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DDR in Afghanistan

Disarming, Demobilizing, and Reintegrating Afghan Combatants in Accordance with a Peace Agreement

Any final peace accord between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents is expected to involve some restructuring of the Afghan security institutions, some amalgamation of Taliban elements into the national army and police, and some number of fighters on each side released from service and transitioning back into civilian life.

Implementation of any Afghan peace agreement will be a multiyear effort. Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) are likely to result from rather than lead in the process, because disarmament in the presence of an armed adversary requires a level of trust that can only be built over time.

The burden for designing and implementing these and most other aspects of a peace accord will fall principally on the Afghan parties. Given the Afghan security sector's heavy dependence on U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) support, however, it is likely that the relevant Afghan government authorities will turn to the United States and its allies for advice in designing these aspects of an accord and help in carrying them out. U.S. officials should,

therefore, begin examining the options for reconfiguring the Afghan security sector and executing the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants and their reintegration into either civilian life or incorporation into a reorganized national security structure in accordance with provisions of a possible peace agreement. The Taliban will, out of necessity, have a voice in designing and carrying such provisions. The possibility of continued American and other international security assistance to the reconstituted Afghan armed forces will provide the principal external leverage on the process.

This Perspective identifies best practices in the DDR field, describes the Afghan conditions under which such programs would need to be carried out, and recommends steps that the U.S. Army and other elements of the U.S. government should take to prepare to advise and assist the Afghan government in negotiating and eventually implementing such arrangements.

This planning should not assume that the size and support costs for the Afghan security sector can be prudently reduced in the early aftermath of a peace settlement. U.S. officials should begin to consider how to respond to any legal or political objections that might be raised to supporting a reconstituted Afghan security sector containing a significant mix of former Taliban fighters.

Best Practices in DDR

DDR have been central components of postconflict stabilization (United Nations [UN], 2017). The formal and informal standards that guide implementation, however, are "often purposely vague and designed to be sorted out later depending on local conditions and the emergent relations over how power vacuums are to be settled" (Von Dyck, 2018, p. 5). Past experience can thus best serve as a checklist of issues to be addressed and questions to be answered in the light of local circumstances.

To begin, how can *disarmament*, *demobilization*, and *reintegration* be defined? Disarmament is a particularly difficult provision of any peace accord to carry out because of the distrust on each side for the other and the fear of being left defenseless before a once and future adversary. Ideally this process would be overseen by a third party that assures the security of both sides as they disarm. There is unlikely to be any such party in Afghanistan. Although disarmament can be understood literally to mean that all fighters must return any weapons in their possession, this is sometimes deemed infeasible, and accommodations would need to be made to establish something more akin to a weapons-management program. This could limit the scope of disarmament to, for example, heavy weapons or require only the registration of weapons.

Demobilization, likewise, could follow several paths. Options include some form of cantonment for a transitional period, the establishment of broader safe zones to separate combatants, and the creation of static registration centers in areas where fighters are more concentrated. Demobilization could include a distinct effort to break the existing command-and-control network of the fighters as a means of preventing recidivism or the reconstitution of subgroups into criminal enterprises. Alternatively, unit cohesion and command structures could be maintained for a period to improve control over the process and discourage individual defection.

In earlier decades, efforts were made to rapidly disarm and demobilize former combatants. More recently, there

has been a shift toward delaying such steps until the advancement of political integration of contending factions into a new national leadership arrangement, thus leaving the insurgent command structure temporarily in place.

The UN identified three possible stages of reintegration. Short-term reinsertion provides temporary employment, counseling, food, and shelter. Longer-term reintegration adds vocational training and microdevelopment. The third stage, community-based integration, focuses on reconciliation among former adversaries (Von Dyck, 2018).

Next, the scope of reintegration must be determined. What, if any, role will there be for transitional justice? Will any actors be deemed irreconcilable at the outset of negotiations, or will fighters be able to self-select by either adhering to the DDR program or acting as spoilers? Will benefits associated with the reintegration program be provided only to former fighters or will their supporters and impacted civilians also be included? What guarantees will insurgent leaders need to make about their ties to outside state and nonstate benefactors, the illicit economy, or other sources of external support? What will the protocols around oversight and monitoring of the program?

Former insurgents have often been brought into national security institutions. This requires some revamping of the security sector and raises various additional questions. Will the cap on overall forces need to be expanded? Will existing protocols for vetting and recruiting personnel be maintained? Will there be a quota system to ensure diversity? How will rank be determined for former fighters, particularly those who were in command positions? How will the insurgent top leadership be incorporated into the top command and ministerial-level positions in the security sector?

Prior experience with integrating insurgents into national security institutions is quite varied. In Nepal, for instance, insurgents were individually enlisted in the national army. In Tajikistan, entire insurgent units were incorporated in the army and police. In Burundi, government and rebel forces were merged in a reorganized set of security institutions.

Since the end of the Cold War, some 60 DDR programs have been conducted around the world. Their record is decidedly mixed (Muggah and O'Donnell, 2015). Reintegration has proved particularly challenging because the societies in question are often unable to generate adequate civilian employment opportunities.

DDR in the Afghan Context

The manner in which DDR are handled in Afghanistan will be influenced by the number of combatants involved, the disposition of forces when the fighting stops, and the nature of power and governance in Afghan society.

By the Numbers

The current *tashkil* (authorized number of forces) for the entire Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) is 352,000, with roughly 227,000 belonging to the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the remaining 125,000 committed to the Afghan National Police (ANP) (U.S. Department of Defense, 2018, p. 41). Since the start of NATO Resolute Support mission in 2015, however, the total number of ANDSF actually serving has remained largely

static at roughly 316,000 (recently introduced electronic reporting places this figure at closer to 308,000). These numbers do not include the Afghan Local Police (ALP), who fall under the Ministry of Interior but are supported exclusively by the United States. The *tashkil* for the ALP is 30,000.

In recent years, the U.S. government has refrained from reporting attrition figures of the ANDSF, citing the wishes of the Afghan government. That said, in January 2019, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani admitted that an estimated 45,000 ANDSF personnel had been killed since he took over the presidency in September 2014—an annual average of more than 10,000 (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2019, p. 65). A larger number leave the force each year for other reasons.

While the number of active Taliban fighters is uncertain, possibly even to the Taliban, then–LtGen (now Gen) Kenneth McKenzie, Jr., who was then the nominee to command U.S. Central Command, estimated the figure to be 60,000 in congressional testimony (U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, 2018, p. 9). Antonio Giustozzi, a noted scholar on Afghanistan, estimated higher—about 60,000 full-time fighters mostly based in Pakistan, in addition to about 90,000 local militia, for a total of 150,000 (Giustozzi, 2017, pp. 12–13).

Some significant proportion of Taliban fighters could be incorporated in the ANDSF without raising its authorized ceiling. This total could be gradually reduced thereafter by limiting additional recruitment to compensate for natural attrition. Budgetary pressures might, however, force more-rapid rundown of the ANDSF. Alternatives to the current ANDSF construct that allow for more locally based or less-formalized security forces

may help reduce longer-term costs and assuage former Taliban fighters who are initially reluctant about official conscription. Giustozzi's numbers suggest that there may be a sizable number of Taliban fighters in need of assistance in transitioning to civilian life, whether that occurs through ANDSF or another alternative.

Disposition of Forces

In 2018, the Taliban claimed "complete control" over 61 districts and counted 59 districts under Afghan government control. In contrast, NATO Resolute Support counted 12 districts under Taliban control and 74 districts under Afghan government control (Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2019, p. 69; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2018). Figure 1 shows the maps of control as understood by NATO command and the Taliban. Both maps show that the far south and northwest areas of Afghanistan have significant Taliban control and the center of the country has high government control. Both groups, however, claim some control in the west and east.

Separation of forces and initial delineation of security responsibility are likely to be relatively straightforward in those few districts where both sides agree about uncontested control. For the bulk of the country, any delineation is likely to prove difficult—but necessary—to map if the initial ceasefire remains in place long enough to begin integrating the Taliban into the government and security structures.

At the outset, any disarmament phase will likely take on the characteristics of a management program, because Taliban fighters will not agree to hand over their weapons
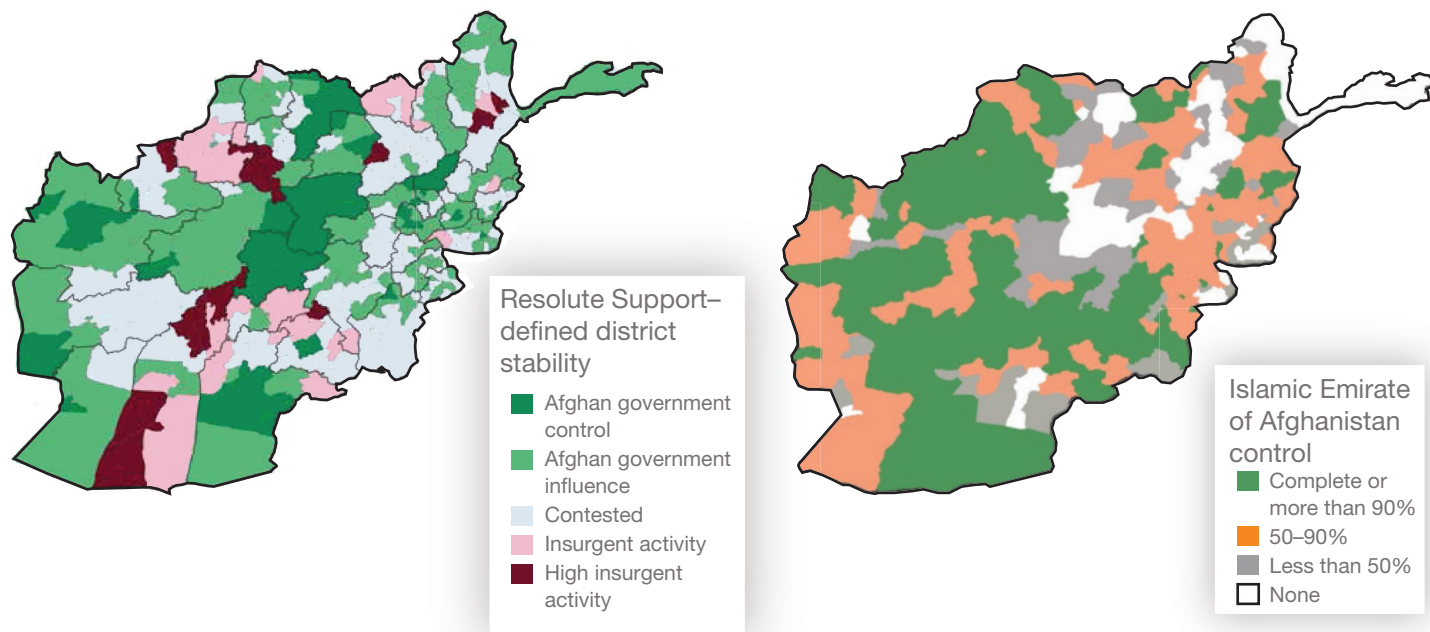
to rival ANDSF personnel. Similarly, it is highly unlikely that the demobilization phase will incorporate cantonment or a definitive break of the Taliban's command-and-control network. Because the Taliban already maintains control over some territory, the initial step might be for both sides to remain in clearly designated areas and establish some means of coordination. Each side could retain responsibility for security in areas it already controls and might arrange for joint patrols and parallel cooperating structures for contested areas. In some cases, integrated

units might be formed. Some combination of these methods could be dictated by the relative degrees of control and intermingling of forces from one district to another.

Power and Governance in Afghanistan

Governance in Afghanistan is a patronage-driven process. Peace and reintegration effectively mean importing the Taliban patronage networks into those of the Afghan government and Afghan security institutions. Making room for the Taliban in this manner will strain the existing

FIGURE 1

Resolute Support Versus Taliban Views of District Control in Afghanistan, 2018

Resolute Support–defined district stability

- Afghan government control
- Afghan government influence
- Contested
- Insurgent activity
- High insurgent activity

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan control

- Complete or more than 90%
- 50–90%
- Less than 50%
- None

SOURCES: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, 2019, p. 71; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2018.

ethnic balance. Because Taliban members are largely Pashtun, their entry should logically come at the expense of the current Pashtun placeholders, who are unlikely to give way. Taliban incorporation could result in a significant overrepresentation of Pashtuns in the government and the armed forces—a development that other ethnicities will resist. Some among these non-Pashtun factions will be in a position to contest forcefully should they so choose. Many leaders of the old Afghan Northern Alliance remain influential and some already control local security forces.

Since 2001, all governments in Afghanistan have been coalitions reflecting the presumed ethnic balance in the country, which is roughly half Pashtun, with Tajiks the next largest, followed by the Uzbeks and the Hazara. Power and patronage have been similarly distributed throughout the security sector. The National Unity Government, formed in 2014 in the wake of a contentious presidential election, ushered in a new phase of competition between Pashtuns and non-Pashtuns, particularly Tajik elites, as each subsequent political appointment became a test of the relative strength.[1] The influence of the international community, and particularly the United States, in persuading the Tajik-favored candidate (Abdullah Abdullah) to accept second place to the Pashtun candidate (Ashraf Ghani) created a fissure between Tajiks and the international community; young urban Tajiks felt that the international partners they had worked with for so long did not respond adequately to their needs (Bose, Bizhan, and Ibrahimi, 2019, p. 18).

Unlike the Pashtun and Tajik ethnic groups, for decades, the Uzbeks have had a small leadership bench dominated by Abdul Rashid Dostum, who has sought to transform from partisan warlord to statesman and the first vice president of Afghanistan under the National Unity Government. The Uzbek community has historically maintained senior-level alliances with the Tajik community, in addition to the Pashtuns, and has at times sided with one or the other. This means that Dostum—with his reliable 10 percent of the Afghan vote and strong militia—can be both kingmaker and disruptor (Ruttig, 2018, p. 40). But Dostum faces a challenge from a substantial number of Uzbek Taliban members and, increasingly, members of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Ali, 2017).

The Hazara community—Shi'a living predominantly in the central Afghanistan—has historically been among the country's most-oppressed groups. The Hazaras remain a preferred target of both the Taliban and ISIL. Hazara have often sought positions working with the international community and in government and have successfully built coalitions to protect their interests. Among the major ethnic groups, the Hazaras have a greater stake in the preservation of the current status quo; should the protection of the state fail, they will again become a persecuted minority. Already, their historic homeland, the Hazārajāt, has come under increased attack from the Taliban (Seerat and Batoor, 2018). There is also a large, long-standing Hazara refugee community in Iran. Furthermore, Iran has recruited large numbers of Hazaras to serve in the pro-government Fatemiyoun militia that is fighting in Syria, whose soldiers are now returning home as fighting in Syria dies down.

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[1] The Uzbek generally remain allied with the major Tajik faction.

Options for Reintegration

It seems unlikely that the Taliban will agree to first disarm, then demobilize, only to reintegrate thereafter. More likely, Taliban fighters will remain armed and organized until a significant number are absorbed into a reorganized national security sector. An agreement that implicitly cedes specific districts and provinces to Taliban control would likely result in some form of reflagging of Taliban troops to ostensibly government troops but without real oversight or input from even a reconstituted government. Taliban representatives have maintained, however, that they do not want the country divided into Taliban and non-Taliban-controlled areas. They do want a single unified nationally controlled army. Thus, international donors should communicate a requirement for accountability and insist that any points outlining territorial jurisdictions be temporary components of a broader plan toward integration. This could, in time, lead to a more thorough integration of the Taliban within the government and the ANDSF command levels and within the force as a whole.

Others may choose to return home or move to the cities in search of employment. For these individuals, reintegration programs focused on temporary employment, counseling, and vocational training for reentry into civilian life could help minimize the flow of former fighters from both sides into local militias, criminal enterprises, or extremist groups. There would also need to be a longer-term strategy for enhancing economic growth and independence. In a more permissive environment fostered by implementation of peace agreement, dividends could be realized through the completion of chronically delayed efforts to complete road and rail networks with neighboring countries.

Some Taliban, nevertheless, will seek to retain control of narcotics and other illicit networks that have helped fund their insurgency. This is unfortunately not entirely incompatible with incorporation into the ANDSF, whose members also have had links to corrupt enterprises. Competition for control of such networks will thus likely be an additional source of tension between the former regime and Taliban elements from place to place.

Other armed groups exist in Afghanistan, including nominally progovernment militias and ISIL, who are regarded as irreconcilable and will seek to undermine any peace agreement. The Taliban will almost certainly insist that the progovernment militias be included in any DDR process, but it is equally likely that the militia leadership will seek to evade any such requirements. Suppressing ISIL will become the amalgamated ANDSF's first priority. Demobilizing nonhostile militias will likely be left for later, if ever.

International and Regional Roles

In many peace processes, a neutral third party, in the form of an international peacekeeping force, oversees the DDR process, affording protection to both sides as each disarms in the presence of a still-armed adversary. The likely absence of such an empowered arbiter and enforcer in the Afghan case will be a major drawback. The international community can still play a role in helping design and monitor a DDR process and in organizing programs to help fighters reintegrate into civilian life. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is a logical candidate for this role. The UN can also be mandated to monitor and report

on human-rights issues and treatment of civilian by the reorganized security institutions.

The provision or withholding of donor support will be the principal source of international influence. In addition to funding a new reintegration program, donors will need to continue supporting the Afghan security sector even as it absorbs a significant number of Taliban fighters. There is already downward pressure on such funding, most of which comes from the United States. Any abrupt decline could doom not just the DDR process but the entire peace process. There will likely be opportunities to reallocate existing funding commitments to efforts that more directly support peace implementation. Relatedly, a reduced threat environment should allow for greater access for the UN and other donors to provide better and more consistent oversight.

Regional governments have a special role to play. They can make or break any peace process by reason of their proximity and their ethnic, religious, linguistic, cultural, commercial, and political ties to the contending parties. In the past, Pakistan, Russia, Iran, and India have all armed and supplied waring Afghan factions, and several of these governments continue to do so, albeit on a more limited basis.

Pakistan, in particular, still affords the Taliban a home base. Taliban fighters are organized in three categories: Local units are recruited and based near their homes in Afghanistan, mobile units largely operate out of Pakistan, and the specialized terrorist strike groups, notably the Haqqani network, are also in Pakistan. Only Pakistan can ensure the disarmament and demobilization of these categories of fighters and oversee the reintegration of

Taliban fighters who choose to remain in the country thereafter.

These regional states should be engaged in the design of DDR programs, as should China by reason of its influence with Islamabad. Pakistan should be offered international support in designing and implementing its own DDR measures for Afghan Taliban fighters. This will require some persuasion, as Pakistani officials have long been loath to recognize the extent of Taliban presence on their territory, and the Pakistani military will be reluctant to fully dismantle what they regard as a hedge against Indian encirclement.

Ultimately, reintegration will prove more than temporary only if the Afghan economy expands sufficiently to employ former fighters on both sides in some new occupations. Regional states can be the principal source of any increased trade and investment that flows from a peace agreement.

Considerations for U.S. Policy

Implementation of any Afghan peace agreement will require a multiyear effort. DDR are likely to result from rather than lead this process, because disarmament in the presence of an armed adversary requires a level of trust that can only be built over time. The United States and other international stakeholders will also need to demonstrate flexibility, allowing for solutions compatible with the local context as long as they do not compromise fundamental principles. The more specific the donor community can be about its expectations and requirements in a post-agreement environment, the better the odds of avoiding

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dangerous miscommunication and skewed expectations during the negotiating process.

For any negotiated peace in Afghanistan to hold throughout this lengthy process, the security sector will need to continue to function under unified national direction, even as both the national government and the security institutions adapt to the inclusion of former insurgents and their leadership. Implementation of such arrangements will not be easy. Under the best of circumstances, the Afghan government finds the management of large, complex initiatives difficult.[2] And the Taliban, who, by reason of its battlefield resilience, will enter any peace arrangement as coequals with the Kabul government; Taliban fighters are victors in their minds and will have their own views.

Existing ANDSF leadership may seek to minimize Taliban inclusion. This may not accord with U.S. interest in avoiding a collapse of the peace process while retaining a viable counterterrorism partner. U.S. objectives will thus be served by an outcome that produces a unified security sector—including a significant admixture of former Taliban—capable of forestalling renewed civil war and suppressing extremist groups but without returning the country to a new version of the Islamic Emirate.

In Afghanistan in 2002 and in Iraq in 2003, American officials grossly underestimated the "postwar" security challenges those new governments would face and the size of the national security forces that would be needed. The United States should avoid repeating such mistakes in the wake of a peace settlement with the Taliban. The immediate demands on the Afghan armed forces will remain high. Some disgruntled Taliban elements may reject

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[2] The legitimacy of the past several elections, the administration's record of making cabinet appointments, and its difficulty passing elections reform are all examples of policy implementation gaps in Afghanistan. Other failures, such as the inability to reliably compensate the families of wounded and martyred soldiers, are examples of noncontroversial national programs that have been a challenge to stand up.

the settlement and some Taliban fighters may defect to ISIL or other extremist groups; these elements will do their best to disrupt the settlement. Regional and local power brokers may establish or further develop their militias by recruiting local army and police personnel or complete units. Additionally, ANDSF leadership will need to work with the Taliban to implement major provisions of the peace agreement even as the two forces begin to amalgamate. It would be foolish, therefore, to move rapidly to downsize the amalgamated national security institutions before implementation of a peace settlement was well advanced.

Sustaining the current force requires $4–5 billion in U.S. support annually, along with almost $1 billion from other allies and roughly $500 million from the Afghan government's own budget.[3] The White House and other executive officials will need to work with Congress to explain the risks of implementing dramatic funding cuts to current Afghan programs in the immediate aftermath of an agreement. Sustaining support will also require addressing inevitable concerns tied to oversight and accountability with Afghan security forces incorporating Taliban members as the U.S. presence decreases. Steps should be taken in the near term to consider these challenges both within the U.S. government and among the wider donor community.

Future Considerations

U.S. officials should begin examining the options for reconfiguring the Afghan security sector and executing DDR provisions of a possible peace agreement with a view to advising the Afghan government in negotiating such an arrangement and supporting its eventual implementation.

Planning should assume that the Taliban will also have a significant voice in designing and carrying out such provisions. Given the likely absence of any third-party enforcement mechanism, provisions, once agreed upon, will only be carried out as long as both sides see doing so to be in their interests. The provision of continued U.S. and other international security assistance will provide the principal external leverage in the process.

Planning should not assume that the size and support costs for the Afghan security sector can be prudently reduced in the early aftermath of a peace settlement. U.S. officials should begin to consider how to respond to any legal or political obstacles that might be raised to supporting a reconstituted Afghan security sector containing a significant mixture of former Taliban fighters. Among the issues to be considered are how to sustain the flow of U.S. and international assistance and what condition to set, recognizing that this assistance will represent the main external leverage over implementation of any peace agreement.

Regional states should be engaged on DDR issues with a particular emphasis on Pakistan, where much of the

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[3] There are three primary vehicles for non-Afghan contributions to the ANDSF: the Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF), encompassing U.S. contributions; the ANA Trust Fund (ANATF), managed by NATO and comprising non-U.S. donations to the ANA; and the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA), overseen by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and consisting of non-U.S. funding for the ANP and related law-enforcement development. For the fiscal year 2019 budget request, requirements by source amounted to $508 million from the Afghan government, $397 million from the ANATF, $370 million from LOTFA, and $5.2 billion from ASFF (see U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 2018, p. 118).

The U.S. Army should consider what sort of support structure can best provide advice and assistance to the Afghan army in preparing for and executing such a transition.

Taliban command, mobile units, and terrorist cadres are based.

The U.S. Army should consider what sort of support structure can best provide advice and assistance to the Afghan army in preparing for and executing such a transition. Other agencies and other U.S. Defense Department elements should similarly consider how best to advise and assist other components of the Afghan security sector. U.S. officials should also consider how to transition such advice and assistance over time from military to civilian hands.

While disarmament and demobilization are normally military tasks, reintegration (other than into new military formations) is a civilian competency and one that is often undertaken by international entities. U.S. officials should consider where responsibilities might be best lodged (e.g., with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) and begin consulting with prospective donor countries on the funding requirements.

Sustained reintegration of former combatants from both sides into civilian life will depend on the capacity of the Afghan economy to provide them with gainful employment. Because external aid levels will eventually taper off in the aftermath of a peace settlement, U.S. officials should encourage trade and investment initiatives, with a particular emphasis on the involvement of regional states, to support economic growth and job creation.

Appendix: Previous Post-9/11 Efforts to Promote Reconciliation and Reintegration

Since the defeat of the Taliban in late 2001, there have been several formal and informal efforts to reach an accommodation with elements of the Taliban and other insurgents and informal fighters. These activities were conducted in support of an ongoing counterinsurgency campaign rather than a peace settlement. The DDR programs were intended to promote Taliban defections. These have had limited effect because the Afghan government had difficulty administering the complex programs involved, and the Taliban fighters exhibited little interest in defecting.

It was not until 2003 that more-formal processes were introduced in an effort to persuade insurgent leaders and fighters to renounce violence in favor of rejoining society.

Early Efforts Toward Reconciliation (2001–2002)

Members of the international community tasked with facilitating the development of a new Afghan constitution at the Bonn Conference appointed Hamid Karzai as chair of the interim administration. In this role, he made early efforts to reach out to a Taliban leadership that, at the time, considered itself to be a vanquished organization. By early December, a tentative agreement had been reached through behind-the-scenes negotiations, and public statements by Taliban officials took on a somber tone. Speaking from Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, a Taliban spokesman, confirmed to the *New York Times* that a surrender agreement had been reached and that "[t]he Taliban were finished as a political force"

(Knowlton, 2001). However, then–U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld leveraged American influence to abrogate the settlement (Muñoz, 2011, p. 30). As a result, these initial efforts at reconciliation resulted only in a few individual surrenders. These occurred when individual Taliban associates either turned themselves in or made their wishes to do so known to personal contacts within the burgeoning Afghan government. Such an ad hoc process yielded few significant figures, and some of those who attempted to turn themselves in were apprehended and detained.[4] For instance, Mullah Wakil Ahmed Mutawakkil, the Taliban government's foreign minister, surrendered to coalition authorities in 2002 and was placed in custody, spending more than two years in detention at Kandahar Airfield and Bagram Air Base. Additionally, individuals who had little or nothing to do with the movement were frequently detained without warning or due process. Such an atmosphere did not impel many genuine Taliban figures to seek reconciliation, and these initial missteps have colored all subsequent efforts at reconciliation and reintegration.

Early Efforts at DDR (2003–2005)

It was not until 2003 that more-formal processes were introduced in an effort to persuade insurgent leaders and fighters to renounce violence in favor of rejoining society. In April, the UNDP launched the Afghan New Beginnings Program, an attempt to address the needs of combatants and lure them away from fighting. According

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[4] For a detailed list of former Taliban leaders who reintegrated or reconciled from 2001 to 2010 see Jones, 2011.

to unpublished work from 2011 by RAND researcher Jason H. Campbell, a component of this was the DDR process. This program focused on the 100,000-strong Afghan Military Forces, the loose conglomerate of militias that had collectively ejected the Taliban with coalition support and was largely successful in collecting heavy weapons and disbanding militias. The objective at the time was to have the burgeoning Afghan National Security Forces fill the security vacuum created by the demobilization of the Afghan Military Forces. Instead, Afghan National Security Forces units failed to materialize in many areas, and the resulting security void was exploited by the Taliban, bandits, and warlords. In June 2005, the UNDP initiated the successor to DDR, dubbed the Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG). The aperture of this effort was widened to include all armed groups that were not affiliated with the Afghan National Security Forces. Each of these endeavors, however, focused almost exclusively on low- and mid-level combatants. They were ultimately limited and, in some cases, undermined by a dearth of resources, lack of oversight, and an overreliance on onetime handouts of money or other incentives in exchange for handing in a weapon.

Renewed Efforts to Promote Reconciliation and Defection (2005)

At around the same time that UNDP established DIAG, President Karzai approved in May 2005 the first formal program that explicitly sought to specifically engage insurgent leadership with the goal of reaching a peace agreement. However, from the outset, the *Proceay-i Tahkeem-i Solha* (the Strengthening Peace Program, or

Peace and Reconciliation Commission), known as PTS, was beset by problems. A tight budget and inconsistent political commitment from the Afghan government limited the reach of the program. According to Campbell, rumors surfaced that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence undermined the PTS by offering some of the more strategically valuable Taliban figures a more appealing alternative of sanctuary and resources without having to forsake their prestigious positions in the Taliban hierarchy. Finally, like the DDR and DIAG efforts, the PTS suffered from a lack of oversight and shoddy vetting standards. Official assessments of the PTS tended to conflate quantifiable results with strategic progress, but these assessments could not show defensible causality between program data and results. A review of the PTS program by Michael Semple, a scholar with years of on-the-ground interaction with members and sympathizers of the Taliban, contends that the PTS had never undergone a formal evaluation and that "a perusal of the PTS records indicates that almost no previously known insurgents have participated in the program" (Semple, 2009, p. 55).

Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program: (2011–2016)

The concept of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) was initially proposed at the London Conference in January 2010 and formally approved by President Karzai in June 2011. Unlike its predecessors, the APRP endeavors to address both top-down and bottom-up aspects of a peace process. Formally, the APRP is "based on a broad strategic vision led by Afghan men and women for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Afghanistan" (Islamic

Republic of Afghanistan National Security Council, 2010, p. 1). However, in its implementation, the APRP has been bifurcated into two distinct efforts: one on reintegrating low- and mid-level fighters back into their local communities (called the *operational level*) and the other on reconciling with insurgent leadership to permit them back into Afghan society (called the *strategic and political levels*) (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan National Security Council, 2010, pp. 1–2). The split has been a matter of expediency rather than ideology. As reintegration efforts deal with localized issues and actors, they are not burdened by the same high-level political considerations as reconciliation. Thus, this aspect of the APRP was initiated shortly after Karzai's approval.

The designers of the APRP strategy sought to avoid the pitfalls of its predecessors. One primary issue was the lack of oversight and formality that plagued the previous efforts.

Thus, a dedicated hierarchy was established to manage a program that required a higher level of bureaucratic competency than had been the norm. Additionally, great pains were made to prevent the impression that only fighters were being rewarded. As a result, the third phase of the APRP was explicitly designed to benefit both the fighters and communities that agreed to accept them back into the fold. Finally, a specific vetting policy was put into place to help guard against insurgent infiltration and establish that candidates were living up to their obligations. While the efficacy of these policies remain up for debate, each is rooted in the morals of previous disappointing attempts at peacemaking.

Like its predecessors, this program yielded limited results because of both the lack of adequate administrative capacity and the limited response from Taliban leaders and rank and file.

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About This Perspective

The authors of this Perspective identify best practices in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration field; describe the conditions in Afghanistan under which such programs would need to be carried out; and recommend steps that the U.S. Army and other elements of the U.S. Government should take to prepare to advise and assist the Afghan government in negotiating and eventually implementing such arrangements.

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