Women and Peacebuilding in Afghanistan Post-2001: Analyses and Lessons Learned

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Organization for Policy Research and Development Studies (DROPS) is a women-led multi-disciplinary research organization committed to strengthening democratic ideas and values by producing evidence-based policy research, training and advocacy that offers policymakers with sound alternative solutions to national issues.

UN Women is the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.

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FOREWORD

DROPS & UN WOMEN – Women's Peacebuilding Journal

The world seems to believe that the Afghan women's rights movement is bound to a timeline. That the Afghan women's rights movement started 20 years ago. But as you travel across Afghanistan, from the urban cities to rural villages, from Faizabad to Kandahar, it is clear that Afghan women have consistently led the movement for transformative change and peace over centuries. They have shaped the vibrant movement and discourse on gender, human rights, peace and security towards the transformative changes that shape the Afghanistan we know today.

What do we miss when we fail to recognize Afghan women's role in peacebuilding? What do we miss when we place women's perspectives in the shadows? The evidence is clear. We miss out on peace for all. We miss out on multiple innovative ways in which Afghan women have organized themselves in their determination to make real their vision of peace. When women are included, peace lasts longer. Evidence also demonstrates time and time again that women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment are "prerequisites" and drivers for peace, prosperity and stability for all.

Yet today, around the world, peace agreements say little or nothing about women's human rights. In addition, from 1992 to 2019, women constituted, on average, only 13 percent of negotiators, 6 percent of mediators, and 6 percent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide. Around seven out of every ten peace processes did not include women mediators or women signatories.

Afghanistan can and should be different. And I am confident that with the expertise, passion and vision, as demonstrated by the authors of this journal, that this is possible. Supporting women's meaningful participation in peace means also supporting Afghan women experts on gender, peace and security to develop and leverage their work and make it central to decisions on negotiating peace at all levels.

What makes this peacebuilding journal unlike any other peacebuilding journal anywhere is that it has at its core the voice, the experience and the expertise of diverse Afghan women at the most critical moment for peace. Every single chapter of this journal flags that the participation of Afghan women in setting peacebuilding priorities is not a matter of choice but a political necessity to move forward in our shared vision of inclusive peace and security.

The road for Afghan women to get where they are today has been hard and it has been long. However, Afghan women have fought their way back time and again. The force of Afghan women can no longer be hampered or erased in the country's current efforts towards peace.

This is the most urgent of times and the most urgent of messages: Afghanistan's history can no longer be written without the voices, perspectives and expertise of Afghan women. And I am truly confident that this journal contributes to rewriting this history with women at the fore.

Aleta Miller - UN Women Representative in Afghanistan
November, 2020

EDITOR'S NOTE

Coined by former United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali in his landmark policy statement, 'An Agenda for Peace,' peacebuilding is a tool to "prevent the recurrence of violence among nations and peoples" [1] to end long-standing conflicts in the post-Cold War era. The Agenda not only placed peacebuilding on the international policy agenda[2] but also created a "conceptual map"[3] differentiating between peacebuilding, peacekeeping, peacemaking and preventative diplomacy. From 1989 to 1992, the UN launched fourteen new missions. Regarded as "first generation peacebuilding,"[4] they were distinctly different from traditional UN peacekeeping as they went beyond the "classic model of inter-state conflict management"[5] and combined assistance with coercion, expanding peacebuilding to include the monitoring of the security sector, holding elections, helping countries draft a new constitution, and promoting capacity building.[6] However, as the UN started becoming more multifunctional, it also became increasingly criticized for being ambitious, intrusive, top-down and lacking local ownership. The international peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan has endured all four criticisms in the last two decades.

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1. United Nations, (1992) 'An Agenda for Peace Preventive Diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping,' Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992.

2. Donais, T., (2012) Peace-building and Local Ownership, Post conflict consensus building. Routledge: 22

3. Paris, R. and Sisk, T. (2009) The Dilemmas of Statebuilding, Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations, New York: Routledge.: 5

4. Newman, E., (2009) "Liberal" peace-building debates. In: Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O. (eds). New Perspectives on Liberal Peace-building. Japan: United Nations University Press: 6

5. ibid., 6.

6. Paris, R. and Sisk, T. (2009) The Dilemmas of Statebuilding, Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations, New York: Routledge: 4

The normative underpinnings of contemporary peacebuilding were a product of the post-Cold War period as the declared "victory of liberal democracy as a universal form of governance"[7] became viewed "as a universal cure for the ills of fragile or war-torn states."[8] Thus, the core ideas of "democratization, economic liberalization, human rights and the rule of law"[9] began to greatly shape peacebuilding theory and practice, making it highly ambitious. As a result, contemporary peacebuilding became readily associated with liberal peacebuilding. Liberal peacebuilders argue that "liberal institutions and practices"[10] provide a "universal framework"[11] that could manage conflicts in host societies while laying the foundation for "sustainable development."[12]

However, within this liberal peace framework, "the local"[13] was treated more as an "object"[14] than as the "subject"[15] of peacebuilding whereas international actors were seen as the best suited, irrespective of their familiarity with the sociopolitical context of the host society, to design and implement the peacebuilding activities. Therefore, by the mid-to-late nineties, "second-generation scholarship"[16] started critically assessing liberal peacebuilding as an "externally driven"[17] and top-down endeavor. However, that is not to say that peacebuilders completely isolated all local actors. In fact, peacebuilders often coopted a handful of "domestic political elites."[18]

However, the problem here was that the elites were given limited agency to express their interests and were often locked into a post-war settlement at the very beginning of the peacebuilding process. The tendency by liberal peacebuilders to assume that the interests of international peacebuilders and local elites always align (or tend to gradually align as peacebuilding activities are pursued) ignored the agency of local elites to reject and resist

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7. Donais, T., (2012) Peace-building and Local Ownership, Post conflict consensus building. Routledge: 22)

8. (ibid. 23)

9. (ibid., 23)

10. (ibid., 23)

11. (ibid., 23)

12. (ibid., 23).

13. (ibid.,31)

14. (ibid., 31)

15. (ibid., 31)

16. Paris, R. and Sisk, T. (2009) The Dilemmas of Statebuilding, Confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations, New York: Routledge: 6

17. Donais, T., (2012) Peace-building and Local Ownership, Post conflict consensus building. Routledge: 31

18. (ibid., 42).

either the entire peacebuilding endeavor or parts of it. By placing emphasis on ownership by the local political elite, community-level actors were largely sidelined. By the early 2000s the gap between the "transformative ambitions"[19] of peacebuilding and the inability of international peacebuilders to deliver on them began to show significantly. Academics and practitioners alike began to recognize the limitations of international peacebuilders on the one hand and the "ambivalence if not outright resistance of key local actors towards liberal peacebuilding"[20] on the other. As such, questions about the legitimacy of peacebuilding missions in the absence of local ownership and lack of consultation with local stakeholders[21] became rigorously debated. It was not until the post-9/11 era that the notion of local ownership started being viewed as a key condition for successful peacebuilding.

The peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan has been described as one of the "most ambitious peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations ever."[22] Intended to be the "flagship project of liberal peacebuilding,"[23] nineteen years later, it has instead, raised debates around the "desirability"[24] and "attainability"[25] of the liberal peace project. In 2001, the greatest dilemma that faced peacebuilders was the daunting task of building a local consensus around a state-building, counter-insurgency and humanitarian/aid strategy in Afghanistan. Consequently, in their hurried pursuits to build local consensus, two key members of the international community— the UN and the US— were instrumental in coopting a broad coalition of state elites, subnational elites and to a lesser extent community level-actors. As a result, top-down approaches have been "inconsistent, uneven and insufficiently attuned to the realities of Afghan politics and culture."[26] Meanwhile, bottom-

19. Sabaratnam, M., (2011) The Liberal Peace? An Intellectual History of International Conflict management, 1990-2010. In Campbell, S. & Chandler, D. & Sabaratnam, M. (eds). A Liberal Peace? The Problem and Practices of Peace-building. UK: Zed Books: 15

20. Donais, T., (2012) Peace-building and Local Ownership, Post conflict consensus building. Routledge: 23

21. Newman, E., (2009) "Liberal" peace-building debates. In: Newman, E., Paris, R. and Richmond, O. (eds). New Perspectives on Liberal Peace-building. Japan: United Nations University Press: 4

22. Barnett, M., Zurcher, C., (2009) The Peacebuilder's contract, How external statebuilding reinforces weak statehood. In Paris, R. & Sisk, T. (eds). The Dilemmas of Statebuilding Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations. UK: Routledge: 41

23. Zurcher, C., (2011) The Liberal Peace – A Tough Sell?. In Campbell, S. & Chandler, D. & Sabaratnam, M. (eds). A Liberal Peace? The Problem and Practices of Peace-building. UK: Zed Books: 76

24. Donais, T., (2012) Peace-building and Local Ownership, Post conflict consensus building. Routledge: 99

25. (ibid. 99)

26. (ibid., 98).

up approaches have been "sporadic, piecemeal, and limited."[27] Moreover, the diversity and influence of state and subnational elites created a far more complex context for peacebuilding than was initially envisioned by the international community.

In contemporary peacebuilding missions, such as that in Afghanistan, local ownership has been framed as the extent to which domestic actors control the design and implementation of the processes. In this context, local ownership is envisaged as an end in itself where it is expected that the host society will embrace the key principles of liberal peace. But what happens when local actors are not involved in its design? What happens when they begin to oppose it? And how much of the achievements under liberal frameworks and institutions are self-sustainable when international peace-builders leave? This last question in particular is crucial to explore as Afghanistan engages in peace negotiations and international donors question more than ever their security presence and aid flows to the country.

To explore these questions and provide lessons learnt on what has and has not proved effective in Afghanistan's experience with international liberal peace-building while looking specifically at women's participation, inclusion, and access, this edition of the Afghanistan Women and Peacebuilding Journal provides 11 in-depth case studies by experts and academics from diverse fields and across Afghanistan, including the subnational level. The purpose of the journal is to develop a body of literature that could assist peace-building practitioners, academics and policymakers in understanding some of the failures of liberal peace-building in the country while illustrating successes that underscore the importance of locally-driven programming. After two decades of Afghanistan absorbing lessons from the world, these works will give the world an opportunity to draw lessons from what is being regarded as the longest peacebuilding mission in UN history.

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November 2020

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27. (ibid., 98).

THE AFGHAN CONSTITUTION AND PEACEBUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

ZAKIRA RASOOLI[1]

Summary

- The Constitution developed in 2004 was designed to both increase the reach of the central government into areas that historically resisted central control and to give the international peacebuilding mission a clear focal point for coordination and cooperation on development and counterinsurgency. This resulted in a centralized system that, rather than reduce the power of local parochial networks, incorporated them and allowed them to use the central government as a resource.

- The peacebuilding mission that led to the current system was unusual in that the NATO/ISAF coalition had to divide its duties between counterinsurgency and development of institutions alongside civilian UN agencies. The incoherence of the implementation of the peacebuilding efforts contributed to the incoherence of Afghan rule of law and democracy development.

- However, it is actors within the Afghan government that exploited gaps and powers within the Constitution to further empower the executive branch over other branches of government. This contributed to a climate of impunity and raised the stakes of presidential elections over others, leading to fraught results where international intervention is always needed to broker a winner. This situation overall contributes to Afghans feeling unrepresented by their government.

1. Zakira Rasooli works as a Program Coordinator at the Women for Justice Organization in Afghanistan.

- It is recommended that constitutional amendments be considered to better balance the powers of the different branches of government and to reduce the centralization of power in order to better account for the realities of the country.

Following the September 11th 2001 attack on the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington that killed almost 3,000 American citizens, the United States (US) and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies launched a military operation in Afghanistan under the doctrine of counterinsurgency. Operation Enduring Freedom was aimed at toppling the Taliban regime that had given sanctuary to al-Qaeda leaders and dismantling al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. NATO, in reaction to the attack on American soil, initiated its mutual defense mechanism in solidarity. The international community justified the continued operation in Afghanistan based on the premise that underdevelopment in Afghanistan, its unstable economy, undemocratic political regime, wide-spread poverty, malnutrition, and absence of public health and education systems provided the perfect breeding ground for violent extremism and hence could cause further global security concerns (and even a second 9/11).

Henceforth, the intervention was rationalized on the basis of liberal peacebuilding with the assumption that peace is an outcome of liberal democracy, market based economic reforms and the formation of institutions associated with democratic states.[2] Therefore, the international community became increasingly involved in a state-building and democratic peace agenda in addition to countering insurgency. To evaluate the democratization process in particular within the broader framework of the peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan, this study provides a special focus on the 2004 Constitution. As will be seen, the Constitution is a product of both Afghan and international politics. The intention was to create a Constitution that could provide the framework for a new democracy in the country, though concerns over ensuring stability also played a role during discussions over the ideal structure of the new government (in particular, the shift towards a unitary form of governance). To evaluate its role in

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2. Dodge, Toby. "Intervention and dreams of exogenous statebuilding: the application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq." Review of International Studies, Vol. 39 Issue 5 (Intervention and the Ordering of the Modern World), December 2013. Pp: 1189-1212

achieving the peacebuilding goals of both the international community and the new Afghan Republic, three constitutional functions will be looked at in particular: the separation of the powers of government with clear checks and balances within government structures, the establishment of rule of law which can protect individual civil and human rights, and the establishment of a mechanism for peaceful transfer of power through elections. It will be shown that the Constitution's over-centralization of power in the executive branch paradoxically contributed to creating brittle institutions that lack the accountability mechanisms of other democratic countries. The result is that the international peacebuilding coalition, particularly in the case of Afghan elections, has to help fill the gaps left by the Constitution.

Afghanistan and the Hybrid "Fifth Generation" of Peacebuilding

The practice of international peacekeeping is divided by Dr. Kai Michael Kenkel (whose works focus particularly on Latin American peacekeeping) into subsequent distinct generations that eventually produce the concept of peacebuilding.

"First-generation" peace operations or "traditional peacekeeping" consists of the UN serving as an impartial buffer between aggressive forces at the request of the host nations. UN troops are lightly armed and operate under the understanding that they are restricted in their use of force. Kenkel emphasizes that the sovereignty of nations was considered a step above human rights in importance when considering the launch of such operations.[3]

"Second-generation" peace operations entailed the addition of civilian tasks to first generation peacekeeping. This became increasingly popular at the end of the Cold War when internal conflicts necessitated increased humanitarian supply missions, most famously during the famines in Africa.[4] It also includes active UN action towards making peace but without increasing UN troops' ability to use force. Thus, while missions like Bosnia in the early 90s had this civilian component, Blue Helmets were still famously helpless to prevent their own capture by Bosnian Serb forces.

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3. Kenkel, Kai Michael. "Five Generations of Peace Operations: From the "Thin Blue Line" to "Painting a Country Blue." Revista Brazileira de Politica Internacional, Vol. 56, No. 1. 2013. Pp: 122-143
4. Ibid.

After the triple disasters of Rwanda, Bosnia, and Somalia, the idea that national sovereignty must be held above human rights hit a wall. This led to creating a new international civilian capacity to administer state functions during transitional periods, applied in places like Timor-Leste and Kosovo.[5] This "third generation" of peacekeeping was more permissive of the use of force and disengaging with notions of "impartiality" that diverged from reality (especially after cases like Rwanda where it was clear one side was morally in the wrong and therefore "impartiality" meant aiding wrong doers). The Kosovo and Timor-Leste missions allowed UN peace enforcement missions to make greater use of force to allow for civilian components to carry out their tasks.

The "fourth generation" is also heavily influenced by the growing influence of the "democratic peace" hypotheses which argued that liberal democracies did not go to war amongst themselves. This hypothesis was also in play in the early 2000s, as seen in interventions like Afghanistan. "Peacebuilding" came into being as a way not just to achieve the elimination of violence, but conflict resolution— creating institutions and socio-economic conditions conducive to a long-term peace.[6] The result is that in recent years, it became difficult to distinguish "peacebuilding" from "state building" (originally a subset of peacebuilding). While it is tempting to put Afghanistan in this category, Kenkel actually classifies the Afghanistan mission as part of a fifth generation "hybrid mission" where NATO (and specifically the United States) use their own military force to create an environment conducive for peacebuilding which is then shouldered by both the coalition forces and the international community (the UN itself opted for a "light footprint" strategy).

If democracy was the way to create a more peaceful and stable society, it followed that the peacebuilding mission needed a country with a democratic framework. The Constitution paved the road for the establishment of a presidential democratic system in Afghanistan. However, the "hybrid" mission of the coalition forces was hybrid in another way: since it was originally intended as a counterinsurgency mission, the coalition was not solely focused on creating suitable grounds for civilian actors to undertake

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5. Kenkel, Kai Michael. "Five Generations of Peace Operations: From the "Thin Blue Line" to "Painting a Country Blue." Revista Braziliera de Politica Internacional, Vol. 56, No. 1. 2013. Pp: 122-143

6. Ibid.

the peacebuilding mission. The government that came to power in 2004 was largely composed of members of the transitional government (2002-2004) led by President Hamid Karzai, a leader chosen for his ability to create consensus among warlord factions. This suited the coalition since these factions were in fact allies against the Taliban. Since the peacebuilding role of the different coalition members was being undertaken at the same time as the war, the war and historical instability of the country ended up entering the calculus of involving everyone in the process of designing the Afghan government.

The Framework of the Government

A constitution has several important functions. It will be looked to as a clear delineation of the scope and limitations of government and the rights of the governed, while providing clear mechanisms through which the constitution can be altered as societally accepted principles evolve.[7] Constitutionalism as an idea usually provides that there are clear delineations between executive, legislative, and judicial power and that there are limits on those powers through the protection of civil rights.[8] This is especially true of the Constitutionalism that evolved during the revolutions of the 18th century which eventually became a foundation for current constitutions worldwide. A judiciary and legislature independent of the executive along with defined and protected civil rights, usually including freedom of expression, association, due process of law, and individual equality before the law among other things, are considered crucial building blocks of liberal democracy.

The 2004 Constitution of Afghanistan is regarded as a progressive document intended to combine liberal democratic norms with Afghanistan's local norms and history (chiefly its Islamic character and its previous Constitution from 1964). However, it did not produce a well-functioning democracy as it is remarkably ill-suited to the realities of the country's politics. The Afghan members of the interim government and their international partners favored a centralized unitary state out of the understanding it would a) give Kabul

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7. "Constitutionalism." Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/constitutionalism/#ConMinRicSen
8. Ibid.

more institutional control over the rural periphery which historically proved difficult to govern and b) allow the international community a singular body with which to coordinate counterterrorism and development (as opposed to a multiplicity of local bodies).[9] State centralization was intended to induce citizens of different backgrounds, interests, and ethnicities to coordinate their demands in the direction of more general-interest public goods and away from parochial transfers. An analysis produced by the Middle East Institute opined that what ended up actually happening was that the parochial networks instead worked to secure strong links within the centralized system and were able to increasingly leverage their ability to destabilize it from the inside.[10] Far from resenting centralized power, many local power holders instead see the government (and its international donors) as a resource that is important to have access to and do not necessarily resent its presence. Carol Wang, writing on rule of law in Afghanistan after a career traveling extensively through the country, remarks that these issues can find their origin in the framework of the government. She chiefly identifies the imbalance of power between the stronger executive on the one hand and the weaker judiciary and legislative branches on the other hand. This framework is further weakened when combined with the lack of direction for local governance.[11]

This executive power is particularly clear when it comes to political appointments. Under Article 64, the president appoints all cabinet ministers, the attorney general, the head of the Central Bank, the National Security director, judges, officers of the armed forces, police, and national security as well as other high ranking officials.[12] With the Constitution vesting so much power in the presidency, parliament's attempts to reject presidential

9. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. Pp: 211-250 https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/Wang.pdf

10. Schetter, Conrad, and Rainer Glassner. "The Peripheralization of the Center: "Warlordism" in Afghanistan." Middle East Institute, April 19, 2012. https://www.mei.edu/publications/peripheralization-center-warlordism-afghanistan

11. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. Pp: 211-250 https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/Wang.pdf

12. Dodge, Toby. "Intervention and dreams of exogenous statebuilding: the application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq." Review of International Studies, Vol. 39 Issue 5 (Intervention and the Ordering of the Modern World), December 2013. Pp: 1189-1212

picks have often been overridden.[13] The legislature's lawmaking power, meanwhile, is challenged by the President's ability to draft laws by decree without legislative approval if the National Assembly is not in session. As for the judiciary, the executive's power over appointments is seen to weaken its independence as a separate branch.[14] As a result, the winner of presidential elections really does take all.

Rule of Law

Rule of law (a principle of governance that crosscuts with a government's civil rights obligations) was deemed essential to enable peace and security. The three main rule of law structures— the Ministry of Justice, the Supreme Court, and the Attorney General's office— were the highest in priority in the reconstruction efforts in law and justice. The international community divided rule of law development among themselves to put in place institutions like the civilian police force, the army, a Judicial Reform Commission (JRC), and the development of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).[15] This is where Kenkel's "fifth generation hybrid model" can be useful to understand what happened in Afghanistan— rather than the UN's peacekeeping and civilian forces taking full control of the situation, the UN's various civilian arms worked on smaller-scale projects among the different members of the NATO/ISAF coalition who played the role of securing an environment conducive to peacebuilding. In the case of justice, it was Italy's role to support both the JRC and the Afghan transitional government in setting up the judicial system. In reality, there was little coordination among these groups. There was also a significant amount of US involvement. For instance, the interim code of criminal procedure for instance was developed by Italian officials and American military lawyers with little input from Afghan justice institutions. In the United States Institute of Peace's 2004 Special Report describing the situation, it was observed that there was little political urgency or funding going into setting up the judicial system.[16] The JRC was not getting

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13. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. Pp: 226. https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/Wang.pdf

14. Ibid. P 226.

15. "Special Report 117: Establishing the Rule of Law in Afghanistan." United States Institute of Peace, March 2004. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/sr117.pdf

16. Ibid. P 117.

much funding from the UNDP while the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, and Attorney General's office were seen to have fractious relationships with each other to say nothing of the difficult relationship between the JRC and Italy. The German mission to train a civilian police force to enforce rule of law was itself facing steep challenges often as a result of competition with the military objectives of the NATO coalition. As a result, rule of law was off to a difficult start in Afghanistan in a period where the lower levels of violence could have provided an ideal environment for it to take off.

Constitutional flaws ensured rule of law would continue to be weak as insecurity increased again after 2005. First of all, the Constitution does not include meaningful checks and balances to ensure accountability at the national level. Instead, as Carol Wang notes, it has concentrated power in the executive branch, "creating a patronage system that sinks from the top down into local communities."[17] She continues to say that international pressure has been the primary and most visible means of holding powerbrokers accountable, "which is itself counterproductive to an Afghanistan that is independent and legitimate in the eyes of its own people." Moreover, the failure of the Constitution to introduce meaningful checks and balances on executive power has facilitated a climate of impunity where the law cannot bring power holders to justice.[18] This reality impedes the success of all other rule of law objectives. If power-holders can arbitrarily exert their will, there are no stable and clear universal means of resolving disputes and grievances, no clear way to protect fundamental rights and punish human rights violations, and thus no basis for trust in the government. Recent polls would seem to bear out this connection. A Gallup poll of Afghan respondents as recent as 2019 revealed a widespread lack of trust in government institutions with general satisfaction at 36% and a 91% belief that government is corrupt.[19] In a 2019 World Justice Project General Population Poll, it was found that only 19% of Afghans believed a government officer would be prosecuted if caught in a hypothetical act of

17. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. Pp: 211. https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/Wang.pdf

18. Ibid. P 225.

19. Bikus, Zach. "Inside Afghanistan: Stability in Institutions Remains Elusive." Gallup, September 4, 2019. https://news.gallup.com/poll/266252/inside-afghanistan-stability-institutions-remains-elusive.aspx

government fund embezzlement.[20] In that same report, judges were the authority most likely to be suspected of corruption by Afghan respondents with 59% of Afghan respondents believing most or all judges were involved in corrupt practices.

Flaws in Elections and Representation

Elections have been fraudulent and have regularly required international monitoring. Afghanistan depends on United States support in particular to conclude its elections because its Constitution is remarkably ill-suited to the realities of its politics.[21] The Constitution never gave clear directives on how to appoint members of the government's Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) — the body that organizes and supervises all elections in the country. This allowed President Karzai to pass a decree giving him the authority over such appointments.[22] A parliamentary attempt to gain authority over the process was vetoed in 2009. However, Article 61 of the Electoral Law allowed the international community a competing oversight body— the Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC) — whose members would be appointed by the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG), the head of UNAMA), the AIHRC, and the Afghan Supreme Court. The ECC audit process was successful at identifying instances of election fraud.[23] Even so, direct US intervention was required for the presidential elections of 2004, 2009, 2014, and 2019 in order to pressure close competitors to withdraw so one candidate could win the election and negotiate extraconstitutional solutions to calm political tensions.[24] All of these facts could possibly be behind why Gallup recorded only 19% of Afghan respondents having confidence in the honesty of elections in their own country in 2019.[25]

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20. "The Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Key Findings from 2019." World Justice Project, 2020. https://worldjusticeproject. org/sites/default/files/documents/Final-Afghanistan-Report-2019.pdf

21. Jarrett Blanc, Afghanistan's Elections disputes reflect its constitution's flaws, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE, 2020.

22. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. Pp: 227. https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/ sites/15/Wang.pdf

23. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. P 226. https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/ sites/15/Wang.pdf

24. Ibid.

25. Bikus, Zach. "Inside Afghanistan: Stability in Institutions Remains Elusive." Gallup, September 4, 2019. https:// news.gallup.com/poll/266252/inside-afghanistan-stability-institutions-remains-elusive.aspx

Elections for parliament are equally difficult. The Constitution, by choosing the single non-transferable vote electoral system, hinders the formation of collective party interests and leads to fractured voting patterns, severing voters' ties to their elected representatives.[26] The 2010 elections demonstrated the way the Constitution hinders the formation of political parties and the ability of public opinion to be reflected in elections results.[27] In addition, UNAMA Head Kai Eide had to intervene to protect the UN's role in the ECC as parliament was unable to prevent the President from decreeing increased authority over the ECC.[28]

The power the Constitution gives to the executive proves once again to be a major hindrance which requires the international participants of the peacebuilding mission to constantly dedicate resources each election to fill in gaps left by the Constitutional framework of the government.

Conclusion

Looking at these three critical features of the 2004 Constitution, it is clear that much remains to be accomplished on the path to democratization. Part of the blame lies with the hybrid mission format of the peacebuilders—coalition members wanted stability as quickly as possible to prioritize counterinsurgency and so showed favor to a centralized system that overemphasized the executive branch. Furthermore, the strong UN peacebuilding structure seen in Timor-Leste and Kosovo were not pursued and civilian peacebuilding forces had to work in an underfunded and piecemeal way alongside the dual missions of the coalition forces. The consequences for the rule of law structures were amply demonstrated by the lack of coordination of these different actors when setting up the justice system. However, it was Afghan actors that exploited gaps and weaknesses in the 2004 constitutional document in order to further skew the imbalances between government branches. The result is a broad disillusionment among

26. Dodge, Toby. "Intervention and dreams of exogenous statebuilding: the application of Liberal Peacebuilding in Afghanistan and Iraq." Review of International Studies, Vol. 39 Issue 5 (Intervention and the Ordering of the Modern World), December 2013. Pp. 1189-1212

27. Ibid.

28. Wang, Carol. "Rule of Law in Afghanistan: Enabling a Constitutional Framework for Local Accountability." Harvard International Law Journal, Vol 55, No. 1, Winter 2014, 2014. P. 230. https://harvardilj.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/Wang.pdf

Afghans with the government they currently have which is noticeably different from the theoretical form of constitutional liberal democracy.

Policy Recommendations

- The constitution proposes a democratic system of governance but at the same time says in Article 60 that "The President shall be the head of state of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, executing his authorities in the executive, legislative and judiciary fields in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution." This contradicts a basic notion of democracy which is that it requires meaningful checks and balances between branches of government. An amendment within the constitution, particularly to change the presidential power of law by decree and over appointments, would help improve the balance between the three branches.

- A federal government which shared power with regional governments could be more efficient than the current unitary system when considering the context of Afghanistan. This would reduce the strength of parochial networks currently using the central government as a resource and increase the ability of citizens to participate in tailoring policies that suit the differing needs of their respective provinces.

- The election law should be amended and ratified by the Afghan Parliament in order to curb the rise of tensions similar to what was seen in all past elections. The power of appointment to the IEC should be shared between government branches and international monitoring on the ECC should continue for as long as fraud persists as an issue.

APROACHES TO SUPPORTING WOMEN IN AFGHANISTAN: GAPS IN IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATION BETWEEN LAWS, PRACTICES AND PARTNERS

GAISU YARI[1]

Summary

- 23 key informant interviews were carried out within donor and implementing partner agencies working in the area of women's empowerment in Afghanistan. The interviewees showed a general uncertainty and skepticism towards how women's empowerment programs are planned, monitored, and evaluated, questioning whether they are even helping their recipients. This goes for both Afghan and international initiatives.

- Major problems that are recurring with women's empowerment programs are: duplication of models, emphasis on the number of women participating rather than measuring improved livelihoods, an inflexible planning process that takes little account of on-the-ground realities, and overall lack of coordination between all actors including local and national government.

International Non-Profit Organizations (I-NGOs), United Nations (UN) agencies and local Non-Profit Organizations (NGOs) remained at the forefront of Afghanistan's development with a particular focus on the empowerment

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1. Gaisu Yari is the Appeals Board Commissioner at the IARCSC.

of women after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. The international community expected to stabilize Afghanistan through international aid with the aim of developing a modernized and more sustainable country in both policy and practices. This included the goal of empowering women with new rights and opportunities. However, there is reason to be concerned about donors' project designs, implementation and the way they are monitored and evaluated. Due to the ad hoc and parachute nature of the design and implementation of these initiatives, most of projects have failed to deliver on their promises and prove sustainable.

Based on 23 key informant interviews conducted in Kabul from international donors and implementers such as the UN, UN Women (UNWomen), UH-Habitat (UNH), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), national NGOs and independent activists, this study gathered perspectives on how donor projects have been designed and implemented. It also looks at attempts to identify shortcomings or gaps that could reveal the process of monitoring, evaluation, and accountability in the Afghan context.

Impact of International Conventions and Resolutions

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) has made several international commitments such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) ratified in 2003 and the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (UNSCR 1325) on women, peace and security adopted in 2013. All countries signatory to CEDAW are obliged to "incorporate the principle of equality of men and women in their legal system, abolish all discriminatory laws and adopt appropriate ones prohibiting discrimination against women" as well as establish institutions that can enforce such new protections and ensure the elimination of all acts of discrimination henceforth.[2] GoIRA made the commitment to report its progress to CEDAW every four years.

GoIRA subsequently established several laws and policies towards achieving CEDAW commitments including the 2009 law for the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (EVAW) and the 2016 Anti-Harassment

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2. "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women." UN Women. https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/

Law to Protect Women and Children. Institutions were then developed to implement these new laws. EVAW is the most ambitious of the two laws, designed to fulfill six objectives focused on 1) protecting women's sharia and legal rights along with their "human dignity","[3] 2) fighting customs and norms that contradict Sharia and cause violence to women, 3) protecting women at risk of violence or who are already victims, 4) violence prevention, 5) providing "public awareness" and training on violence against women, 6) and prosecuting perpetrators of violence against women.

In 2017, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) reported on the different types of violence against Afghan women and the performance of Afghan courts to enforce EVAW. Of the total cases the AIHRC reviewed, violence occurred almost predominantly from within victims' families (with 94% occurring in the victim's home and with 61% of perpetrators being husbands).[4] The report compared its data between 2015 and 2016 which revealed an increase of 11.7% percent of registered cases of violence against women.[5] A 2012 United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) report stated that while there was progress in terms of registration of incidents of violence against women by prosecutors and primary courts, the number of cases actually resolved through the judicial system remained "very low" in the 16 provinces under evaluation. Often, police and prosecutors refer such cases to traditional **jirgas** (assemblies) and **shuras** (consultative bodies). The advice and resolutions provided by these male-dominated institutions "often undermined implementation of the EVAW law and reinforced harmful practices."[6] The data shows that progress in gaining equal justice for women has been hard to achieve.

GoIRA continued to pass national pro-women plans in reaction to international movement on this issue. Two years after the UNSC passed UNSCR 1325, GoIRA developed the 2015 National Action Plan (NAP 1325). In

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3. "Law on Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW)." Afghanistan Ministry of Justice; Official Gazette: Extraordinary Issue. Issue No. 989. August 1st, 2009. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5486d1a34.pdf
4. "Summary of the Report on Violence against Women: The causes, context, and situation of violence against women in Afghanistan." Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. 2017. P 4. https://www.aihrc.org.af/media/files/Research%20Reports/Summerry%20report-VAW-2017.pdf
5. Ibid. P 2.
6. "Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of the Law on Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan." United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. December 2012. P 4. https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/AF/UNAMA_Stillalongway_go_implementation.pdf

the NAP, the government set for itself broad goals encompassing women's issues as diverse as psychological support for abuse victims, financial resources for women in distress, engaging men and boys to participate in fighting violence against women, and an end to judicial impunity for crimes against women.[7] The Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization (APPRO) produced a 2018 report with support from Sweden and Oxfam concluding that while the NAP clearly articulates the need for detailed implementation planning, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation, it had still not shown evidence of an implementation plan or monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.[8] There also appeared to be no linkages between key actors of the plan. While it praises the budget structure proposed by the Ministry of Finance, most issues with the NAP are attributed to lack of clarity around the actual budgeting taking place and lack of interest among government actors. The result has been no evaluations or monitoring of NAP 1325 activities and lack of technical capacity and human resources.

Most interviewees for this research agreed that laws such as EVAW, the Anti-Harassment of Women and Children Act, and other initiatives are perceived as achievements when in reality they have faced severe implementation challenges. Zaki Daryabi, the head of the EtilaatRoz newspaper, argued that "while men and women have equal rights to marriage and have the same equal responsibilities before, after, and during the marriage, unfortunately our civil code or civil law is derived from Sharia principles,"[9] which restricts women trying to file for divorce from their husbands.[10] On the other hand, what women have gained since the fall of the Taliban is unavoidable, he argued. Universities are particularly focused on women, he believes. He also points out examples of women-led media on TV (Zan TV), in print news, and radio.[11] Sayed Muzaffar Shah, the Country Director of the Center for Civilians in Conflict, asserted that "fundamentally things have not changed. It is

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7. "Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325-Women Peace and Security: 2015-2022." Ministry of Foreign Affairs. June 2015. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/wps-afghanistan_national_action_plan_1325_0.pdf

8. "Afghanistan's NAP 1325 (2015-2018): A Critical Assessment." Afghanistan Public Policy Research Organization. May 2018. Pp 19-21. http://appro.org.af/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/2018-05-13-Afghanistans-NAP-1325-A-Critical-Assessment.pdf

9. Daryabi, Zaki, Editor in chief of Etilaatroz Newspaper. Interview by the Author. May 26, 2018.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid.

because the mentality of the people has not changed, the life of women on the domestic level has not changed."[12] He believes that bringing a change through projects and donors aid programs will not have a larger impact. Ehsan Qaane, a researcher at the Afghanistan Analyst Network agreed with Muzaffar Shah and had concerns about women's current protections in the workplace.[13] To Qaane, examples including violence against women and unsafe work environments show that the country is not fulfilling expectations. All interviewees agreed that since women-related initiatives are donor-driven with a top-down approach, changes at the local level are impossible. This is further complicated by the inflexible approach of donors and the rosy picture of women's progress created by local NGOs who think such positive spins are necessary to keep donors interested. The latter in particular obscures the reality on the ground and can negatively impact the planning phase of donor programs. In addition, the APPRO report explains the consultation process is already skewed by the lack of public participation and by the inclusion of international policy experts who lack knowledge of Afghanistan.[14]

Duplication of Project Designs

Duplication among donor projects is another reason donor aid has had a weak impact. UN and USAID projects have applied similar thematic projects with weak coordination and collaboration resulting in blurred approaches among practitioners. An interviewee (remaining anonymous)[15] stated that UNWomen project themes are almost identical to those of other donor agencies with a similar design of three-two-six days of training. If donor funding was channeled to long-term and sustainable projects, the outcomes would be increasingly more diverse and sustainable.

Another interviewee (who also chose to remain anonymous)[16] working with UN-Habitat (UNH) shared her experience of a UNH tailoring skills training

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12. Syed Muzaffer Shah. Interview by the Author. June 14, 2018.
13. Ehsan Qaane. Interview by the Author. June 02, 2018.
14. "Afghanistan's National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325-Women Peace and Security: 2015-2022." Ministry of Foreign Affairs. June 2015. P. 12. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/wps-afghanistan_national_action_plan_1325_0.pdf
15. Anonymous. Interview by the Author.
16. Anonymous. Interview by the Author.

project implemented in 2005 in the city of Jalalabad, Nangarhar. This project provided machines, instructors, and materials that would enable women to learn and produce sellable products.[17] The assumption was that since uneducated women in the region learnt embroidery at an early age, the program could help by turning that into a revenue base with access to local markets. Sewing machines were given to the women at the end of their training. This is but one example of many similar skills trainings throughout the country directed at increasing women's skillset and self-reliance.

However, the lack of follow-up on how the trainees used these skills to earn money is what Mehri Mirzad, an employee at UNH, struggles to understand. Mirzad argued that the Jalalabad project ultimately failed because of a lack of follow-up mechanisms for post-implementation. She goes further: "If you go to any house or Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, there are trainings for tailoring or embroideries. The problem with that is all the houses in Jalalabad got a tailoring machine. But you hardly find a tailor. The trainings were only three to six months. You cannot train a tailor to be a tailor in three months."[18] Mirzad believed that learning the skills of tailoring requires more resources and long term planning for a better outcome. She further argued that the available funding was lacking because all the project designs were result-based instead of impact-based. What that means is that donors "want to know how many women got trained, how many women participated in the advocacy training or other short period trainings. But no one goes back and checks if that training had an impact."[19] Implementers may end up with the same participants they had in their previous training which allows donors and implementers to use the same participants over and over in their statistics.

Neither international donors nor national NGOs formed collective approaches to designing their projects; instead such projects are often developed from abroad. Most of these projects are donor-driven as Sayed Muzaffar Shah argued. "Donors are coming with an assessment. Most of the time, their assessments are based on assumptions. They do not [work] based on the

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17. "Tailoring and Hand Pump Project (Kandahar)." UN Habitat. November 08, 2005. http://www.fukuoka.unhabitat. org/projects/voices/afghanistan/detail02_en.html .
18. Mehri Mirzad. Interview by the Author. June 07, 2018.
19. Ibid.

reality on the ground, [nor based on] proper assessments in Afghanistan [where they know] how much money they want to spend."[20] Gender indicators in project design are symbolic according to Muzaffar Shah.[21] A needs assessment is not a requirement to award a project or select the right partner. When speaking with Afghans currently working with international agencies in leadership positions, they claim to still not have access to project designs or the awarding process. Anosha Ejlasi, working within the donor community, claimed that although she works as a senior gender specialist for the UNH, she still does not know how projects are designed or how partners are selected.[22] This is a shame since, as the donor community may not have full access to the country, Afghans working among them are an important body of information and resources which could simultaneously become an asset to design proper projects and select the right partners.

M&E and Coordination Mechanisms between Donors and Implementers

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) among the donor community and the NGOs is a question of responsibility for what they construct together. Both donors and partners use their own methods to monitor and evaluate a project yet some of these practices have shortcomings. For instance, Ejlasi does not know what mechanisms are used in the M&E of the UNH despite herself working as a specialist within that organization. She said: "I cannot give you the right answer on the procedures of how they collect their data."[23] Another interviewee, a UK Department for International Development (DFID) representative (speaking anonymously) who had an almost identical position as Ejlasi, noted that at the UN level it is difficult to have a proper M&E procedure for conflict areas: "If we cannot travel, we hire third-party monitoring. We let them go and do the monitoring, [or] sometimes we use some NGOs who are present in those areas."[24]

These mechanisms exist on paper but reveal flaws in their results. The government has the responsibility to monitor projects, the implementing partners have an obligation to submit an M&E report, and the donor should

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20. Syed Muzaffer Shah. Interview by the Author. June 14, 2018.
21. Ibid.
22. Anosha Ejlasi. Interview by the Author. June 07, 2018.
23. Ejlasi. Research Interview.
24. Anonymous. Interview by the Author. June 23, 2018

have its practical procedure. According to Mirzad, "in this process, what is lacking is that we take this process so lightly."[25] Monitoring and evaluation are two different processes. Monitoring should be used before the problem occurs, whereas evaluation is to see the impact post-implementation. "What happens [is] that they usually check the last phase which is the evaluation part. They [forget] the monitoring phase. It is with the government, with the partners, and the donors,"[26] Mirzad argued. According to this explanation, if monitoring is not taking place during the implementation, it will be tough to analyze the quality of a project and whether or not it was executed in the best way possible. As soon as the contract is signed between the donor and partner, nothing can be changed during the implementation.

Coordination among donors and stakeholders can be difficult yet crucial to project implementation and M&E. Donors' country offices are the main intermediaries between the HQs and beneficiaries. Country offices design and plan their initiatives. "To be honest, we try and have tried to be as relevant to Afghanistan as possible but I can see there are still shortcomings,"[27] said one interviewee (choosing to remain anonymous). UN Women also tries to align its projects with GoIRA priorities such as the Women's Economic Empowerment agenda, Citizen Charters, or the National Solidarity Program. The reason UN Women uses this method is to minimize parallel structures that might compete with the government. According to an anonymous interviewee, "We are here to support, not compete."[28] After Afghanistan's government developed its Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) beginning 2017, UN agencies came together to develop One UN for Afghanistan, coordinating their work.

This mechanism only helps UN agencies in the country, not other individual donors. The platform focuses on six areas: education; food-security, nutrition and livelihoods; health; return and reintegration; rule of law; and human rights advocacy and protection. In addition, norm and standard-setting are considered a broad function of the UN that applies to the whole

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25. Mirzad. Interview by author, June 07, 2018
26. Ibid.
27. Anonymous. Interview by the Author.
28. Anonymous. Interview by the Author.

platform.[29] These six thematic areas are trying to go hand-in-hand with the themes of the ANPDF[30] which serves as GoIRA's roadmap towards greater self-reliance. UN agencies had been highly criticized for its insufficient work in Afghanistan, particularly UN Women. As such, the new changes are designed to address such criticisms—especially that of lack of coordination and the creation of parallel structures to the government. Transparency and accountability are important values in the One UN initiative. Efforts on the GoIRA side, meanwhile, can be seen in Ministry of Finance's recent donor aid database showing the aid coordination team how the new approach is working. Nonetheless, it is still not clear if it will be that much more transparent since the culture of corruption and waste has been embedded in the government for many years.

Conclusion

This research was undertaken based on the assumption that there had not been enough progress on women's empowerment in Afghanistan. It was also assumed that embedded corruption within local partners is the main obstacle for women-related programs' impact. However, the findings show this obstacle may not be as central to the story as initially supposed. Instead, the main problem (linked to the corruption issue) is the implementation gap between the existing laws and current practices occurring simultaneously to a gap between development donors and partners. Interviewees from both the donor side and partner side described the confusion this inflicts on their work. Most responded with uncertainty that women are being empowered and what the research found is less than promising.

GoIRA, since its initial establishment, produced many laws, regulations, specific policies and mechanisms to protect women and to ensure women have equal rights before the law. The government has also worked to increase women's presence in government and leadership levels so that it symbolizes their commitment to the international world. However, most of the new mechanisms have not been fulfilled; as the confusion around the implementation of the NAP 1325 showed, it can appear like government

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29. Afghanistan: "One UN— One Programme"; 1 January 2018- 31 December 2021. UNESCO. November 21, 2017. https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/one_un_afghanistan.pdf
30. Ibid.

interest in enacting these laws ends with the symbolism of the act. On the other side of the development partnership, the donor community still lacks accountability and transparency. This is true of their project designs to assist women and their weak M&E. Lack of coordination remains a major issue. It is hoped that the following recommendations will be considered in future initiatives (with the full knowledge that the post-peace process landscape will be different).

Policy Recommendations

- IGOs, UN agencies, and NGOs should develop a coordination mechanism that can help them both at the national and sub-national level. An improvement in coordination among development actors and government agencies would help budget effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

- IGOs, UN agencies, and other international actors should design programs using on-the-ground research and needs-based assessments. Business methodology in designing projects cannot assist the complex issues women face in different levels of the society. It should be recognized that Afghan women have the capacity to assess their own needs and provide feedback to donors for further support. This allows both women and donors to be coordinated and implement sustainably.

- GoIRA should have clear Monitoring and Evaluation mechanisms in the Ministry of Economy to hold NGOs and donors accountable. This will prevent NGOs from using women's rights as a business they can profit from.

HUMAN RIGHTS, TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE, AND INTERNATIONAL PEACEBUILDING: A VIEW FROM POST-9/11 AFGHANISTAN

NASEMA ZEERAK[1]

Summary

- The failure of the new Afghan Republic and international community to enact transitional justice allows past acts of violence to remain unacknowledged and unaddressed, contributing to further violence and national instability.

- The "peace first justice later" approach created a culture of impunity for war crimes and human rights violations. The new intra-Afghan peace negotiations offer a possible opportunity to correct this with the inclusion of transitional justice mechanisms.

- The absence of transitional justice shakes the faith of citizens in the ability of the government to protect them and their rights. Transitional justice provides the mechanisms by which they can participate in peacebuilding and feel heard, contributing to positive peace.

Nearly two decades after the overthrow of the Taliban regime, Afghans continue to suffer grave human rights violations on a daily basis. Since 2009 alone, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) has documented more than 100,000 civilian casualties, with more than 35,000

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1. Naseema zeerak is a candidate in the MSc in Conflict Resolution and Management of the Kroc School of Peace Studies, University of San Diego.

killed and 65,000 injured.[2] The ongoing conflict that has plagued the country inhibits the promotion and protection of human rights in serious ways. Despite the many legislative measures and enforcement mechanisms, the robust language of the new constitution, and ratification of international treaties, the efforts to promote and protect human rights have failed to facilitate the realization of human rights for Afghans. Based on an analysis of existing literature, this paper argues that this failure can be attributed to a peace first and justice later approach, a lack of transitional justice mechanisms, and the perpetuation of a culture of impunity. The peace first justice later approach prevented the planning and implementation of transitional justice mechanisms to deal with the grave human rights violations and the underlying issues of the conflict that has plagued the country since the Soviet Union invasion in 1979. The reigning culture of impunity for human rights abusers allows for continuing violations to this day. Since this culture allows abusers to be part of the system, justice reforms are rendered difficult.

Peace First and Justice Later

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the international community launched many peacebuilding efforts in post-conflict transition and recovery states. In the process, it gained much experience and insight into the process for sustainable transitions. According to Norah Niland, Director of Human Rights at UNAMA, these experiences and insights were geared towards helping countries recover and "generate new patterns and structures of societal organization."[3] However, the peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan ignored this accumulated experience.[4] Efforts focused on protecting the fragile political stability that resulted from the Bonn Agreement on 5 December 2001. Only factions allied to the US coalition were present at the negotiations— chiefly the Northern Alliance and the Rome Group.[5] As

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2. "Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019." United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, February 2020. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_annual_report_2019_-_22_february.pdf

3. Niland, Norah. "Impunity and Insurgency: A Deadly Combination in Afghanistan." International Review of the Red Cross 92 (2010): 931-950. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383111000014.933

4. Hakimi, Aziz, and Suhrke, Astri. "A Poisonous Chalice: The Struggle for Human Rights and Accountability in Afghanistan." Nordic Journal of Human Rights 31, 2013. Pp: 201-223. https://www.cmi.no/publications/4801-a-poisonous-chalice

5. Rubin, Barnett. "Afghanistan from the Cold War Through the War on Terror." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp: 133-148.

a result, the agreement resembled more of a political exchange between the elite and major military factions.[6] Furthermore, UN Special Envoy to Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, also decided on a "light footprint" strategy— smaller resource investment in the expectation that the US-led coalition would perform normally UN-run duties.[7] However, Brahimi realized that the Bonn agreement failed to address the central problem of impunity and ignored the need for accountability. Niland recounts Brahimi's regret in 2007: "Lakhdar Brahimi concluded that it was flawed, as the overall arrangement was not premised on a genuine reconciliation process that would have enabled Afghans to deal with deeply engrained patterns of abuse."[8] Later in 2009, Brahimi recognizing the negative consequences of the flawed approach stated: "We are now paying the price for what we did wrong from day one ... the popular base of the interim administration put together in Bonn under President Karzai was far too narrow.."[9]

In order to produce a sustainable transition, a shared history of truth and reconciliation must be established and the peacebuilding effort must move beyond negative peace. While positive peace is defined by influential political figures like Jane Addams, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and Dr. Johan Galtung (father of "peace research" and major intellectual of modern peacebuilding) as "peace built on justice for all peoples", negative peace is defined as "peace without justice."[10] Ignoring grievances and the needs of victim for justice and accountability does not lead to positive peace, which is the main objective of peacebuilding. This sentiment is shared among the Afghan people as well. [11] [12] A nationwide consultation, 'A Call for Justice', by the Afghanistan

6. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020. Pp: 93-145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

7. Hakimi, Aziz, and Suhrke, Astri. "A Poisonous Chalice: The Struggle for Human Rights and Accountability in Afghanistan." Nordic Journal of Human Rights 31, 2013. Pp: 201-223. https://www.cmi.no/publications/4801-a-poisonous-chalice

8. Niland, Norah. "Impunity and Insurgency: A Deadly Combination in Afghanistan." International Review of the Red Cross 92 (2010): 936. https://doi.org/10.1017/S1816383111000014.933

9. Ibid.

10. Herath, Oshadhi. "A Critical Analysis of Positive and Negative Peace." Department of Economics, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, 2016. P. 106. http://repository.kln.ac.lk/bitstream/handle/123456789/12056/journal%20%281%29.104107.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

11. "Enduring Freedom Abuses by U.S. forces in Afghanistan." Human Rights Watch, 2004. https://www.hrw.org/report/2004/03/07/enduring-freedom/abuses-us-forces-afghanistan

12. "'I Had to Run Away:' The Imprisonment of Women and Girls for 'Moral Crimes' in Afghanistan." Human Rights Watch, 2012. http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/afghanistan0312webwcover_0.pdf

Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in 2004 found that more than 75% of Afghans considered that accountability processes were needed to end a long history of violence.[13]

However, the Bonn agreement contained no references to transitional justice to cope with past or even ongoing abuses. This resulted in the Northern Alliance members present at Bonn granting immunity to each other in exchange for a power-sharing arrangement with no provisions against amnesty for human rights violations and war crimes.[14][15] Additionally, by 2003 President Hamid Karzai shifted his focus away from holding perpetrators of violence during the 90s civil war accountable towards, instead protecting the fragility of the newly established government.[16] In 2007, the National Reconciliation, General Amnesty, and National Stability Law was adopted by the Karzai administration. This law granted immunity from criminal prosecution to those involved in war crimes and human rights violations over the past 30 years including to insurgents who pledge cooperation with the government.[17] Lastly, in order to protect this fragile stability (being preserved with foreign assistance), the Afghan government prevented the publication of the "Conflict Mapping Report" by the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), a crucial document that accounted for all human rights violations between 1978 and 2001.[18] This report has been referenced by many scholars as representing a critical account of violations of human rights law and humanitarian law, shedding light on those responsible.[19] [20]

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13. "A Call for Justice: A National Consultation on Past Human Rights Violations in Afghanistan." Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), Kabul, January 2005. P. 13.

14. Rubin, Barnett. "Afghanistan from the Cold War Through the War on Terror." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp: 133-148.

15. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020. Pp: 93-145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

16. Rubin, Barnett. "Afghanistan from the Cold War Through the War on Terror." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. P 140.

17. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020. P 101. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

18. Gossman, Patricia. "Human Rights, Security and Afghanistan's Peace Process: The Justice- stability Nexus." Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives 27, 2018. Pp: 122-127 https://www.c-r.org/accord/afghanistan/human-rights-security-and-afghanistans-peace-process-justice%E2%80%93stability-nexus

19. Ibid.

20. Rubin, Barnett. "Afghanistan from the Cold War Through the War on Terror." Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp: 133-148.

Absence of Transitional Justice and the Persistence of Human Rights Violations

Transitional justice scholars and practitioners define transitional justice as measures by which a society accounts for past abuses as it moves from a condition of dictatorship or conflict (where the perpetrators of violence enjoy impunity) to one of civil peace (where the state seeks to provide justice and security to its citizens).[21] However, the absence of transitional justice has been one of the main reasons human rights have faced resistance in Afghanistan.[22] Among other scholars, Eleanora Testi, drawing from the lessons of the Colombian Peace Process, has flagged the dangers of keeping agreements as a political exchange between local elites and the international community in a transitioning society.[23] Furthermore, she has asserted the necessity of incorporating the victim's needs, alongside political agreements, to reach the required social stability needed to ensure lasting peace.[24]

Dr. Elham Atashi, professor and co-director of the Peace and Justice program at Georgetown University, has argued that the implementation of transitional justice in Afghanistan by human rights advocates must fight assumptions that war crimes and violence must be left to the past when they in fact impact the present.[25] She also notes that Afghanistan remains in a state of war and questions the applicability of transitional justice in this context.[26] However, what is missing from Atashi's analysis is that Afghanistan did in fact transition to a post-war regime in 2001, at least until the escalation of violence around 2006. Had the peacebuilding effort included transitional justice mechanisms in this earlier phase, the transition would have been able to give way to justice for Afghans and prevent the violations of human rights post-2001. Instead, the needs of the victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity were overshadowed by "War on Terror" rhetoric[27], setting in motion new cycles of violations of human rights

21. Ibid.

22. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020. Pp: 93-145. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

23. Testi, Eleanora. "What Future for Transitional Justice? Colombia and the Balkans as Case Studies." Zeitschrift Für Internationale Strafrechtsdogmatik, 2018.

24. Ibid.

25. Atashi, Elham. "Afghanistan: Transitional Justice in The Midst of War." Nationalities Papers 41, no. 6, 2013. Pp: 1046-1064 https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2013.801414.

26. Ibid.

27. Rangelov, Iavor, and Marika Theros. "Political Functions of Impunity in the War on Terror: Evidence from Afghanistan." Journal of Human Rights 18, no. 4, 2019. Pp: 403-418 https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2019.1629889

and international humanitarian law. In addition to these current cycles, Dr. William Maley, professor of diplomacy at the Australian National University, has extensively documented the negative consequences of lack of justice under the communist regime (1978-1989), the civil war (1990-1996) and the Taliban regime (1996-2001) and concludes that they have had a ripple effect preventing the realization of human rights today.[28]

Culture of Impunity and Failure to Uphold the Rule of Law

In Afghanistan, the culture of impunity has grown stronger since 2001. Those responsible for the most atrocious human rights violations (besides having never been held responsible for their past crimes) are more politically powerful than ever, hence rendering future justice difficult if not impossible.[29] The Amnesty Law of 2007 signaled they could continue their acts of aggression knowing that they will not be prosecuted. This has resulted in a high perception of impunity, leaving victims faithless in the justice system. According to the World Justice Project, overall perception of impunity varies across the country with the South-West region having the most positive perception of accountability (49%) while Kabul has the least positive perception (9%), relatively low compared to neighboring countries.[30]

The measures used by the government to seek accountability on behalf of victims are inadequate to investigate, take appropriate steps to protect victims, and bring perpetrators to justice. According to UNAMA, civilian casualties from armed conflict in 2019 alone reached more than 10,000.[31] However, the impact of the conflict goes beyond civilian casualties— extensive and durable harm was caused to the physical, mental, and socio-economic well-being of individuals, families and communities. Children are continuously exposed to extreme harm. According to UNAMA, children constituted 30% of all civilian casualties in 2019. In addition, they are also victims of recruitment by armed forces and victims of sexual exploitation

28. Maley, William. "Transition in Afghanistan: Hope, Despair and the Limits of State Building." London: Routledge, 2018. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315143071

29. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020.. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

30. "The Rule of Law in Afghanistan." World Justice Project, 2016. P. 6. https://worldjusticeproject.org/sites/default/files/documents/WJP_Afghanistan%20GPP%20%20JSS%20Report_2May2017%20%283%29.pdf

31. "Afghanistan Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2019." UNAMA, February 2020, Kabul, Afghanistan. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_annual_report_2019_-_22_february.pdf

and violence.[32] For instance, in 2019, UNAMA verified the recruitment and use of 64 boys by the Taliban, Afghan national security forces, and other pro-government armed groups.

Women are also disproportionately affected. Lida Ahmad, gender adviser to Humanitarian Assistance for the Women and Children of Afghanistan (HAWCA), and Priscyll Avoine illustrate in their research that the lack of formal mechanisms of accountability for the former Mujahideen has enabled them to maintain positions in the political institutions, such as dominating the majority of seats in Parliament.[33] This major example of impunity, according to their analysis, helped normalize a culture of impunity for violence against women, further enabled by the continued power of misogynistic warlords in state structures.[34] While the US-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan was ideologically justified under the banner of democracy and women's rights, Ahmad and Avoine have claimed "it appears that violence against women has increased on a large scale with foreign presence and recent peace talks" due to the militarization of society and lack of accountability.[35] Violence perpetrated by family members such as honor killings constitute a high risk for women, resulting in further victimization from social exclusion, suicide, or forced prostitution.[36]

Making advances in the human rights arena requires significant investment. This includes the development of strategies for strengthening existing accountability mechanisms to disrupt and combat the culture of impunity. In cases where perpetrators of abuse deny violations or the state is incapable of dealing past atrocities, international actors can support or set up truth and reconciliation commissions in delivering justice and acknowledging the harms done to victims with guarantees that abuse will be prevented in the future. Truth and reconciliation commission cases from Chile, South Africa and El Salvador can provide many lessons learned in the way of implementation.[37]

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32. Ibid.

33. Ahmad, Lida and Priscyll Anctil Avoine. "Misogyny in 'Post-War' Afghanistan: The Changing Frames of Sexual and Gender-based Violence." Journal of Gender Studies, 27, no. 1, 2018. Pp: 86-101 https://doi.org/10.1080/0958923 6.2016.1210002.

34. Ibid.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Sevastick, Per. "Rule of Law, Human Rights and Impunity: The Case of Afghanistan." Hague Journal on the Rule of Law 12, 2020.. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40803-019-00089-z

Conclusion: Looking Ahead

Nineteen years after the Bonn agreement, Afghanistan's human rights record continues to be a cause for deep concern. The Bonn agreement, while replete with references to human rights and rule of law, failed to acknowledge and address the structural flaws that had given rise to decades of political turmoil and instability, condemning Afghans to a repetition of an era marked by human rights violations. The peace first and justice later approach sidelined transitional justice mechanisms in the peacebuilding strategy, making the advancement of human rights difficult if not impossible. As tempting as it may be for policymakers to sweep the past under the rug after so many decades of war, the failure to address the past and disrupt impunity will contribute to ongoing insecurity and violations of human rights. In the meantime, while it is important to draw lessons from other post-conflict countries and their mechanisms for dealing with past atrocities, Afghanistan's own failure (perhaps inability) to deal with the past provides valuable lessons for the intra-Afghan talks. The recommendations below are for the consideration of the parties of the intra-Afghan talks of the coming months (potentially years):

Policy Recommendations

- Ensuring the Inclusion of Human Rights in the Agenda of the Intra-Afghan Talks and Beyond: By adopting a framework that works towards building positive peace and including human rights in the peace agreement, conflict resolution discussions on contested issues can move in a positive direction. The examination of the recent eight peace agreements by the International Council on Human Rights Policy concludes that human rights discussions can make practical and positive contributions to many areas of conflict resolution. Understandably, the integration of human rights discussions, particularly minority and women's rights, in the negotiations remains challenging. Nonetheless, to break the cycle of abuse, negotiating parties must ensure the inclusion of human rights in the intra-Afghan talks.

- Including the Victims and Their Voices in the Intra-Afghan Talks: Inclusion of victims and survivors of the conflict will ensure the

legitimacy of the peace agreement while their exclusion will render any peace fragile. To ensure the sustainability and durability of the peace agreement, it is vital to develop mechanisms for including victims and their voices in the delegation and the intra-Afghan talks. Working closely with the AIHRC to leverage its experience and influence can be a good starting point.

- Implementing Transitional Justice Mechanism(s): The implementation of transitional justice mechanisms must be considered in the intra-Afghan talks. While providing recommendations on the specific mechanisms of transitional justice is outside the scope of this article, it is important to remember that addressing the legacy of massive human rights violations is necessary to avoid the persistence of abuses. There is growing evidence that sidelining the calls for dealing with past atrocities will jeopardize any settlement with the looming shadow of unresolved grievances.[38]

- Disrupting the Cycle of Impunity: A democratic state should not be built on impunity for human rights violators. The legitimacy of the state depends on its ability to serve and protect citizens as well as give them meaningful avenues to voice grievances. Putting an end to the cycle of abuse must include addressing the impunity that too often allows abuses to continue undeterred. Further, impunity has served as a mechanism to not only exacerbate violations of human rights, but to reproduce and diffuse the insecurity as has been illustrated in this article. At this critical juncture, as the parties to the conflict are nearing a political settlement, it is vital for human rights advocates to assimilate these lessons and focus on developing strategies for strengthening and activating accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, human rights advocates must focus on instruments for combating impunity, not only for current violations but also for violations of human rights since the onset of the recent wave of conflict.

- Establishing a Shared Understanding of the Conflict and Violence: As many human rights advocates familiar with the situation in Afghanistan

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38. Thomas Obel Hansen. "In Pursuit of Accountability During and After War." Journal of Strategic Studies 42, no. 7, 2019. Pp: 951. DOI: 10.1080/01402390.2019.1588120.

have highlighted, it is critical that the Afghan government support the release of the AIHRC Conflict Mapping Report which will initiate a dialogue about the legacy of war and establish a shared understanding of history of the conflict that goes beyond their own community, tribe or ethnic group. This will be a step forward for Afghans to understand how and why the war began and has continued for so long, reflecting different perspectives across conflict lines. The transitional justice mechanisms can be built over this report, such as the establishment of a shared truth and reconciliation commission.

- Protecting Women's Rights Advances: To protect hard-won gains and further guarantee women's rights, it is crucial to support local initiatives that will not only denounce the structures exacerbating the conflict, but also rearticulate women's capacity and leadership rooted in local knowledge and expertise. More importantly, protecting women's rights in any peace process will require a commitment by the participants not to weaken existing constitutional guarantees for women's rights.

IS NATO THE RIGHT ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY SECTOR REFORM IN CONFLICT & POST-CONFLICT ENVIRONMENTS?

LIMA AHMAD[1]

Summary

- If NATO wants to be credible as it prepares to undertake broad SSR responsibilities in its "neighborhood" with Projecting Stability, it must actually adhere to the core principles of Security Sector Reform (SSR) as opposed to practicing Security Sector Assistance (SSA) relabeled as "SSR."

- The experience of Afghanistan is not a positive experience of SSR; it is in fact an ample demonstration of how not to run an SSR operation — a disunited command, conflicting objectives, and donors not adhering to the needs of the recipient government or its citizens.

- The experience of Afghanistan demonstrates that the civilian side of SSR must not be neglected and should be fully integrated into a unified SSR strategy.

- Accountability mechanisms combined with greater local participation could have helped avoid corruption and avoid the enabling of human rights violators. This lesson should be considered in future SSR.

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"*Whereas strategy is only concerned with the problem of winning military victory, grand strategy must take the longer view – for its problem is the winning of the peace. Such an order of thought is not a matter of 'putting the cart before the horse,' but of being clear where the horse and the cart are going.*" —B.H. Liddell Hart[2]

In 2016, at the Warsaw Summit, NATO leaders committed to the security sector support model called 'Projecting Stability' in order to contribute to the efforts in strengthening the security capabilities of partners beyond NATO borders. With this model, NATO aims to extend security cooperation to partner nations that face security challenges, including terrorism.[3] 'Projecting Stability' includes engagement, capacity-building, and crisis management measures relying on the military capabilities of the partner nations.[4] NATO Senior Policy Advisor Ruben Diaz-Plaja claimed in 2017 that NATO has "too much experience" expanding the number of tools, instruments and mechanisms in use with different partner countries over the course of 25 years. In his view, "Projecting Stability" would be a way to streamline this complexity into long-term sustainable action.[5] More importantly, 'Projecting Stability' was conceived as a much-needed preemptive security measure by NATO states in order to address the threats posed by weak and failing states both to their own populations and to the world. However, there is not much substantial evidence to show that NATO with its current capabilities is the right organization to implement this vision. Most of the literature on NATO programing regarding 'Projecting Stability' talks about NATO operations contributing to stabilization in crisis management operations in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Iraq with Security Sector Reform (SSR) components.[6] These operations are used to show the capabilities of NATO as an organization that is able to implement 'Projecting Stability' model.

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2. B.H. Liddell Hart. "Strategy." New York: Meridian Printing, 1991. Pp: 349-350

3. NATO Encyclopedia. "Projecting stability in NATO's neighbourhood through practical cooperation." NATO Public Diplomacy Division, December 2017.

4. Diaz-Plaja, Ruben. "Projecting Stability: An agenda for action." NATO Review Magazine, March 13, 2018. https://www.nato.int/docu/review/2018/also-in-2018/projecting-stability-an-agenda-for-action-nato-partners/en/index.htm

5. Ibid.

6. Díaz-Plaja, Rubén. "What does NATO need to 'project stability' in its neighbourhood?" Real Instituto Elcano, May 17, 2017. http://www.realinstitutoelcano.org/wps/wcm/connect/6ee5b258-9161-4a93-9657-6155c287bdf2/ARI40-2017-DiazPlaja-What-NATO-need-project-stability-neighbourhood.pdf?MOD=AJPERES&CACHEID=6ee5b258-9161-4a93-9657-6155c287bdf2

This paper discusses the capabilities of NATO as an entity for implementing the 'Projecting Stability' model and argues that NATO at its current capacity is not able to implement SSR. Meanwhile, its current use of traditional Security Sector Assistance (SSA) has not proven successful in the current security environment of the world. The main question this paper aims to answer is: why should NATO acquire SSR capabilities to successfully implement the 'Projecting Stability' model in its neighborhood? Using the case of NATO's involvement in Afghanistan's security sector, this paper outlines some key issues after seventeen years of SSA/SSR implementation in Afghanistan. While this case study may not exactly reflect the kind of SSA/SSR the 'Projecting Stability' model is trying to emulate, Afghanistan has been over-cited as a pre-qualifier and a successful NATO operation whenever NATO's capabilities in SSA/SSR are discussed. Therefore, it will be argued that security support to Afghanistan does not qualify NATO as the right organization to implement SSA/SSR in a holistic way.

What Constitutes SSR and Why 'Projecting Stability' Needs SSR Rather Than SSA?

In simplistic definitions, SSA deals with operational effectiveness and does not necessarily include reform of the security sector of host partner nations.[7] SSR, on the other hand, is a broader concept that includes "strengthening, reforming, restructuring the human and institutional capabilities and capacities of the security sector to provide security."[8] The important distinction between the two is the increasing institutional capabilities of civilian government that SSA does not encompass and SSR does. SSA only focuses on strengthening the security sector, which is suitable for developing states that have fairly functional government structures with institutions that have the capabilities of monitoring the security sector. On the other hand, SSR is more suitable for failing and fragile states because it not only provides support to the security sector but also strengthens the civilian governance side to enable the government to maintain a monopoly of power over the security sector.

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7. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14
8. Ibid.

While debates about conceptual definitions are not the focus of this paper, it is essential to be clear about the difference between SSR and SSA. The post-Cold War SSR concept emerged in the late 1990s. In contrast to pre-Cold War SSA that focused solely on providing support in the form of training, equipment, and armaments to the security sectors of allied states, the current SSR recognizes a broader approach to security assistance which includes "security services in the political and economic lives of countries."[9] This new model compared to previous forms of security assistance focuses on the governance of the security sector.[10] The need for a concept that is broader than the traditional SSA was felt when, in the 1990s, many peacekeeping and stabilizing military operations were not resulting in 'happy endings', despite the fact that the U.S. and its NATO allies had military advantages when it came to capabilities.

SSR was initially a European concept led by the United Kingdom and organizations such as Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). SSR originated at a time when the United Nations and other international actors saw the failures of international peacekeeping programs such as UNPROFOR, UNAMIR, and UNOSOM II. The UN, European Union (EU) and NATO started to draw linkages between security and development as a way to achieve peace in the developing countries.[11] These actors underscored that security institutions could implement development assistance programs focusing on peace in fragile states, leading to the application of SSR.[12] The OECD DAC's handbook to operationalize the 2005 DAC guidelines on SSR characterizes SSR as fit for "transitional countries moving from closed societies to democracies…as well as countries entering post-conflict."[13] At a time when new ideas about human security were emerging, SSR got attention because of its people-centric nature. It was adopted by the Netherlands,

9. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14.

10. Sedra, Mark. "Introduction: The Future Of Security Sector Reform." The Future of Security Sector Reform, The Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), 2010. Pp: 16-27

11. Chanaa, Jane. "Security Sector Reform: Issues, Challenges and Prospects." Oxford: Oxford University Press for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2002.

12. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14

13. The OECD DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice, OECD Publishing. 2007.

Germany, and Canada but not all NATO members have adopted SSR as their international security assistance strategy, the U.S. chief among them.[14] The United States did not see its national interests in SSR for their interventions prior to 9/11. SSR experts Dr. Querine Hanlon and Dr. Richard Shultz, in their 2016 book promoting SSR to the US foreign policy establishment, note that even in the post-9/11 Iraq and Afghanistan wars the U.S. adopted a "stability generation" approach.[15] The United States, being the highest contributor to majority of NATO missions, had still not incorporated SSR into their grand strategy of interventions. Many international security interventions by NATO have been and are still done using the traditional SSA model that focuses mainly on training and supplying arms to the security forces of weak and failing states, paying little attention to the governance and capacity building of oversight institutions within those fragile states.

Other SSR experts like Luc van de Goor and Erwin van Veen suggest that the SSR model should be allowed to expand into countries that don't fit into the "post-conflict" category provided it can easily link up with the local government's agenda and focus on the developing recipient's needs.[16] They explicitly state that current donor cooperation with Afghanistan does not fall under SSR as the donor objectives are just as much (if not more) about preserving their own security as opposed to taking Afghanistan's security sector needs as the starting point (a necessary condition of SSR in Groor and Veen's view). Shultz and Hanlon warn that SSR intervention in post-conflict environments is the most difficult to implement because, in post-conflict environments, host governments have to tackle internal disagreements from different parties to the conflict and also acquire the institutional capabilities to establish a monopoly on the use of force. However, Shultz and Hanlon still suggest SSR could play a vital role in post-conflict areas along with areas experiencing authoritarian transition and vulnerable democratic environments.[17] Peacebuilding expert Dr. Paul Jackson on the other hand

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14. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14

15. Ibid. Pp: 187-207

16. Goor, Luc van de and Erwin van Veen. "Less Post-Conflict, Less Whole Of Government And More Geopolitics?" The Future of Security Sector Reform, The Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), 2010. Pp: 88-99

17. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14

criticizes SSR "orthodoxy" that seeks linear formulas to SSR and clean-cut categorizations of different conflict environments, noting the term "post-conflict" itself can have many implications. Dr. Jackson argues that while it may be tempting to view "post-conflict" countries as ripe for externally imposed models, it can be dangerous for donors to ignore existing norms and the origins of the violence in the recipient society. He also warns against ignoring potentially valuable local solutions and structures that could make SSR durable. [18] Therefore, donors involved in international interventions such as Afghanistan should take nuanced approaches on how best to utilize moments where the host governments are flexible and open for institutional reforms.

Hanlon and Shultz criticize the current interchangeability of the terms "SSR" and "SSA" in the jargon of a majority of practitioners because it demonstrates a lack of conceptualization of these instruments. They argue that SSR requires a more tailor-made and long-term commitment approach. While the ready-made blueprints of the SSA model make it easier to adopt, they are not usually suitable for post-conflict environments even if they are often well developed and well funded. Shultz argues that before irregular threats escalate, there is a need for a new SSR strategy that encompasses not only strengthening the capacity and accountability of the security forces but also the defense ministries of weak and failing states.[19] SSR was successful in Eastern Europe in the mid-1990s because SSR was required as a prerequisite for membership in NATO and the European Union (EU). Moreover, these security reforms were incorporated into their security system in fairly stable security environments. Membership to the EU and NATO was used as an incentive for many European countries to uphold the principles of democratic civil-military relations and the potential for membership continues to be used to promote reforms in countries of the Western Balkans. Therefore, NATO and EU members developed the capacity of their civilian authorities and institutions to foster accountability and effective management of their armed forces.[20] Most of these reforms were

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18. Jackson, Paul. "SSR And Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Armed Wing Of State Building?" The Future Of Security Sector Reform. The Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), 2010. 118-133.
19. Shultz, Richard H. "Security Force Assistance and Security Sector Reform." The JSOU Press, 2013.
20. Ball, Nicole. "The Evolution Of The Security Sector Reform Agenda." The Future Of Security Sector Reform, The Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), Pp: 29-41

self-implemented by the NATO European countries with the help of other NATO nations because of the need for a collective security in Europe. It was important to have security capabilities and policies aligned with European interests rather than purely national ones. Organization within the EU play a vital role through institutional instruments that include the European External Action Service, Council bodies, and the Directorate General for Enlargement to shape SSR in Europe and elsewhere.[21] However, the EU in its internal reports demonstrates an understanding that its experiences in Europe and especially Africa show a need to expand its tools for SSR beyond what it developed during the 1990s/2000s period of enlargement.[22]

Mark Sedra, President of the Canadian International Council (CIC), is skeptical of SSR, believing there is a dearth of notable success stories and that the next generation of SSR must bridge the conceptual with the contexts in which it is applied.[23] To do so, future models must be sensitive to the political realities of recipient nations. He is especially worried that the experience of Afghanistan created wariness around SSR as a concept; the experience has been an over-alignment with military objectives and a substantial divergence from the original SSR objectives. If NATO envisions stability for countries in its "neighborhood", the 'Projecting Stability' model should be on the basis of an SSR wrested away from the over-securitization seen in Afghanistan which for all practical purposes was more SSA than SSR.

NATO in Afghanistan

NATO has been in Afghanistan now for almost 17 years. The literature is silent on whether NATO's mission in Afghanistan was based on SSA or SSR or a combination of both. Between 2003 and 2018, through the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Resolute Support Mission (RSM), NATO together with the United States (U.S.) has trained, equipped, assisted and advised 227,374 Afghan military forces, and 154,626 Police Forces.

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21. Gross, Eva. "Assessing The EU's Approach To Security Sector Reform (SSR)." European Parliament; Directorate-General For External Policies of the Union: Policy Department, January 2013. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/etudes/join/2013/433837/EXPO-SEDE_ET%282013%29433837_EN.pdf

22. Gross, Eva. "Assessing The EU's Approach To Security Sector Reform (SSR)." European Parliament; Directorate-General For External Policies of the Union: Policy Department, January 2013.

23. Sedra, Mark. "Towards Second Generation Security Sector Reform." The Future Of Security Sector Reform, the Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), 2010. Pp: 102-114.

Since 2002, the U.S. alone invested over $83.1 billion in the Afghan National Defense Security Forces (ANDSF). NATO's current involvement in Afghanistan is mainly focused on three areas: the RSM, financial support, and long-term partnership. The first, RSM, is a non-combat mission which is mandated to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions. Second is financial support for Afghan security forces and the Afghan National Army Trust Fund.[24] The above two pillars of NATO involvement were mutually agreed upon between Afghanistan and NATO through the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) at the 2012 Chicago Summit.[25] The third pillar of NATO in Afghanistan is the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership. This partnership was signed at the NATO 2010 Lisbon Summit with the assumption that NATO's mission (ISAF) would fully handover security responsibilities to Afghan security forces. The Enduring Partnership was intended to allow NATO to provide long-term political and practical support to Afghanistan as the country worked to rebuild its security sector. Since 2010, the Enduring Partnership has only been discussed at the NATO Summits in Wales 2014 and in Warsaw 2016. NATO has not yet operationalized the partnership and demand for its strengthening has yet come from the Afghan government.

It is unclear whether the U.S. and NATO use any specific model to build and support the security sector in Afghanistan. The security environment in Afghanistan overlaps between war-zone, post-conflict, and vulnerable democratic environments. Afghanistan fits Hanlon and Shultz's definition of a post-conflict environment, one where not all parties to the conflict have agreed to any specific settlement and where the government of the post-conflict state does not have a complete monopoly of force.[26] Afghanistan also qualifies as a vulnerable democratic state, again using Hanlon and Shultz's definition, because it has some democratic institutions and practices but they are not well established and functioning due to lack of capacity.[27] The security sector support by the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan overlaps between SSR and SSA in a very uncoordinated manner.

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24. "NATO-Afghanistan Relations." Media Backgrounder, November 2017.
25. NATO-Afghan Government. "Agreement Between the NATO and The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Status of NATO Forces and NATO Personnel." Afghan Unity Government, 2014.
26. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14
27. Ibid.

Security Threats and the Afghan Security Sector

Afghanistan's security sector is barely 17 years old and it is facing numerous challenges. One major challenge is terrorism. The Afghan public endures many violent attacks on a daily basis. According to the Afghan National Security Council (NSC), there are some twenty internationally proscribed terrorist organizations and insurgent groups operating in Afghanistan.[28] In addition to terrorism, transnational crime, drug trafficking, hybrid warfare, and border issues complicate the security environment. Furthermore, corruption has taken over state institutions, making it difficult for the state to provide simple public services. This has resulted in growing mistrust among Afghan people of the state's institutions. Street harassment has increased and regularly involves acid attacks on women. Large and small-scale kidnappings are prevalent even in big and reasonably secure cities in Afghanistan. Thefts and robberies are also among the challenges that the Afghan security and law enforcement sector face today.

Despite the tremendous investment of NATO states in the Afghan security sector, statistics from the U.S. Defense Department (DoD) showed that by January 2018 only 56% of the country was under Afghan government control with 14% under the Taliban's control and the other 29% remaining contested.[29] Additionally, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) recorded 12,636 civilians' casualties between 2018 and 2020, 3,458 of which were recorded in the first six months of 2020.[30] In the same year, 69% of the total conflict-related incidents in Afghanistan have been targeted killings, suicides, and combined IED attacks.[31] The Taliban has started employing the tactic of attacking attacking army bases and security checkpoints and seizing weapons and ammunition. Many government soldiers and police officers are killed in the process.[32]

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28. Sharifi, Arian, Director of National Threat Assessment for Office of the National Security Council of Afghanistan. Interview by author, June 22, 2018.

29. Constable, Pamela. "Afghan security forces declining in number, U.S. Inspector General report shows." The Washington Post, May 2018.

30. UNAMA. Afghanistan Protection Of Civilians In Armed Conflict Midyear Report: 1 January—30 June 2020. Quarterly, Kabul: UNAMA, 2020.

31. Ibid

32. "Taliban attack Afghan army base, killing 17 soldiers." Associated Press, October 14, 2018. https://apnews.com/article/ef3f3a064a804436a9acbd6fc910cd6f

Among the previously mentioned 20 terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban's insurgency is the longest standing. Within the Afghan Taliban are those that support and associate themselves with terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda and the Haqqani Network and there are those that only fight because they want to regain political power and force the withdrawal of foreign forces. Counterinsurgency is not successful in Afghanistan because the security sector is unable to protect the population from the insurgents or to counter insurgent narratives that sow distrust of the government. On the ground, there are Afghans living in rural areas who buy into the Taliban's appeal that foreign powers have invaded the country and that the central government is allowing it.[33] Other factions of the Taliban spread terror and execute high-level attacks targeting civilians and security forces to show that the central government and its security forces are not able to protect the population from security threats. Thus, it has proven hard for Afghan security forces to gain the support of the population. The unclear classification of the Taliban as both insurgents and terrorists provides a significant security dilemma for the Afghan security forces with their current capabilities and resources.

Besides the complex insurgency by the local Taliban, Afghan security forces' most significant challenge is fighting irregular and hybrid warfare as Afghanistan continues to face externally-enabled and resilient terrorism supported by international criminal and terrorist organizations. Afghan security forces have to acquire both conventional and unconventional capabilities to fight these complex security needs. The twenty plus internationally proscribed terrorist organizations and insurgent groups that operate in Afghanistan are divided into four categories. First, there is the Afghan Taliban, which includes the Haqqani Network, the Quetta Shura, and the three military commissions. Second, there are the Pakistani terrorist groups that include Taherk Taliban Pakistan, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Sepahi Sahaba, Lashkar Jhangvi and more. The third category is composed of regional terrorist groups, which include the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM, China), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Jandullah (Tajikistan), and Jamaat Ansarullah (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan). The fourth category includes global terrorist groups such as Al-Qadea, Al-Qadea in the Indian sub-

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33. Activist, Civil Society, Community Mobilzer in Helmand province, interview by author, June 24, 2018.

continent, and Daesh Khurasan (ISK).[34] Apart from the Afghan groups, these terrorist organizations have objectives outside of Afghan borders and they are attempting to use Afghan soil to pursue their goals. Many of the groups are linked to each other as well as to transnational criminal organizations, collectively posing a grave threat to the security and stability of the region and the world.

Another security threat to Afghan security is "ethno-political corruption", a tool of warlords and ethnic leaders [35] currently integrated into the Afghan Unity government used to demand powerful government positions and the accompanying resources. Afghan security forces are not immune to these ethno-political corruption networks. Therefore, security forces need to provide the Afghan central government protection against internal forces and warlords. In 2004, the U.S. government tried to incentivize these warlords with high positions in government in exchange for giving up on their militias/military power and to make them concur to the Disarmament Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process. However, the DDR program failed; the warlords maintained their militias, and continued to engage in illegal activities and set up illegal checkpoints.[36] This has not only prevented the central government from forming a unified strong security sector, it also prevented the government from having a monopoly on the use of force which is one of the fundamental Weberian principles of nationhood and a core principle of successful SSR. Moreover, Afghanistan's relations with regional and global powers are closely linked to economic considerations, mainly in regard to energy supply routes. With few exceptions, most actors see Afghanistan as a "geostrategic pivot," meaning a country whose strategic value is determined more by its geographic position as a "gateway" than by its natural wealth. Therefore, complicated geopolitical rivalries have perpetuated between powers that want Afghanistan to be part of their spheres of influence. These powers can penetrate Afghanistan because of its lack of strong state institutions and especially its lack of a strong security sector which could deter and caution some of these geopolitical rivalries.

34. Sharifi, Arian, Director of National Threat Assessment for Office of the National Security Council of Afghanistan. Interview by author, June 22, 2018.

35. Chayes, Sarah. Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security. W. W. Norton & Company, 2015.

36. "Corruption In Conflict: Lessons From The U.S. Experience In Afghanistan." SIGAR, 2016. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-16-58-ll.pdf

There are many questions to be answered as it relates to the Afghan security situation. Among the most pressing are: first, what went wrong in the security assistance provided by the U.S. and its NATO allies, and second, is NATO the right organization for security assistance in the conflict and post-conflict environments? To answers these questions, it is important to focus on whether NATO has incorporated the lessons learned from Afghanistan into its future programming and if NATO is the right entity to implement "Projecting Stability." This can be done by taking a closer look at the Afghanistan as a case study.

Failing at Stabilizing Afghanistan

In 2003, NATO took over ISAF's mission of providing security support to the new interim government backed by the international community. At the time, Afghans but also many countries around the world were optimistic because ISAF forces grew to 30,000 by 2008, which fostered hope that the SSA to Afghan security forces would increase as well. However, contributing states consistently failed to deliver expected results because the United States under the Bush administration was entirely focused on the war in Iraq. While NATO's assumption of the mission helped to increase the size of the Afghan security forces,[37] it could not stop the security situation from worsening in coming years. Lieutenant-General Jonathon Riley, a former deputy commander of the ISAF, concludes that the damage done in Afghanistan was due to incoherence in the military approach; there was, "no single command of the money, no attention to addressing Afghan community needs as opposed to those of donors, no means of prioritizing, and no means of rewarding good behavior and punishing bad."[38] It is crucial to discuss a few of the flaws of the NATO mission in Afghanistan, such as lack of unity of command, lack of uniformity of commitments by NATO states, lack of coordination among the NATO and donor states, lack of accountability and corruption, parallel structures by NATO undermining the Afghan government, and last but not the least lack of a unified SSA/SSR strategy.

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37. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 19-34, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 16. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW116-State-Strengthening-in-Afghanistan-Lessons-Learned-2001-14_0.pdf
38. Ibid. P. 29.

Many of the NATO states actually did not have any unified strategy for SSA/SSR other than that they were called on by their powerful co-member state, the United States. Former EU Senior Policy Advisor Barbara Stapleton, remarked "the burden-sharing arrangement in Afghanistan with NATO member states was considered more of a necessity to enable a full U.S. military campaign in Iraq than a demonstration of U.S. confidence in NATO's capabilities."[39] The result was that even at this early stage, the international intervention lacked consensus on objectives while coordination between the U.S. and its NATO allies proved inadequate due to the lack of a unified strategy and fragmented civilian actors for security assistance to Afghanistan.[40]

The confusion over 'who is reporting to who' is not a new phenomenon in any coalition intervention, let alone military coalitions. NATO's mission in Afghanistan was certainly not immune to it. Many military officials in Afghanistan identified early on the effects of the lack of unity of command but not much of this criticism was translated into change of policy. Colonel Ian Hope, who served in Afghanistan, is one such official who attributes military failure to divergence from the principle of unity of command which he believes occurred in 2006: "Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) passed control of the ground fight to ISAF and split operations between Commander U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), and Commander U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM)".[41] Colonel Hope concludes that the fraught politics of the 2000s dividing the US and Europe caused this fracture of command: "U.S. reluctance to work within NATO and European refusal to support U.S. unilateralism have created a fractured command structure that is abetting the Taliban insurgency and the forces of corruption that plague Afghanistan."[42]

However, most analysts including Colonel Hope point the finger at the division of responsibilities undertaken at Bonn in 2001. Individual nations

39. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 19-34, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 22. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW116-State-Strengthening-in-Afghanistan-Lessons-Learned-2001-14_0.pdf
40. Ibid. 30
41. Hope, Ian. "Unity Of Command In Afghanistan: A Forsaken Principle Of War." SSI, Novmber 2008. P. 1. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/2008/ssi_hope.pdf
42. Ibid. P. 12.

were pressured to take the lead in interrelated elements of Afghan government reform. For example, the justice sector was assisted by Italy; Japan was responsible for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration; the United Kingdom managed counter-narcotics; police reform was overseen by Germany; and the building of a new Afghan army was the responsibility of the U.S.[43] Most of these nations were not coordinating their efforts with each other. The situation was furthermore complicated due to the multi-national sponsorship of the security sector with no unified expectations. For instance, Stapleton notes that in 2006, the training and institution-building of the Afghan police led by Germany was funded by "twenty-five countries and several international organizations, but there was no common vision on the kind of police force Afghanistan needed."[44] The multi-donor SSA resulted in a mismatch between the overlapping resources at hand and the institutional needs on the ground, a situation resulting in the handoff of Germany's responsibilities to the EU the very next year.

The lack of alignment of donor countries' priorities regarding security sector reform is visible in both NATO missions (ISAF and RSM) that concentrated on recruitment in the Afghan security forces under the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI) rather than prioritizing development of the scope of their work and the quality of the recruits. The international community also failed to align its security support with the needs of the Afghan security sector based on the needs of Afghan society and this is reflected by the lack of proper resources and processes to do so.

The duplication of programs and throwing heavy funding without any accountability mechanisms in place resulted in the institutionalization of corruption in the government institutions. Corruption contributes to the core of any institutional failure and the ANDSF is no different. The crucial points in counterinsurgencies, as Shultz argues, are the uncorrupt law enforcement and judicial systems which are part of the nation-building process.[45] The

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43. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 19-34, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 23. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW116-State-Strengthening-in-Afghanistan-Lessons-Learned-2001-14_0.pdf
44. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 19-34, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 23. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW116-State-Strengthening-in-Afghanistan-Lessons-Learned-2001-14_0.pdf
45. Shultz, Richard. "Counterinsurgency History, Theory, Practice." Boston: The Fletcher School, November 14, 2018.

Afghan population has lost confidence in these two entities because neither can provide sufficient protection and law enforcement services to the public (a failure often stressed in the insurgents' propaganda). In the 1990s, the Taliban gained initial support from the Afghan public due to their promise to restore order and end the corrupt and predatory behavior of warlords. However, in 2001, during the U.S. Military operation "Operation Freedom," the U.S. brought these warlords back onboard, ignoring their human rights atrocities, drug trafficking, arms smuggling, land grabbing, illegal checkpoints, and corrupt behavior during the 1980s and 1990s.[46] For example, Marshal Fahim was appointed as Defense Minister, which entrenched his ability and others like him to use donor community resources for his patronage networks.[47] General John Allen, ISAF Commander has stated, "The existential threat to the long-term viability of modern Afghanistan is corruption." However, it is crucial to highlight that these warlords and corrupt individuals also benefited from the mismanagement of donor nations who did not dispute their control of Afghan institutions and allowed them to participate in resource extortion. The Taliban are using the same strategy of associating the Afghan central government and security forces with corruption to fuel grievances and gain support for their insurgency.

Parallel structures without local ownership was another big gap in NATO's mission in Afghanistan. Nation building in Afghanistan was agreed upon in the Bonn agreement of December 2001 which highlights nation building as the DDR of former militia, the building and training of the new Afghan National Army (ANA), the training of the Afghan National Police (ANP), the establishment of the jurisdictional system and counter-narcotics operations.[48] However, the question of who would take the responsibility of supporting the Afghan government in implementing these priorities was missing.

The lack of unified priorities for Afghanistan among the NATO states has resulted in duplication of efforts and neglect of local ownership to Afghans by many international organizations and individual countries

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46. "Corruption In Conflict: Lessons From The U.S. Experience In Afghanistan." SIGAR, 2016. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/sigar-16-58-ll.pdf

47. Ibid.

48. Brandstetter, Gerd. "Action Building In Afghanistan: The German Provincial Reconstruction Team Concept—Means To Improve Efficiency Of Effort?" USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, March 18, 2005. P. 3. https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a431763.pdf

due to the absence of an authoritative lead institution that could align multiple assistance efforts. Other than the U.S.' military role, post conflict operations (either NATO-led or led by other international organizations in Afghanistan) remain vague. Afghanistan became a country in which many donor countries were running their own administrations and not reporting the progress of their programs to the Afghan government in a systematic manner. This situation was further exacerbated by the limited capacity of the Afghan government leading to the establishment of parallel structures by the international community which further undermined the credibility of Afghan local governance. The most prominent example of parallel structures are the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).

PRTs were established in 2002 to help improve the state authority and security in all 34 provinces of Afghanistan. The goal was to bring civilian and military efforts together for the reconstruction of the country.[49] However, this goal was not shared or accepted by many NATO nations involved in Afghanistan. ISAF force member states were unwilling to participate in setting up their own PRTs. They argued that expanding their mission outside of Kabul into the provinces was not in their mandates. The result was the U.S. taking a greater share in the establishment of PRTs.[50] As with other matters in Afghanistan, PRTs were also implemented by different NATO states in different provinces of Afghanistan with different sets of goals and priorities with limited coordination among them. Although ISAF implemented PRTs, they were still managed and controlled by their respective national authorities.[51] There were several harms caused by the PRTs, most notably the way it was undermining state authority, overwhelming the capacity of subnational government to absorb resources, and imposing undesired and unsustainable projects on these subnational units.[52] Additionally, many aid budgets were made in the capitals of NATO nations rather than in Kabul.

49. Murtazashvili, Jennifer. "Subnational Governance In Afghanistan: Back To The Future." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 53-67, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 60. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW116-State-Strengthening-in-Afghanistan-Lessons-Learned-2001-14_0.pdf

50. Brandstetter, Gerd. "Action Building In Afghanistan: The German Provincial Reconstruction Team Concept— Means To Improve Efficiency Of Effort?" USAWC Strategy Research Project, U.S. Army War College, March 18, 2005. P. 5. https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a431763.pdf

51. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." Peaceworks, May 2016.

52. Murtazashvili, Jennifer. "Subnational Governance In Afghanistan: Back To The Future." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 53-67, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 60.

The priority was given to designing projects that could absorb the funding while ignoring the needs and capacities of the subnational units in the Afghan institutions. As a result, most of the military and civilian projects were unaligned with Afghan national development strategies.

The NATO mission not only ignored focusing on the needs of the people but also undermined security threats face by women that could have been dealt with by including women in the security sector. Afghan women rarely feel protected under the current law enforcement forces because men in Afghanistan do not identify with the security threats faced by women.[53] Some civil society groups and donor countries pushed on behalf of the needs of women in the security sector but women's inclusion in the Afghan public sector overall was mostly done to satisfy these donors' requirements rather than as a recognized institutional need.[54] Both the Afghan government and NATO missions have failed to identify the scope and importance of women in the security sector. Thus, women are included at some levels in the security sector but with limited scope and without being properly utilized as force multipliers. As one of the senior officials of RSM stated, most women in the MoD do not have an office space or necessary facilities.[55] This officer argued that the biggest problem is prioritization. The international community pushed for increasing the numbers of women and the Afghan government brought those numbers but without the proper scope and planning for it. The RSM advisors are told to reach a quota of how many women should be recruited rather than first reforming the structure to accommodate women, further revealing the ad hoc methodology of SSR in Afghanistan. Being inclusive to women in the security sector (and really in any part of the Afghan public sector) is seen as a luxury and a sideshow compared to more mainstream reform issues. Although traditional cultural norms and insecurity are key challenges facing Afghan women throughout Afghan society and the ANDSF,[56] structural barriers remain the top obstacles for women's effective inclusion in the security sector.[57]

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53. Sarwar, Halima, Executive Director of Paywand Afghanan, A Civil Society Organization for Women Access to Legal resources, Interview by author, May 26, 2018.

54. Dostyar, Aref, Director General for International Relations and Regional Cooperation Office of the National Security Council Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Interview by author, May 22, 2018.

55. Officer, US Special Forces. Interview by author. Posted to US mission in 2011 and 2016, August 2018.

56. Austen, Abigail. Interview by Lima Ahmad. Enduring Partnership Coordination Cell, June 26, 2018.

57. Gerber, Rebekah. Interview by Lima Ahmad. MoD Senior Gender Advisor NATO Resolute Support Mission. November 16, 2018.

The Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Operations at NATO, John Manza, stated in a 2017 interview "we are not doing enough and I would give us an "F" in Projecting Stability" though he sees Projecting Stability as less fundamental to NATO interests than traditional deterrence and defense.[58] Even so, the lessons learned from NATO's missions in Afghanistan are used to qualify NATO's capabilities for implementing the 'Projecting Stability' model. In reality, NATO lost credibility in Afghanistan as an organization that could provide SSR support to failing and fragile states. Thus, gaining the trust of the donor nations in NATO's capabilities requires concrete measures within NATO and its member states to align their commitments and objectives with the resources and commitments they opt for 'Projecting Stability.' It is also important that the host governments of those failing and fragile states trust the capabilities of NATO in providing them with SSR support. The 'Projecting Stability' model should be less affected by member states' different political priorities and more technical in nature, implemented on the basis of the security needs of partner nations. Additionally, if most of NATO's decisions are made only by one country (and predominately by the U.S.), then it will be tough to utilize the full commitment of other NATO countries. If NATO missions in Afghanistan are the examples of NATO's capabilities, then NATO is surely not the right organization for implementing a "Projecting Stability" model because it lacks a unified SSR/SSA model.

Conclusion

The U.S. and its NATO allies' engagement in Afghanistan, in addition to countering terrorism, was meant to strengthen the state's capacity not only to maintain a monopoly of power over a strong security sector but also be able to have functioning local governments and state institutions. Noting the scale of the objectives being simultaneously undertaken, former EU Senior Policy Adviser Stapleton wryly adds: "...priorities [were] determined as much by the electoral, budgetary, and news cycles of leading NATO member states as by conditions in Afghanistan."[59] Furthermore, many NATO states

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58. Rousselet, Lelia. "John Manza gives NATO an "F" in Projecting Stability." The German Marshal Fund of the United States (GMF), December 13, 2017. https://www.gmfus.org/blog/2017/12/13/john-manza-gives-nato-f-projecting-stability

59. Stapleton, Barbara J. "Military And Civilian Assistance In Afghanistan: An Incoherent Approach." Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 21.

committed to the SSA/SSR missions because the U.S. needed such burden-sharing in order to focus on Iraq. The lack of unity of commitments by the U.S. and NATO may have helped grow the number of security forces but capacity building on the civilian side of Afghan institutions remained pretty much ignored especially in the provinces.[60] This lack of commitment to unifying goals resulted in different international actors following their own individual interests and preferences in an uncoordinated manner.

The absence of an integrated strategy that included political-military, economic, and humanitarian elements in the nation-building model caused every NATO nation to implement their version of security assistance models in different institutions and provinces of Afghanistan. Additionally, the decisions about projects and training were made by different NATO states with separate chains of command in their capitals, not Kabul.[61] Unfortunately, in Afghanistan, there was no consensus on a unified SSR. Once called a post-conflict state, Afghanistan has again become a conflict state. It was once a perfect case of a post-conflict environment, where a comprehensive SSR strategy with unifying goals could have made it a success story. Dr. Hanlon and Dr. Shultz explain that in a state where conflict is still ongoing, "putting police officers back in the classroom to learn the new rules of democratic policing or changing basic police procedures while the institution is fighting for its life is not practical. Nor realistic."[62] Therefore, it is hard to imagine implementing SSR in a holistic way in Afghanistan today because the government does not have a monopoly of force, nor can it provide basic services. This has cost the government its credibility among a majority of the Afghan public.

The model of 'Projecting Stability' will not work if it is only a SSA with its traditional purpose of solely training and equipping security forces. A successful "Projecting Stability" needs the commitment of the NATO countries, the political will for security assistance with local ownership, under the "broader umbrella" of an SSR approach with a unity of effort by the NATO

60. Murtazashvili, Jennifer. "Subnational Governance In Afghanistan: Back To The Future." State Strengthening In Afghanistan: Lessons Learned, 2001–14. 53-67, USIP; Peaceworks, May 2016. P. 64.

61. Ibid. 61

62. Hanlon, Querine and Richard H. Shultz, JR. "Prioritizing Security Sector Reform: A New U.S. Approach." Washington D.C: USIP, 2016. Pp: 3-14.

donor countries. It is important to achieve the full commitment of the host nations where the 'projecting stability' model is going to be implemented. If the locals in those nations are not onboard, it will be complicated for NATO to implement their strategy of stabilizing their "neighborhood." Shultz argues that a "large, multiyear Afghanistan-era engagement can no longer be sustained…" but the engagement in Afghanistan is not prolonged because of the SSR model but rather because of the absence of a well-designed SSR strategy which resulted in the duplication of efforts and programs.

Policy Recommendations

It is clear that SSR will not be successful without the active participation of national actors in countries undergoing SSR. SSR expert Mark Sedra warns, however, that the "effectiveness of the security sector is not just measured by the capacity of the security forces, but how well they are managed, monitored and held accountable."[63] The 'Projecting Stability' model can play a positive role in the security environment of our world today where saving weak and failing states from becoming safe heavens of terrorists and armed groups has become a necessity, not an option. The following are some of the lessons learned from the Afghanistan case that NATO needs to incorporate into its SSR model:

- Unified SSR Strategy for NATO: NATO nations must develop a unified strategy that encompasses the principles of SSR in its holistic meaning. NATO should not only focus on strengthening the security forces but also ensure that they aren't leaving the civilian side of the state in deteriorating conditions as is the current result in Afghanistan today.

- Unity of Command: Unity of command is one of the key issues that NATO has to develop to avoid the mission creep that has prolonged operations in Afghanistan. Unity of command is also crucial for NATO to avoid duplication of programs for implementation of SSR that would result in the waste of resources.

- Ensuring National Ownership of SSR Processes: In failed and post-conflict states, SSR models should not merely be imposed by external

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63. Sedra, Mark. "Introduction: The Future Of Security Sector Reform." The Future of Security Sector Reform, The Centre For International Governance Innovation (CIGI), 2010. P: 16.

actors as this eventually results in failed SSR. It is vital to achieve the full commitment of the host nations where the 'Projecting Stability' model is implemented because, if the locals in those nations are not onboard, it will be challenging for NATO to implement their strategy successfully.

- Role of NATO Nations in Supporting SSR: For the success of SSR programming, external support, particularly in post-conflict contexts, is also vital. However, external support should not be uncoordinated as witnessed in Afghanistan. Additionally, external support for implementing SSR must avoid incoherence between the policies and the funding for implementing these policies which can happen due to the difference in political commitments of NATO states towards the host states. Therefore, NATO states have to work on coherence and maintain long-term, sustainable financial commitments for implementing 'Projecting Stability'.

PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS: WOMEN'S BUSINESS PROGRAMS AND THEIR ROLE IN PEACEBUILDING IN AFGHANISTAN

MANIZHA WAFEQ[1]

Summary

- Manizha Wafeq, the Co-founder and President of the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) offers with this article a case study of the PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS (PTB) program and the events which led to the creation of the AWCCI. She offers an analysis of the role of women's empowerment in business as someone who personally took part in all programs and events discussed in the case study.

- It will be argued that business can have a positive role in peacebuilding provided that local actors are sufficiently engaged and supported in the creation of local institutions and networks.

- Women in particular have faced issues in past business empowerment programs that proved not to have staying power. The PTB program provides a more successful case that could inspire other programs to better fulfil the peacebuilding needs of Afghanistan. Its mentorship program under American businesswomen and its Pay it Forward program (which keeps women participants involved both as mentors and women's business advocates) are particularly important components

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1. Manizha Wafeq is the Co-founder and President of the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI).

that ensure lasting impact and continued appeal to aspiring Afghan women entrepreneurs.

The private sector can have an important role in peacebuilding; it can look into exploring new places to invest in, adopt inclusive and sustainable practices, and work more closely with humanitarian and development agencies to link investments to peacebuilding objectives. This is especially true of local businesses within the area of conflict. Understanding how business can influence peace is central to improving their role in it. The role of women in business in particular will be looked at as part of this overall agenda.

In order for Afghanistan and for women in the private sector to play their respective roles in peacebuilding, women entrepreneurs established the Afghanistan Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) in 2017 to elevate their voices, interests and concerns on policy matters and use this platform to ensure women are viewed as economic agents and not just beneficiaries of economic resources. This is the first policy advocacy organization promoting women's perspectives on the links between peace and inclusive business in Afghanistan. Its founders believe that development and business activities need to reach rural residents, women, and youth. The author, as a co-founder and current President of AWCCI, provides herein an analysis of the programs that led to AWCCI's creation and a view of the business-peacebuilding relationship more generally.

This paper explores how, in 2009, a group of Afghan businesswomen graduated from the American PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS® (PTB) program and formed the basis of the future AWCCI with the PEACE THROUGH BUSINESS® Network (PTB-N). This advocacy organization expanded to include many prominent businesswomen in Afghanistan in order to better serve as an advocacy organization for women in business. By 2013, PTB-N had built a larger group of allies and in 2014 transformed into the Leading Entrepreneurs for Afghanistan's Development (LEAD). On 12 March 2017, LEAD transitioned into what is known today as AWCCI. It is argued in this paper that the foreign aid initiative of the PTB program lead to a potentially replicable model of business development that can contribute to inclusive peacebuilding initiatives that are still sorely needed throughout Afghanistan to this day.

Business in Peacebuilding

The private sector's role in peacebuilding and even international development as a whole is still an issue under discussion between development actors. The idea of corporate responsibility and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) indicators have come into greater prominence along with increased discussion among major donor nations about how to count Private Sector Instruments in development aid statistics. €7 trillion in investments had been benchmarked by 2018/2019 for corporate progress on peace and development with respect to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[2] However, even a Project Lead for the World Economic Forum wrote in 2019 that "business presence in itself is no guarantee of a positive contribution to peacebuilding," noting that businesses have as much potential to exacerbate conflict.[3]

In a 2019 study for the Conflict, Security & Development journal, Jason Miklian and Peer Schouten noted the complexities facing businesses running business-peace projects and trying to check off UN SDGs in their practices. In the diverse countries where they study the application of the business role in peacebuilding, they note that business-peace projects that merely try to improve business access typically exacerbate inequalities favouring elite actors. Significant government and international regulation, aid, and oversight would likely need to play a substantial role in order to create real advancement in company interaction with conflict-ridden societies. On the other hand, the study concludes that local businesses in conflict situations are uniquely positioned to navigate conflict economies even if they tend not to be "eager to become overtly visible, for their own political, reputational and personal risk reasons."[4]

Ultimately, scholarship on this issue is growing but still not advanced enough for current reports to state clearly one way or another if business (local or foreign) can fulfil a significant peacebuilding role. Even a publicly available brief to the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) —

2. Miklian, Jason and Peer Schouten. "Broadening "business", widening "peace": a new research agenda on business and peace-building." Conflict, Security & Development. Vol. 19, 2019— Issue 1: Bringing Business and Peace up to the Mainstream— and Down to the Local. Pages 1-13. February 14 2019. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14678802.2019.1561612?scroll=top&needAccess=true

3. Crawford, Victoria. "7 ways busienss can be agents for peace." World Economic Forum. May 28 2019. https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2019/05/7-ways-business-can-be-agents-for-peace/

4. Miklian and Schouten. "Broadening "business", widening "peace.""

the council of major national donors of international aid within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) — notes an "insufficient demonstration and communication of the results of private sector engagement at project, programme and portfolio levels," concluding on the need for more evaluations to assess development impact and effectiveness of current partnerships with business actors.[5] Even the rules around statistical measures by which the DAC would fully weigh private contributions to development efforts are still under discussion.[6]

Overview of Women's Role in the Afghan Economy and in Business Ownership

Historically, women have played a significant role in various economic sectors such as carpet production, dry fruits, dairy processing, and animal husbandry. They have been the majority of the over 1 million carpet industry workers in Afghanistan, yet it remains an industry that is hard to value even in recent evaluations. According to Afghanistan's own 2018-2022 National Export Strategy (developed jointly between Afghanistan's Ministry of Industry and Commerce and the International Trade Centre), 75% of carpet exports to the international market are not recorded with most exports actually occurring through middlemen in Pakistan.[7] The effect is to obscure the potential of this women-driven industry even if it is one of the country's largest export sectors.

Women have also historically worked in the regionally important trade of dried fruits and nuts and are heavily involved throughout the value chain. This sector was actually valued as being higher than any other export sector in 2016, accounting for almost 23% of the whole Afghanistan export basket. In that year, it had an export value of $183 million.[8] Women often play a significant role during the harvesting and processing stages, thereby

5. "Private Sector Peer Learning Policy Brief 3: Ensuring Results when Engaging the Private Sector in Development Co-operation." OECD. https://www.oecd.org/dac/peer-reviews/Policy-Brief-3-Ensuring-Results-when-Engaging-the-Private-Sector-in-Development-Co-operation.pdf

6. "Private Sector Instruments." OECD. 2018. http://www.oecd.org/fr/cad/private-sector-instrument.htm

7. "Afghanistan National Export Strategy 2018-2022: Carpets Sector." International Trade Center. 2018. P 24. https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Redesign/Projects/AAT/AFG_Carpets.pdf

8. "Afghanistan National Export Strategy 2018-2022: Dried Fruits and Nuts Sector." International Trade Centre. 2018. P 24. https://www.intracen.org/uploadedFiles/intracenorg/Content/Redesign/Projects/AAT/AFG_Dried%20Fruits%20and%20Nuts.pdf

elevating their status as contributors to household incomes.[9] In the National Export Strategy report, it was still noted that cultural norms surrounding the interactions between men and women hampered the ability of women to proactively maximize their potential throughout the dried fruits and nuts value chain.[10] It was recommended that greater women involvement would allow for the kind of women-to-women interaction that would be more culturally feasible and productive within the local context.

Despite the position of women as important producers of exportable consumer goods, the World Bank's recorded labor force participation rate for Afghan women only rose to 21.7% in 2020 (based on the International Labor Organization's estimate)[11] which doesn't include the informal labor described above. In addition, Afghan women are very much the bearers of the infamous "double burden" or "second shift" of having to support the family both in difficult "public sphere" labor and family caretaking in the "private sphere" of the home with the two theoretical "spheres" often blending together. These difficulties carry over to women's business ownership.

According to AWCCI's own statistics (released to the Afghan press in early 2019) 1,150 women entrepreneurs invested in different Afghan businesses over the past 18 years. These investments by women totalled around $77 million with 300 new women-founded businesses in 2018 alone. 77,000 new jobs were created by these businesses. This success is tempered by the fact that 50% of these investments were in Kabul.[12] A separate 2018 study by AWCCI randomly selected 248 women-owned businesses in Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad, and it was found that in these areas (where most of the businesses created by women were appearing), 90% of women business owners were educated and 50% had a working knowledge of English and computer literacy which paints a picture of progress captured almost completely by educated urbanites. This might lend further credence to Miklian and Schouten's conclusion that business access improvement alone favours certain elites.[13] At the same time, less than 50% of respondents

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9. Ibid. P 1.

10. Ibid. P 37.

11. "Labor force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modelled ILO estimate) – Afghanistan." The World Bank. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.CACT.FE.ZS?locations=AF

12. Arman, Rohullah. "AWCCI Releases Figures on Women Entrepreneurs." Tolo news. February 10, 2019. https://tolonews.com/business/awcci-releases-figures-women-entrepreneurs

13. Wafeq, Manizha. "Internal Factors Affecting Growth of Women-Owned Businesses in Afghanistan." Afghanistan Women Chamber of Commerce and Indurstry. P 4. https://awcci.af/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/AWCCI-Research-Paper-Factors-Affecting-Womens-Businesses-Print-Layout-V2-Pages-Low-Res.pdf

had business or marketing plans or a standard operating system or were familiar with quality control and financial management systems. A combination of external obstacles (deficient infrastructure, a weak legal system, lack of access to finance, lack of access to markets, and socio-cultural gender expectations) and internal obstacles (weak internal capacity) were significantly hindering Afghan women in business.[14]

The 2018 study was not optimistic about the future of Afghan women-owned business. Only 5% of all licensed businesses were women-owned, usually in handicrafts and food processing even if there was growing activity in restauration, information and technology services, and travel services (based on information collected when the AWCCI was still known as LEAD).[15] It was noted that many women-owned businesses were stagnating, registering "little to no growth over several years."[16] The situation urgently calls for models that could help women overcome barriers to economic participation and contribute to peacebuilding by normalizing women's participation in the public sphere and in leadership positions. The PTB program which eventually lead to the establishment of LEAD and then AWCCI could be one such positive model for local business actors acting in the interest of peacebuilding and women's empowerment.

Case Study: The Peace Through Business Program

In 2006 Dr. Terry Neese, an entrepreneur from Oklahoma and advocate for women in business (co-founding the Women Impacting Public Policy (WIPP) in 2001), was asked by Laura Bush, former US First Lady, to put together a business training and mentorship program for Afghan businesswomen. Dr. Neese was trusted as an ally of the Bush administration (raising $1 million for George W. Bush's re-election in 2004 and offered a position in his administration in 2005)[17] but also for the network she created in the U.S. among the women business-owner community boasting a database of 200,000 American women business owners.[18] It was with this network that

14. Ibid. P 4.

15. Ibid. P 7.

16. Ibid.

17. Gold, Matea and Tom Hamburger. "In 2016 campaign, the lament of the not quite rich enough." The Washington Post, March 25, 2015. https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/in-2016-campaign-the-lament-of-the-not-quite-rich-enough/2015/03/24/f0a38b18-cdb4-11e4-8a46-b1dc9be5a8ff_story.html

18. Nance-Nash, Sheryl. "Women Business Owners Partner to Bring Prosperity and Peace." Forbes. April 26, 2012. https://www.forbes.com/sites/sherylnancenash/2012/04/26/women-business-owners-partner-to-bring-prosperity-and-peace/

she planned to create a unique program for training aspiring Afghan women.

Dr. Neese founded the PTB program in 2007 which held the philosophy that businesses create jobs and jobs in turn create productive spaces for economic engagement between citizens. Looking back on the program in 2018, Dr. Neese continues to express her belief that strong democracies require stable economies in which women have a central role.[19] This was a common theme in many of the private aid programs during the 00s decade though among them, PTB stands out as more of an exception than the rule. Unlike many other privately run women's empowerment in business programs taking place in Afghanistan at the time, PTB stands out for its more long-term success in terms of trained women's performance. It is therefore important to understand why PTB performed better than many of the other programs that shared its philosophy and objectives.

PTB launched in 2007 with a first cohort of 13 women which included the author of this article among their ranks. PTB evolved over time with the current program providing aspiring women entrepreneurs with a 10 week curriculum in Afghanistan developed with Northwood University on operations management, financial basics, marketing, promotion and selling, and human resources. 15 top Afghan students are then chosen to come to the US for a period of "entrepreneurial immersion" on Northwood campus (and more recently, AT&T University campus) and then a week with an American mentor (from within Dr. Neese's large network of American women entrepreneurs) in a matched profession.[20][21][22] Program graduates are then taken on as PTB mentors in the "Pay it Forward" phase to teach new students in Afghanistan and to serve as speakers for women's organizations and advocates on "economic issues."[23]

The program maintained an effective balance between theory and practice allowing Afghan businesswomen to learn directly from their American

19. Hall, Cheryl. "Terry Neese brings women entrepreneurs to Dallas to help end strife in Afghanistan, Rwanda." The Dallas Morning News. August 03, 2018. https://www.dallasnews.com/business/entrepreneurs/2018/08/03/terry-neese-brings-women-entrepreneurs-to-dallas-to-help-end-strife-in-afghanistan-rwanda/
20. Nance-Nash. "Women Business Owners Partner to Bring Prosperity and Peace."
21. Hall. "Terry Neese brings women entrepreneurs to Dallas to help end strife in Afghanistan, Rwanda."
22. "What We Do." IEEW. https://ieew.org/our-impact/what-we-do/
23. Ibid.

counterparts. The author of this article, as part of the first cohort of PTB graduates, later founded the Afghan PTB Alumni Association in 2009 in order to further develop networking and policy advocacy opportunities for local businesswomen. The "Pay it Forward" phase would later see graduates use the new AWCCI to fulfil their advocacy work. There was also a 2017 development of a "Pathways Course"— a 5-day version of the program for rural trainees to cover the basics of business planning and principles.[24] The author of this article serves as the main contact for this course.

The PTB program currently reports on its Alumna page that over 450[25] Afghan businesswomen have so far been trained. It also reports on its Impact page that around 80% of the PTB's graduates in both Afghanistan and Rwanda (the other country involved in the program) are still involved in business today.[26] Media coverage of the program readily reports this number (citing the PTB's statistics without further inquiry) though outside of the PTB's own estimation, there are no publicly available in-depth evaluations of the PTB program's impact or what exactly the statistic means by "still in business." The PTB program can nevertheless be regarded as somewhat successful as 89% of graduates still stay on for the Pay it Forward phase and interest in participating in the program is increasing in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the PTB program's managing non-profit— the Institute for Economic Empowerment of Women (IEEW) — continued education supports AWCCI's growth as a platform for women's advocacy in business.[27]

The PTB-N, created by the first three PTB program cohorts for policy advocacy purposes, felt that they required a larger platform to bring significant policy changes for women in business in Afghanistan. To achieve this, the PTB-N joined prominent businesswomen to eventually found the Leading Entrepreneurs for Afghanistan's Development (LEAD) in 2013, which itself turned into the first Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AWCCI) in Afghanistan on 12 March 2017.[28] Since its establishment, AWCCI has provided support to Afghan businesswomen on a national level. As it is a

24. "PTB/NU Pathways 5-Day Course: Afghanistan." IIEW. https://ieew.org/pathways-course/
25. "Peace Through Business Alumnae." IIEW. https://ieew.org/students/ptb-alumnae/
26. "Our Impact." IIEW. https://ieew.org/our-impact/
27. Ibid.
28. "Our Organization." AWCCI. https://awcci.af/en/our-organization/

very new organization, it is bound to take time to fully register any kind of impact but its existence is significant in its own right as a testament to the continued advocacy work provided by PTB graduates (and therefore the lasting impact of the PTB program).

Conclusion

Program design and approach require flexibility and evolution. The PTB program remained relevant due to its willingness to evolve and to work alongside Afghan graduates who used their agency to expand the program on their own initiative. The Pay it Forward phase, the development of a strong alumni network, and the recent establishment of AWCCI proves the importance of organic local participation and agency in the success of a program. Many other similar programs that benefitted from large-scale funding did not survive precisely because they did not take a longer-term view to their graduates and did not engage local interest in taking project ownership. As current research on the business-peace relationship shows, it is local actors that can help navigate conflict areas and locate the best ways to apply development objectives in specific contexts. More programs with the PTB's staying power and effective capacity-building practices are needed to end the status quo of unstable and unprofitable women-led business in Afghanistan.

Policy Recommendations

- Training programs should use long-term coaching and mentorship in order to transfer knowledge and skills and ensure they result in a real change in women's livelihoods and business management.

- Sustainable institutions with committed leadership should be given space to arise organically through Afghan women's efforts.

- Such organic organizations led by women can contribute to peacebuilding and should be provided political, technical and financial support over longer periods to give time for tangible results to appear.

- These organizations' governance and structure should be well-defined and laid out in their inception so that their operation is not interrupted by internal disunity.

- The design of the programs' content, methodology of delivery and trainer selection should be well-suited for the Afghan context. Knowledge of local languages is essential. Trainers for women should be women where possible.

- In countries beset by conflict like Afghanistan, programs should be developed with a focus on how they contribute to peacebuilding and inclusive development.

DECISIVE COMPROMISE WITH WOMEN BEHIND THE DOORS: THE FLAWED PROCESS OF AFGHAN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

MARYAM JAMI[1]

Summary

- The Taliban claim to have evolved ideologically on women's rights since 2001 but there is no way to truly know until they have enough power to enact an agenda. As such, it is best not to take chances during peace negotiations and to continue to press them on the issue.

- The Taliban oversaw a period of excruciating hardship for women and girls between 1996 and 2001. Their violence continues to devastate them. It is the duty of the negotiating team— preferably with a significant number of women as team members— to hear out the experiences and needs of Afghan women and use them to craft an assertive diplomatic position protecting their rights.

- The Afghan government and its allies— particularly the United States— have come under scrutiny for their perceived flippancy with women's rights. The intra-Afghan talks are their chance to prove they are serious about this issue.

Afghan women's participation became ever so important in 2018; as the peace process began to gain momentum following US-Taliban talks, women's participation in the intra-Afghan dialogue was seen as a way to

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avert the possibility of compromising women's rights and safety for peace.[2] Women have voiced concerns that their current levels of participation are regarded merely as symbolic.[3] Their roles in positions of authority have been deemed superficial since they lack political support and bear weak decision-making and enforcement power.[4] This paper strives to answer the question of what measures can be taken to make sure that women will be adequately represented in the Afghan peace talks and their demands will not be ignored. The paper analyses women's current status, role, demands and concerns in the intra-Afghan negotiations. The paper finds that although women are already a part of the formal peace talks, their voices need to be further enhanced, supported and strengthened by all stakeholders in order to ensure their perspectives are not only heard but used to impact the process.

Women's Concerns Regarding the Peace Process

The US has committed through multiple diplomatic agreements to consolidating democracy, rule of law and human rights in Afghanistan since 2001.[5] However, the US-Taliban negotiations conducted by US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad have shown, the US has talked about their vital interests with the Taliban but not their commitments to Afghanistan which include safeguarding women's rights. As a result, female activists started to hold meetings and events to advocate for democracy and human rights and make their voices heard.[6]

At the centre of the peace talks is the case of women's constitutional rights. The codification of women's rights in the 2004 Constitution was hard-won along with other achievements in the inclusion of women in social, political, and economic spheres. As the Taliban want the current constitution changed,[7] women fear that their achievements may be lost just as they had

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2. Karzai, Hekmat Khalil. "An Unprecedented Peace Offer to the Taliban" The New York Times, March 11, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/11/opinion/peace-taliban.html

3. Salehi, Zarghona. "Afghan Women Say No to Symbolic Role in Peace Talks" Pajhwok Afghan News, 2019. https://thefrontierpost.com/afghan-women-say-no-to-symbolic-role-in-peace-talks/

4. Nijat, Aarya and Jennifer Murtazashvili "Women's Leadership Roles in Afghanistan" United States Institute of Peace. September 4, 2015. https://www.usip.org/publications/2015/09/womens-leadership-roles-afghanistan

5. Houlihan, Erin and William Spencer. "Rule of Law, Governance and Human Rights in Afghanistan, 2002 to 2016" United States Institute for Peace, August 29, 2017. https://www.usip.org/publications/2017/08/rule-law-governance-and-human-rights-afghanistan-2002-2016

6. Ahmadi, Belquis. "Afghan Talks: No Women, No Peace." United States Institute of Peace, 2019.

7. Kane, Sean. "Talking with the Taliban: Should the Afghan Constitution Be a Point of Negotiation?" United States Institute for Peace, January 2015. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR356-Talking-with-the-Taliban-Should-the-Afghan-Constitution-Be-a-Point-of-Negotiation.pdf

experienced during the Taliban regime of the late 90s. Tayeba Zahidi, former senator of the Mishrano Jirga (Upper House of the National Assembly of Afghanistan), shared her opinion about what the Taliban thought about women's constitutional rights and participation in society:[8]

> *"Firstly, the current Afghan Constitution is based on teachings of Islam and it is precisely stated in articles 1, 2, and 3. I was one of the members of the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003, and we tried to do our best to include the rights of women in the Constitution according to Shari'a. Thus, if the Taliban claim that they will accept women's rights under Shari'a, in my opinion the current Constitution should not be seen as a point of tension in Afghan peace talks and the women's constitutional rights should be recognized."[9]*

The Taliban claim that they have evolved ideologically since the height of their political power in the 1990s towards an ideology that is more accommodating to women.[10] However, opinions are divided in this regard. Mohammad Rafiq Shahir, Head of the Herat Expert's Council, believes that no one could actually surmise or predict what the Taliban would do after an intra-Afghan peace agreement is signed.[11] He noted that this could only be known when the Taliban are formally included in Afghan politics.[12]

The US -Taliban Agreement and the Concerns of Women

On 17 December 2019, Germany offered to hold a conference on intra-Afghan reconciliation in Doha, Qatar, between the Taliban and government representatives.[13] This was the first meeting in which high-ranking Afghan government officials, amidst civil society actors, met with a delegation from the Taliban's political office since the US began talks with the group. The Taliban had long stated that they would not negotiate with the Afghan

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8. Zahidi, Tayeba, Former senator of the Mishrano Jirga (Upper House of the National Assembly of Afghanistan), Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.

9. Ibid.

10. Shahir, Mohammad Rafiq, Head of the Herat Expert's Council, Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. Sohail, Ajmal. "The Efficiency of German Contribution in the Afghan Peace Process." Modern Diplomacy, November 12, 2019. https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2019/11/12/the-efficiency-of-german-contribution-in-the-afghan-peace-process/

government since they deemed this government a puppet of the US.[14] As a result, this meeting was held under the condition of informality even if the goal of the attendees was to discuss a framework for reaching an eventual peace deal. This informality also permitted representatives of Afghan civil society and especially women to participate and gauge Taliban positions on human and women's rights. The Taliban showed interest in negotiating with representatives of President Ashraf Ghani and a joint statement on a "roadmap for peace" was reached at the end of the Doha meeting. The spokesman for the Taliban said they would hold talks with the government once a deal was signed with the United States.[15]

On 29 February 2020, the US and Taliban delegates signed a peace agreement.[16] This agreement hinges on four major points: 1) a gradual withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan; 2) a commitment by the Taliban regarding the refrainment from using Afghanistan as a base to commit attacks against the US and harbouring other terrorist groups who may pose a threat; 3) the earnest start of an intra-Afghan peace negotiation with the Afghan government in Kabul; 4) the end of terrorism and violence in Afghanistan.[17]

Although the US promised to help consolidate democracy, safeguard human rights and women's rights in Afghanistan[18], the US-Taliban peace agreement does not mention neither what caused internal political debate in both the US and Afghanistan as to the actual nature of the deal and the underlying goals of the Trump administration.

Mohammad Rafiq Shahir, however, takes a cautiously optimistic view:

> "The US-Taliban agreement signed on February 29th has a military basis and is brokered between the Taliban and the US, so there must

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14. "Taliban Takes Districts Headquarters, Says It Will Not Negotiate with Afghan Government Team." Radio Free Europe, March 28, 2020. https://www.rferl.org/a/taliban-takes-district-headquarters-says-it-will-not-negotiate-with-afghan-government-team/30514790.html

15. Ibid.

16. Samad, Harris. "The Afghan Peace Process: Where Do We Go from Here?" Atlantic Council, March 23, 2020. https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/new-atlanticist/the-afghan-peace-process-where-do-we-go-from-here/

17. "Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan." (n.d.) https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/02.29.20-US-Afghanistan-Joint-Declaration.pdf

18. Ibid.

> *not be any concern regarding the mention of women's rights, human rights, and democracy in this document. However, we hope that the US will deliver its promise and help include the mentioned terms in the prospective 'intra-Afghan peace agreement'."*[19]

This view is not shared by all and particularly not certain female civil society activists and politicians who made their opinions known to the American press that an immediate American withdrawal would endanger constitutional rights and democracy, citing Taliban demands to change the Constitution.[20] Ghizaal Haress, a commissioner at the Independent Commission for Overseeing the Implementation of the Constitution, tells The New York Times in early 2019 that "it is imperative that these constitutional rights are not compromised during the peace negotiations, as there has been a broad social and political consensus around the Constitution."[21]

The agreement does note that the Taliban should begin peace negotiations with the Afghan government and that they would be, to some extent, afforded a share of political power. Accordingly, there are strong concerns that a probable inclusion of the Taliban may once again expose the women to marginalization and violence[22] as Taliban control usually means the barring of women from pursuing education, professional careers, and a political voice and the encouragement of a culture of repression against women who are seen to transgress such restrictions.

In addition to doubts around the Taliban position, issues with moving ahead on intra-Afghan negotiations arose from the government side as well. In March 2020, the Afghan government announced a committee consisting of 21 members to hold direct peace talks with the Taliban.[23] However, the office of former Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah objected to the composition of the committee and claimed that it was not comprehensive. The Afghan government refused to make any changes to

19. Shahir, Mohammad Rafiq, Head of the Herat Expert's Council, Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.

20. Safi, Mariam and Yourish, Muqaddesa. "What is wrong with Afghanistan's Peace Process?" The New York Times, February 20, 2019. https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/20/opinion/afghanistan-peace-talks.html

21. Ibid.

22. "What Will Peace Talks Bode for Afghan Women?" International Crisis Group, April 6, 2020. https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/what-will-peace-talks-bode-afghan-women

23. Shams, Shamil. "US and Taliban Sign Historic Deal to End Afghan Conflict." DW, February 29, 2020. https://www.dw.com/en/us-and-taliban-sign-historic-deal-to-end-afghan-conflict/a-52582850

the peace committee.[24] Despite the fact that President Ghani had stated earlier that same year that women's participation was now seen at all levels in Afghanistan, on 22 May 2020, 12 male political leaders gathered to reach an agreement to end Ghani and Abdullah's political rivalry over the disputed results of the 2019 presidential elections after months of political deadlock inside the Afghan government. This in turn caused women's rights activists to raise their voice regarding the exclusion of women from the reconciliation processes and important agreements inside the government.[25] With pressure from the US to reach a compromise, Dr. Abdullah was then put in charge of the High Council for National Reconciliation (HNCR), responsible for talks with the Taliban.[26]

Regarding the question of the inclusivity of the new negotiation team announced by the Afghan government, Tayeba Zahidi believes the members of this team were sufficiently diverse as they were from different sectors of Afghan society and that they bore the required expertise in their fields.[27]

> *"I believe that that all men and women in this team have a huge mission resting on their shoulders. They have to represent 100 percent of Afghanistan's population including women and address their demands comprehensively. Firstly, I am hopeful towards this team and think that it was an appropriate choice. And secondly, I emphasize that representatives inside this team should enter the peace talks bearing in mind that they are going to speak on the behalf of a large community, not just a few people. Besides men, they also have to represent all oppressed women who have long suffered from violence, social limitations, discrimination and abuse."[28]*

Prospective Contribution of Women in the Peace Talks

Naheed Farid, Member of Parliament from Herat, believes that the role

24. Saif, Shadi Khan. "Afghanistan Rules Out Any Changes in Peace Committee." AA.com, March 29, 2020. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/afghanistan-rules-out-any-changes-in-peace-committee/1784027

25. Glinski, Stefanie. "Where Are the Women? Outcry over All-Male Government Meeting in Afghanistan." The Guardian, May 22, 2020. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/may/22/where-are-the-women-afghanistan-all-male-government-meeting

26. "Afghanistan president Ashraf Ghani and rival Abdullah Abdullah ink power-sharing deal." DW, May 17, 2020. https://www.dw.com/en/afghanistan-president-ashraf-ghani-and-rival-abdullah-abdullah-ink-power-sharing-deal/a-53470402

27. Zahidi, Tayeba, Former senator of the Mishrano Jirga (Upper House of the National Assembly of Afghanistan), Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.

28. Ibid.

women can play in the peace process is to ensure they have an impact on any future peace deal with the Taliban.[29] She argues that "Women constitute 50 percent of Afghan society and should be represented in the negotiations according to their population. Secondly, the selected women for the peace committee should be committed to conveying the messages and demands of all oppressed, active, working, and disabled women all over Afghanistan."[30] While she identified ways women could improve their influence in the peace talks, she also foresees challenges that they will probably face during the talks. "As we all know, the Taliban do not want women to work and appear in public. They oppose the provisions of the current Constitution which has given constitutional rights to women. Thus, I think women rights will be an essential and furious debate during the talks,"[31] added Farid.

Alongside the challenges that women can face before even reaching the negotiating table, there are also challenges that they may face once at the table. Layeqa Sadaqat, Law and Political Science lecturer, believes that "The most obvious challenge that the women will probably face in the talks is the fact that the role of women may not be recognized in these talks." She also expressed her belief that women did not have much influence in current Afghan politics. Sadaqat concluded that women may probably be side-lined in the negotiations.[32]

While many of those interviewed emphasized the burden female members of the peace delegation will face, some emphasized how important it was that the male members share the women's burden especially when it comes to representing all of Afghanistan. Monesa Hassanzada, Deputy Governor of Herat province, states:

> *"All representatives inside the team should bear in mind that they are committed to representing a wide community inside Afghanistan. Women have been hit the hardest during 18 years of war and bloodshed in this country and they need to be considered during the peace talks. On the behalf of Herat's women, we tried too much to include some of our influential female activists in these talks and we*

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29. Farid, Naheed. Member of Afghan Parliament, Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.
30. Ibid.
31. Farid, Naheed. Member of Afghan Parliament, Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.
32. Sadaqat, Layeqa, Law and Political Science Lecturer, Interview by the author. April 16, 2020.

even contacted the Presidential Palace. But, unfortunately, we could not have them involved in the negotiating team. However, it does not matter who will represent the women. The representatives must hold meetings with different communities advocating women's rights before the peace talks and listen to their thoughts and demands. More importantly, representatives have to be committed to represent women comprehensively and believe that all Afghan women are supporting them. Hereby, they can stay strong in the face of the challenges they may encounter."[33]

Taliban officials stated that in the case that a compromise is reached, they would recognize the rights of women according to Shari'a. Although the Taliban refused to give a clear example of 'women's rights under Shari'a', there are different opinions as to what this phrase means. Tariq Nabi, an Islamic scholar, lays out his reasoning for what the Taliban view of Shari'a might be:

"The Taliban are related to different Islamic sects in India, Pakistan, and Arab countries. Accordingly, there are different interpretations of women's rights among them. Some of them follow the Hanafi sect's view which stipulates that women can appear in public with hijab not covering their faces and hands. On the other hand, there are other groups of Taliban who support the perspective of the Hanbali sect which says that women should cover their faces and hands too. In this case, we can say that there is no consensus even among the Taliban itself over the term "women's rights under Shari'a." I believe that the Taliban have used this term to divert the focus away from women rights for now in order to get prepared for the peace deal."[34]

The Afghan Negotiating Team has now been selected. However, opinions continue to revolve around the question of whether women's rights and demands will be met by them in an efficient manner. Female activists and women's rights defenders from Herat province in particular believe that the government must ensure that the voice of women will be heard in the peace talks and that their demands will not go unheeded.

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33. Hassanzada, Monesa. Deputy Governor of Herat province, Interview by the author. April 17, 2020.
34. Nabi, Tariq. Religious Scholar, Interview by the author. April 18, 2020.

Policy Recommendations

Women can improve their influence in the peace talks in the following ways:

- Firstly, the greatest responsibility for advocating for women's rights rests on the shoulders of the Afghan government and the international community. The government officials along with the international players should take careful measure to note women's rights, human rights and democracy as prominent points on the negotiation agenda. It may be prudent to have a special envoy from the United Nations who could advocate for women's rights in the negotiations. We also need a women's affairs supervisor from the Afghan government who would be responsible for screening the talks to make sure that all demands by Afghan women are discussed and advocated for.

- Members of the negotiating team can hold meetings and sessions with female activists, women's rights advocates, and female survivors of violence and listen to their demands. The opinions of women should be noted and recorded during these sessions and part of these recordings can be played during the peace talks to convey the message of women to the Taliban and the Afghan government. Also, the representatives should sit beforehand with delegations from the opposition group in an informal gathering and try to negotiate with them on women's rights and demands.

- The peace negotiations team should meet men and women working in the government including ministers, advisors, ambassadors, and other officials to understand their ideas about the current role and effect of women in Afghan politics.

- Moreover, during meetings with the above people, negotiating team members should note the specific topics in which women face important difficulties. As a case in point, if women of a district or province report that they are not able to pursue their education due to security problems brought about by the Taliban's violence, it should be discussed with the Taliban during the talks.

THE ROLE OF YOUTH IN THE PEACEBUILDING PROCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

SAMIRA ALOKOZAY[1]

Summary

- The relationship between youth and peacebuilding is gaining increased attention, particularly in the UN. This is an opportunity to explore what youth can bring to peacebuilding in Afghanistan and benefit from the increased research and policy creation being done around this issue.

- Youth since 2001 have already been strongly involved in the international peacebuilding process (no less because they are the dominant portion of the population). However, they reap few of the benefits of Afghanistan's economy and not enough make it all the way through the education system.

- A survey of 30 youths was conducted for this research; the results revealed that the subjects saw large gaps in what was available to youth but that they still felt the government was moving in the right direction overall. They are especially hungry for critical thinking education and preparation for integrating society while female participants in particular wanted study abroad opportunities.

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1. Samira Alokozay is working at the United Nation International Organization for Immigration (IOM).

"The function of education is to teach one to think intensively, and to think critically. Intelligence plus character — that is the goal of true education, education must inspire student to dream in order to achieve"— Martin Luther King.[2]

Over the past four decades, Afghanistan has been in a state of perpetual war from the Soviet invasion of 1979 to the civil war of the 1990s, from the rise of Taliban to the 2001 US intervention. There were no breaks from violence. Generations of youth grew and suffered during this period. Many of them were displaced. The Taliban in particular restricted public life. They stripped Afghan youth of the possibility for formal education. Schools were closed. Women and girls were told to stay home. The trauma of the long war itself resulted in Afghan youths paying more psychologically for personal growth during their prime years of development.

The development roadmap kick-started by the 2001 Bonn Conference meant the international community had given itself the responsibility to aid the nascent Afghan Republic in developing new systems for education and job opportunities. Youth economic empowerment, international circles believe, contributes to the success of a post-conflict economy. New skills gained from a formal education will enhance stable job opportunities and lead to a better outcome for the Afghan community as a whole. The ideal situation, going by this line of thinking, is that this process will also create a pipeline for future Afghan leadership, skilled labor, entrepreneurship, and the growth of new profitable sectors.

With the political changes of 2001, youths sometimes took on peacebuilding responsibilities themselves. Far from passively receiving development help, these youths seek to become development actors in their own right. This research will analyze how the youth of Afghanistan interact with peacebuilding and experience its effects. It will also seek to understand the difficulties young people face when engaging society and why promoting socio-economic stability is important for Afghan society but also for the personal development of Afghan youths and future generations.

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2. Martin Luther King Jr was an American spokesperson and leader in the Civil Rights Movement from 1955 until his assassination in 1968.

Methods

This research consists of analysis of existing literature concerning youth policy (especially from the UN and Afghan government) and online surveys of 30 youths— 15 male and 15 female. A questionnaire was developed aimed at young participants from diverse backgrounds including civil society organizations, government services, students and the private sector. Interviewees were selected to ensure equal gender representation, diversity in education level, and diversity in province of residence. Part of the analysis below will be based on the answers given by the 30 participants to the questionnaire.

International Approach to Youth and Peacebuilding

Modern culture categorizes "youths" in contradictory ways— sometimes representing local perceptions of what it means to be young and at other times embracing global ideas of youth, youth socialization, and milestones in the life of a young person. There still is confusion over who counts as "youth." This uncertainty coupled with their unclear role in peacebuilding is identified by Renato Cursi (expert in the role of youth in peacebuilding) as a barrier to the emergence of research around youth or program delivery.[3] Of greater concern is that, according to a 2005 report by youth and conflict expert Yvonne Kemper, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and most conflict-related data completely omit the status of youth between childhood and adulthood from the agenda of international peace development arenas.[4] More alarmingly, she notes they are instead too often targeted as possible troublemakers while efforts by the UN, World Bank, and NGOs to research specific youth concerns and set up programs for them are quite recent and still lack a framework or much in the way of evaluations. Sadly, according to an article posted to UNICEF in 2014[5] and one to the Oxford Research Group in 2016[6], this situation does not seem to have

3. Cursi, Renato. "The Role of Youth in Peace Building." Centro Studi Difesa Civile, March 2017. http://www.pacedifesa. org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/The-role-of-youth-in-peacebuilding_rev26092017-1.pdf . 7

4. Kemper, Yvonne. "Youth in War-to-Peace Transitions: Approaches of International Organizations." Berghof Report 10; Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management. January 2005. https://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Papers/Reports/br10e.pdf

5. McLean Hilker, Lyndsay. "Violence, peace and stability : the "youth factor." UNICEF, September 18, 2014. https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/1061-violence-peace-and-stability-the-youth-factor.html

6. Alpaslan, Ozerdem. "The Role of Youth in Peacebuilding: Challenges and Opportunities." Oxford Research Group, October 26, 2016. https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/the-role-of-youth-in-peacebuilding-challenges-and-opportunities

changed since Kemper published her report in 2005. Both articles note that youth are still being "othered" in discussions around conflict with the UNICEF article in particular noting the rise of cultural portrayals that depict youths as perpetrators of violence and easily manipulated towards malicious ends.

That has not stopped other researchers in the peacebuilding sector from trying to define and understand the role of youth during the last three decades of peacebuilding missions. According to Renato Cursi's 2017 study based on UN missions and research (The Role of Youth in Peace Building), "youth" can be defined through formal, functional, or social- psychological criteria. In other words, it can be based on arbitrary age brackets, by social milestones like achieving voting age, or by criteria based on socio-psychological development, particularly development of social relationships. Cursi demonstrates how all of these categories are affected by periods of conflict and how the social-psychological development of youth in particular can be harmed by the stresses and traumas of conflict situations to the point where becoming a healthy adult is a real challenge. UN experience on the ground was valuable to gaining these insights.

Recently, the UN Security Council mandated a turnaround on the available data on youth. In 2018, a landmark report by independent researcher Graeme Simpson produced an important basis for advocacy for the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding. In this report, Simpson lays down that the simultaneous exposure to conflict-related violence and harassment by the system supposed to protect youth (but instead suspects them of potential malice) produce psychological and physical trauma as well as discouragement from investing in their own future.[7] Social services and institutions that address youth problems are important to create a socially cohesive youth along with internationally supported youth networks and organizations (assuring that certain youths are not marginalized for belonging to the wrong class, ethnicity, gender, or other social category). Furthermore, the potential of youth to contribute to peace can be unlocked through peer-to-peer learning and the experience of direct participation in peacebuilding.[8] It

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7. Simpson, Graeme. "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security." United Nations; General Assembly Security Council, March 2, 2018. P 18. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress_Study_on_Youth_Peace_Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH.pdf
8. Ibid. 17.

was found that youth could serve to bridge the different development silos such as security, humanitarian aid, or human rights, for instance. This report led to the UN Secretary-General and his Special Envoys being called upon on June 6th, 2019 to take young people's views into account in security-related discussions. A wide-ranging resolution voted by the UNSC (UNSCR 2419) underlined the contribution young people can make to peace and security if they are actively engaged.[9] Follow up has been slow however, with a new UNSCR as recently as July 2020 requesting that the Secretary-General develop a dedicated guidance on protection of youth and making a broad call to member states to increase youth inclusion in planning and stabilization peacebuilding efforts.[10] None of this will be binding but it does indicate a positive direction in the international conversation on youth going against seeing them as a primarily negative or inert force. It also indicates a possible new shift in direction for Afghanistan and its international donor community.

Afghan Youth Peace-building and Education

The UN-chaired Bonn agreement in December 2001[11] created a new hope for Afghanistan bringing distinct changes to Afghan communities: new institutions, new elections, new strategies and approaches on delivering social services, an internationally legitimate state, but also enhanced education in various parts of the country. Collectively, this had great impact on youth. As part of the Bonn process and UNICEF,[12] Afghanistan also witnessed the return of members of its diaspora as well as a largescale Demobilization, Demilitarization, and Reintegration (DDR) program managed by Japan for young fighters rejoining society. 10 million illiterate young people and adults were also witnessing international aid coming to primary schools accompanied by practical reforms and new facilities. In

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9. "Adopting Resolution 2419 (2018), Security Council Calls for Increasing Role of Youth in Negotiating, Implementing Peace Agreements." United Nations; Peacebuilding. https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/news/adopting-resolution-2419-2018-security-council-calls-increasing-role-youth-negotiating

10. "Security Council Underlines Vital Role of Youth in Building Peace, Unanimously Adopting Resolution 2535 (2020)" United Nations; Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. July 14, 2020. https://www.un.org/press/en/2020/sc14251.doc.htm

11. Matsumoto, Yukitoshi. Education for Demilitarizing Youth in Post-Conflict Afghanistan. Graduate School of Asia Pacific Studies, Waseda University, November 1, 2008. P 7. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.2304/rcie.2008.3.1.65 .

12. Ibid. 7.

spite of great achievements, especially for women, DDR expert Yukitoshi Matsumoto was already writing in 2008 that the high expectations the youth had for the new era was being overshadowed by their unimproved military and economic situation.[13]

The World Bank in its 2018 report found that the country did make great strides in improving access and enrollment in primary schools, a 9-fold growth since 2001.[14] However, the enrollment numbers fall dramatically the further youths move up the education ladder. The provinces in particular see a high proportion of out-of-school children, exceeding 50% in 15 out of 34 provinces with girls less likely to attend especially if they come from illiterate families. By 2014, the UN youth category of 15-24 is only around 50% literate, only 13% better among those born to top income families. A 7% drop in literacy for those aged 7-15 years between 2012 and 2014 was considered especially worrisome. The World Bank is concerned about a reduction in government spending on education over the last 5 years (as a proportion of the budget) and that only donor financing kept the sector in a position to deliver basic services.[15] The economic growth between 2010 and 2015, which tripled the government budget, did not translate to more resources for education as education's share fell from 25% in 2010 to 13% in 2015.

On a positive note for peacebuilding, schools and universities in particular have become hotspots for youth seeking to become peacebuilders. Members from the U.S. Institute for Peace noted new curricula for peace studies at a growing number of Afghan universities.[16] Peace activists, often recruited from among students, are increasingly visible throughout the country.

Youth Economic Inclusion

While initial projections for 2020 and beyond may have been optimistic based on growth achieved in 2019 (particularly thanks to agricultural recovery from droughts), the recent pandemic among other issues have

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13. Ibid. 6.
14. Lahire, Nathalie. "Afghanistan: Promoting Education During Times of Increased Fragility." World Bank Group, 2018. P. 9. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/280721531831663216/afghanistan-promoting-education-during-times-of-increased-fragility
15. Ibid. 10.
16. Lindborg, Nancy and Andrew Wilder. "Opinion: Afghans' Growing Demand for Peace is Key to Ending Decades of War." NPR, November 18, 2020. https://www.npr.org/2019/11/15/779979724/opinion-afghans-growing-demand-for-peace-is-key-to-ending-decades-of-war?t=1599832255336

caused the Asian Development Bank to forecast a -4.5% GDP growth rate.[17] Since Afghanistan has reduced its debt and maintains large foreign exchange reserves, it theoretically laid foundations for pro-growth policies.[18] The economy had been improving since 2017, reaching a 3% GDP growth rate by January 2020.[19]

Despite this, youth remain hard hit by joblessness— the World Bank forecasts that "at best" half of the 400,000 new workers predicted to enter the domestic labor market in 2020 will be absorbed by the economy.[20] Simpson's 2018 report to the UN moreover singles out Afghanistan as a country where economic well-being alone would not protect youth from instability— different inequalities, social immobility, and social exclusion can also destabilize young people's ability to contribute to society and peace.[21] During periods of joblessness, the World Bank recommends that youths join community and youth groups as agents of change to avoid the destabilizing factors mentioned by Simpson— a strategy it sees as especially promising with rural youths who are more likely to be disaffected by the status quo.[22]

In spite of these challenges, youths and young women especially played an important rule on contributing to the recent economic development. The government enabled women to participate in the economy and society to a greater extent.[23] Women entrepreneurs were able to use this to start new businesses and join the workforce in visible numbers.[24]

17. "Economic indicators for Afghanistan." Asian Development Bank, June 2020. https://www.adb.org/countries/afghanistan/economy

18. "Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017 to 2021." Afghanistan Mission to the UN in New York. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5b28f4294.pdf

19. "Economic indicators for Afghanistan." Asian Development Bank, June 2020. https://www.adb.org/countries/afghanistan/economy

20. Lenehan, Sara, Shubha Chakravarty, Palwasha Mirbacha, Sarah Elizabeth Haddock, and Maria Virginia Ceretti. "A Qualitative Assessment of Pathways to Youth Inclusion in Afghanistan." World Bank Group, 2020. P. 8. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/593251587481081246/a-qualitative-assessment-of-pathways-to-youth-inclusion-in-afghanistan

21. Simpson, Graeme. "The Missing Peace: Independent Progress Study on Youth and Peace and Security." United Nations; General Assembly Security Council, March 2, 2018. P 13. https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/Progress_Study_on_Youth_Peace_Security_A-72-761_S-2018-86_ENGLISH.pdf

22. Lenehan, Sara, Shubha Chakravarty, Palwasha Mirbacha, Sarah Elizabeth Haddock, and Maria Virginia Ceretti. "A Qualitative Assessment of Pathways to Youth Inclusion in Afghanistan." World Bank Group, 2020. P. 15. https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/593251587481081246/a-qualitative-assessment-of-pathways-to-youth-inclusion-in-afghanistan

23. "Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework (ANPDF) 2017 to 2021." Afghanistan Mission to the UN in New York. https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5b28f4294.pdf

24. Ibid. 12.

Local Perceptions on the Inclusion of Youth in the Peacebuilding Process

For this research, 15 male and 15 female interviewees were given a survey to complete. Participant's answered questions regarding their level of satisfaction with status quo and what they have experienced in the Afghan community. The aim is to analyze the remaining challenges the interviewees see on matters pertaining to education, entering society, and achieving peace. The analysis of the survey results are shown below.

During the peacebuilding process, youths tried to act as leaders engaging themselves in decision-making even with regards to the peace negotiations currently taking place with the Taliban. As a matter of fact, Ali Khan Haidary who works at the Administrative Office of President, mentioned: "Afghanistan experienced war and violence for decades. People are now hoping for peace. I am sure that if peace with the Taliban happens, it will not be an achievement only in terms of security but also in terms of the economy, human rights and education".

Not all are as optimistic. Farida Amiri, who is an undergraduate and founder of Peace Friends in Kabul, mentioned the challenges she faced fighting for women's rights under the Taliban and her progression towards becoming a peace leader. In her experience, it is hard to be a woman working for peace in Afghan society. Most of the time, youths working as peace builders are targeted by terror attacks. During her academic years Amiri proved herself through engagement in social activism on education and peace alongside other youths through different programs.

Other than activism, another interviewee (remaining anonymous) stated that education is the only option for youths to reach their goals. She believes that youth can use education as a weapon to fight against poverty and to bring peace. In addition, Shughnia Ramzjo, who recently returned to Afghanistan after completing her bachelor's degree in American University of Central Asia (located in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan), added: "Peace and education are connected to each other. In order to have a sustainable community we should first lead a country with better education". She is very hopeful for the social inclusion of youths, especially compared to what she saw before she left for college.

The different Afghan youths participating in the survey have used different support systems to advance through their years of education and social adhesion. A participant mentioned that the government provided great support by including them in decision making and providing them an international scholarship. Some participants however still believe the government has a way to go when it comes to providing proper educational support for youths living in rural provinces. They also bemoan the education system's lack of critical thinking training and lack of training for how to better engage with society as it currently exists. An interesting reveal was strong female participant support for getting more opportunities to study abroad. Most participants, however, do feel the education system is moving in the right direction when it comes to trying to improve on these issues.

Conclusion

Eighteen years of war brought a huge change on different aspects of youth and education to the country's development. After the fall of the Taliban, the country's youth built an atmosphere among themselves that was conducive to engagement on peacebuilding and peace keeping. With two-thirds of Afghanistan fitting into one youth category or another and with waves joining the jobs market without necessarily having completed an education, involvement in peacebuilding is more crucial than ever. With the new impetus from the UN to create mechanisms for such inclusion, it may be an opportunity for Afghanistan to rise to the occasion.

Involvement with the government and international platforms have been a prominent achievement for youths who are then able to manifest and propose new agendas and new policies on peace and education in the country. Girls and women in particular were given new access to scholarships from outside of Afghanistan and were able to use their new Constitutional rights to enter the public and private sectors in significant numbers. Great strides remain to be taken but with the international community's increasing attention towards youth issues (hopefully without a prejudicial view of youth as troublemakers), there is reason to be optimistic about possible increased research into youth needs and more refined proposals for ensuring their inclusion and well-being in the overall peacebuilding project.

Policy Recommendations

- Continuing to recognize the importance of focusing on education in view of Afghanistan's future development and providing students with scholarships for local universities and abroad.

- Spending more on promoting existing economic opportunities and promoting ways for youth to become active agents in the community so to build and improve their social life and cohesion to the community.

- Create enabling spaces for youth to engage in leadership and decision making roles in national and regional spheres.

AN ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN AFGHANISTAN: A CASSE STUDY OF BALKH PROVINCE

BEHISHTA KHURRAM[1]

Summary

- Thanks to a relatively secure first decade of peacebuilding and an easier time under the PRT system than other areas, Balkh was able to see progress in economic empowerment for rural women as civilian development workers were allowed greater countryside penetration. It also avoided having its development overly tied to wartime objectives though the war did result in a diversion of funding away from Balkh towards more unstable provinces.

- Many of the common issues like international preference for short-term projects and growing insecurity, especially in the second decade of the peacebuilding agenda, plague Balkh's empowerment programs as well.

- It is too soon to declare the success or failure of post-2014 women's empowerment programs that are ending in 2020 and many have not released detailed evaluations on their performance in Balkh. There is already unease among both locals and international observers regarding the sustainability of these programs.

The Balkh province in the north of Afghanistan has hosted a great number of women's empowerment projects under the peacebuilding banner

since 2001. With its capital at Mazar-e-Sharif, the fourth largest city in Afghanistan, it is a significant regional base for peacebuilding projects and donor agencies. From 2006 to the 2014 transition, Balkh was part of the Area of Responsibility (AOR) of the Swedish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). Sweden avoided the pitfalls suffered by other PRT AORs by mostly separating military goals from civilian peacebuilding work. Sweden also avoided the trap of creating large parallel structures by funneling most aid through government bodies. Peacebuilding continued after the end of the PRT system in Afghanistan in 2014 through the UN, World Bank, European, and American efforts. Up until recently, Balkh was unique in that development workers considered it safe enough to significantly expand into rural areas in ways that were not possible in other provinces. This allowed successful economic empowerment programs for women in agriculture. This safety paradoxically meant that funding was often channeled away from Balkh towards less safe areas to match up with counterinsurgency objectives. As with everywhere else, the results of the women's empowerment programs in Balkh are mixed with only rough estimates existing for the actual success of the programs (where such numbers exist).

The following research will attempt give a provincial view of women's empowerment programs compared to other chapters which take a nationwide view of the matter. It will both look at the available reporting on Balkh empowerment programs and include original data derived from key informant interviews of Afghan women implicated in local empowerment programs in order to provide the views of those witnessing these programs on the ground, chiefly public servants, civil society organization members, and foreign aid agency workers. The combination of what currently is publicly available and what was derived from the interviews will show there has been significant progress in women's socio-economic situations but also major challenges. Women and girl's empowerment programs still lack significant resources and most crucially sustainability as there is a lack of clarity around whether government structures can or will still keep them in place should donor aid decrease.

The Peacebuilding Mission in Balkh under the Swedish PRT

In 2008, a survey was conducted in the PRT AOR under Sweden for the

benefit of Sweden's development agency, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (shortened to "Sida").[2] The report itself admits its numbers are "rough estimates"[3] but its overview of Balkh remains an important resource in absence of an official census or other available peacebuilding-related data on the region from the time. It describes a Balkh that was in rapid expansion population-wise with its urban centers growing as Mazar-e-Sharif swelled with displaced, landless migrants (displaced not just from insecurity but also from drought which was reportedly serious in 2008). Even then, agriculture and livestock were still the main source of income for the vast majority of those living in Sweden's AOR (Balkh had a 66% rural majority). Somewhat encouraging is a 2007 ranking funded by the United Nations Fund for Population Activities ("UNFPA," known now as the United Nations Population Fund) where Balkh was the 9th most well off in socio-economic terms using indices that included education and government services but also access to shopping facilities and exposure to radio and television.

Among its advantages, Balkh maintained fertile agricultural land with high potential along with a strong dairy industry. Silk, carpet, and jewelry handicrafts are still widespread (and are all women-dominated craft industries) though even by 2013, the potential of a revitalized international market for such goods had still not been capitalized on (Germany in particular was attempting to help women create marketable carpets).[4] However, the introduction of saffron in 2006 did lead to a successful growth in women-led saffron cultivation which had a possible positive side-effect of helping displace poppy cultivation.[5] Trade, however, is still quite small-scale. Another advantage Balkh had going for it regarding women was a comparatively high literacy rate and a tradition of high educational standards, something still reported today.

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2. Larsson, Katarina. A Provincial Survey of Balkh, Jowzjan, Samangan and Saripul. November 2008. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Katarina_Larsson/publication/265288251_A_PROVINCIAL_SURVEY_OF_BALKH_JOWZJAN_SAMANGAN_AND_SARIPUL/links/5577096008ae7521586e1072.pdf . 1

3. Larsson. 8

4. Fishstein, Paul, Islamuddin Amaki, and Mohammed Qaasim. "Balkh's Economy in Transition." Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit. August 2013. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1228946/1226_1377517446_1306-20ip-20balkh-20economy-20aug-202013.pdf . 32

5. Ibid. 40

According to the 2008 report to Sida, Balkh used to be among the provinces that received the most development aid due to its "good security situation and strong leadership." Even before 2001, Balkh received important Soviet assistance and retained industrial infrastructure and Central Asian commercial links from that time.[6] But by 2008, trends were perceived to be changing. Both the Head of UNAMA at the time, Marguerite Roy, and Balkh Governor Atta Mohammad Noor expressed strong dissatisfaction with the fact that aid funding was increasingly flowing into "hostile" regions in the south and east of the country. They claimed money was now insufficient and that popular discontent was growing.[7] In any case, Balkh was facing serious issues affecting both its men and women: increased landlessness, very high drug use in the countryside (especially among women), and certain districts becoming hubs for local crime in absence of sufficient legal and social structures. Women's issues were still among the most serious problems in the province. In 2005, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) saw as the most urgent issues: early marriage and child labor (46.3% of women aged 20-24 were married before 18), promoting iodized salt to reduce physical damage to newborns, and provision of obstetric care to reduce the number of maternal deaths in childbirth.

There were significant positive features in the management of the AOR, however. Sweden and its partner Finland managed development in a markedly different way from other PRTs. Most of the funding by 2010 went (via various funding mechanisms) through the central government. This in itself is remarkable given the still widespread criticism against donor-created "parallel administrations" that weakened the government. Another key differentiator is the separation of civilian and military functions of the PRT, a reflection of Scandinavian coalition members' unwillingness to use their militaries to conduct aid work, especially in light of negative experiences of that elsewhere in the country.[8] The relative security from the ongoing war also probably facilitated this civilian/military separation of duties though insecurity in the area persisted due to poverty and unemployment which

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6. Fishstein, Paul and Andrew Wilder. "Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan." Feinstein International Center; Tufts University. January 2012. https://fic.tufts.edu/assets/WinningHearts-Final.pdf . 21

7. Larsson. 5

8. Fishstein and Wilder. 28

likely contributed to criminality.[9] The lack of fighting (and civilian casualties) also meant coalition members were not regarded with as much fear or apprehension and there was greater local willingness to engage with the PRT. Overall, this system meant greater civilian control of development and less subordination of development to war objectives.

Many development actors had made Balkh an important regional center of operations or focus of attention.[10] Under the European Union Commission's (EU) aegis, at least two development organizations were directly involved in women's empowerment, shelter, and legal support (the Cooperation Centre for Afghanistan and Medica Mondiale) with other actors involved in issues that crosscut with women's issues (income generation or access to justice, chief among them). This PRT AOR also received direct funding boosts from the EU. UNICEF meanwhile had projects with special focus on quality education for girls. The World Bank, as the main mechanism of international development funding for Afghanistan as a whole, was also active in providing local grants for boosting girls in education while its other programs also had benefits for women. The National Solidarity Program (NSP), which supports small-scale community projects and is involved in boosting rural women's social inclusion, is widely regarded as one of the most popular World Bank-funded development programs in Afghanistan and one of the best examples of cooperation by all major development actors including the government.[11]

In addition to multinational aid, there was also significant aid on a bilateral basis. Germany and Japan focused aid on Balkh and the Mazar-e-Sharif area in cooperation with Sweden and UN agencies on many issues that crosscut with "gender". Both Germany and Sweden gave gender issues special attention. While the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was the biggest funder of all aid activities in the country, the 2008 report to Sida noted no projects directly aimed at women's empowerment at the time though it listed many projects that in theory crosscut with women's empowerment such as education, skills trainings, and youth empowerment.

In spite of all of this activity, the report still concluded that women's issues

9. Ibid. 34
10. Larsson. 35
11. Fishstein and Wilder. 52-53

needed far more attention across all sectors.[12] While Balkh is held up as a success in terms of trainings for public officials and civil servants, by 2008 (seven years after the beginning of the mission) it was still the case that far more progress was required with regards to women's equality and empowerment. In the 2010 Tufts University report, Afghan respondents expressed to analysts their dissatisfaction with the small scale of projects and their lack of sustainability.[13] Among both men and women, there was a marked desire for projects that provided long-term stability and employment. The lack of funding for these kinds of projects was seen as part of the "peace penalty"— the lack of funding due to lack of urgency in the security situation relative to other provinces. Aid was also universally seen as fragmented, incoherent, and poorly implemented owing to donor's lack of local knowledge and unfulfilled promises from previous PRT rotations. To counteract this, there was often the temptation among new PRT rotations to report greater success than their predecessors and were thus tempted to take short cuts like paying off local maleks (which worried both locals and aid agencies who feared this was fueling future destabilization).[14]

The upcoming end of the PRT system in 2013 in anticipation of the 2014 Transition created an atmosphere of uncertainty in Balkh. While the international military was seen as unobtrusive (compared to other PRTs), respondents to analysts at the time showed lower confidence in a full takeover by local officials.[15] The issue of poor governance by local authorities was unimproved and now exacerbated by new environmental issues of water scarcity, desertification, and overharvesting of natural resources.

Post-Transition: Empowerment Programs between 2014 and 2020

Information post-transition specific to Balkh is harder to find. The experiences of the key informant interviews will come into play here to understand the empowerment programs in the eyes of those carrying them out.

Of the available evaluations, one of the most notable is the one by Sida and the International Labor Organization (ILO) regarding their collaboration on

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12. Larsson. 63
13. Fischstein and Wilder. 47
14. Ibid. 49
15. Fishstein et al. 2

the Road to Jobs (R2J) project (active in Balkh since 2015). The 2018 evaluation describes mixed success in women's inclusion in agricultural business (for example, success in women's empowerment in dairy but failure in poultry) though it claims success in stakeholder inclusion.[16] The ILO currently claims to have improved 52,162 jobs with 3,475 for women in both the Balkh and Samangan provinces as of its most recent available count.

USAID's massive Promote program for women's empowerment, meanwhile, also claims to have directed attention at Balkh between 2013 and 2020 though it did not yet publish a detailed evaluation of the latest results. In currently available evaluations or tallies of its targets and program graduates, Promote does not distinguish between the targeted regions.[17][18] Thus the actual effect of Promote on Balkh is currently unknowable. The US Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) famously criticized the sustainability and overall effectiveness of the Promote program as a whole in its 2018 audit though again without specifying province-specific numbers.[19]

Germany's development agency (GIZ) is a major donor to programs between 2014 and 2020, chiefly SEDEP which was aimed at creating sustainable employment in six northern provinces including Balkh. It claims that since 2017, 9,700 people were reached with training, advice, and needs assessment measures of which 37% were women. Overall improvement in farming quality is also claimed to have been achieved.[20] This program has not yet published a public evaluation. One Afghan interviewee for this study who is an adviser and youth trainer for the GIZ in Balkh believes Germany's currently active training programs are effective at women's empowerment and especially help women form networks.[21] She also believes they

16. Watkins, Francis, Kimiko Hibri Pedersen and Naweed Rahmani. "Evaluation of ILO Road to Jobs (R2J), Afghanistan." Sida. 2019. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_705770.pdf

17. "PROMOTE: Women In Government." USAID. July 2019. https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/Promote_-_Women_in_Government.pdf

18. "PROMOTE : Women's Leadership Development." USAID. July 2019. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Promote_-_Womens_Leadership_Development_0.pdf

19. "Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote): USAID Needs to Assess this $216 Million Program's Achievements and the Afghan Government's Ability to Sustain them." SIGAR. September 2018. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-18-69-AR.pdf

20. "More work and income in northern Afghanistan." Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/30881.html

21. Joya, Gulbibi. Interview by the author. August 15 2020.

help the younger participants to build emotional intelligence, stronger communication skills, overall resourcefulness, and leadership skills.

Tahmina Gawhary, a public servant working at the Balkh Department of Women's Affairs (DoWA), highlights the largescale cooperation of government agencies with these activities. She equally notes the activities of other aid institutions such as the Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) which, with the support of the EU, has set up training programs and provided agricultural and sewing equipment.[22]

According to Gul Chehrah Beheen, head of the Mobtada legal organization and member of a local women's organization (the Women's Voice Advisory Group on Civil Peace Policy), these empowerment programs have had success in increasing women's participation in social life. "Empowerment programs in Balkh have undoubtedly been useful and civil society organizations have worked harder in this regard" she states. "Unfortunately, government programs in this area have not been very effective." To address this, she urges women to use their newfound skills in literacy and advocacy to further push the cause of women's empowerment and even start their own civil society organizations.[23] According to Beheen, civil activists for women's empowerment recognize that insecurity can hinder the effectiveness of empowerment programs but emphasize that these programs have helped reduce violence and strengthen the peace process in addition to making women more socially active.

Another interviewee believes the empowerment programs have boosted women's interest in business and sales. In her view, there has been an increase in market saleswomen and female shop owners which in turn made it easier for women to easily buy the goods they need.[24] Yalda Bari, Women Economic Empowerment Project Officer in GIZ, explains that close consultation with participants, attentiveness to their feedback, and special sessions with businesswomen speakers helps participants improve their businesses. However, special attention to illiterate women should be given through a combination of educational and practical business training.

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22. Samar, Nadia. Interview by the author. June 30 2020.
23. Beheen, Gul Chehrah. Interview with the author. July 22.2020.
24. Samar. Interview.

Ensuring their participation in exhibitions and setting up free booths for them is also one of the activities undertaken by women's economic empowerment institutions.[25]

Complaints about the short-term nature of development and empowerment projects (already noted by the Tufts report in 2010) persist to this day. However, according to Beheen, the short-term nature of these programs has not impeded their effectiveness. She goes further, saying they have proceeded in accordance with the will of society.[26] In the beginning, there were problems with how these programs were implemented, owing to lack of security and the lack of professional trainers in the empowerment sectors who could actually transfer this knowledge. However, in recent years, the implementation of these programs has risen and the number of experienced teachers has increased.

Other interviewees see the opposite progression: in earlier years, achievements could be seen all parts of the province while in recent years, these achievements are more limited as insecurity has increased. Gawhary, however, still believes women can be force multipliers in spite of the current context. She observed that when a girl participates in empowerment programs, she can then empower about 20 other people (which can include family and friends).[27] As a DoWA worker, Gawhary reckons that even with the recent Covid-19 pandemic, about 2,000 women from the Balkh DoWA and affiliated institutions managed to increase the number of capacity-building empowerment sessions in 2020.

The main challenge identified by interviewees is the quality of the programs—ensuring the inclusion of specialized teachers, programs with a scientific standard, and a professional approach.[28] Security is another challenge. Many women's empowerment programs in the districts are stopped due to lack of project security leading to uncompleted programs. Finally, one must also contend with possible lack of motivation to participate in these programs.[29]

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25. Bari, Yalda. Interview with the author. August 12 2020.
26. Beheen. Interview.
27. Gawhary, Tahmina. Interview with the author. June 30 2020.
28. Beheen. Interview.
29. Gawhary. Interview.

Conclusion

The perspectives of the interviewees provided human elements to fill in the gaps between the numbers and long lists of programs provided by international onlookers. There is a strong desire among Afghan women implicated in empowerment programs to promote their usefulness. Some even demand more impressive efforts from their fellow women to use their new skills to further boost the cause. Surveys from other sources covering the region reveal a Balkh that is weary of the government's performance and actual will to sustain programs like women's empowerment. It is also highly demanding of the international community and critical of their current efforts which are seen to be insufficient. In this way, Balkh is much like the rest of Afghanistan.

The international evaluations largely align with the Afghan people in terms of weariness around the actual sustainability of current projects should donor support end. While there is projected optimism around the number of women trained and increased participation of women in the workforce and social life, Balkh has not entirely escaped the pitfalls seen in many other provinces: lack of local knowledge on the part of donors, lack of adequate funding and sustainability, rising insecurity, and environmental catastrophes (notably droughts) among other issues. However, Balkh has also enjoyed better penetration of development into its countryside to a degree that was not possible in other provinces as well as better management under the PRT system which helped avoid the worst of the parallel aid structure systems. Some improvements will be proposed for Balkh empowerment programs for women and girls.

Policy Recommendations

- Implementation of women's empowerment programs based on quality educational materials approved by reputable academic institutions, a regular program, and specialized teachers.

- Long-term and sustainable programs that can provide training for increased number of women.

- Provision of security to programs to ensure that women in remote areas can benefit from empowerment programs and in turn pass on those teachings.

HEALTH CARE SERVICE DELIVERY IN AFGHANISTAN: A STRONG PEACEBUILDING TOOL

DR. KHADIJA SAFI[1]

Summary

- Dr. Khadija Safi offers her personal experience as a senior health officer for the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC) and a leader in many of their programs. Her personal observations and accounts of these programs provide a direct view of what she regards as successful trainings of female practitioners of midwifery. In addition to NAC program success in increasing midwife numbers, particularly in insecure rural areas, the paper emphasizes that courses that teach peacebuilding skills like dialogue and communications are valuable given the lived experience of midwives already practicing in the field.

- Additionally, the paper stresses that Afghan health services are still in great need of female practitioners, particularly to continue positive trends in fighting maternal mortality in childbirth. The NAC programs described will be shown as positive examples for addressing this issue.

Eight years after the arrival of international forces to Afghanistan, the International Journal of Emergency Medicine published a study which identified continued challenges to Afghanistan's health care system: insecurity, lack of infrastructure, a poor economy, weak governance, and lack

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1. Dr. Khadija Safi is a gynecology specialist and senior health officer for the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC).

of health care providers. Afghanistan also faced a lack of access to health care facilities, poor hospital conditions, and a shortage of female healthcare personnel—culturally important in a conservative society that prefers women to seek treatment from women.[2] Additionally, existing health care practitioners in Emergency Departments had little or no emergency care training. With regards to medical practitioners generally, training was seen as "inconsistent" due to the lack of standardized training programs. Those who had been trained by NGOs between 2001 and 2009 did not meet the government's strict requirements. The result, according to a nationwide survey by the World Health Organization (WHO), was a shortage of at least 7,000 physicians and 20,000 nurses, midwives, and allied health professionals.

While the number of overall health care workers started improving in the last two decades, more focus is needed to increase the number of female health care providers. In 2002, only 21% of health care facilities had at least one female health care provider. This was a result of the Taliban's ban on women and girls' education between 1996 and 2001.[3] By 2009, that number had improved to 60% with international help. After 19 years of peacebuilding efforts in the country, there are continued improvements in the country's health care system, particularly with the number of community-based midwives and nurses, access to medical education, and the number of hospitals, health associations, and clinics. However, Afghanistan still has a long way to go.

The following account focuses specifically on programs aiming to increase the number of community-based midwives with the support of the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC). Maternal mortality has been one of the worst medical scourges in Afghanistan and still requires urgent attention. Many women in need live in rural or insecure areas. Thus, this paper will also look at the relationship between training midwives and contributing to the international peacebuilding agenda overall. As practitioners who regularly have to work in areas deemed insecure, midwives

2. Acerra, John R., Kara Iskyan, Zubair A. Qureshi, and Rahul K. Sharma. "Rebuilding the health care system in Afghanistan: an overview of primary care and emergency services." International Journal of Emergency Medicine. 2009 Jun; 2(2): 77-82. June 5 2009. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2700223/#CR18
3. Ibid.

can provide important lessons for other internationally-supported medical training programs. The NAC currently trains midwives through programs that combine both healthcare and peacebuilding components using the lessons learned by midwives practicing in less secure areas. The Community Midwives Education School in Wardak, where the author is headmistress, will be looked to as a success story among internationally-supported efforts to address the issue of female medical practitioner numbers and their role in peacebuilding. Accounts will also be given of the Midwives for Peace Workshop and other NAC programs. This will be based primarily on the author's personal experience and observations of the programs both as a female Afghan medical practitioner and a senior health officer for the NAC, involved in all of the NAC programs discussed further on.

UN Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) numbers for Afghanistan 2000-2017[4]

Year	Maternal mortality ratio (MMR)[a],[*]	Maternal deaths[*]	HIV-related indirect maternal deaths[*]	Live births[b]	Proportion of maternal deaths among deaths of female reproductive age (PM, %)[a],[*]
	Per 100 000 live births (lb)	Numbers	Numbers	Thousands	
2000	1450 [1030-1840][c]	15000	0	1024	70
2005	1140 [860-1400]	13000	1	1131	59
2010	954 [749-1210]	11000	1	1178	51
2015	701 [501-1020]	8400	1	1192	40
2017	638 [427-1010]	7700	1	1202	37

[a] MMR and PM are calculated for women 15-49 years.
[b] Live birth data are from United Nations, Population Division. World Population Prospects 2019. New York: UN Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019.
[c] The uncertainty intervals (UI) for all estimates refer to the 80% uncertainty intervals (10th and 90th percentiles of the posterior distributions). This was chosen as opposed to the more standard 95% intervals because of the substantial uncertainty inherent in maternal mortality outcomes.
[*] Figures presented in the table are estimates based on national data, such as surveys or administrative records, or other sources, produced by the international agency when country data for some year(s) is not available, when multiple sources exist, or when there are data quality issues.

Annual rate of reduction based on estimated MMR (%)	
2000-2017	4.8 [1.4, 7.3]
2010-2017	5.8 [1.0, 9.4]

The Fight Against Maternal Mortality and the Norwegian Afghanistan Committee

Perhaps one of the greatest successes of international efforts in Afghanistan is their contributions to increased maternal health. Since the surveys of the early 2000s, recent data shows a continual reduction of maternal deaths.

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4. "Maternal mortality in 2000-2017: Internationally comparable MMR estimates by the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-Agency Group (MMEIG) WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, World Bank Group and the United Nations Population Division." World Health Organization. July 30 2019. https://www.who.int/gho/maternal_health/countries/afg.pdf

By the estimates in the table above, the annual rate of reduction based on estimated Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR) in 2010-2017 is 5.8% versus 4.8% for 2000-2017 overall. Part of the story of that decrease has been international cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Public Health and international development programs to train midwives.

The NAC, according to the WHO's database and the NAC's own mission statement, has trained 270 midwives in Afghanistan since 2002— 10% of all certified Afghan midwives total.[5] By contrast, a 2020 journal publication discussing the quality of midwife services in Afghanistan estimates that the NAC program "Advancing Maternal and Newborn Health in Afghanistan" produced "approximately 1,000 midwives" since 2002.[6] This program works through multiple local midwife-training programs and is funded by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad).

Observations under NAC-Supported Programs

A reproductive age mortality survey conducted in 2002 with a non-representative sample of four out of the 360 Afghan districts revealed an estimated MMR from 1999-2002 of between 1,600 and 2,200 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.[7] The survey also revealed an urban-rural divide: the lifetime risk of maternal death was 1 in 6 in rural areas and 1 in 9 in urban areas. When they began their work in 2002, the NAC made sure both to accommodate local culture and to give rural communities significant focus. It also coordinates its efforts with the Ministry of Public Health to ensure that program trainees are registered by the Ministry.[8]

In 2011, the NAC added a new training program: The Peace and Conflict Management Training in midwifery education. This training along with future NAC-supported programs included explicitly peacebuilding-oriented

5. "Norwegian Afghanistan Committee (NAC)." The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health. 2020. https://www.who.int/pmnch/about/members/database/nac/en/

6. Thommesen, Trude, Hallgeir Kismul, Ian Kaplan, Khadija Safi, and Graziella Van den Bergh. ""The midwife helped me...otherwise I could have died": women's experience of professional midwifery services in rural Afghanistan- a qualitative study in the provinces Kunar and Laghman." BMC Pregnancy Childbirth. 2020; 20: 140. March 6 2020. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7059669/

7. "Afghanistan Mortality Survey 2010." Afghan Public Health Institute Ministry of Public Health. November, 2011. https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr248/fr248.pdf

8. "Annual Report 2018." Norwegian Afghanistan Committee. 2019. https://afghanistan.no/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/NAC-2018-Annual-Report-low-res.pdf

components. In the Community Midwives Education School in Wardak (where the author was headmistress), 25 young girls from the area were the first cohort to receive this training the year it became available. Today, the school is active with support from the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan (SCA). Most of the description of events surrounding the 2011 training program and other NAC programs will be drawn from the observations of the author as a NAC senior health officer and member of the facilitation team for the NAC-supported Midwives for Peace program (which will be discussed further on).

The new 2011 training (which provided extracurricular credit) was initiated during the heat of a conflict between two ethnic communities in the rural villages of Wardak province: the Hazara and the Pashtun tribes. At that time, there were female students from both groups (as well as Tajiks) studying and living together as part of the midwifery education. Thus, because of the conflict, the students were often found fighting with each other in the hospital, in the class-room, and in the dormitory. Small issues were used as excuses to start fights as part of the larger Pashtun-Hazara ethnic conflict that was taking place at the time and which they were witnessing at home.[9]

The NAC program was not well-received to begin with as local health care authorities expressed disagreement towards the Peace and Conflict Management Training. The training was assumed to be political in nature (as it is related to the political peacebuilding process) and they expressed the belief that this sort of topic should be kept within specific circles (schools, families, and the work place). After seeing the positive impact of the subject and the positive behavioral change of the students, they changed their minds and accepted the training course. It could be observed that the behavior of the students (from Hazara and Pashtun ethnicities) was evolving to become friendlier. Communication between them was becoming much easier and cultural respect was developing through their time training together. This might be attributed to the fact that they were living in the same rooms in the hostel, worked in the same class and skill lab, and studied together in the same library. By having to be with each other constantly, a measure of

9. Grande, Norunn, Deeva Biabani and Khadija Safi. "Midwives for Peace: Report from workshop- February 16-19 2014- Kabul." Midwives for Peace. 2015. http://www.peace.no/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Midwives-for-Peace-spreads.pdf

familiarity was able to develop organically among them.

This initiative was successfully implemented for a period of time. However, due to security challenges in Wardak province, the program was put on hold in November 2012. The midwifery school was affected by a suicide attack that month and even though the incident occurred during a public holiday, service staff were injured and the school building was severely damaged. In addition, the student's documents, books, chairs and lab materials were also damaged. It took three months but the school was rehabilitated with the support of the NAC and SCA.

Presently, the students still receive training in peace and conflict management in addition to their midwife training. There are now examples of graduates from Wardak who have moved to other provinces— even hostile and insecure ones— and have become educators where they pass on their midwifery and peacebuilding training to others. The success of the Peace and Conflict Management Training evolved into a new program as a result of a new partnership with the Nansen Center for Peace and Dialogue (NCPD).

In 2014, the Norwegian peace Fund (Norges Fredsfond) requested that the NCPD apply for funds to support civilian peacebuilding.[10] Norunn Grande (the designated team leader and facilitator from the NCPD) and the Afghan-Norwegian midwife Deeva Biabani (who was born in Afghanistan and educated in Norway) conducted an advanced peace workshop in Kabul gathering midwives from five districts for a four-day workshop in February 2014. The NCPD worked with the NAC since the inspiration for their workshop had come from NAC-supported programs, particularly the Community Midwife Education (CME) program taking place in Wardak province under the supervision of the author of this article. The workshop was given greater urgency as 2014 saw the transition of responsibility for territorial security from international authorities to Afghan authorities. There was a sense that as the international military operation was coming to an end, local civil actors needed to step into the vacuum and midwives could be a relevant group.

The aim of the workshop was to support grassroots peace initiatives in Afghanistan and to help the midwives play a bridging role as peacebuilders in

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10. Ibid.

local communities. International actors like the NCPD and NAC could support them with capacity building in peaceful dialogue and communications. At the workshop itself, midwives from different districts of the country shared their stories on how they managed to provide the security needed for midwife-related work in conflict affected areas. Through the workshop they were able to share their issues and best practices for conducting work in insecure situations. The effects of this dialogue was building trust between workshop participants and creating an atmosphere of confidence in which these different women could share their stories. Another effect of the workshop was to map conflicts and provide solutions by using dialogue. In 2016, a similar workshop took place in Badakhshan province with NAC staff trained in dialogue and conflict transformation. Today, this approach is in the process of being integrated into all fields of NAC work such as education, Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), and agriculture.

Conclusion

Healthcare workers already take on an important relationship-building role in local communities in Afghanistan. As they are needed everywhere (and women in particular are in high demand given cultural norms), they have an easier time justifying their presence even in areas outside of government control. With skills provided by the NAC in communications and dialogue, midwives but also other types of health practitioners can both increase the availability of services across the country and play a part in peacebuilding (as defined by the international community supporting them). The experience of the author provides a firsthand glimpse at what is possible when women and girls are provided opportunities by international actors like the NAC.

Policy Recommendations

- To improve peacebuilding in local communities, training programs should provide courses in communications and dialogue.

- Special incentives should be created for female doctors and health care workers, such as harassment-free environments, child care within the health facilities, and contracts strictly in line with the employment laws and regulations of Afghanistan.

STUDY OF HERAT WOMEN'S EXPECTATIONS OF A POST-PEACE PERIOD: DARK VISIONS OF THE FUTURE FROM AN ALREADY DARK PRESENT

FARIDA RAZAQI[1]

Summary

- In an online survey of 160 women from the city of Herat conducted for this study, the numbers show a vast majority do not trust that the Taliban have changed for the better on women's rights and are anxious about a future where the Taliban are included in the government and society.

- Most respondents believe any kind of deal that brings the Taliban into the government will endanger current rights that give women and girls access to education, freedom to travel and commute, have a say in politics, or remain in the workforce.

- Support for the above positions cut across the different demographic categories that could be reached by the online survey including both younger students and women already in the work force or actively seeking work. Rural women could not be reached.

During the 1990s and especially under the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, Afghan women were not allowed to leave their homes without a male chaperone (Mahram). By 2002, few women were literate as a result of education being closed off to girls and women for a decade. Healthcare in

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1. Farida Razaqi is a Lecturer at the department of Law and Sharia of Herat University.

the 90s was virtually inaccessible to women since only men were allowed to be practitioners and women could not seek treatment from men. Brutality against women was a regular occurrence under the Taliban and the main punishment for any kind of transgression.[2]

Fast-forward to the ongoing intra-Afghan peace negotiations between the Taliban and the government of Afghanistan which started a debate among Afghan women about their destination in a possible post-war future. Women now have to contemplate a theoretical shared future with the Taliban once more. Given the lot of women under the Taliban of the 90s, it is not irrational for women to be on their guard.

This study is based on a survey designed to assess the hypothesis that Afghan women are not optimistic towards a post-peace treaty future with Taliban. Questions will quantify their outlook of social, political, and economic gains that could be endangered by the Taliban. It will be shown that the thought of repeating the experience of the 90s Taliban rule has caused most study respondents to fear of a joint future with Taliban.

There is some progress at stake, here: while Afghans as a whole still have trouble seeing women in leadership roles, 89.3% of respondents to a 2019 Asia Foundation survey supported women's voting rights, 87% supported their right to an equal education, and 76% support women working outside the home.[3] While male support for all of these have been rising, women are more likely to support these rights especially with regards to the right to employment. Urban and young respondents are much more likely than older and rural respondents to approve of women's right to work outside the home but low-income respondents were also among the most likely to support this right. Women continue to see lack of educational opportunities, lack of rights and justice, and continued violence to be major concerns, however.

The target area of the survey was the city of Herat, lying at the center of Herat province, located in West Afghanistan on the border with Iran. The

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2. "Women in Afghanistan: the back story." Amnesty International UK. November 25 2014. https://www.amnesty.org.uk/womens-rights-afghanistan-history

3. "A Survey of the Afghan People: Afghanistan in 2019." The Asia Foundation. 2019. https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/2019_Afghan_Survey_Full-Report.pdf . 199-230

questionnaire was designed and distributed through online platforms to 160 respondents from 15 Police Department districts of Herat. The findings do not reflect the views of women living in rural areas and other districts of Herat. Given the fact that the survey had to be conducted online due to the Covid-19 lockdown, illiterate women also could not be reached. Thus, this survey does not represent uneducated women's perspectives. This will also mean that this survey skews towards demographics that tend to be more protective of their new rights if going by the 2019 Asia Foundation national survey results (female, urban, literate, with access to the internet).
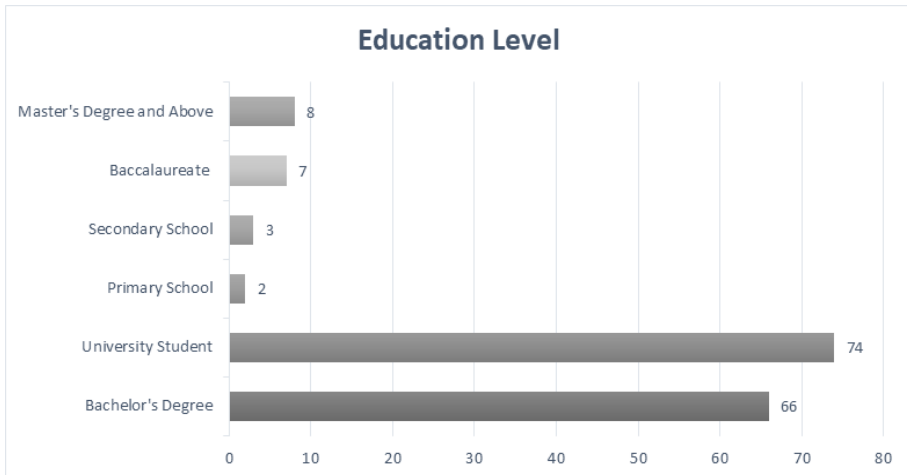
To provide context, the women responding to the survey already do not experience full equality or freedom under the status quo. Herat has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the country and some of the highest rates of suicide among Afghan women.[4] While Herat does have a high rate of incident registration and prosecution compared to other provinces (according to 2012 UN numbers), it is also the province with the most prosecutions for "runaway" girls (girls fleeing their families) which is not an actual crime under either the Penal Code or Sharia. With this in mind, the anxieties expressed by Herat respondents towards a future with the Taliban speak volumes.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Age Groups

- 41- above: 1
- 31-40: 9
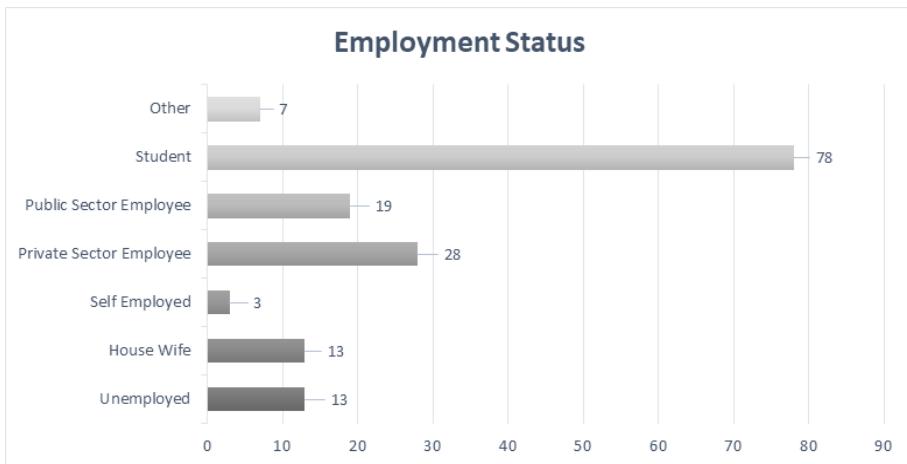- 21-30: 103
- 16-20: 49

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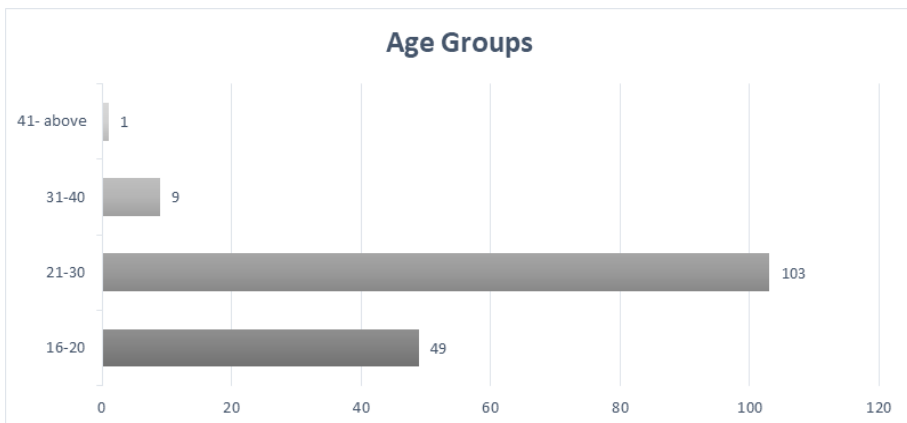
4. "Still a Long Way to Go: Implementation of The Law on Elimination of Violence Against Women in Afghanistan." United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. December 2012. https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/evaw_still_a_long_way_to_go_11dec12_final.pdf

The largest group of respondents is people of ages 21-30 which constitute 64% percent of the respondents. It is followed by people aged 16-20 (30%) and then people aged 31-40 (5%).

Education Level

Category	Value
Master's Degree and Above	8
Baccalaureate	7
Secondary School	3
Primary School	2
University Student	74
Bachelor's Degree	66

The plurality of respondents are undergraduate university students making up 46% of the respondents. Women holding a bachelor's degree are 41%. The remaining 13% are women with a master's degree or above (5%), baccalaureate degree (5%), or primary/secondary studies only (3% combined).

Employment Status

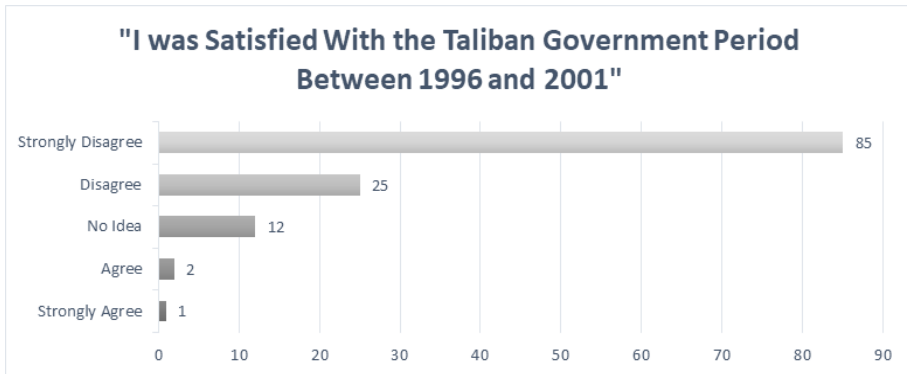| Category	Value
Other	7
Student	78
Public Sector Employee	19
Private Sector Employee	28
Self Employed	3
House Wife	13
Unemployed	13

The majority of respondents are currently students in some capacity (49%). 17% of the respondents work in private/non-governmental sectors, 12% are

employed in the public sector. 8% are previously employed and currently unemployed women with the remainder being housewives and self-employed women. 4% of the respondents chose "other" .

Study Findings and Data Analysis

Women's General Attitude Toward the Taliban

"I was Satisfied With the Taliban Government Period Between 1996 and 2001"

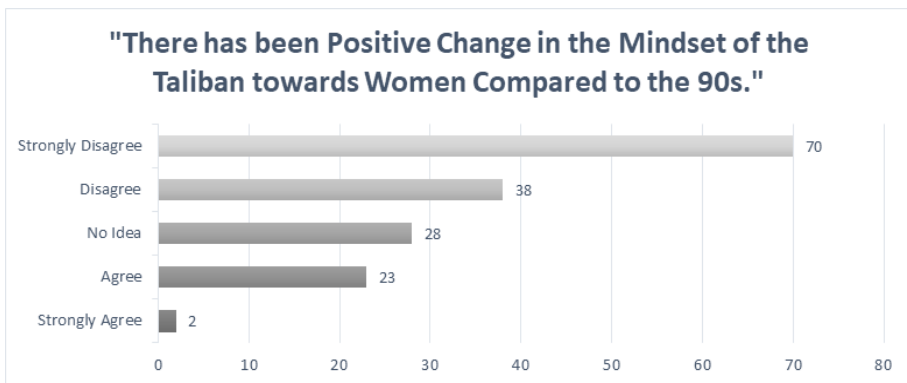|	
Strongly Disagree	85
Disagree	25
No Idea	12
Agree	2
Strongly Agree	1

Respondents were asked whether they had been satisfied living under the 90s Taliban regime or not. 88% of respondents disagreed, with 68% strongly disagreeing. If asked to elaborate, they particularly objected to the fact that women were not allowed to go school, were forced into underage marriage and subjected to very harsh punishments among other issues. Only a very small number of respondents (3%) reported satisfaction with the 90s Taliban's regime and 9% of respondents had no specific answer to the question.

The next question examined what respondents felt their place would be in a contemporary Taliban-run society. The respondents were given five options to express their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement: "I believe that the Taliban value women".

"I Believe that the Taliban Value Women"

Response	Value
Strongly Disagree	60
Disagree	44
No Idea	16
Agree	4
Strongly Agree	1
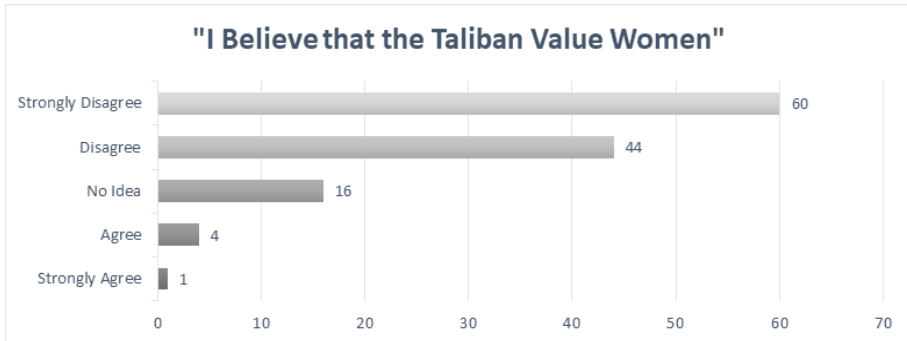
83% of respondents opposed the statement and the majority of this opposition showed strong disagreement. 4% of respondents believe that the Taliban value women. Most of this 4% of respondents were also satisfied with the period of Taliban rule in the 90s. 13% of the respondents did not know how to answer the question.
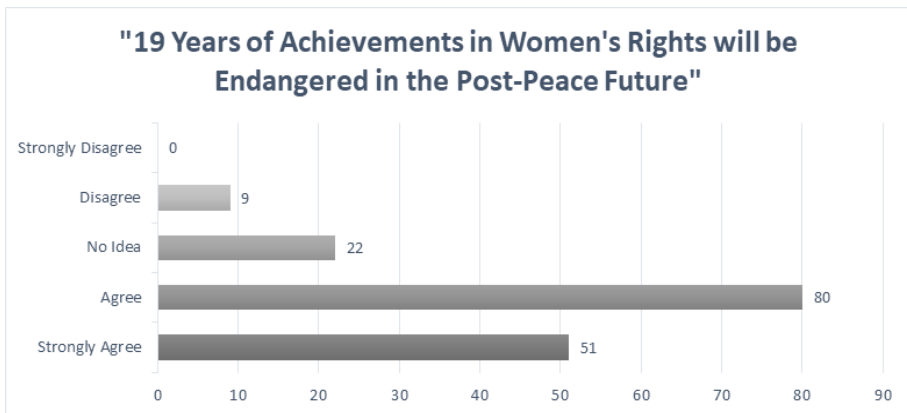
Peace talks with the Taliban created a new debate around whether the Taliban have changed their previous position toward women to a more moderate and positive stance. The next chart looks at how believed such claims are by the respondents of Herat.

"There has been Positive Change in the Mindset of the Taliban towards Women Compared to the 90s."

Response	Value
Strongly Disagree	70
Disagree	38
No Idea	28
Agree	23
Strongly Agree	2

68% of respondents believe that there has been no positive change in the mindset of the Taliban toward women and that they have the same mindset as in the 90s. However, 15% of respondents think the new generation of Taliban recognize more rights and freedoms for women in

society. Interestingly, 60% of the latter group of respondents had previously indicated their belief that the Taliban does not value women and almost all of them condemned the 90s Taliban period. Changes in the statistics of this chart compared to previous charts may be the result of recent debates on the legitimacy of peace talks with Taliban. It may also very well be that this overlap could be due to a belief the Taliban improved somewhat but not enough to be seen as truly valuing women overall.

Besides these two groups of respondents, 17% of women do not have a specific answer. In the previous question, 71% of this group expressed that the Taliban does not give importance to women yet here they seem uncertain about positive changes in the behavior of the Taliban toward women.

"19 Years of Achievements in Women's Rights will be Endangered in the Post-Peace Future"

Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	9
No Idea	22
Agree	80
Strongly Agree	51

(x-axis: 0, 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90)

The chart above shows respondents' choices when asked to state their attitude toward the statement "I believe that 19 years of achievements in the area of women rights will be endangered in the post-peace future".

The chart shows that almost 80% of the respondents agree with the statement though the plurality goes to the "agree" rather than "strongly agree" category. This combined "agree" group is comprised of 89% of all student respondents, 79% of public servants, 78% of private sector employees, 77% of the unemployed and 68% of the self-employed with each category constituting 44%, 10%, 13%, 6% and 1% of the whole "agree" group respectively. 95% of this group in a future question stated that they feel fear towards a joint future with Taliban. Furthermore, most among this group

believes that women's right to freely commute (89%), right to education (92%) and right to work (93%) will be violated (see further on for more detail on these questions).

Only 6% of respondents disagree with the statement. This same group believes women's rights will be protected even after a deal with the Taliban. Like the "agree" group, the majority of the "disagree" group believe that basic rights will be violated— women's right to freely commute (60%), right to education (70%) and right to work (77%). This group includes students, public and private employees along the same proportional ratio.

Meanwhile, 14% of respondents have no idea about what will happen to the achievements of women. A majority of this group (68%) provide the same answer when asked whether the situation will get worse after return of the Taliban.
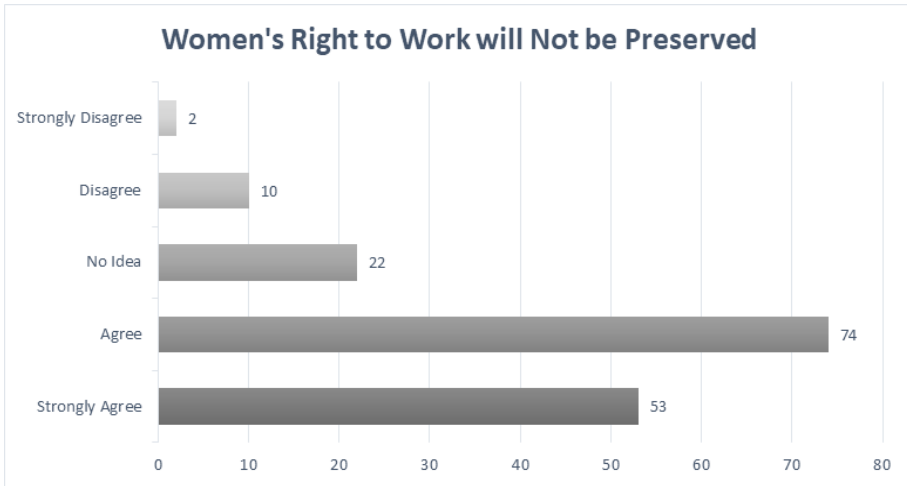
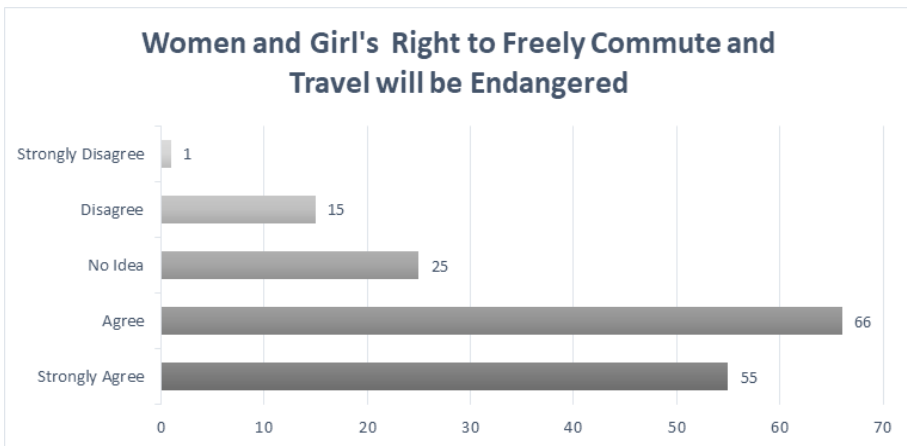**Women's Political Share and Participation in Decision Making**
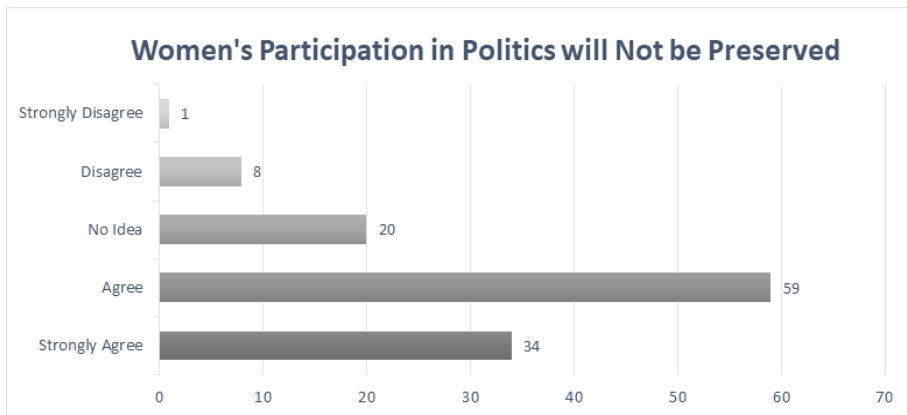
In terms of women's political participation and involvement, respondents were asked to what extent they agree with the claim that women's current political share of power and political participation will be saved in the post peace government. As shown above, 76% of respondents say that the political rights of women will be violated after the peace agreement. Recall that in the 2019 national survey, women's political participation was broadly supported (but not in leadership positions) so a rollback of such rights would not be considered acceptable.

By contrast, a minority (8%) think that women's rights in political decision making and participation will be preserved after a peace agreement. 16% are undecided on the issue.

Women's Right to Work and Active Presence in Society

Women's Right to Work will Not be Preserved

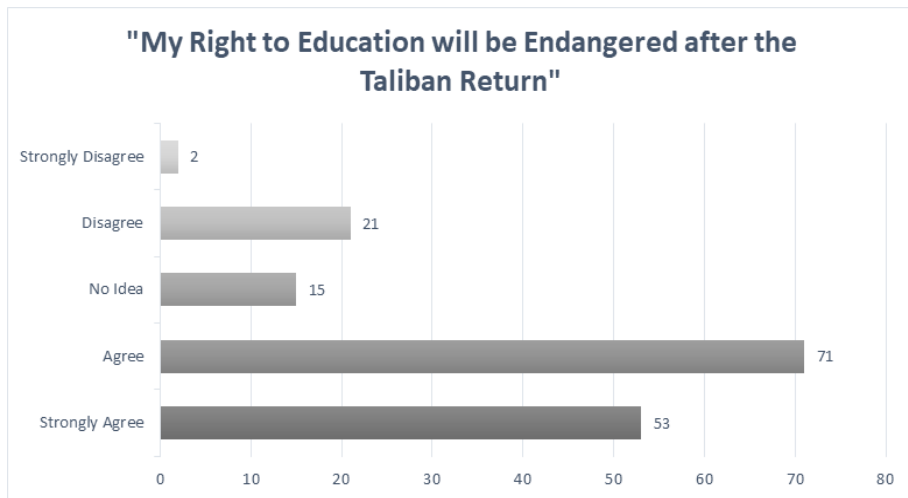| Category	Value
Strongly Disagree	2
Disagree	10
No Idea	22
Agree	74
Strongly Agree	53

The chart above demonstrates that 79% of all the respondents support the view that women's freedom to independently earn income in the public sphere will not be preserved in the post-peace future. By contrast, 7% of the respondents believe a peace agreement will not bring change to the status quo. The right to join the formal labor market is especially dear to the demographic categories that dominate this survey (young and urban) according to the Asia Foundation survey.

Women and Girl's Right to Freely Commute and Travel will be Endangered

Category	Value
Strongly Disagree	1
Disagree	15
No Idea	25
Agree	66
Strongly Agree	55

As for the ability to travel and commute, the majority of the respondents believe it will no longer be safe and that there will be similar restrictions as in the Taliban period of the 90s. Meanwhile, 10% of the respondents say that the right to commute freely will not be violated after a peace deal. Half of this group indicated that the right to work will not be endangered while 31% of this same group thinks that the right to work be violated.

Women's Right to Education

"My Right to Education will be Endangered after the Taliban Return"

- Strongly Disagree: 2
- Disagree: 21
- No Idea: 15
- Agree: 71
- Strongly Agree: 53

Respondents were asked to indicate the level of their agreement with the following statement: "I believe that my right to education will be endangered after the Taliban return." The statistics suggest that 77% of interviewees think women will be deprived of education. Compared with past questions, nearly all of the "agree/strongly agree" group believe that right to work, travel, and political participation will also be endangered. 57% of this group are university students and 28% are employed with a bachelor's degree. 19% are neither employed or students.
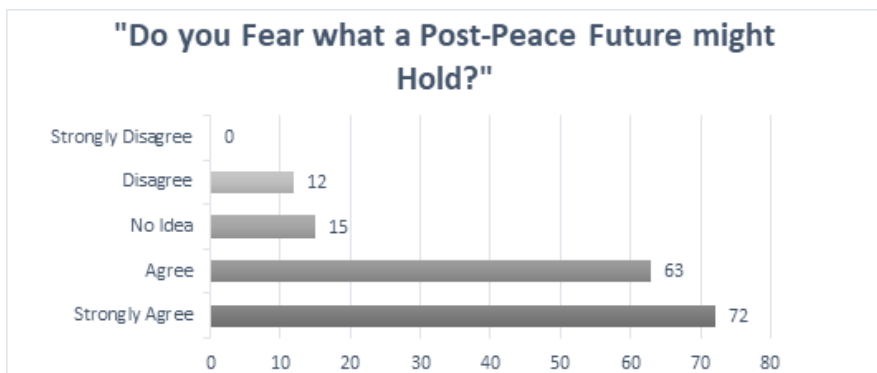
By contrast, 14% believe in a scenario where the right to education will be protected after the peace agreement with Taliban. 57% of this group are employed either in the private sector or public services and have a bachelor's degree, master's degree or higher. It may be that having reached a high level of educational achievement, they are more concerned with their right to

work. In any case, it is a confidence that runs counter to the rise in Taliban attacks against girl schools throughout the country (unless they believe this anti-girls education stance will cease after a deal).[5] The high degree of educational and professional achievement of respondents in this category in any case is notable.

Only 9% of the respondent selected "no idea" in this case, demonstrating a greater level of certainty among respondents one way or another on this question.

Women's General Perspective towards a Post-Peace Future

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to present their general stance toward a post-peace future. The next question will assess whether women feel fear when they think of a joint future with the Taliban or not. The responses were as follows:

"Do you Fear what a Post-Peace Future might Hold?"

Strongly Disagree	0
Disagree	12
No Idea	15
Agree	63
Strongly Agree	72

As is obvious from the chart, the majority of respondents (84%) agrees or strongly agrees they feel fear about the post-peace future. Far less women do not report fear (7% with no one in the "strongly disagree" category). 9% of the respondents have "no idea" concerning the future.

To find a clear and general root of the fear and the insecurity that respondents feel, they were asked some follow-up questions. In the next question, respondents indicated their thoughts on this statement: "I believe that women's situations will get worse in a post-peace future".

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5. A Survey of the Afghan People. 199-230

"Women's Situation will get Worse in a Post-Peace Future"

The pie chart above suggests that 70% of respondents agree with the statement. Only 7% of respondents disagree. Meanwhile, 23% of the respondents answered "no idea", a far larger proportion than the previous question. It may be there is greater certainty around whether or not they fear the future but not enough certainty to definitively say whether that stance is warranted.

In this last follow up question, respondents reacted to the following statement: "I believe that the Taliban will remain committed to their promises documented in the peace agreement."

"The Taliban will Committ to their Promises Documented in the Peace Agreement"
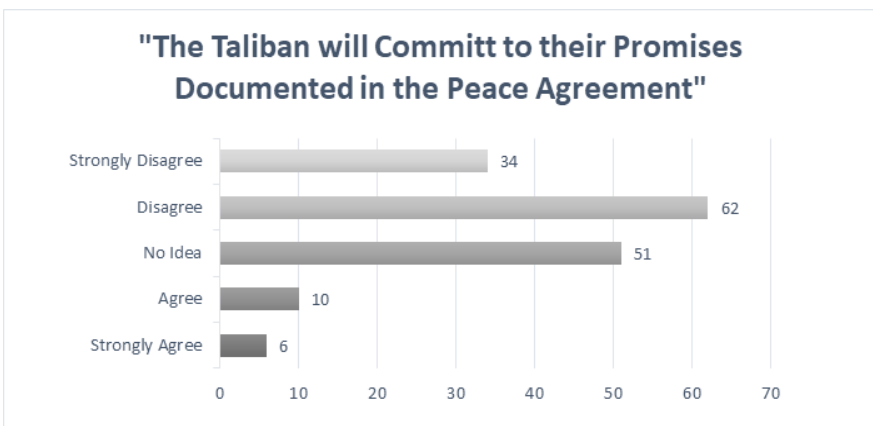
69% of the respondents do not see the Taliban committing to a negotiated agreement even in the case where they accept women's rights and freedoms

at the negotiation table. The statistics from previous questions demonstrate that almost all among this group of respondents believe that women's rights will be endangered after the Taliban return to society including rights to education, work, political participation or free commute.

On the other side, 10% of respondents count on the promises of the Taliban if they accept women's rights in the peace agreement. 31% of the respondents answered "no idea". Looking at the previous questions, 67% of the latter group believes that the Taliban do not value women and 50% of them stated that there was no positive change in the attitude of the Taliban toward women. It can perhaps be implied that a large number of women are still unsure of whether or not a peace deal will bind a Taliban they see as definitely hostile to women.

Conclusion

This study examined and analyzed the attitudes and perceptions of women in the city of Herat towards a future where the main parties of the conflict—the government and the Taliban— agree on a permanent ceasefire and peace as a result of negotiations. The findings of this study demonstrate that women are not optimistic towards such a future in terms of the preservation of their current rights and many actively fear a potential integration of the Taliban into society and possibly even the government. The majority of them believe that the current Taliban hold the same extremist ideology against women as they did in the 90s. Based on the findings of this survey, respondents fear that the result of a peace deal would be a repetition of the previous Taliban regime in which women did not have equality or freedom. According to the majority of women who responded to the questionnaire, the Taliban should not be taken at their word if they accept women's rights at the negotiation table. Bear in mind, such fears and anxieties come from women living in a region that is already difficult for women. These survey results from the women of Herat are a sign that the end of open conflict will not be seen as the end of an extremist threat that has the potential to worsen an already bad situation for women and girls.

Policy Recommendation

- The government of Afghanistan, particularly, the negotiating team, must not treat women's rights as a bargaining chip during the negotiation phase.

- Afghan women and women's rights activists should define red lines around what they will not negotiate in the peace process. This will require a united stance to firmly advocate these values.

- The international community should use all their financial and diplomatic leverage in support of women's rights and to safeguard the achievements of the last 19 years. This includes setting women's rights as a pre-condition for support and assistance to Afghanistan.

PROMOTE: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM IN AFGHANISTAN

ZAKIA ROSHAN[1]

Summary

- Promote-WIE was launched by the US as one of the most important (if not the most important) programs targeting Afghan women's economic empowerment. In spite of some success, the lack of sustainability and follow-up to the project seriously hampered its effectiveness. It was widely criticized as wasteful with no monitoring that could produce evidence of its supposed helpfulness to women.

- Promote-WIE's issues are emblematic of the flaws in many aid programs targeting women. On the donor side, better on-the-ground assessments of women's needs and better follow-up of participants are required. On the government side, there needs to be strong cooperation to ensure that socio-cultural norms do not become barriers and that the programs are sustainable past their official end dates.

Afghan women's status witnessed remarkable improvement with the end of the Taliban regime. A new republic backed by the international community supported women's rights and political engagement through legal frameworks and strategic planning such as the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan (NAPWA- 2008-2018).

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During the Taliban regime (1996-2001), prohibitive decrees prevented women from having any role in public life.[2] In 2002, shortly after fall of the Taliban regime, the Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Afghanistan 173 among 177 in the health, education and standard of living indicators. As such, the international community pushed Afghanistan to commit to improving women's socio-economic status and making it a priority by establishing gender sensitive legislation and regulatory frameworks that promoted gender equality including access to inheritance, property, labor law protections, access to skills development programs, vocational trainings, and income generative activities.[3] At the beginning of internationally supported peace-building efforts (especially 2003-2009), economic growth in Afghanistan had been volatile but rapid.[4] In spite of this growth, women faced many challenges: (a) illiteracy, (b) socio-cultural barriers, and (c) inaccessibility of financial resources and capital. This last challenge especially affected women's economic empowerment programs. Many initiatives were taken by international agencies, governmental and non-governmental institutions to ensure women were given the tools and space to participate in this economic growth and thereby improve their socio-economic status. Reports as recent as 2019, however, show that women still only make up around 16.2% (1990-2019) of the total national work force.[5]

Women's empowerment and participation are crucial for economic development. However, empowerment and participation are only possible when there is enhanced gender equality in the workforce. In this paper, by focusing on the United States' initiative for women's economic empowerment— "Promote Gender Equity in National Priority Programs Project (Promote 2015-2020)" — as part of their peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan, the question of the overall importance of women's economic empowerment to Afghanistan's economic development will be explored. This analysis will also include discussion around the status quo for women

2. Benard, Cheryl, Seth G. Jones, Olga Oliker, Cathryn Quantic Thurston, Brook K. Stearns and Kristen Cordell. "Women and Nation-Building." RAND Corporation. 2008. Pp: 81-106 https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg579imey-cmepp.13

3. National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan: 2007-2017. Ministry of Women Affairs. P. 61
http://extwprlegs1.fao.org/docs/pdf/afg149120.pdf

4. "Business and economic data for 200 countries." TheGlobalEconomy.com, https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Afghanistan/Economic_growth/

5. Ibid.

in the economy generally and the obstacles that make government and international community cooperation on this issue critical. It will be argued that improvements to the sustainability of empowerment programs and to their ability to overcome social barriers are a vital consideration for future programs. It will also be argued that future programs require better monitoring and on-the-ground analyses of women's actual needs. As Promote is one of the most recent and well-funded initiatives specifically targeted at women's empowerment, it will make an ideal case study for why such features are necessary to positively impact the socio-economic status of Afghan women.

The Importance of Women's Economic Empowerment for Peacebuilding

The UN, US, and other international partners implemented a number of initiatives which covered all development areas with the goal of bringing sustainable peace in Afghanistan.[6] After 23 years (1978-2001) of war, the newly established government, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA), committed to improving women's status and included equal rights for women in the country's 2004 Constitution.[7] After signing onto the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs-2004), GoIRA integrated them into its National Priority Programs (NPP) which fall under the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS).[8]

In 2002, the Asia Development Bank (ADB), the UNDP and World Bank (WB) estimated between $14.6-$18.1 billion dollars were needed for the next decade of reconstruction in Afghanistan's. [9]But reports assessing living conditions on the ground show that there is a significant disparity between the amount of aid allocated to Afghanistan and the progress achieved. GoIRA received only 45% of the $25 billion in funds from donors' disbursements for the period of 2002-20011[10]. This issue received particularly more attention

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6. محمد رضا صحرایی. غلامعلی چنگیزاده. ۱۳۹۴. «ارزیابی فرایند صلح سازی در افغانستان پس از توافق نامه بن ۲۰۰۱.» فصل نامه پژوهشهای راهبردی سیاست. شماره ۱۴. سال چهارم

7. "Bonn Agreement-Dari; Constitution." Afghanistan Independent Election Commission. http://www.iec.org.af/public_html/Civic%20Education%20Material/Flipcharts1/Dari.pdf

8. "Afghanistan Millennium Development Goals Report 2012." Ministry of Economy. December 2013. P. 29 https://www.af.undp.org/content/afghanistan/en/home/library/mdg/MDGs-report-2012.html

9. Fayez, Hikmatullah. "The role of foreign aid in Afghanistan's Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment." Economic and Political Weekly. Vol. 47 No. 39, September 29, 2012. Pp: 65-70 https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720193

10. Ibid.

since 2014 as discussions around ending the international intervention in Afghanistan gained momentum, donor funding began declining, and poverty rates were increasing.[11]

Following the 2015 Paris climate conference, donors agreed to features covering the new 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with 169 targets to end poverty, inequalities and protect the environment by 2030.[12] "Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment" also featured as an SDG and is recognized as an essential component of all other SDGs[13]. GoIRA signed on to the SDGs in December 2015. As the 2017 SDG's Progress Report for Afghanistan noted, 36% of Afghans in 2015 were living below the poverty line while discrimination against "vulnerable groups" such as women and ethnic minorities remained a "concerning challenge, despite significant progress made in the context of the MDGs."[14] It became apparent in this report that without the continued support of "international partners, civil society organizations, private sector, and regional cooperation," Afghanistan would not be likely to achieve its SDGs' by 2030. [15]

In spite of being identified as critical to the Afghan workforce, women's continued absence as a human resource has led to a slow-down of the country's development.[16] Women often face the most severe economic exclusion in fragile and conflict-affected countries, yet these nations have a crucial need for their economic participation.[17] The Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey Report[18] (2016-2017) showed a 29% participation rate of

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11. Thomas Rutting, Jelena Bjelica. "The State of Aid and Poverty in 2018: A new look at aid effectiveness in Afghanistan." Afghanistan Analysts Network, May 17, 2018.
https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/economy-development-environment/the-state-of-aid-and-poverty-in-20018-a-new-look-at-aid-effectiveness-in-afghanistan/

12. "The 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development." UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/post-2015

13. "SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." UN Women. https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/women-and-the-sdgs/sdg-5-gender-equality

14. "Voluntary National Review at the High-Level Political Forum: SDG's Progress Report Afghanistan." HLPF, July 2017. P.13. https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16277Afghanistan.pdf

15. Ibid.

16. فرزام، رضا. «زنان، فرصت های اقتصادی و کاهش خشونت» ویژه نامه توانایی و تنهایی ویژه زنان. روزنامه اطلاعات روز، سنبله، ۱۳۹۳

17. Klugman, Jeni and Yvonne Quek. "An overview of challenges and prospects: Women's Financial Inclusion and Economic Opportunities in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States." Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security 2018, April 2, 2019. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/event/womens-economic-empowerment-in-fragile-and-conflict-affected-states-the-role-of-the-private-sector/

18. "Afghanistan Living Conditions Survey 2013-2014: National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment." Central Statistics Organization, 2016. P. 190. https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/6557/study-description

women in the Afghan labor market (versus men's 81% participation rate).[19] Between 2011 and 2012, the share of non-agricultural labor actually dropped from 11.1% to 10.3%. However, more than 40% of women aged 25-60 were active in agriculture at the time of reporting. Only 3.4% were engaged in a business or organization that did not belong to the family household. The more recent 2017 Survey of Afghanistan People by the Asia Foundation shows 10.9% of women report being engaged in income-generating activities (compared to 79.2% of men), with 12.4% of female urban respondents versus 10.5% of female rural respondents[20], which denotes that the development process has been dilatory. Among women reporting an income, teaching is the most commonly cited income-generating activity.

The US, as a key ally of Afghanistan in international peace-building efforts, funded one third of all economic support in the development sector[21] and took important initiatives for women's economic empowerment. One was the Women Enterprise Development (WED 2005-2008) which provided 10 small grants of $10,000 to women business associations. There was also the Agricultural Credit Enhancement I & II (ACE 2015-2019) which lent $1.4 million to 270 female entrepreneurs with the cooperation of religious authorities (ensuring the program's availability in more conservative regions). Another example is the Financial Access for Investing in the Development of Afghanistan (FAIDA 2011–2016) which provided $3.2 million to 1,756 female-owned or operated businesses while also providing skills development programs, advocacy and technical assistance. In spite of some improvement to women's economic status resulting from such programs legal constraints, socio-cultural barriers, unjust disparities in access to financial resources and opportunities, and illiteracy have continued to remain keys challenges to women's economic empowerment.

19. Junussova, Madina, Mariia Iamshchikova, Naveen Hashim, Mohammad Ajmal Khan, Pakiza Kakar, Freshta Wardak, Shukria Rajabi. "The Role of Women in the Economic Development of Afghanistan." Working Paper #53. 2019. P. 7. https://www.ucentralasia.org/Resources/Item/2342/EN#:~:text=The%20Role%20of%20Women%20in%20the%20Economic%20Development%20of%20Afghanistan,-Type%3A%20Working%20Papers&text=With%20the%20assistance%20of%20donors,participation%20in%20the%20country's%20economy.

20. "Afghanistan in 2017: A Survey of the Afghan People." The Asia Foundation, 2017. P. 69 https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_AfghanSurvey_report.pdf

21. Fayez, Hikmatullah. "The role of foreign aid in Afghanistan's Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment." Economic and Political Weekly. Vol. 47 No. 39, September 29, 2012. Pp: 65-70 https://www.jstor.org/stable/41720193

Promote-Women in Economy (WIE)

USAID announced the Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote) on July 2013, describing it as its largest single investment to advance women globally. The goal was to secure the gains made by Afghan women up to that point and make further positive impact.[22] Promote reaffirmed the US' commitments to Afghan women (made at Bonn and restated in other agreements) with a promise of meeting new performance targets and sustainability.[23] It was a five-year project valued at $216 million targeting 75,000 young women (aged between 18-30) from all levels of society with the objective of improving their status by 2020.[24] The four components of Promote were aimed at strengthening their participation in civil society, the economy, governance leadership and business management.

Women In Economy (WIE July 2015-June 2020), is one of the four components of the Promote program. Valued at $71.5 million,[25] it was aimed at helping at least 40,000 Afghan women and increasing their participation in the private sector through employment opportunities, increased income growth, viability for women-owned businesses, and businesses whose workforces are composed of at least 10% women.[26] It was implemented in five economic zones.[27]

Three years after Promote's launch, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released an audit report finding that USAID/Afghanistan deviated from the original intent of the program when it "modified the WIE contract to increase the number of participants by 7,500 (to a total of 9,500) while also shortening the period of performance by 1 year.[28] According to SIGAR, "these changes slowed the component's

22. Promoting Gender Equity in National Priority Programs (Promote): USAID Needs to Assess This $216 Million Program's Achievements and the Afghan Government's Ability to Sustain Them: SIGAR 18-69 Audit Report. SIGAR. September 2018. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-18-69-AR.pdf

23. Ibid.

24. "Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Program (Promote)." USAID, November 15, 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/promoting-gender-equity-national-priority-programs

25. Promote— Women in The Economy, Overview. September 2019.
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/Promote_-_Women_in_the_Economy.pdf

26. "Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Program (Promote)." USAID, November 15, 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/promoting-gender-equity-national-priority-programs

27. Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Jalalabad and Kandahar

28. "Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Program (Promote)." USAID, November 15, 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/promoting-gender-equity-national-priority-programs

progress towards meeting its performance indicator targets." The result was that by the end of 2017, WIE was considered to have missed its target for the number of women receiving new or better employment. The report spread rapidly through national and international media who echoed many of SIGAR's criticisms.[29] SIGAR found that $89.7 million was spent but USAID/Afghanistan had not fully assessed the extent to which Promote was meeting its overarching goal of improving the status of more than 75,000 young women in Afghanistan's public, private, and civil society sectors.[30] In that same report, SIGAR reports that USAID itself did not expect the Afghan government to sustain Promote, contradicting USAID's own 2014 analysis that Promote met all required elements for sustainability. SIGAR's own analysis did not support this 2014 analysis. John L. Sopko, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, said: "we can't find any good data that they're helping any women."[31]

Rod Nordland of the New York Times gave different figures than SIGAR for Promote, reporting an original budget of $280 million as opposed to $216 million. One of the few concrete results of Promote being cited in 2018 was the promotion of only 55 women to better jobs. Nordland reported Special Inspector General Sopko's multiple critical statements along with Afghan criticisms (from both government officials and women's groups) of the program's poor design and USAID's misleading characterizations of what it could do. Sopko accuses USAID of lying to American taxpayers and Afghan recipients.[32] The Guardian covered SIGAR's criticism but also USAID's response to the criticism as "unfounded", saying much work had been done on outreach and that consultation with the government and women's organizations is "significant."[33] Even so, The Guardian also reports that Amnesty International overall agrees with SIGAR's report stating that

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29. Nordland, Rod. "U.S. Aid Program Vowed to help 75,000 Afghan Women. Watchdog Says It's a Flop." The New York Times, September 13, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/13/world/asia/afghanistan-women-usaid.html

30. "Promoting Gender Equality in National Priority Program (Promote)." USAID, November 15, 2017. https://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/promoting-gender-equity-national-priority-programs

31. Nordland, Rod. "U.S. Aid Program Vowed to help 75,000 Afghan Women. Watchdog Says It's a Flop." The New York Times, September 13, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/13/world/asia/afghanistan-women-usaid.html

32. Ibid.

33. Rasmussen, Sune Engel. "Afghanistan: US Watchdog Criticizes Aid Scheme of Women's Rights." The Guardian, April 7, 2019. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/apr/07/afghanistan-us-watchdog-criticises-aid-womens-rights

aid towards women's rights have been "piecemeal and ad-hoc, and much of the aid money is drying up" with far too much focus on short-term gains.

 USAID's own September 2019 updates for Promote-WIE did however go ahead and claim important accomplishments. For instance, it reported that 17% of Promote-supported businesses moved from small to medium size and 50% of all Promote-supported businesses grew by 289% within two years of receiving assistance. Wages or income improved by at least 10% for 9,003 women and 12,521 women obtained new or better employment. It even claims credit for political change in Afghanistan such as the Women's Rights, Inheritance and Ownership policy adopted by the Ministry of Women.[34]

Two months before WIE's official end date of June 30th 2020, SIGAR's quarterly report to the United States Congress concluded that $64,514,152 were disbursed out of WIE's contract value of $71,571,543.[35] In that same report, 16,058 women were calculated to have graduated WIE's Forward Together scholarship program (which offered job skills courses) while a total 29,112 out of 73,534 Promote beneficiaries found employment. Of these, 1,757 joined the public sector while 10,599 are in private sector internships (though SIGAR warns of double-counting which happens when those counted as interns are also counted when they secure permanent employment).

Conclusion

The absence of women in income generating activities has led to a slow down in the country's overall development. Traditional social norms have often been cited as a key factor contributing to this. Even for graduates of WIE, these norms are often cited as barriers they would face regardless of their certification from the program. In spite of noted interest by certain government officials in ensuring the program's success, SIGAR and other observers fret over the sustainability of the program due to a perceived lack of will in the Afghan government in sustaining it.

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34. Promote— Women in The Economy, Overview. September 2019.
https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/Promote_-_Women_in_the_Economy.pdf
35. "Quarterly Report to the United States Congress." SIGAR, April 30, 2020. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2020-04-30qr.pdf

Therefore, those who aim to support Afghanistan's economy should help the government to strengthen the fundamentals of economy and ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of their supporting strategies.

Women's empowerment and economic development are closely interrelated. Any program for Afghan women's empowerment should not be confined to only short-term training projects but should provide all required tools to make them capable of contributing to the formal economy. It is the Afghan government who must provide women opportunities to contribute to the economic development of their country by combatting factors inhibiting their economic growth, chiefly the cultural and social barriers along with the inequality of resources and opportunities between men and women. Widespread corruption, lack of rule of law, insecurity, and extremism should all be addressed by inclusive policies and strategies. Until these are addressed, feeble outcomes like those of WIE should be expected. However, it is also the role of foreign aid agencies to improve their monitoring and follow-up and design of their programs to ensure long-term success for their participants. The most important tool for development plans and assessment is real and accurate data that would help policymakers in their decisions to achieve positive outcomes and impacts. This type of monitoring is a vital tool that has always been absent in programs and projects aimed at 'empowering' Afghan women.

Policy Recommendations:

A better working relationship and improved coordination mechanisms between funding agencies and local/international implementers under the supervision of the Afghanistan government may decrease the risk of failure and help increase of effectiveness as it will avoid repetition, cost reduction and secure transparency.

Accurate statistics of women in formal and informal economic activities will help policymakers and advocates be more precise and effective in decision making

- Baseline studies and needs assessments should include accurate statistics around gender. The terms and conditions of education, age limitations, and the geographical scope of economic zones of past

programs did not account for the nature of Afghan women's socio-economic status.

- Economic empowerment programs for women must help remove legal, social, cultural and political constraints against their economic participation. Part of efforts for women's empowerment must include strengthening the judicial system to prevent economic violence against women and protect their economic rights. Women are in unfair competition with men as there is gender-biased discrimination to resource access and development opportunities, especially education and skills development. There should be concrete policies and legal protection of women's right to access justice along with financial resources with which to enter the formal labor market.

- The government must show determination in supporting women's empowerment programs and coordinating the assessment of the different program stages during implementation. It should also ensure the sustainability of program results.

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