of operational coordination arrangements is explained by the debate about the alleged political allegiances and objectives of the various line ministries, and the possible undesirable political impact that their control over sectoral coordination processes might have. Put crudely, the argument is that Afghan warlords are in control of the ministries and that a successful international effort made to legitimise the AIA/ATA and the peace process will, inter alia, legitimise those accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity, thereby reinforcing rather than overcoming a culture of criminal impunity. It is argued by many that the operational coordination arrangements therefore risk reinforcing the economic and political hegemony of the warlords. A parallel argument was brewing over the logic, rationale and effect of the UN lead agency model and similar concerns have been expressed about the newer programme secretariat model.
11. **Centre-region disconnect:** There is a commonly expressed view that the UN assistance strategy and the purpose of the UNAMA reforms are understood in Kabul, but that the reality in the rest of the country is markedly different where a sense of “business as usual” prevails. In contrast, regional staff argued that Kabul based managers are out of touch with the reality on the ground, where the powers of local warlords and individual agency mandates remain undiminished.
12. **Regional/provincial incoherence:** The pre-Bonn UN coordination arrangements used the “region” as the operational locus of aid coordination. Fears that local authority coordination at this level equates to and thus legitimises undesirable warlord and ethnically rooted authority, has led to a decision that operational field coordination should be located instead at the “area” level. The uncertainty about the future status of regional offices has generated anxiety amongst staff and arguments about the viability of area coordination.
13. **Slow pace of disbursement of funds:** Considerable frustration, in some cases downright anger, is building up over what is perceived as the exceedingly slow pace of donor disbursements. This calls into question the legitimacy of the Tokyo pledges, the credibility of the assistance effort and, in turn, the effectiveness of the peace process. It is the staff of those agencies which are closest to the extreme privations of life in Afghanistan who bear the major brunt of unrealistic public expectations, stoked up by unrealistic aid pledges.

14. Slow pace of programme implementation: Universal criticism was heard from all AIA officials interviewed at the slow pace of the reconstruction and recovery programme. In some cases this was accompanied by expressions of anger, accusations of corruption and a growing rhetoric of “betrayal by the international community”. The perceived failure to initiate a major labour-intensive road building programme was the most commonly articulated frustration.
15. Gender equity: There is mounting internal criticism about the seriousness with which the UN system applies its own commitment to gender-equity, both in terms of the programmes it supports and the manner in which it manages itself.
16. Human rights: There are many differing opinions, mostly strongly felt and expressed, about the proper place of human rights in the assistance effort. Some hold the view that political pragmatism dictates a measured approach to continuing human rights violations, while others argue that the current approach encourages impunity and warlordism. The marginalisation of protection and human rights is seen by some as the direct consequence of simultaneously mainstreaming human rights in Pillar Two and monitoring human rights in Pillar One, while maintaining control of human rights activities by the SRSG’s office . There are concerns expressed that there has been inadequate attention paid to and support for the Judicial Commission and the Human Rights Commission.
17. The NGO problem: There are mixed, contradictory, but very strong opinions expressed about NGO behaviour in Afghanistan. Many government officials (the AACA excepted) spoke of the urgent need for legislation to “control the NGOs”. Many donors and UN agencies expressed rather similar, although generally less extreme opinions. In contrast, the NGOs feel increasingly beleaguered and unappreciated by a donor community and UN system that has, from the NGO point of view, almost totally depended upon NGO courage and ingenuity to deliver programmes throughout years of conflict.
18. The humanitarian/development divide: There appears to be considerable disagreement about the severity of the current humanitarian situation and the appropriateness of continued large-scale food aid. These arguments may be closely bound up with the mandates of the agencies, with the humanitarians arguing the need for continued emergency assistance and the development agencies claiming problems of dependency and stunted development and the need to move from relief to development.
19. Assistance conditionalities and aid-induced pacification: While this study is concerned with coordination, it cannot entirely avoid questions about the conceptual and empirical validity of the strategic choices and instruments deployed by the International Community in Afghanistan. While it is noted elsewhere that the politicisation of aid, as represented in the UNAMA peace-building objectives, creates division and disarray amongst aid actors, this is not only due to matters of agency mandate and practical concerns about staff security. It is also a matter of some debate whether the conceptual logic of “aid-induced pacification” reinforced by a strategy of aid conditionalities is robust or flawed, and whether or not there is an empirical case to support it. While the Security Council treats these matters as given, they most certainly are not accepted as such by many within the aid community.

5.2 Additional observations

To add to this litany of reported concerns, there are a further four observations made in the course of this study which, indirectly, may also have strategic consequences.

1. Accommodation: Many agency staff live in accommodation with very limited privacy and personal space. This, combined with many other work-related stresses, probably contributes to what appears to be unusually high rates of illness and difficult inter-personal relations amongst international staff.
2. Over-work: In almost all cases, agency personnel are working excessively long hours with inadequate periods of rest and

recreation. This is bound to have a deleterious impact upon health, efficiency and judgement.

3. **Verbal communications culture:** The strong attachment exhibited by many staff to their mobile phones and other verbal communications gadgetry, the apparent lack of time-zone awareness on the part of headquarters, and a heightened sense of the “need to know” (about almost everything it seems), all contribute to a relentless 24-hour mobile phone and walkie-talkie culture that gives these devices precedence over every other activity, including business meetings, conferences, eating and sleeping. All of these processes (and probably others too) must surely suffer as a consequence.
4. **Afghan interlocutors:** While there appears to be a wide measure of agreement about the strategy to transfer authority to the AIA and the primary importance of capacity building for Afghan institutions, the daily practice of programme delivery and operational coordination seems yet to be little changed, and certainly Afghans are not yet occupying the driver’s seats of most parts of the international assistance effort. Indeed, many of the more high-level inter-agency meetings are reported to take place with no Afghan involvement at all. At a time when the international assistance effort is particularly keen to demonstrate that it can have an impact on Afghan public opinion and the conduct of public affairs, this makes the strategic level of inter-agency discussion very prone to acting upon unintentional or deliberate misinformation about what is happening in the country.

5.3 Comment on reported issues and observations

While the players in the process of strategic coordination of the international assistance effort are far from complimentary about each others organisations, this is not necessarily to be taken as conclusive proof of a malfunctioning policy coordination mechanism. Under the circumstances, given the combination of uncertainty, insecurity, the hurried transfer of offices from Pakistan, unsustainable workloads, unsatisfactory housing arrangements, radical policy change and huge

pressure from headquarters to be seen to be delivering, it is hardly surprising that the actors involved are prone to letting off steam when talking to a researcher in a confidential interview. Furthermore, the list of complaints and concerns above are certainly not unique to Afghanistan, and it would be wrong to interpret the amount of argumentation and dissonance as overwhelming evidence of a failing system. Indeed, some argued that much had already been achieved, and most interviewees agreed that it is really too early to tell on an empirical basis whether or not a strategically coordinated outcome will be delivered.

However, the consistency with which interviewees dwelt upon the perceived failings of the system and the outstanding challenges still to be addressed, provides no grounds for complacency. The 19 strategic coordination issues and the four additional observations are not an exhaustive list covering every concern raised, although they were all mentioned or observed with sufficient frequency to merit their inclusion here. However, given the non-random nature of the sample of people interviewed, any attempt to prioritise them on the basis, for example, of their reported frequency would be a spurious exercise. Arguably, the exercise of validating these issues, taking corrective action to resolve those that warrant a response, and disposing of those which have little or no merit, are tasks for those in charge of assistance strategies and coordination processes. Nevertheless, from this author’s perspective, there are certain tractable issues which demand special attention.

These are, in order of importance:

1. the “command and control” model of UNAMA leadership and management, coupled with the failure to date to get a critical mass of donors and NGOs to engage with the UN strategy of aid-induced pacification;
2. the communications strategy vacuum;
3. the absence of an agreed and transparent plan for the migration of authority from assistance agencies to the AIA;
4. the confusion over the place of human rights in the strategy;

5. the growing controversy about gender policy;
6. the uncertainties surrounding humanitarian principles; and
7. the distractions caused by the policy of the “light footprint.”

The omission from this list of many human resource and management considerations, which actually make up the great bulk of the reported and observed issues described above, should not be seen as dismissive of their significance. In particular, until workloads have been brought down to manageable levels it is difficult to see how the assistance effort can be more strategically managed. This is not the place for a detailed organisational development needs analysis of the aid system in Afghanistan, but in the case of the UN agencies in particular, it is worth pointing out that much of the work pressure is self-induced, stemming in part from a corporate culture that values effort over achievement, and quantity of data above quality of management information. The UN work culture also appears to reward the tendency, paraphrasing the Brahimi Report, to tell managers what they want to hear rather than what they need to know.⁶⁵ The effect is to fuel expectations, while the chosen remedy, which probably in fact makes matters worse, is to work ever longer hours. This creates a self-defeating and vicious cycle of unrealistic promises, unachievable objectives, unproductive meetings

The UN work culture creates a self-defeating and vicious cycle of unrealistic promises, unachievable objectives, unproductive meetings and untenable workloads. It encourages the notion that sleep is unnecessary, that rest is indulgence, and that virtue equates to physical and mental exhaustion.

[The lack of interest to extend ISAF beyond Kabul] is a straightforward matter of a lack of political will, which has provoked considerable dismay for the assistance effort and which might still yet prove to be the undoing of this particular opportunity for peace in Afghanistan. In this respect, an international assistance strategy which is in fact bereft of key strategic instruments is not just an illusion, but arguably also a political alibi that will enable the burden of responsibility to be shifted to the assistance agencies should the peace process fail. This would affirm the proposition that strategic coordination when undertaken exclusively by assistance providers, carries with it the risk of being used as a strategic scapegoat.

and untenable workloads. It encourages the notion that sleep is unnecessary, that rest is indulgence, and that virtue equates to physical and mental exhaustion. If a regimen of achievable personal objectives linked to the delivery of strategic goals were to be imposed upon UN personnel, many of the substantive strategic policy issues discussed below would stand a far better chance of being resolved.

Also excluded from this list of strategic issues is perhaps the most fundamental of the threats to the effectiveness of the international assistance

effort. This is the very troubling situation concerning security in Afghanistan and the failure of the international community to provide sufficient resources for the deployment of ISAF beyond Kabul. The reasons for this are subject to considerable speculation, but for the purposes of this study of strategic coordination, it is very clear that the Secretary-General has been as forthright as he could possibly be concerning this matter. For example, in his report to the Security Council of 18 March 2002 he states that:

“At present the Force (ISAF) remains limited to Kabul, while the main threats to the Interim Administration emanate from the provinces. There is a continuing danger that existing security structures, both Afghan and international, will not adequately address the security threats that are currently discernible and

that are likely to increase as the convening of the emergency loya jirga approaches. I hope that

⁶⁵ Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations (The Brahimi Report) [A/55/305], (New York: United Nations, 2000).

the Security Council will consider these factors and support the wish of the Afghan people for the expansion of the Force.

“Security is and will remain the essential requirement for the protection of the peace process. Consequently, the Afghans are unanimous in considering security as their first and most important need. This view is reflected by Chairman Karzai, who has repeatedly called for the expansion of the ISAF to other parts of the country. Afghans and most close observers of the Afghan political scene are confident that such a geographic expansion to a number of major urban centres would significantly minimise the likelihood of large-scale hostilities erupting again between existing armed factions...I cannot emphasise enough that, whatever form of security assistance the SC and Member States should decide to provide to Afghanistan at this, its hour of need, speed is of the essence.”⁶⁶

He goes on to argue that speed is also of the essence for the indigenous security sector:

“Without a credible national security apparatus in the short and longer term, all that has been achieved to date could unravel quickly. Moreover, without security today, the billions pledged for

Afghanistan”s reconstruction will be of little use tomorrow.”⁶⁷

However, as strategically critical as this obviously is, it is not really a coordination issue as such, since there is, outside Kabul, no ISAF, nor any prospect thereof, to coordinate. This is a straightforward matter of a lack of political will, which has provoked considerable dismay for the assistance effort and which might still yet prove to be the undoing of this particular opportunity for peace in Afghanistan. In this respect, an international assistance strategy which is in fact bereft of key strategic instruments is not just an illusion, but arguably also a political alibi that will enable the burden of responsibility to be shifted to the assistance agencies should the peace process fail. This would affirm the proposition that strategic coordination when undertaken exclusively by assistance providers, carries with it the risk of being used as a strategic scapegoat.⁶⁸

Having acknowledged both the primacy of this matter and the fact that the issue is not one of coordination, we now turn to those strategic issues for which remedies might still lie within the grasp of the assistance community.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ This phenomenon is well described in Eriksson et al. *The Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda*, (London: ODI/HPN, 1996). UNHCR in particular, and humanitarian aid more generally are held to have “fed the killers in the camps,” whereas at the time, pleas by the high commissioner for an international force to detain the genocidaires were several times rejected by the Security Council. Few remember the latter, while many still associate UNHCR with the former.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Building strategic alliances

There are at least three reasons why structural reforms based upon the principles of “unification” and “integration” have only limited relevance to the task of improving the strategic coordination of the sprawling and variegated international assistance effort for Afghanistan.

First, the classical concept of strategy described in section 3.1 above, does not recognise the validity of independent or neutral organisational strategies as pursued by non-state and non-governmental entities. For the Red Cross movement in particular, the concept of independence is a fundamental organisational and operational principle, enshrined in international humanitarian law. The principle of organisational independence is, at least theoretically, shared by all signatories of the Red Cross and NGO Code of Conduct in Disaster Relief, which includes the majority of international NGOs operating in Afghanistan. The practice of operating independently of the interests and wishes of the Afghan government, at least during the Taliban era, has spread across the UN system also.⁶⁹ The process of strategic coordination is therefore seen by some humanitarian organisations, most notably the ICRC and MSF, as problematic in principle, even if coordination is engaged with to some degree in practice. Amongst NGOs, the concept of independence is perhaps, their defining - indeed some would argue - only common feature. For agencies such as MSF, independence is underwritten and guaranteed by private, voluntary donations, the existence and significance of which seems to be lost upon government donors, the Afghan authorities and the UN agencies. Many NGOs are offended by the assumption that they

There are many moments when the donors talk as if they were members of a cartel, but few occasions when they actually behave as one. Thus, no matter how “unified and integrated” the UN might get, in Afghanistan it is bound to continue working with an NGO and donor “community” whose members think and behave independently, and over which the UN has only the slightest financial or political leverage.

are simply implementing partners of official aid donors or UN agencies. This might be less important in other countries where government, UN, and commercial capacities offer real alternatives to the delivery of assistance. However in Afghanistan, the assistance effort still depends almost entirely upon the Afghan and international NGOs for implementation. It is certainly true that many NGOs in turn depend heavily, and some completely, upon official sources of funding.

However, as the donors also assert their independence from each other, they also inadvertently create a donor market place in which NGOs can go shopping for support for their favoured projects. There are many moments when the donors talk as if they were members of a cartel, but few occasions when they actually behave as one.

Thus, no matter how unified and integrated the UN might get, in Afghanistan it is bound to continue working with an NGO and donor community whose members think and behave independently, and over which the UN has only the slightest financial or political leverage. At present, by far the greatest proportion of implementation capacity in Afghanistan, particularly outside Kabul, is managed not by the UN or state donors, but by international and national NGOs, which are not under any legal compulsion to answer to the UN bureaucracy, no matter how much it may huff and puff.

Second, while coordination may be relatively easily achieved through the exercise of command, control and discipline in a military hierarchy, the great majority of actors in the Afghanistan assistance community are civilians operating within much more negotiable or permissive management cultures. In the case of the UN and NGOs, this includes quite large numbers of

⁶⁹ The 1998 doctrine of “Principled Common Programming” committed all UN agencies, participating donors and NGOs providing humanitarian assistance, to do so in accordance with the principles of “humanity, universality, impartiality and neutrality.” The ITAP reiterates this as the first guiding principle for assistance in January 2002.

volunteers and high proportions of short-term contracted staff, not all of whom have a corporate outlook and unto death do us part organisational loyalty. Many NGOs embrace an explicit bottom-up and participatory culture and some regard the practice of management as an alien cultural intruder.

This is not to be interpreted as a comment upon relative organisational effectiveness, but rather to draw attention to the fact that the origins of the concept of strategic coordination might imply for some the legitimisation and promotion of authoritarian management models which are highly uncharacteristic of many of those organisations over whom strategic coordination is expected to exert significant influence.

Third, while the classical concept of strategy is linked to the exercise of state power delivered through a bureaucratic hierarchy, in Afghanistan, the lead body mandated by the United Nations Security Council to do strategic coordination is not just encumbered by the problem of a proliferation of national, sub-national and non-governmental strategies at work, it is itself highly fragmented, and has a very complex and non-unitary governance structure. This prevails in spite of the creation of UNAMA. The specialist agencies, perhaps most obviously UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP, were not established under the sole authority of the Secretary-General. All have executive committees composed of member states, and in UNICEF's case, with non-governmental members and a significant amount of voluntary income. While many studies have commented rather harshly upon the fractious nature of inter-UN agency relationships, not all have recognised that the tension between agency-mandated and UN strategic goals is an inevitable and even perhaps honourable consequence of these extremely complex governance structures.⁷⁰

If strategic coordination for international assistance in Afghanistan is the task of bringing some form of coherence and complementarity to the plans and operations of all assistance actors involved, then it is obvious that the UN has neither the power nor authority to impose this using the military attributes of command, control and discipline implied by the classical meaning of coordination, and as mistakenly invoked by the Security Council.

Indeed, it would be interesting to see what a lawyer would make of the limitations placed upon the authority of the SRSG by the Security Council's requirement that his "full authority over the planning and conduct of all United Nations activities in Afghanistan" should be "in accordance with its

relevant resolutions."⁷¹ It is probable that the SRSG's real authority is in law, as well as in fact, significantly hedged by a plethora of relevant resolutions, including those of the General Assembly that provided for the governance of the UN agencies.

Having set out some of the difficulties associated with borrowing a military concept and applying it to a highly complex and contested civilian multi-agency environment, it is perhaps already apparent why the phrase "strategic coordination" often invokes caustic, although unfair, comment. The task when assigned to a UN country mission, as has happened previously in Afghanistan, raises equally unrealistic fears, as well as expectations, of its capacity to direct and control a myriad of resources and organisations which are in actuality well beyond its legal authority and institutional mandate. If strategic coordination for international assistance in Afghanistan is the task of bringing some form of coherence and complementarity to the plans and operations of all assistance actors involved, then it is obvious that the UN has neither the power nor authority to impose this using the military attributes of command, control and discipline implied by the classical meaning of coordination, and as mistakenly invoked by the Security Council. Not only does the UN Security Council itself lack such authority, it is probably the case that the task is actually made more difficult by the suspicions that the term provokes in many donors, multilaterals, specialised UN agencies and NGOs.⁷²

⁷⁰ Reindorp and Wiles, *op. cit.*

⁷¹ UN Security Council, Resolution 1401, *op. cit.*

⁷² There is a deep irony in the fact that member states are often highly reluctant to contribute to or to comply with the strategic coordination function that they demand the UN undertake. This is further compounded by the oft heard donor arguments that the UN should get its own house in order before it tries to coordinate others, when in reality it is partly at member states insistence at the executive committees of the UN agencies that the agencies retain a measure of independence from the UN Secretariat.

UN structural reform on the basis of integration and unification is probably an unhelpful and misleading distraction. In a multi-agency environment with the three characteristics described above, arming the SRSG with “total authority” at best misses

the point and at worst may make his job more difficult. What any SRSG needs is a combination of luck, charisma, a compelling argument and brilliant communications. While the first two qualities are given in grace, the latter two are the result of an effective process of strategic leadership and planning that recognises that the participation of independent agencies and their compliance with strategic policies is a function of voluntary ownership and not of blind obedience. However, for some agencies, even best practice in strategic planning will be insufficient to get them on board with the strategic objectives of the Security Council.

Humanitarian discourse is so habituated to asserting its non-political nature, especially in militarily disputed contexts in which to be partisan is also to be a potential target, that the basic default of the great majority of humanitarian organisations is to be antagonistic towards the political objectives for international assistance proposed by the Security Council and UNAMA. In the classical sense, humanitarianism does not subscribe to any strategic objective, at least beyond saving lives. To attempt to cajole humanitarian organisations into a process of strategic, as opposed to operational, coordination is therefore bound to meet stiff resistance if this is felt to compromise their core values and mandate. It is important, therefore, that organisational reluctance to take part in a coordination process should not necessarily be interpreted as an indication that the agency is also hostile towards Afghanistan or that its activities are necessarily politically damaging. One large international humanitarian NGO in Afghanistan is determined to avoid any

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A separate humanitarian coordination system explicitly “uncontaminated” by political objectives, is therefore much more likely to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the humanitarian agencies, as they will be far more inclined to cooperate with such a body.

association with the UN’s political objectives and yet it is running a major programme that almost certainly has significant, although unintended, political utility, deriving from the considerable expansion of its programme which has taken place since

the collapse of the Taliban regime. This might be lost to the country entirely if overly strenuous efforts are made to force it into a coordination system with explicit political objectives, as many AIA, donors and UN staff express their desire to do. Not only is this a waste of effort on the part of already over-worked senior personnel, it may also be deeply damaging to the credibility of the peace process if it had the effect of causing the contraction or closure of highly valued public services provided by that particular humanitarian agency.

Instead, a separate humanitarian coordination system explicitly “uncontaminated” by political objectives is therefore much more likely to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the work of the humanitarian agencies, as they will be far more inclined to cooperate with such a body. The political utility of this apolitical coordination system would almost certainly be greater from the AIA/ATA/UNAMA point of view, than an approach which attempts to integrate the political with the humanitarian and which thereby generates purposeless dissonance, provokes agency disengagement, reduces the production or delivery of public goods, and which may consequently undermine public confidence in the peace process.

However, there are many development organisations that consider the political objectives of peace-building to be a perfectly legitimate purpose for aid, even though some may be reluctant to establish an explicitly partisan objective as the primary goal of their work. Nevertheless, such agencies would probably be very willing to participate in a strategic

coordination process that focussed upon means of enhancing their collective political utility in support of the peace process. This is far more difficult to do when humanitarian agencies are in the room disputing the legitimacy of such goals, as tends to happen at present. Instead, were a group of politically like-minded donors, UN agencies and NGOs to be convened by AIA/ATA/UNAMA, a considerably more constructive process of strategic coordination would be possible than it is at present. A distinct process of recovery/development coordination would assist in the identification of donors and agencies that are impatient with the "wait and see" attitude of others. Collective will in large and highly diverse

groups tends to be of the minimalist, lowest common denominator variety. Such group dynamics typify meetings organised under the conventional aid coordination categories based upon geography, technical sector or type (UN, donor or NGO) which places them in groupings that have no strategic sensitivity and where boldness of approach tends to be discouraged. It is clear that the political strategy of the UN led assistance effort will require risk-taking and innovation, but it is quite implausible to envisage all agencies and donors agreeing to engage with this. By convening "one-size fits all" coordination groupings, the risk-takers and innovators amongst the UN, the donors and the NGOs are likely to be swamped by those sticking to more technocratic and apolitical approaches. It is arguably the case that Afghanistan can benefit from both, but that coordination in its current form is likely to encourage neither, and instead can become a stultifying and expensive exercise in political gridlock. In addition, for those organisations with a unique mandate and objectives, with only restricted or earmarked funds, and no peers or competitors to trip over, time and resources spent on coordination carries a significant opportunity cost and provides no "strategic" benefit whatsoever.

Such poor coordination outcomes stem mainly from the invalid assumption that commonly used

A "one size fits all" approach to NGO coordination either fills up rooms with agency representatives deploying no significant strategic assets, or excludes some of the largest, best informed and most influential assistance actors completely. As a consequence of the failure of the formal coordination arrangements to bring the key strategic players together in a manageable forum, informal coordination arrangements or discussion groups have emerged instead, but without the requisite time, space, support and mandate to make best strategic use of them.

generic labels, such as "NGO", "donor" and "UN agency," have some sort of strategic validity. The least useful of all these terms must certainly be "NGO", which unhelpfully disguises enormous diversity in terms of size, capability, objectives and governance. Coordination arrangements that

treat NGOs as a single homogenous group will inevitably be sub-optimal. Some NGOs dispose of more financial resources in Afghanistan than certain donors. A number deploy significant sums of privately donated assets. Some are simply private contractors and others barely exist outside a briefcase. A "one size fits all" approach to NGO coordination either fills up rooms with agency representatives

deploying no significant strategic assets, or excludes some of the largest, best informed and most influential assistance actors completely. As a consequence of the failure of the formal coordination arrangements to bring the key strategic players together in a manageable forum, informal coordination arrangements or discussion groups have emerged instead, but without the requisite time, space, support and mandate to make best strategic use of them.

Finally, it is worth pointing out here, the ambiguous position of the World Bank, playing perhaps the most highly politicised role of all aid agencies in Afghanistan, but formally bound by statute to be non-political in its programme objectives. The Bank's community development programme perhaps best exemplifies the strange contradictions in its position, designed primarily to promote and legitimate new democratic local authorities to undermine the regional and ethnic warlords, but somehow contorted into an economic/community development exercise. The formal pretence of the non-political nature of the World Bank's programme in Afghanistan constrains the possibility of an open and accountable process of strategic coordination when the Bank is involved, and yet undermines the process when such a pivotal player excludes itself. The non-political mandates of UNHCR, WFP and UNICEF create similar problems.⁷³

⁷³ M. Cutts, "Politics and Humanitarianism," *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, Vol. 17. No 1. (Geneva: UNHCR, 1998).

Recommendations

- A new approach, based upon a combination of compelling argument and the identification of strategically like-minded UN agencies, NGOs and donors, organised through the principle of complementarity rather than integration should be adopted. In a complex multi-agency international assistance operation, strategic coordination is only possible between those entities which share common strategic objectives. This can not be achieved solely or even in significant part through structural reforms of the UN country mission, even with regard to the UN system itself. To begin with, a clear separation should be made between one coordination process specifically created for humanitarian agencies that are obliged to be neutral by mandate or choice, and another for those which are willing and able to support the political/peace-building strategy.
- The ambiguous position of the World Bank should be resolved. By its constitution the World Bank is obliged to be non-political, but in Afghanistan it is implementing perhaps the most politicised of all of the international aid programmes. Officially in denial of its political objectives, the World Bank is thus constrained as a player within any formal strategic coordination process, to the understandable consternation of others. If necessary, donors should consider channelling funds through multilateral channels which are not handicapped in this manner.
- The focus of strategic coordination should be upon the 10 or 20 percent political “additionality” that might be provided by the agencies and donors rather than pursuing vain attempts to convert the agencies as a whole to a political/peace-building agenda. Eighty percent of assistance is probably fixed through pre-existing mandate and donor commitments. Much of this may be worthy even if largely insignificant in terms of political impact. The key challenge is therefore to craft the use of the remaining notional twenty percent in an innovative and politically value-added manner. This is where the very limited and desperately over-stretched capacity of the senior personnel of the international aid effort should focus their energies, rather than pursuing rhetorically macho (and thus within the prevailing culture of the assistance effort, very attractive) sounding policies, that actually have no hope whatsoever of being fulfilled.
- Management energy currently being wasted in considering ways to “control the NGOs” should be redirected towards a more effective process of inter-agency cooperation within the UN system and amongst the bilateral donors. While like-mindedness is the most essential strategic starting principle, complementarity comes in a close second. This will often require the courage to agree to disagree and to manage the consequences of these disagreements in the least damaging manner. Often that would mean not wasting scarce management time on matters that relate to intractable factors such as formal agency mandates. It also requires the wisdom to leave well alone when no benefit is to be gained through coordination.

6.2 Communications - a strategic vacuum

The art of modern political spin does not derive from a competition between ever more grossly inflated and undeliverable political promises. Instead, it starts from an understanding of the personal aspirations of voters, and the crafting of public policy to chime with those in a realistic way. This is a critical lesson for the international assistance effort for Afghanistan to learn. An information void will always be filled and, if not

by the protagonists of peace, then by the protagonists for violent conflict. For a transition strategy to gain the popular support of the majority of Afghans, they must be confident that the leadership and the process of transition are perceived to be reasonably fair and that the benefits of change, the so-called “peace dividend,” will be “fairly” distributed.⁷⁴

At present, donor, UN and NGO communications seem to be almost entirely concerned with

⁷⁴ It should be noted that “fair” is almost certainly a culturally relative concept.

promoting their own profiles, primarily for fund-raising purposes. This is not just failing in the basic purpose of a communications strategy; it is probably actually counter-productive with regard to the peace process itself. Frequent trumpeting of overwhelming donor generosity and inflated claims of UN and NGO impact are almost the sole diet that feeds public opinion concerning the international aid effort in Afghanistan. There appears to be widespread and growing cynicism, reinforced by the “light footprint” debacle described below, about who will be the principal beneficiaries of the Tokyo aid pledges.

A growing thread of Afghan opinion asserts that the only people dependent upon international aid for Afghanistan are the aid employees themselves. Over-hyped agency and donor profiling communications strategies raise public expectations, and subsequently and inevitably generate public disappointment and disenchantment. Whether or not the aid system is corrupt to the core and enriching itself and a small coterie of local collaborators at the expense of the Afghan public is, from a political perspective, irrelevant. If that is the belief which informs Afghan public opinion as a consequence of misguided efforts to impress donors or the domestic constituents in donor countries, the damage will be done in any case. The impact of the quite extraordinary proliferation of agency/ donor signboards, attached to just about any object that can be construed of as a product of international assistance is another example of communications driven by “marketing default” rather than by strategic design or purpose. What actual effect the rash of agency signboards has upon public opinion in Afghanistan is unknown and un-researched, but it is quite possible to construct a plausible case for considerable political disutility arising from them.

On a wider front, there seems little interest or effort made to understand Afghan public

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opinion and the impact that international assistance policies and practices are having upon it. Yet, at the heart of UN/AACA assistance strategies, either with or without conditionalities, is the premise that public confidence in the peace process and in the legitimacy of the AIA and the

ATA, will be enhanced through the early manifestation of “public goods” being delivered, be these in the form of new roads, education services or community development projects. For some students of social and cultural change processes, the

model may be over simplified. From a materialist perspective, it may be incomplete without the inclusion of a broader understanding of the public and private benefits to be foregone through giving up alternative “warlord economic enterprises,” such as the production of narcotics or illegal cross border trafficking. From the real-politik perspective, the model may also be inadequate as it fails to take account of the distribution of weapons and the means of violence. But, notwithstanding any of these shortcomings, the model nevertheless exists and is quite explicitly presented as the centrepiece of the UNAMA international aid effort strategy.

It is therefore very odd that the key partner in this strategy, that is the Afghan public at large, is not subject to any kind of systematic opinion polling and opinion trends analysis at all. Furthermore, fears about government intentions toward the NGOs is marginalising their relatively better access to public opinion, which in the absence of more systematic polling, is a precious planning resource given the nature of the task confronting the assistance agencies. As a result, the international assistance effort and the AIA coordination process are, in effect, steering almost entirely in the dark. For example, there is no reliable corroborating evidence that the “Back to School” programme is the most effective means available to the international assistance effort for enhancing public confidence. It could be that improving access to water, as

distinct from simply extending irrigation systems, would have a far greater political effect, as suggested by Sue Lautze's recent USAID study, a paper that provides one of the rare insights into the state of Afghan public opinion provided by the aid effort. Others argue that the restoration of

basic personal freedom of movement to enable people to resume productive and trading activities in safety is the most popular priority in Afghanistan. Who knows for sure?

Interestingly, ISAF, with some 70 civil liaison staff engaged in regular and detailed opinion surveys as part of their extremely sophisticated approach to force protection probably has the most extensive knowledge of public opinion within Kabul. Sadly, the information gathered is unavailable to the civilian assistance effort, although given the purpose for which it is collected; it may have only limited relevance in any case. Nevertheless, the ISAF operation offers one of the rare examples of good practice in consulting and responding to public opinion in Afghanistan. The civilian aid agencies ought to feel embarrassed by their amateurish approach in comparison. Certainly the international aid effort in general is very poorly informed about

On a wider front, there seems little interest or effort made to understand Afghan public opinion and the impact that international assistance policies and practices are having upon it. Yet, at the heart of UN/AACA assistance strategies, either with or without conditionalities, is the premise that public confidence in the peace process and in the legitimacy of the AIA and the ATA, will be enhanced through the early manifestation of "public goods" being delivered.

There can surely be no more important objective for the strategic planning process in Afghanistan, whether led by the AACA or by the UN, than to find effective ways of making the Afghan public a real strategic partner in setting priorities for the international assistance effort.

the most effective way of building public confidence. Efforts made to ascertain the extent of public satisfaction or goodwill even towards the agencies themselves, such as that undertaken by the Humanitarian Accountability Project in Herat, are all too rare. There can surely be no more

important objective for the strategic planning process in Afghanistan, whether led by the AACA or by the UN, than to find effective ways of making the Afghan public a real strategic partner in setting priorities for the international assistance effort.

The urgent task for international assistance is to buy time for the peace process, basically through the provision of popular public goods, as opposed to the dumping of aid agency/donor supply-side driven products, amidst misleading and damaging claims of impact. The assistance effort has perhaps one year to 18 months to make a real difference. If an effective communications strategy is able to assert some influence over the manner in which the assistance organisations behave, there may still be enough time for some parts of the international aid system to listen, learn, change and have significant impact.

Recommendations

- Given that the UN has adopted an explicit strategy of using international recovery and development assistance for building public confidence in the peace process, then it is logical that the full range of political tools should be deployed in support of this strategy. Most obviously, the international aid effort requires a genuine communications strategy, rather than a public relations policy, that is capable of distilling public opinion, measuring attitude trends and identifying popular priorities drawn from realistic policy options.
- Donor governments should draw upon their domestic political expertise (for example, in the technique of focus group research methods) to enhance the capacity of UNAMA and the AIA/ATA to better understand and respond more effectively to public opinion in the formation of international assistance and national development strategies.
- A study of the political/peace-building utility and disutility of agency/donor signboards should be carried out with some urgency and guidelines adopted for the use of these if so indicated.

6.3 Transition from *de jure* to *de facto* government coordination

While the new sovereign authority of Afghanistan might enjoy full international recognition, it has still to extend its authority over all of its *de jure* territory.⁷⁵ While the new Interim Administration is expected to be in the “driver’s seat” in planning the national development framework, its capacity to coordinate programme implementation within the provinces and within certain sectors is very mixed. In some provinces, it needs help to get a driving seat, let alone sit in it. It is a healthy sign that the capacity building and “Afghanisation” policies highlighted in the NDF acknowledge this problem. However, in the meantime, the *de facto* local authorities in many parts of Afghanistan are not answerable to the AIA and some probably oppose it outright. The migration of *de facto* UN/NGO/donor authority to *de facto* AIA/ATA authority is thus a highly complex political process. Yet, despite the fact that this process is at the very heart of the AIA/ATA’s and the Security Council’s expectations of what the UN, donors and NGOs will do to deliver a key element in the strategy of lending legitimacy to the peace process, there appears to be no plan or process of negotiation to manage and monitor this. While the NDF provides a strategic vision, it is largely devoid of guidance with respect to this critical political objective, and instead seems to assume the near-immediate fulfilment of the Afghanisation policy through capacity building and the return of Afghans from exile. While these processes might indeed create the necessary *de facto* capacity over time, it appears that the planning assumptions upon which the Afghanisation policy and arguably the peace process itself rests, have not been generated from a comprehensive and practical critical path analysis. While it is obviously vital that the numerous “batons” that must change hands are neither passed prematurely and dropped into a void, nor fought over with similar results,

Even then, it is important to recognise that the Afghanisation policy can not independently bring about the territorial expansion of the AIA/ATA’s authority. In some provinces those required to surrender authority to the AIA and its successors are other Afghan powers, rather than the UN and the NGOs, and if anything “de-Afghanisation” through the expansion of ISAF might be a necessary prior approach in such areas.

there are grounds to fear that both may indeed happen. For this process to be successfully implemented, a realistic timetable for the orderly handing-over of policy and coordination functions needs to be negotiated with the relevant parties.

Even then, it is important to recognise that the Afghanisation policy can not independently bring about the territorial expansion of the AIA/ATA’s authority. In some provinces those required to surrender authority to the AIA and its successors are other Afghan powers, rather than the UN and the NGOs, and if anything “de-Afghanisation” through the expansion of ISAF might be a necessary prior approach in such areas. The AACA almost seems to take the view that because it has *de jure* authority, it can therefore practice *de facto* authority, more or less at the flick of a switch. This view has been reinforced by the Security Council’s injunction that international assistance should be passed through the AIA. This has several repercussions. First, it has created some mistrust and suspicion amongst NGOs, donors and line ministries. Second, at the time of the field research it had created a potential bottleneck in the process of project authorisation due to the very limited capacity of the AACA. Third, many agencies operating in the more autonomous regions feel trapped between the “rock” of Kabul based policies and the political “hard-place” of warlord fiefdoms. Fourth, the Security Council’s credibility is undermined by a proposition that is both impractical and which could be self-defeating of its own strategic objective. The combined effect is that agency and donor goodwill is possibly beginning to ebb, although in the absence of a functional communications strategy, this remains, regrettably, a matter of

guesswork. If the linkage between agency effectiveness and public opinion concerning the peace process is as significant as the strategy for international assistance assumes, this logically must have the equal and opposite potential for denting public goodwill too. It is therefore essential

⁷⁵ Report of the Secretary-General, Section III.

that the organisational development dimensions of the transition objective are professionally and realistically planned in a manner that provides

confidence for all parties that appropriate human resources standards will be applied.

Recommendations

- A comprehensive organisational development plan for the transition process, disaggregated by function, agency and geography should be developed.
- Simple critical success indicators of capacity building targets, appropriate human resource standards and vital events or milestones need to be negotiated with all the relevant parties.
- The plan, targets and human resource standards adopted for the transition process should be genuinely transparent. This quality will not be achieved through the use of the Internet alone. Much more accessible communication channels should also be used.
- The process of transition should allow for some degree of flexibility and, with regard to certain strategically vital activities, it should be conditional upon agreed levels of capacity being secured by the AIA/ATA, and reversible in the light of unexpected events that significantly reduce capacity below an agreed critical mass.

6.4 Human Rights and aid conditionalities

Resolution 1401 makes the provision of recovery and reconstruction aid conditional upon local authorities having “contributed to the maintenance of a secure environment and demonstrated respect for human rights.” This policy is not apparently being implemented by the United Nations, nor is it being observed by the bilateral and NGO aid delivery mechanisms.⁷⁶ On the evidence offered by the Pillar Two Management Plan, there also appears to be no intention to work out how to put the conditionalities into practice. There is much confusion about the status of this strategy, but for the time being at least, it remains on the UN statute book and its early dereliction generates a more general sense of uncertainty about which, if any, Security Council pronouncements should be taken seriously, even by the UN system itself. Yet it has already raised expectations both within the UN system and beyond, that this early initiative to signal international impatience with human rights violations would be followed through and subsequently reinforced with further judicial measures. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights call for a truth commission during her visit

to Kabul in early 2002 seemed to consolidate the expectation that new human rights and humanitarian protection commitments would be central to the UN’s relationship with the AIA and its successors. Instead, there is disquiet expressed within the “human rights community” that the human rights monitoring function has been placed in the SRSG’s office, where it is seen by some to be subject to tight political control. The writ of the Security Council and the ascribed authority of the SRSG combined, have little or no impact upon the perceived effectiveness of UNAMA’s human rights strategy. The credibility of UNAMA’s arrangements for human rights monitoring is low, and further undermined by the relatively slow progress made in establishing the judicial reform and human rights commissions envisaged in the Bonn Agreement.

Countering these arguments, UNAMA points to its commitment to main-streaming humanitarian protection and human rights. It continues to claim that the promotion of human rights standards is central to its mission in Afghanistan. However, it argues that this objective can now be pursued more effectively through political channels, where diplomatic discretion in making human rights

⁷⁶ In the case of one major international NGO encountering serious human rights violations, the only action taken has been to report the matter in confidence to a human rights NGO. This is probably fairly normal practice for humanitarian NGOs in Afghanistan, in spite of the Security Council’s stated position.

demarches to a friendly and recognised government should not be interpreted as a de-prioritisation of human rights. It is argued that public denunciations could be very destabilising of a new regime struggling to persuade the Afghan warlords to mend their ways and to voluntarily cede their power to the new political dispensation. These matters are indeed very complex. An argument sometimes advanced is that respect for human rights is an outcome or a product of development, and that it would be unreasonable and self-defeating to make respect for human rights a pre-condition of development assistance. A second argument suggests that in Afghanistan, security must come first and that the “maintenance of a secure environment” by local authorities, the other requirement laid down by the Security Council, can only be achieved by allowing those authorities to commit minor violations of human rights. It is argued that in a state with collapsed judicial, police and prisons systems, upholding the principles of habeus corpus, the rights of free association and assembly, due process in detention and interrogation procedures, and so on, might so disable the authorities, that maintenance of public order and security would be impossible to achieve. Thus, it is argued, temporary and minor lapses in the observance of human rights standards are a necessary and pragmatic trade-off in the early establishment of a secure environment. This is the argument that to defeat evil, maybe one has sometimes to do a little evil.

This study is unable to offer any empirical evidence about which of these arguments is valid in

Afghanistan. But whatever the case, the UN specifically and the assistance effort more generally gives the appearance of being in disarray on a matter upon which the Security Council has, rather unusually, expressed a clear and firm position.

In addition to the confusion over principles and policies, there is also some ambiguity surrounding the institutional arrangements for human rights monitoring. In the Bonn Agreement, the responsibility for this was given to an independent Human Rights Commission, to be established by the AIA with support from the UN. Within UNAMA, the human rights monitoring function has been placed in Pillar One, while overall responsibility for human rights activities rests with the office of the SRSG. It is charged with “investigating human rights violations and, where necessary, recommending corrective action.” Thus, for Pillar Two, where the implementation of the UN assistance strategy has to be managed, guidance or perhaps even instruction to withhold assistance from certain areas due to human rights violations might be expected to come from either the Human Rights Commission, or from the SRSG’s office. The Secretary-General stated that, “once the HRC is established and functioning, the UN will be in a better position to further develop its plans for fulfilling the human-rights related responsibilities entrusted to it in the Bonn Agreement.”⁷⁷ This might conceivably place Pillar Two in a position where it receives contradictory advice from two bodies both with formal human rights monitoring responsibilities. Unfortunately, neither the SRSG’s office nor the Human Rights Commission inspires widespread

Recommendations

- The UN Security Council and UNAMA need to clarify their policies on human rights and aid conditionalities. It is quite conceivable that there may be irreconcilable differences between the Security Council and UNAMA, and between UN agencies, donors, NGOs and the AIA/ATA. It is better that these are acknowledged and then managed on an “agree to disagree” basis, than to allow critical amounts of senior management time to be swallowed up in the politics generated by the current confusion.
- The independence of the Human Rights Commission should be reviewed. If it is to be in fact a government led commission, it is inappropriate for it to be called “independent”. If instead the spirit of the Bonn Agreement is to be upheld, the composition of the Commission needs reconsidering and adequate international support for it should be availed rapidly.
- The institutional arrangements for human rights monitoring are currently confused and unsatisfactory. The decision to place the human rights monitoring function within the SRSG’s office should be reconsidered. The possibility of merging the function into a revitalised and genuinely independent Human Rights Commission as envisaged by the Bonn Agreement should be considered.

⁷⁷ Report of the Secretary-General, op. cit.

confidence amongst the human rights agencies in their capacity to offer a genuinely “independent” view of human rights observance by the authorities in Afghanistan. Thus the status of advice or recommendations from either body would be subject to some doubt too.

6.5 Gender policy

Throughout the documentation describing the international assistance effort for Afghanistan, there are frequent references made to “gender issues”, to “gender mainstreaming” and to “gender equity.” These are not one and the same thing, but in conversations with a wide cross-section of aid officials, on the rare occasions when they are referred to at all, they often seem to be used interchangeably. One could speculate endlessly about the reasons for the dissonance between the policies of the UN, the donors and the AIA. Perhaps more importantly, it is doubtful whether any sort of meaningful gender policy implementation is possible when there appears to be such widespread apathy or disinterest in the matter on the one hand and such confusion about critical policy choices on the other. Quite understandably and predictably, as with the human rights debate, one detects a growing sense of dismay about the gulf between written gender

policy and “actual” gender policy as heard in verbal discourse and as observed in practice. This is likely to lead to growing demands upon senior management time to resolve the confusion over the strategic objective for gender policy. This issue goes to the heart of the debate about who is in the driving seat, what degree of autonomy the “driver” has, and what, if any, rules or principles are applied to driving conduct. Although there appears to be considerable apathy concerning gender policy within the international assistance effort, there also appears to be a substantive difference between the position of many donors, UN agencies and NGOs on the one hand, and the AIA/ATA on the other. The gender policy described in the NDF also no doubt represents a compromise between a wide range of Afghan views about the rights of women and girls. It is very likely that the current confusion over gender policy will become a significant and time-consuming issue for managers dealing with the intra-agency, inter-agency and agency/government interfaces. As with other dimensions of public policy in Afghanistan, this matter is too important to be treated as a minor row between the international assistance community and the new Afghan administration. A well-informed public debate about gender related rights and public policy in Afghanistan is needed.

Recommendations:

- A strategic gender policy review should be conducted jointly by the ATA/AACA and UNAMA, with donor, IFI and NGO participation. This should also seek to promote a well informed public debate and involve a more systematic sampling of public opinion on the issue of gender based rights and gender-sensitive public policies.
- While opinions might vary sharply about strategic policy options, the obligations of the AIA/ATA in terms of its treaty obligations, perhaps particularly regarding the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), should be used as a benchmark for policy development and in coordinating the international aid effort.

6.6 Humanitarian principles

At the insistence of the Secretary-General, the UN Security Council, with the backing of the main donors, and the apparent acquiescence of the UN agencies and many international NGOs, have taken a gamble with the integration of large parts of the humanitarian system into an explicitly partisan political project. If this fails, and Afghanistan returns to a conflict driven humanitarian crisis, it is highly unlikely that the agencies will be able

to return to the situation *ex ante*, with their impartial humanitarian status intact. For those humanitarian agencies perceived to be associated with the UN’s “regime change legitimization” strategy, there seems little doubt but that their neutral or non partisan status will have been compromised in the eyes of those opposed to the new political dispensation. Therefore, humanitarian access to contested areas may in future be subject to greatly increased risk, all the more so for those agencies known to have

embraced the policy of using international assistance in a bid to legitimise the new government and the peace process.

Yet, while there is little to suggest that conventional humanitarian assistance and protection is no longer required in Afghanistan, there seems to be provision for such action within the NDF.

The AACA has also adopted a policy that merges humanitarian and development objectives. The NDF sets out two programmes as priorities under its Humanitarian, Human and Social Capital pillar. These are referred to as the National Solidarity Programme (the World Bank funded community development programme) and “Ten key areas for special attention” programme. Neither of these initiatives is likely to conform with the standard principles of humanitarianism, as neither has a primary life-saving objective. Both might be described as instrumentalised quasi-humanitarian programmes.⁷⁸ Yet, while there is little to suggest

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that conventional humanitarian assistance and protection is no longer required in Afghanistan, there seems to be provision for such action within the NDF.

The entry of the CJCMOTF into humanitarian space, and the funding of its humanitarian operations by USAID, both serve to deepen the appearance of the integration of the political and the humanitarian systems. The NGOs concerns about the CJCMOTF’s practice of deploying staff and vehicles in the field without clear military markings, has been partially addressed, and an uneasy military/civilian co-existence now exists. However, it is unproven that the strategic benefits of this use of Coalition Military force capacity outweighs the potential humanitarian costs that are now being incurred by associating the language and the identity of conventional civilian humanitarianism with the military objectives of intelligence gathering, winning “hearts and minds,” and force protection.⁷⁹

Recommendations:

- The AACA should review the NDF in consultation with the humanitarian agencies and establish a national policy that humanitarian assistance is provided on the basis of need, and in accordance with the other Red Cross principles.
- As recommended above, UNAMA should establish a separate humanitarian coordination mechanism, the sole strategic objective of which would be to prevent excess morbidity and mortality. Some mutually agreed fora for information exchange between humanitarian and non-humanitarian actors should be continued.
- If the primary purpose of using CJCMOTF for “humanitarian purposes” is in fact for force protection, as ISAF acknowledge with regard to their civil/military operation, then at the very least the adoption of the language and the symbols of conventional humanitarian actors by CJCMOTF should be ended forthwith.

6.7 The “light footprint”

The “light footprint” is a desired quality relating to the means of providing international assistance, yet it has been elevated by UNAMA to the status of a strategic objective in its own right. By mixing

up means and ends in this way, the UN has created a situation in which the attainment of its highest level strategic objectives might be compromised by the unintended effects of its own operational policy.

⁷⁸ N. Stockton, NGOs and Peace-Operations in the Post 11 September Context, Geneva Centre for Security Studies Conference (Geneva: March 2002).

⁷⁹ In July 2002, some NGOs remained unconvinced about the CJCMOTF’s assurances on this matter.

It seems that every agency is at liberty to determine what “light” should mean for itself, and also what “light” should mean for others, apparently, with no requirement that the criteria should be universal. The “light footprint” has thus become a hostage to fortune and has probably already produced many “own-goals,” each one further undermining the credibility of the UN system. Unfortunately, without any objective standards to measure the weight of an organisational footprint, accusations of being in breach of the policy are easy to make, and difficult to disprove. This creates an irrational but very real pressure upon managers, which encourages

a tendency to under-estimate the human resources that are required to deliver programmes. The impact upon the unfortunates tasked to deliver in such under-capacitated circumstances is destructive of confidence and morale. Although politically and economically correct in principle, the “light footprint” policy is likely to be deeply unfair in practice, offering endless opportunities to undermine individuals and to discredit agencies. The UN risks sustaining considerable damage to its own reputation and to the careers of many of its staff if it persists with this policy without simultaneously providing standards for the interpretation and application of it.

Recommendations:

- The light footprint policy should be demoted from its status as a UN strategic objective and re-designated as an operational guideline. In spite of this well-intentioned initiative and the crucial need to control agency management/programme ratios, it should be acknowledged that there are as yet no objective standards for measuring the “weight of an institutional footprint.”
- However, transparency concerning the costs of management and coordination should be adopted as a reporting principle by all agencies.
- A management system and culture which rewards organisational development policies that promote achievement over effort, and management information over data, should be encouraged as an alternative to the “light footprint” policy.

7. Strategic Coordination - An Academic Footnote

In spite of the consensus amongst academics and practitioners that aid coordination is, by definition, a good thing, the evidence continues to accumulate that, in practice, “strategic” coordination is usually beset with difficulties and shortcomings.⁸⁰ In spite of his conviction about the value of humanitarian coordination, Donini also argued that any attempt to coordinate development, humanitarian and peacekeeping through structural integration would be “tantamount to a reduction ad absurdam.”⁸¹

This argument is based upon Donini’s observation that the objectives and organisational cultures of the development, humanitarian and peacekeeping communities are essentially irreconcilable within a single, unitary organisational structure, and that some “inter-mingling” and coordination by consensus rather than coordination by command is a better arrangement at this level. In spite of Donini’s observation, “reduction ad absurdam” continues to feature as a standard recommendation in almost all studies of aid coordination and has become the favoured paradigm for managing complex UN operations.

However, what these coordination studies have so failed to provide is a cost-benefit case to support the prevailing prejudice about the added value of investment in coordination. The counterfactual evidence of the strategic benefits of “coordination by default” has not been properly examined. Conversely, as opportunity costs associated with coordination are simply not recognised, more or less by definition, recommendations for additional coordination capacity and ever more onerous coordination processes are regularly made with no consideration of the financial or humanitarian consequences. In spite of its other immediate disadvantages for the agencies operating in Afghanistan, the “light footprint” policy has at least asserted the principle that aid management (including coordination) has a social welfare opportunity cost, which can be calculated in terms of lives not saved and public goods foregone. This gives recognition to the fact that there is a high price to be paid for

over investing in strategic coordination. It is in the failure to acknowledge the financial and opportunity costs of coordination that the continued use of Minear’s definition may, inadvertently, have established a tradition in aid coordination studies that treats the financial and opportunity costs of coordination as free or sunk, rather than as a levy upon the scarce resources allocated to the sick, the dying and the destitute in the poorest corners of the world.

While this study has not been able to analyse the opportunity costs of strategic coordination from an economic and humanitarian perspective (and it is recommended that future studies do so), it does take issue with the view that coordination is an unmitigated good for another reason. Minear’s definition implies, and most subsequent coordination studies appear to assume, that aid organisations share common, or at least complementary objectives and that strategic coordination as an outcome is possible, and thus as a process, worth investing in. Given the evidence of multiple state and non-state strategies at work in Afghanistan, this is a questionable assumption. If in fact the strategies are sufficiently diverse or conflicting, then strategic coordination as such is impossible, since by definition coordination requires as a given that all the elements of the group share a common goal, even though their individual contributions may be complementary rather than coherent. It seems unlikely, on the face of it, that the diversity of nations and agencies involved in providing “assistance” to Afghanistan are doing so in pursuit of common or even complementary objectives. It is not enough to assume that by describing the work of an organisation as providing international assistance that this confers upon those actions a strategic purpose shared by all other providers of assistance. In the highly contested political context of Afghanistan, this would be a naive assumption. This point should not be interpreted as referring to the possibility of sinister links between agencies or states and terrorist networks. Such may exist, but that is a matter for those

⁸⁰ K. von Brabant, *Opening the Black Box: An Outline of a Framework to Understand, Promote and Evaluate Humanitarian Coordination*, (London: ODI, 1999).

⁸¹ Donini, *The Policies of Mercy*, op. cit., 121.

involved in other vocations. Rather, the point is that the objectives of development and humanitarian agencies are of a sufficiently distinct nature that it is questionable as to whether “harmonious integration” would ever be possible, raising the question as to whether “strategic coordination” is the right tool or process for managing the relationship between them. While apples and oranges are both wonderful fruit in their own right, the integrated coordination of them, can easily produce something which is both expensive and unpalatable, and which bears a serious opportunity cost for the thirsty.

Finally, because the academic studies have typically treated the strategic objectives of humanitarian assistance as an unproblematic and universally given, the emergence of “new humanitarianisms” which incorporate security and political objectives, further invalidates the Minear model of strategic coordination. Now that Mary Anderson’s “do no harm” aid paradigm of building “local capacities for peace” has moved from the fringe to the centre stage of aid strategy, the time has come to more fully understand the

impact, effectiveness and broader consequences of this re-politicised new humanitarianism. The incorporation of social pacification objectives into the international assistance agenda, spurred on by the events of 11 September, has encouraged this new aid orthodoxy, even though it is unproven in empirical terms, and conceptually very shaky. The international assistance effort for Afghanistan represents this new approach in its clearest and most explicit form. Above all else, this deserves a commensurate effort to subject the new approach to rigorous examination as to its effectiveness and impact, intended or otherwise. While the joint-agency evaluation of the 1994 Rwanda crisis is not without its flaws, it nevertheless represents an almost unique attempt to analyse and evaluate the international aid system as a whole. It threw down a challenge to make international aid more coherent with political objectives. This approach, in turn, is now due for a thorough, system-wide review. Afghanistan, and many other countries now being subjected to the policies of “aid-induced pacification,” deserves no less.

Appendix A

AFGHANISTAN RESEARCH & EVALUATION UNIT TERMS OF REFERENCE STRATEGIC COORDINATION CONSULTANT

BACKGROUND

The strategic coordination of assistance efforts for Afghans has always been challenging. One contributing factor in the past was that with ongoing conflict and no recognized government the locus of coordination and assistance activities was based primarily in Pakistan (Islamabad for the UN and donors and Peshawar for NGOs). Donors, UN agencies and NGOs all struggled with how to improve coordination both within their respective constituencies, as well as collectively between the constituencies. In 1997-98 a major effort was initiated to address strategic coordination concerns, and to promote coherence between the political and humanitarian objectives of the international community. This process culminated in the establishment of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (SFA), and its field level process known as Principled Common Programming (PCP). Assistance efforts have generally been coordinated, with mixed results, under the umbrella of the SFA and PCP from 1998 up to the present. In 2001 the Strategic Monitoring Unit (the former name of AREU) organized an external evaluation of the SFA.

THE CURRENT CONTEXT

The devastating drought in Afghanistan, the establishment of a recognized interim administration under the Bonn Agreement, and the dramatic increase in assistance and assistance actors, have all contributed to growing questions and concerns about the strategic coordination of assistance efforts for Afghans. Some of the questions and issues raised are as follows:

- Confusion about the future of past coordination processes and organizations, and the role of new coordination processes and organizations.
- If and how to promote coherence between political and humanitarian objectives.

- How to relate coordination organizations and processes to a recognized government.
- How to coordinate between different levels (e.g., province, region and national, and between field and headquarters” levels).
- Lack of clarity about the differences between coordination, cooperation and information sharing.
- Whether or not the interests of some assistance actors are so fundamentally different that coordination of some activities may not be a realistic objective.
- If and how to coordinate with coalition military forces also involved in assistance activities.
- Growing frustration at the amount of staff time spent in “coordination meetings”, often with few visible results.
- Is the international humanitarian and development “system” reformable?

Some of the coordination-related organizations and processes at present at the field level are as follows:

Afghanistan Interim Authority

- Afghanistan Assistance Coordination Authority (ACA)

Donors

- Afghanistan Support Group (ASG)
- Implementation Group (IG)
- Steering Group
- Troika (past, current and future ASG Chairs)

UN

- Regional Coordination Officers (RCOs)
- UNAMA
- UN Heads of Agencies meetings
- UNOCHA

NGOs

- Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR)
- Afghanistan NGO Coordination Body (ANCB)
- Islamic Coordination Council (ICC)
- Kabul NGO Forum.

Coalition

- Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells (CHLC)
- Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operational Task Force (CJCMOTF)

Inter-Agency

- Afghanistan Programming Body (APB)
- APB Standing Committee
- Emergency Task Force (ETF)
- Principled Common Programming (PCP)
- Regional Coordination Bodies (RCBs),

- Strategic Framework for Afghanistan (SFA)
- Thematic and Sectoral working groups

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this consultancy is to prepare an issues paper on the strategic coordination of assistance efforts in Afghanistan that documents and analyzes the current coordination situation, draws out key lessons and conclusions, highlights initiatives to build on and “best practice” examples, makes recommendations for policy makers, and stimulates debate.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Specific tasks of the consultant will be to:

1. Review relevant documents and interview key actors among the assistance community (UN, donors, NGOs, ICRC), the Afghanistan Interim Administration and the coalition forces about strategic coordination issues.
2. Write an issues paper on the subject of strategic coordination that can be published in monograph form (approx. 30-40 pages) in an easily accessible style for practitioners. The paper must begin with an executive summary not exceeding 3-4 pages.
3. Present the key findings of the study at a seminar in Kabul (and possibly Islamabad).

DURATION: 4-5 weeks (mid-April to mid-May)

REPORTING TO: Andrew Wilder, Director, AREU

Appendix B

List of Interviewees

Donors and Governments

Beerda, Joris, Netherlands Embassy
 Cautain, Jean-François, European Commission
 Dewey, Gene, BPRM, US Embassy
 Hager, Ruedi, Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC), Swiss Embassy
 Hushek, Tom, BPRM, US Embassy
 Kelly, Tania, Humanitarian Adviser, DFID
 Krescko, Alan BPRM, US Department of State
 Kunder, Jim, USAID
 Lautze, Sue, USAID Consultant, Tufts University
 McConnel, Bernd USAID
 Ouvrey, Adrian, Humanitarian Adviser, DFID
 Toreng, Tore, Norwegian Ambassador
 Upton, Philip, DFID
 Walkup, Mark, BPRM, US Embassy

United Nations

Bowden, Mark, OCHA
 Bradford, Pippa, WFP
 Costy, Alex, UNAMA
 Currion, Paul, AIMS
 de Almeida e Silva, Manoel, UNAMA
 Donini, Antonio, UNAMA
 Fange, Anders, UNAMA
 Faruqi, Ferhana, UNAMA, Mazar-i-Sharif
 Fisher, Nigel, UNAMA
 Ghelani, Rina, UNAMA, Mazar-i-Sharif
 Grandi, Fillipo, UNHCR
 Hingst, Dr. Gepke, UNICEF, Mazar-i-Sharif
 Kapur, Bela, OHCHR/UNAMA
 Kennedy, Kevin, OCHA
 Leader, Nicholas AACA/UNAMA
 le Duc, Carol, UNHCR
 Lockwood, David, UNDP
 Maxwell, Peter, UNAMA
 McCleod, Ewen, UNHCR
 McLachlan-Karr, David, OCHA
 Niland, Norah, UNAMA
 Omer, Ismail, WFP Mazar I Sharif
 Ostby, Knut, UNDP
 Patterson, Mervyn, UNAMA, Mazar-i-Sharif
 Reynolds, Samantha, UNHCS (Habitat)
 Sackett, Mike, UNAMA
 Salama, Peter, UNICEF
 Taft, Julia, UNDP

NGOs

Austin, Sally, CARE International
 Barker, Paul, CARE International
 Bishop, Jim, Inter-Action
 Buwalda, Johan, Consultant for Dutch NGOs
 Dutreix, Georges MSF
 Fairhurst, John, Oxfam
 Henry, Kevin, CARE International
 Hikmat, Fouad, Oxfam, GB
 Javed, Engineer, HAFO
 Johnston, Marilyn, Medair
 Joyenda, Mir Ahmed, AREU Deputy Director,
 Lindborg, Nancy, Mercy Corps/Inter-Action
 Mehotra, Shruti, ACTED
 O'Brien, Paul, CARE US
 Pain, Adam, SC/US Consultant
 Purves, Ian, ACBAR
 Rahimi, Abdul Salam, CHA
 Stanikzai, Masoom, Mohamed, AREA
 Their, Alex ICG Consultant
 Trives, Sebastian ACTED
 Wilder, Andrew AREU

Afghanistan Interim Administration

Rahman, Abdur Haji, Ministry of Planning,
 Mazar-i-Sharif
 Ferhang, Amin Mohammad, Ministry of
 Reconstruction
 Asghar Payman, Ali, Ministry of Planning
 Ghani, Ashraf, AACA
 Lockhart, Claire, AACA
 Petrie, Charles, AACA
 Shewa, Ministry of Planning, Mazar-i-Sharif

The Red Cross Movement

Epprecht, Tobias ICRC
 Steinbeck, Mark, ICRC

International Financial Institutions

Byrd, William, World Bank (telephone discussion)

International Military Forces

Hope, Mandy, UK Army/ISAF
 Taylor, Captain Annabel, UK Army/ISAF
 Warmack, Major Mike, CJCMOTF

Appendix C

Security Council Resolution 1401 (2002) SC/7345 450 1st Meeting (AM) 28 Mar 2002

"The Security Council,

"Reaffirming its previous resolutions on Afghanistan, in particular its resolutions 1378 (2001) of 14 November 2001, 1383 (2001) of 6 December 2001, and 1386 (2001) of 20 December 2001,

"Recalling all relevant General Assembly resolutions, in particular resolution 56/220 (2001) of 21 December 2001,

"Stressing the inalienable right of the Afghan people themselves freely to determine their own political future,

"Reaffirming its strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan,

"Reiterating its endorsement of the Agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the re-establishment of permanent government institutions, signed in Bonn on 5 December 2001 (S/2001/1154) (the Bonn Agreement), in particular its annex 2 regarding the role of the United Nations during the interim period,

"Welcoming the establishment on 22 December 2001 of the Afghan interim authority and looking forward to the evolution of the process set out in the Bonn Agreement,

"Stressing the vital importance of combating the cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs and of eliminating the threat of land mines, and the importance of curbing the illicit flow of small arms,

"Having considered the report of the Secretary-General of 18 March 2002 (S/2002/278),

"Encouraging donor countries that pledged financial commitments at the Tokyo Conference on the reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan to fulfil their commitments as soon as possible,

"Commending the United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan (UNSMIA) for the determination shown in the implementation of its mandate in particularly difficult circumstances,

1. Endorses the establishment, for an initial period of 12 months from the date of adoption of this resolution, of a United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), with the mandate and structure laid out in the report of the Secretary-General of 18 March 2002 (S/2002/278);

2. Reaffirms its strong support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and endorses his full authority, in accordance with its relevant resolutions, over the planning and conduct of all United Nations activities in Afghanistan;

3. Stresses that the provision of focused recovery and reconstruction assistance can greatly assist in the implementation of the Bonn Agreement and, to this end, urges bilateral and multilateral donors, in particular through the Afghanistan Support Group and the Implementation Group, to coordinate very closely with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Afghan Interim Administration and its successors;

4. Stresses, in the context of paragraph 3 above, that although humanitarian assistance should be provided wherever there is a need, recovery or reconstruction assistance ought to be provided, through the Afghan Interim Administration and its successors, and implemented effectively where local authorities contribute to the maintenance of a secure environment and demonstrate respect for human rights;

5. Calls upon all Afghan parties to cooperate with UNAMA in the implementation of its mandate and to ensure the security and freedom of movement of its staff throughout the country;

6. Requests the International Security Assistance Force, in implementing its mandate in accordance with resolution 1386 (2001), to continue to work in close consultation with the Secretary-General and his Special Representative;

7. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council every four months on the implementation of this resolution;

8. Decides to remain actively seized of the matter."

Appendix D

AGREEMENT ON PROVISIONAL ARRANGEMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN PENDING THE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PERMANENT GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS (The Bonn Agreement)

The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan,

In the presence of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan,

Determined to end the tragic conflict in Afghanistan and promote national reconciliation, lasting peace, stability and respect for human rights in the country,

Reaffirming the independence, national sovereignty and territorial integrity of Afghanistan,

Acknowledging the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice,

Expressing their appreciation to the Afghan mujahidin who, over the years, have defended the independence, territorial integrity and national unity of the country and have played a major role in the struggle against terrorism and oppression, and whose sacrifice has now made them both heroes of jihad and champions of peace, stability and reconstruction of their beloved homeland, Afghanistan,

Aware that the unstable situation in Afghanistan requires the implementation of emergency interim arrangements and expressing their deep appreciation to His Excellency Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani for his readiness to transfer power to an interim authority which is to be established pursuant to this agreement,

Recognizing the need to ensure broad representation in these interim arrangements of all segments of the Afghan population, including groups that have not been adequately represented at the UN Talks on Afghanistan,

Noting that these interim arrangements are intended as a first step toward the establishment of a broad-based, gender-sensitive, multi-ethnic and fully representative government, and are not intended to remain in place beyond the specified period of time, Recognizing that some time may be required for a new Afghan security force to

be fully constituted and functional and that therefore other security provisions detailed in Annex I to this agreement must meanwhile be put in place,

Considering that the United Nations, as the internationally recognized impartial institution, has a particularly important role to play, detailed in Annex II to this agreement, in the period prior to the establishment of permanent institutions in Afghanistan,

Have agreed as follows:

THE INTERIM AUTHORITY

I. General provisions

- 1) An Interim Authority shall be established upon the official transfer of power on 22 December 2001.
- 2) The Interim Authority shall consist of an Interim Administration presided over by a Chairman, a Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, and a Supreme Court of Afghanistan, as well as such other courts as may be established by the Interim Administration. The composition, functions and governing procedures for the Interim Administration and the Special Independent Commission are set forth in this agreement.
- 3) Upon the official transfer of power, the Interim Authority shall be the repository of Afghan sovereignty, with immediate effect. As such, it shall, throughout the interim period, represent Afghanistan in its external relations and shall occupy the seat of Afghanistan at the United Nations and in its specialized agencies, as well as in other international institutions and conferences.
- 4) An Emergency Loya Jirga shall be convened within six months of the

establishment of the Interim Authority. The Emergency Loya Jirga will be opened by His Majesty Mohammed Zaher, the former King of Afghanistan. The Emergency Loya Jirga shall decide on a Transitional Authority, including a broad-based transitional administration, to lead Afghanistan until such time as a fully representative government can be elected through free and fair elections to be held no later than two years from the date of the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga.

- 5) The Interim Authority shall cease to exist once the Transitional Authority has been established by the Emergency Loya Jirga.
- 6) A Constitutional Loya Jirga shall be convened within eighteen months of the establishment of the Transitional Authority, in order to adopt a new constitution for Afghanistan. In order to assist the Constitutional Loya Jirga prepare the proposed Constitution, the Transitional Administration shall, within two months of its commencement and with the assistance of the United Nations, establish a Constitutional Commission.

II. Legal framework and judicial system

- 1) The following legal framework shall be applicable on an interim basis until the adoption of the new Constitution referred to above:
 - i) The Constitution of 1964, a/ to the extent that its provisions are not inconsistent with those contained in this agreement, and b/ with the exception of those provisions relating to the monarchy and to the executive and legislative bodies provided in the Constitution; and
 - ii) existing laws and regulations, to the extent that they are not inconsistent with this agreement or with international legal obligations to which Afghanistan is

a party, or with those applicable provisions contained in the Constitution of 1964, provided that the Interim Authority shall have the power to repeal or amend those laws and regulations.

- 2) The judicial power of Afghanistan shall be independent and shall be vested in a Supreme Court of Afghanistan, and such other courts as may be established by the Interim Administration. The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a Judicial Commission to rebuild the domestic justice system in accordance with Islamic principles, international standards, the rule of law and Afghan legal traditions.

III. Interim Administration

A. Composition

- 1) The Interim Administration shall be composed of a Chairman, five Vice Chairmen and 24 other members. Each member, except the Chairman, may head a department of the Interim Administration.
- 2) The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan have invited His Majesty Mohammed Zaher, the former King of Afghanistan, to chair the Interim Administration. His Majesty has indicated that he would prefer that a suitable candidate acceptable to the participants be selected as the Chair of the Interim Administration.
- 3) The Chairman, the Vice Chairmen and other members of the Interim Administration have been selected by the participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan, as listed in Annex IV to this agreement. The selection has been made on the basis of professional competence and personal integrity from lists submitted by the participants in the UN Talks, with due regard to

the ethnic, geographic and religious composition of Afghanistan and to the importance of the participation of women.

- 4) No person serving as a member of the Interim Administration may simultaneously hold membership of the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga.

B. Procedures

- 1) The Chairman of the Interim Administration, or in his/her absence one of the Vice Chairmen, shall call and chair meetings and propose the agenda for these meetings.
- 2) The Interim Administration shall endeavour to reach its decisions by consensus. In order for any decision to be taken, at least 22 members must be in attendance. If a vote becomes necessary, decisions shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting, unless otherwise stipulated in this agreement. The Chairman shall cast the deciding vote in the event that the members are divided equally.

C. Functions

- 1) The Interim Administration shall be entrusted with the day-to-day conduct of the affairs of state, and shall have the right to issue decrees for the peace, order and good government of Afghanistan.
- 2) The Chairman of the Interim Administration or, in his/her absence, one of the Vice Chairmen, shall represent the Interim Administration as appropriate.
- 3) Those members responsible for the administration of individual departments shall also be responsible for implementing the

policies of the Interim Administration within their areas of responsibility.

- 4) Upon the official transfer of power, the Interim Administration shall have full jurisdiction over the printing and delivery of the national currency and special drawing rights from international financial institutions. The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a Central Bank of Afghanistan that will regulate the money supply of the country through transparent and accountable procedures.
- 5) The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, an independent Civil Service Commission to provide the Interim Authority and the future Transitional Authority with shortlists of candidates for key posts in the administrative departments, as well as those of governors and uluswals, in order to ensure their competence and integrity.
- 6) The Interim Administration shall, with the assistance of the United Nations, establish an independent Human Rights Commission, whose responsibilities will include human rights monitoring, investigation of violations of human rights, and development of domestic human rights institutions. The Interim Administration may, with the assistance of the United Nations, also establish any other commissions to review matters not covered in this agreement.
- 7) The members of the Interim Administration shall abide by a Code of Conduct elaborated in accordance with international standards.
- 8) Failure by a member of the Interim Administration to abide by the

provisions of the Code of Conduct shall lead to his/her suspension from that body. The decision to suspend a member shall be taken by a two-thirds majority of the membership of the Interim Administration on the proposal of its Chairman or any of its Vice Chairmen.

- 9) The functions and powers of members of the Interim Administration will be further elaborated, as appropriate, with the assistance of the United Nations.
- IV. The Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga
- 1) The Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga shall be established within one month of the establishment of the Interim Authority. The Special Independent Commission will consist of twenty-one members, a number of whom should have expertise in constitutional or customary law. The members will be selected from lists of candidates submitted by participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan as well as Afghan professional and civil society groups. The United Nations will assist with the establishment and functioning of the commission and of a substantial secretariat.
 - 2) The Special Independent Commission will have the final authority for determining the procedures for and the number of people who will participate in the Emergency Loya Jirga. The Special Independent Commission will draft rules and procedures specifying (i) criteria for allocation of seats to the settled and nomadic population residing in the country; (ii) criteria for allocation of seats to the Afghan refugees living in Iran, Pakistan, and elsewhere, and Afghans from the diaspora; (iii) criteria for inclusion of civil society organizations and prominent individuals, including Islamic scholars, intellectuals, and traders, both within the country and in the diaspora. The Special Independent Commission will ensure that due attention is paid to the representation in the Emergency Loya Jirga of a significant number of women as well as all other segments of the Afghan population.
 - 3) The Special Independent Commission will publish and disseminate the rules and procedures for the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga at least ten weeks before the Emergency Loya Jirga convenes, together with the date for its commencement and its suggested location and duration.
 - 4) The Special Independent Commission will adopt and implement procedures for monitoring the process of nomination of individuals to the Emergency Loya Jirga to ensure that the process of indirect election or selection is transparent and fair. To pre-empt conflict over nominations, the Special Independent Commission will specify mechanisms for filing of grievances and rules for arbitration of disputes.
 - 5) The Emergency Loya Jirga will elect a Head of the State for the Transitional Administration and will approve proposals for the structure and key personnel of the Transitional Administration.
- V. Final provisions
- 1) Upon the official transfer of power, all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces.
 - 2) The Interim Authority and the Emergency Loya Jirga shall act in accordance with basic principles and provisions contained in international instruments on human rights and international humanitarian law to which Afghanistan is a party.
 - 3) The Interim Authority shall cooperate with the international community in the

fight against terrorism, drugs and organized crime. It shall commit itself to respect international law and maintain peaceful and friendly relations with neighbouring countries and the rest of the international community.

- 4) The Interim Authority and the Special Independent Commission for the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga will ensure the participation of women as well as the equitable representation of all ethnic and religious communities in the Interim Administration and the Emergency Loya Jirga.
- 5) All actions taken by the Interim Authority shall be consistent with Security Council resolution 1378 (14 November 2001) and other relevant Security Council resolutions relating to Afghanistan.
- 6) Rules of procedure for the organs established under the Interim Authority will be elaborated as appropriate with the assistance of the United Nations.

This agreement, of which the annexes constitute an integral part, done in Bonn on this 5th day of December 2001 in the English language, shall be the authentic text, in a single copy which shall remain deposited in the archives of the United Nations. Official texts shall be provided in Dari and Pashto, and such other languages as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General may designate. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General shall send certified copies in English, Dari and Pashto to each of the participants.

For the participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan:

Ms. Amena Afzali

Mr. S. Hussain Anwari

Mr. Hedayat Amin Arsala

Mr. Sayed Hamed Gailani

Mr. Rahmatullah Musa Ghazi

Eng. Abdul Hakim

Mr. Houmayoun Jareer

Mr. Abbas Karimi

Mr. Mustafa Kazimi

Dr. Azizullah Ludin

Mr. Ahmad Wali Massoud

Mr. Hafizullah Asif Mohseni

Prof. Mohammad Ishaq Nadiri

Mr. Mohammad Natiqi

Mr. Yunus Qanooni

Dr. Zalmai Rassoul

Mr. H. Mirwais Sadeq

Dr. Mohammad Jalil Shams

Prof. Abdul Sattar Sirat

Mr. Humayun Tandar

Mrs. Sima Wali

General Abdul Rahim Wardak

Mr. Pacha Khan Zadran

Witnessed for the United Nations by:

Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi

Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan

ANNEX I

INTERNATIONAL SECURITY FORCE

1. The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan recognize that the responsibility for providing security and law and order throughout the country resides with the Afghans themselves. To this end, they pledge their commitment to do all within their means and influence to ensure such security, including for all United Nations and other personnel of international governmental and non-governmental organizations deployed in Afghanistan.
2. With this objective in mind, the participants request the assistance of the international community in helping the new Afghan authorities in the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces.
3. Conscious that some time may be required for the new Afghan security and armed forces to be fully constituted and functioning, the participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan request the United Nations Security Council to consider authorizing the early deployment to Afghanistan of a United Nations mandated force. This force will assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas. Such a force could, as appropriate, be progressively expanded to other urban centres and other areas.
4. The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan pledge to withdraw all military units from Kabul and other urban centers or other areas in which the UN mandated force is deployed. It would also be desirable if such a force were to assist in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan's infrastructure.

ANNEX II

ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DURING THE INTERIM PERIOD

1. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General will be responsible for all aspects of the United Nations' work in Afghanistan.
2. The Special Representative shall monitor and assist in the implementation of all aspects of this agreement.
3. The United Nations shall advise the Interim Authority in establishing a politically neutral environment conducive to the holding of the Emergency Loya Jirga in free and fair conditions. The United Nations shall pay special attention to the conduct of those bodies and administrative departments which could directly influence the convening and outcome of the Emergency Loya Jirga.
4. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General or his/her delegate may be invited to attend the meetings of the Interim Administration and the Special Independent Commission on the Convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga.
5. If for whatever reason the Interim Administration or the Special Independent Commission were actively prevented from meeting or unable to reach a decision on a matter related to the convening of the Emergency Loya Jirga, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General shall, taking into account the views expressed in the Interim Administration or in the Special Independent Commission, use his/her good offices with a view to facilitating a resolution to the impasse or a decision.
6. The United Nations shall have the right to investigate human rights violations and, where necessary, recommend corrective action. It will also be responsible for the development and implementation of a programme of human rights education to promote respect for and understanding of human rights.

REQUEST TO THE UNITED NATIONS BY THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE UN TALKS ON AFGHANISTAN

The participants in the UN Talks on Afghanistan hereby

1. Request that the United Nations and the international community take the necessary measures to guarantee the national sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Afghanistan as well as the non-interference by foreign countries in Afghanistan's internal affairs;
2. Urge the United Nations, the international community, particularly donor countries and multilateral institutions, to reaffirm, strengthen and implement their commitment to assist with the rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan, in coordination with the Interim Authority;
3. Request the United Nations to conduct as soon as possible (i) a registration of voters in advance of the general elections that will be held upon the adoption of the new constitution by the constitutional Loya Jirga and (ii) a census of the population of Afghanistan.
4. Urge the United Nations and the international community, in recognition of the heroic role played by the mujahidin in protecting the independence of Afghanistan and the dignity of its people, to take the necessary measures, in coordination with the Interim Authority, to assist in the reintegration of the mujahidin into the new Afghan security and armed forces;
5. Invite the United Nations and the international community to create a fund to assist the families and other dependents of martyrs and victims of the war, as well as the war disabled;
6. Strongly urge that the United Nations, the international community and regional organizations cooperate with the Interim Authority to combat international terrorism, cultivation and trafficking of illicit drugs and provide Afghan farmers with financial, material and technical resources for alternative crop production.

COMPOSITION OF THE INTERIM ADMINISTRATION

Chairman: Hamid Karzai	Department of Hajj & Auqaf: Mohammad Hanif Hanif Balkhi
Vice Chairmen:	Department of Martyrs & Disabled: Abdullah Wardak
Vice-Chair & Women's Affairs: Dr. Sima Samar	Department of Education: Abdul Rassoul Amin
Vice-Chair & Defence: Muhammad Qassem Fahim	Department of Higher Education: Dr. Sharif Faez
Vice-Chair & Planning: Haji Muhammad Mohaqqeq	Department of Public Health: Dr. Suhaila Seddiqi
Vice-Chair & Water and Electricity: Shaker Kargar	Department of Public Works: Abdul Khaliq Fazal
Vice-Chair & Finance: Hedayat Amin Arsala	Department of Rural Development: Abdul Malik Anwar
Members:	Department of Urban Development: Haji Abdul Qadir
Department of Foreign Affairs: Dr. Abdullah Abdullah	Department of Reconstruction: Amin Farhang
Department of the Interior: Muhammad Yunus Qanooni	Department of Transport: Sultan Hamid Sultan
Department of Commerce: Seyyed Mustafa Kazemi	Department for the Return of Refugees: Enayatullah Nazeri
Department of Mines & Industries: Muhammad Alem Razm	Department of Agriculture: Seyyed Hussein Anwari
Department of Small Industries: Aref Noorzai	Department of Irrigation: Haji Mangal Hussein
Department of Information & Culture: Dr. Raheen Makhdoom	Department of Justice: Abdul Rahim Karimi
Department of Communication: Ing. Abdul Rahim	Department of Air Transport & Tourism: Abdul Rahman
Department of Labour & Social Affairs: Mir Wais Sadeq	Department of Border Affairs: Amanullah Zadran

Appendix E

NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION (WITHOUT ANNEXES) Kabul, April, 2002

Preface

The following is an early first draft of the Afghanistan National Development Framework. The draft reflects directions provided by the Board of the Afghan Assistance

Coordination Authority (AACCA), chaired by the Chairman of the Interim Administration

and individual consultations carried out by the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Reconstruction and the AACCA. The draft is based on inputs from the government departments, Joint Needs Assessment process and inputs from other actors on the ground.

This document attempts to set out national strategy and includes national priorities and policy directions.

This early first draft is presented to the participants of the Implementation Group in order to convey an early sense of the direction taken by the Interim Administration in the development of the country, and to place in an appropriate context the priority projects presented in the course of the meeting. It is envisaged that within six weeks a National Development Budget will have been finalised. Finalisation will entail a further series of extensive consultations with ministries, international organizations and the NGO community.

The ongoing process to create the national development budget has included the establishment of the Development Budget Commission, composed of the Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Reconstruction and the AACCA. All projects are expected to be anchored in one of the programs identified within the National Development Framework, unless exceptional circumstances apply. In this regard

mechanisms for project and program review are being established.

NB The highlighted numbers in the text refer to the table of Quick Impact Projects.

The National Development Framework

There is a consensus in Afghan society: violence as a means of compelling the majority to submit to the will of a minority must end. The people's aspirations must be represented and reflected in an accountable government that delivers value on a daily basis. This consensus forms the foundation for a vision of a prosperous and secure Afghanistan. The current poverty of the country is painfully obvious; this vision of a peaceful and prosperous future is a beacon that can mobilize the energies of an enterprising and independent people, guide them in their collective and individual pursuits, and reinforce the sense of national unity, mutual dependence and participation in a common enterprise.

Our people are poor, the majority is illiterate, but the sophistication of political debate and awareness is remarkable, in great part due to the international media. Despite the years of war, our opinions are also shaped by a myriad of networks that link us to the international community. There is a widespread desire to retain the current international interest in our country, and to channel it in ways that would lay the basis for multiple partnerships between different groups in our society and the global community.

This desire for engagement is premised on the hope that international engagement will be an instrument for ending our poverty, the re-establishment of our sovereignty and national unity, and a foundation for sustainable prosperity. Our people's expectations have been raised by the promises of world leaders that they will be with us for the long haul. The succession of visits

and delegations are a sign to our people that the engagement is continuing.

Discussions of development, however, remain abstract. Public opinion is shaped by concrete manifestations. If the general discussions are not connected to changes in the daily lives and experiences of the people, public opinion could easily turn skeptical.

Afghans have been disappointed by the international community before. Hope could then be replaced by frustration, and frustration, in a context of raised expectations, is a recipe for anger, discord and finally conflict. For us to capitalise on the current consensus, then, we must deliver, and deliver soon; as words become deeds, belief in the possibility of a safe and prosperous future will grow.

Delivering rapidly, however, does not mean delivering unwisely. We must internalise the lessons of 50 years of experience of international assistance. Afghanistan offers a unique opportunity to prove to the skeptics that the aid system is relevant in a post-conflict context, and that difficult challenges can be met with determination, partnership and vision.

Five lessons stand out:

- First, the developmental agenda must be owned domestically, and the recipient country must be in the driver's seat.
- Second, the market and the private sector is a more effective instrument of delivering sustained growth than the state.
- Third, without a state committed to investing in human capital, the rule of law, the creation of systems of accountability and transparency, and providing the enabling environment for the operation of the private sector, aid cannot be an effective instrument of development.

- Fourth, people in general and the poor in particular are not passive recipients of development but active engines of change. Sustainable development requires citizen participation and adopting of methods of governance that enable the people to take decisions on issues that affect them and their immediate surroundings.
- Fifth, donor-funded investment projects, unless they are anchored in coherent programs of government, are not sustainable. Structural adjustment programs, unless they are translated into feasible projects, do not result in reform.

There is an emerging consensus that the budget must be the central instrument of policy, and that the country should have the capacity to design programs and projects that are part of a coherent developmental strategy. All interventions must have clear outcomes, and be properly monitored.

The strategy

Our developmental strategy has three pillars: The first is to use humanitarian assistance and social policy to create the conditions for people to live secure lives and to lay the foundations for the formation of sustainable human capital. The second is the use of external assistance to build the physical infrastructure that lays the basis for a private sector-led strategy of growth, in such a manner as to support the building of human and social capital. The third pillar is the creation of sustainable growth, where a competitive private sector becomes both the engine of growth and the instrument of social inclusion through the creation of opportunity.

Cutting across all our activities will be the issues of security, of administrative and financial reform, and of gender.

A brief outline of the programs and sub-programs contained in each pillar will be provided here, the Annexes contain a more detailed description.

Pillar 1 - Humanitarian and Human and Social Capital

We are still in the midst of a humanitarian crisis. We are keenly aware of the needs and conditions of our vulnerable people. We need immediate action in the following areas:

Refugees and returnees; between 1.4 to 2m refugees are expected to return to their homes, along with thousands of internally displaced. A systematic and integrated approach will be required if we are to help them re-integrate safely and develop secure livelihoods rather than end up in shanty towns. Education, after years of neglect and worse, will be the foundation of economic growth and poverty reduction. Vocational training is a priority, in particular to assist the mujahadeen, many of whom have sacrificed so much in the cause of freedom, and to assist women. Health and nutrition will require massive and long-term investment if we are to lift Afghanistan from 169 in the human development index. Two areas need particularly urgent attention, malnutrition, and better obstetric care that will bring down the unacceptably high levels of maternal and infant mortality rates. Afghans have shown a remarkable ability to survive in the face of disaster, but there is a need to invest in livelihoods to facilitate our enterprise in the search for a good living. And finally, after the ravages of the Taliban, we must act fast to preserve our national heritage, we must remember the vital role of culture in the process of national reconstruction and defining Afghan identity.

It is vital that we take an integrated and programmatic approach to all work in this pillar.

We cannot afford sectoral and localized projects that lead to disconnects. So we are initiating two, large-scale, integrated programs as the foundation of much work in this pillar. Firstly we will initiate a national community development program, known as National Solidarity, which will deliver block grants to communities across the country. And secondly we have designated 10 key areas for special attention because they have been

worst affected by human rights abuses and will be centers of refugee and IDP return. We are requesting the UN agencies and bilateral donors to help us develop rapidly a series of projects in these areas.

Pillar 2 - Physical Reconstruction and Natural Resources

We intend to begin the reconstruction and expansion of the physical infrastructure as soon as possible. The government is committed to launching public works programs immediately in order to offer opportunities to the unemployed and under-employed. We have identified a number of programs in this area and are in the process of preparing specific projects within each of the programs. For example, roads, water and sanitation, and the energy sector all need urgent attention. As the country will be rebuilt by its families, we also need to ensure people have access to building materials.

In urban management our aim is to invest in a balanced urban development program across the country to create viable cities that are hubs of economic activity, and organically linked to rural areas. With the concentration of population in some cities, they would play a major role in the overall improvement of human development indicators. In terms of municipal infrastructure we need to focus on some immediate and pressing needs such as roads and transport sewerage, waste management, drinking water and sanitation.

As much of the physical infrastructure of government has been destroyed, we will implement a national program of construction that will create or restore the physical infrastructure of government across the country.

Our approach to physical infrastructure is based on lessons from international experience. The state will define the areas of priorities, but it will not be the implementing agency.

Instead, we will turn to the national and international private sector to help us design and implement our projects. Communities and NGOs will be asked to participate in identification,

monitoring and evaluation of these programs and projects.

We will pay serious attention to the operation and maintenance costs of these projects and will be looking closely at their financial and economic sustainability. The issue of medium to long-term consequences of short-term interventions has already become clear in the health sector. For example, there has been considerable interest in the rehabilitation or construction of hospitals in Kabul. But our health experts are pointing out that the recurrent costs of hospitals located in the capital could be a serious drain on resources that could be more usefully directed towards preventative medicine.

Pillar 3 -Private Sector Development

The implementation of the infrastructure program will give some impetus to the development of the private sector, but it is in the development of a competitive export-oriented economy that our real hopes for the private sector lie. We are in the fortunate position that the European and American markets are open to our exports. We are in the process of being granted most favored nation status and we are receiving strong support from the US Administration and Congress for textile quotas.

We need to meeting international standards on health, organic agriculture, child labor, certificates of origin, and other technical requirements. We will need assistance in these areas and consultations with our entrepreneurs to explain the opportunities that exports to

Europe will provide. The development of the export market for our agricultural and horticultural products is critical to our strategy of eliminating poppy cultivation. With high-value and low-volume products, we can be confident of offering our farmers secure livelihoods. We are planning to use our OPIC guarantee to assist in the development of an agricultural processing industry.

Recognizing the enormous international interest in Afghanistan, we are creating a "Made in Afghanistan" label and "Made in Afghanistan by

Women" label to enable Afghan producers to realize the maximum from their labors. We hope to link Afghan producers to a number of large department stores. Afghanistan has considerable assets; sustainable use and development of these assets will require foreign direct investment. We are working on the relevant policy and legal frameworks that would attract investment, including, for example, the urgent need for a basic regulatory and licensing framework for telecommunications.

We must also use internal trade as a way of binding the country back together again, economically as well as politically. Alongside the roads programs already mentioned, this will mean reinvigorating our market places in secondary and tertiary towns.

Governance, financial management and administrative reform We know that good governance is a precondition for attracting direct foreign investment.

We are addressing the issues of financial management, auditing and procurement through hiring international private firms chosen on the basis of direct competition. Our goal is to have a budgetary process that would meet the international standards for receiving direct donor support for reconstruction and development projects. Building the domestic revenue collecting ability of Afghanistan will be a key part of the reconstruction process.

Revenue capacities, and particularly the national unity of the revenue collection system, have been in disarray during the recent period and need to be rebuilt.

The degradation of our financial institutions in fact offers us an opportunity to move forward with speed and determination in creating management systems that will provide the underpinning for accountability, efficiency and transparency. Our banking sector requires a major over-haul, and we are embarking on this process. The Central Bank's role is being strengthened and the government has made a commitment in its budget decree to observe financial discipline and

not resort to overdraft. We are emphasizing the need for urgent capacity building in the Central Bank and the banking sector and are requesting urgent technical assistance in this area. We are examining the relevant laws and regulations and are preparing a series of measures to provide a firm legal basis for a modern financial sector.

Rule of law is the basis of good governance. The administration has strictly abided by the Bonn agreement and is determined to see the Emergency Loya Jirga take place on time.

We are determined to use the time remaining to the Interim Administration to prepare proposals and plans for strengthening the rule of law and to implement measures that would enhance the confidence of our people in their government. We view the principle of accountable government as applying as much to our development policy as our administrative and judicial. We in the advanced stages of planning a national community empowerment program, called National Solidarity, that will deliver a series of block grants to communities to enable them to make decisions in a participatory manner on their key priorities. We are planning to cover at least 1 to 2 districts in every province under this program. This approach should enable members of the communities to choose their local leaders, and to strengthen their collective efforts in mobilizing their own resources to supplement those provided by the government.

We must get the balance right between Kabul and the provinces, between the urban centres and the rural areas. This is important both to ensure an equitable balance in our investments, and in terms of the political and administrative relationship. All interventions, whether roads, sanitation, power or drinking water, will be chosen on the basis of an even-handed approach to spatial development that focuses on needs not on ethnic group. While Kabul's needs are immense, and there is an urgent need for a comprehensive reconstruction plan of the city, our focus must be the entire country. The physical infrastructure of government is either destroyed or severely damaged. We are therefore planning a major program of construction of the physical

infrastructure of governance across the country. Each ministry and district must have a minimum number of facilities and these facilities should be equipped with means of communication to enable speedy flow of information between levels of government and to connect Kabul to the provinces. Only then will we be able to link up the country under a unified government.

We have carried out an assessment of the capacity of our line ministries and have reached the conclusion that we need an innovative approach to the rapid building of capacity as well as a strategy for reform of the administrative system. Our approach to the immediate problem is to create implementation cells of between 10 and 40 people in line ministries.

The staff of these cells, to be recruited on the basis of clear criteria of merit, technical competence and clear definition of tasks, will be provided with the resources to translate our overall programs into specific projects and oversee the implementation of these projects by the private sector, NGOs and international contractors. They will be supported by technical assistance from donors and will work closely with AACA to enhance coordination between communities, the government, donors, NGOs and the UN.

We will be adopting a similar approach to the provincial administration.

The years of conflict degraded the civil service. We now need to start work in earnest on the important task of creating a modern and efficient civil service. The Civil Service Commission has been selected and will start its work soon. It will need to be supported by strong analytic work and by inputs from key actors in the development arena to formulate and implement a comprehensive agenda of reform. Of particular importance will be training, in both management and technical areas. A civil service training college is being proposed.

Pay scale is a critical issue. NGOs, bilateral, multilateral organizations and the UN system have pay scales that exceed the government's pay scale by a factor of 50 for their national staff.

The differential in pay between international staff and government staff is a factor of 1000 to 2000. Such an uneven playing field militates against the building of capacity. While the market cannot be controlled, there has to be an imaginative and principled approach to addressing this critical issue. Donors should make a clear commitment to increasing the number of their Afghan national staff and should join the government in setting up a task force to propose sustainable solutions to this problem.

Without a workable solution, this problem will haunt all our good intentions for creating capacity.

Security and the Rule of Law

Rule of law and good governance depend on security. The Afghan state must have a legitimate monopoly of violence, a corollary of which is that its citizens will not need to pay for the cost of protection as individuals. Freedom of movement, for commodities and ideas, is constrained by perceptions of security. For example, many donors now insist on staying in Kabul, and starting projects there. Kabul's needs are immense, but in our judgment, there are other parts of the country that are more secure than Kabul. Thus does the perception of insecurity exclude areas urgently in need of development assistance from receiving attention.

We have prepared a detailed program for the creation, training and deployment of a national police force. We have, however, been constrained from implementing our program by lack of funds and exclusion of support for the police from the UNDP administered Trust Fund. This constraint is being removed, and we hope to embark on our program very rapidly. We have also formulated our plan for the formation of a national army and the first battalion of the new army has been trained and deployed as the National Guard.

We will also need to provide for absorption back into society of the mujahadeen, who have sacrificed so much for the independence and dignity of this country. Absorption of the mujahadeen into the economy, society and polity

is a significant challenge. We plan to meet this challenge through a series of measures. A large scale program of vocational training, based on an analysis of the needs of an expanding economy, will be a critical part of this program and we are inviting donors to assist us in implementing this program quickly. Demining is also an urgent priority and a precondition for agricultural recovery and freedom of movement.

We are counting on finding solutions to meeting the expenses of the security sector quickly. In Geneva, there have been extensive discussions on meeting the costs of the national army and police and we now need to act rapidly. Our developmental efforts depend on the provision of security, as without the perception and reality of security of person and property, people will not feel safe to invest.

The judicial system will be revived through a program that provides training, makes laws and precedents available to all parts of the system, and rehabilitates the physical infrastructure and equipment of the judicial sector.

Our vision of security, however, is broader than the services provided by the security sector to the citizens. Security of livelihood is critical to our endeavor, to eliminate poverty, to provide social justice, remove barriers to inclusion and to create a society where all citizens are provided with access to equality of opportunity.

Gender

Gender is a critical issue for us. Subjected to the segregationist policies of the Taliban, our girls and women need special attention. We do not want gender to be a ghetto. There must be specific programs directed to enhancing the capabilities of our girls and women.

More importantly, all programs must pay special attention to gender, and not include it as an afterthought. We have to engage in a societal dialogue to enhance the opportunities of women and improve cooperation between men and women on the basis of our culture, the experience of

other Islamic countries, and the global norms of human rights.

Research, Information Management and Policy-Making

As a living document, this framework will be amended, modified and transformed in the light of new research, experience and knowledge. Its implementation will thus depend on access to and management of information. Currently, very little reliable information exists, often information is fragmented and hoarded. This hampers the government's ability to respond to predictable crises and to make policy based on evidence of what works and what does not.

The government will create and maintain an information management system on all donor activities. Standards for information gathering need to be set, and information shared promptly and widely. Timely monitoring and evaluation of programs and projects will be built into their design. The Afghanistan Information Management System (AIMS) will be one component of this larger strategy. We have already received assistance and are in the process of implementing this policy. All information management systems created by individual donors should provide inputs to the government's information management system currently at the AACA that will be eventually transferred to the Central Statistical Office.

The Role of the State

Finally, our strategy of development provides a clear role for the state. The state must provide security, invest in human capital, and articulate and implement a social policy focused on assistance to the vulnerable and excluded and the elimination of poverty. It must create an enabling environment for the activities of the private sector, make effective use of aid to attract trade and investment, and put the economy on a sustainable path to growth. We thus need an effective central government that re-establishes the national unity of the country on the basis of strong institutions and the rule of law. Simultaneously, we are committed to building on community level participation and effective management at the local level. We do not see government as the producer and manager of the economy, but as regulator and promoter of the entrepreneurial energies of our people. The state will enter into a direct managerial role only when social justice demands its presence. The government will act in partnership with communities, NGOs, donors, UN organizations and the national and international private sector to implement its programs, and realize its vision. As the legitimate representative of the people, it is the key task and challenge of the government to create the institutions and organizations that would embody principles and practices of good governance.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AACA	Afghan Assistance Coordination Authority
ACBAR	Agency Coordination Body for Afghanistan Relief
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APB	Afghanistan Programming Body
CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IFRC	International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IGSC	Implementation Group Standing Committee
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
SG	Secretary-General
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

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