

SHOULDERING RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUSTAINABLE PEACE: EXPLORING
AFGHAN OWNERSHIP OF PEACEBUILDING ACTIVITIES IN AFGHANISTAN

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba
in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies

University of Manitoba

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

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Abstract

The international community has followed up its 2001 invasion of Afghanistan with a complex multi-faceted peacebuilding project. However, informed observers believe the Western-led mission in Afghanistan has failed to address the inherent peacebuilding needs of Afghanistan and has hindered the formation of a locally experienced sustainable peace. In response, emerging peacebuilding theory and rhetoric has pointed to an urgent need for revised peacebuilding paradigms and strategies that hold local (Afghan) ownership of peacebuilding activities as a central concern.

This research project utilised a qualitative grounded theory methodology to explore perceptions of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Research data was gathered in early 2011 through face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 63 local and international peacebuilding leaders in two Afghan urban centres. The participants included persons from the United Nations, the Afghan and foreign governments, local and international NGOs, a broad range of civil society groups, international donors, and the international military forces.

Analysis of the interview narratives revealed several dilemmas on the journey towards increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. First, participants believed that the international community is performing important roles in Afghanistan, but is struggling to ensure Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. Second, international and Afghan peacebuilding actors have struggled to define who should be owning peacebuilding in at least two respects: (1) civil society or government; and (2) traditional-informal or democratic-formal institutions. Third, grassroots populations and Afghan civil society felt virtually no ownership of upper-level peace processes, and described a

distinct lack of locally owned grassroots-level peace process activities. And fourth, inappropriate external forces and processes, the militarisation and politicisation of peacebuilding activities, local aid dependency, and inadequate local control over peacebuilding coordination have hindered the international-domestic inter-relationship in Afghanistan.

However, the dilemmas of local ownership do not need to be viewed as unworkable barriers but can be re-conceptualised as holding constructive potential in designing sustainable peacebuilding solutions. To this end, this research study proposed the creation of a locally owned, broadly participatory, and strategic dispute resolution system that might transform international-local relations and forge the necessary space in which the transition to local authority and ownership might occur.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to
my lovely wife Laura,
and my three precious daughters,
Jayden, Savannah, and Autumn.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Introduction

Ten years after the removal of the Taliban by international forces and their local backers, Afghanistan is experiencing rapidly escalating violence and attacks aimed at both international troops and Afghan civilians (Winterbotham, 2012). International military and Afghan civilian casualties have both shot up in recent years¹. And the immediate future does not look hopeful. The September 2011 assassination of Burhanaddin Rabbani, the leader of the Afghan government backed High Peace Council, has put upper-level peace processes into question. All the while, intervening nations such as the U.S., Britain, and Canada are rapidly withdrawing their troops and aid, leaving many Afghans fearing a resumption of all-out civil war.

These facts make the ten-year mark after the 2001 international invasion of Afghanistan a fitting time to engage in a vigorous discussion on the future of the international peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan. One theme that is increasingly gaining legitimacy in this discussion is the concept of local (Afghan) ownership of peacebuilding (Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009a; Hansen, Wiharta, Claussen, & Kjeksrud, 2007; Nathan, 2008; Pietz & von Carlowitz, 2007; Reich, 2006), and is the primary theme under investigation in this research study. The time is certainly ripe for elevating the voice of Afghan citizens and their civil society and government leaders in the peacebuilding programme as experienced in Afghanistan. Real partnership with and

¹ Regarding foreign military casualties, compare 711 deaths in 2010 and 566 in 2011 to 70 in 2002 and 58 in 2003. In a similar fashion, civilian deaths from the conflict have steadily risen for five consecutive years: 2007 – 1523 deaths, 2008 – 2118 deaths, 2009 – 2412 deaths, 2010 – 2790 deaths, 2011 – 3021 deaths (UNAMA, 2012).

empowerment of Afghan actors may be necessary to salvage failing attempts at regaining a sustainable and positive peace² in Afghanistan.

Statement of Purpose

At its core, this research study is concerned with the complex and unsteady inter-relationship between external intervention actors and domestic counterparts and populations in Afghanistan³. And, to be more specific, this thesis explores the meaning and practice of local (Afghan) ownership of peacebuilding activities inside of this competitive external-domestic relationship⁴. While the rationale behind the concept of local ownership is not new, it remains obscure what it actually means for peacebuilding practice and whether the local Afghan population is actually able to ‘own’ an externally driven process (Pietz & von Carlowitz, 2007, pp. 5-6).

The meaning of the term ‘local ownership’ continues to be convoluted for both theoreticians and practitioners. At a basic level, it holds a sort of commonsense wisdom

² Differentiation between ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ peace is important for this study. First defined by Galtung (1996), ‘negative peace’ requires simply an absence of violence and war, while ‘positive’ peace requires, in addition to this, the restoration of relationships, the institution of social systems that respond to the entire population, and insures that society is able to deal with its conflict in a non-violent manner.

³ When referring to foreign intervention actors, I am inclusive of those working in a wide variety of peacebuilding sectors, and in particular: (1) security; (2) political transition; (3) economic and social development, and (4) justice and reconciliation. I am also inclusive of private sector actors and academics. In terms of domestic counterparts, this study is inclusive of a wide variety of government and civil society groups, as well as other local leaders from the private sector, academia, and recognised local leaders with no organisational affiliation.

⁴ The international intervention in Afghanistan as discussed in this thesis primarily refers to the post-Soviet period in Afghanistan (i.e. post-1991), but is primarily concerned with the post-Taliban (i.e. post 2001) period to the present time. As such, the participant’s words in this thesis are referencing, for the most part, a set of intervention activities that were initiated by the post-9/11 military invasion of Afghanistan, the subsequent 2001 Bonn conference, the influx of foreign governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as the corresponding growth in the Afghan civil society sector.

that people generally care for and protect the things that they own. Thus, local ownership becomes a personal, as well as political, activity in war-torn contexts experiencing outside intervention. Simon Chesterman (2007) describes this process of owning personal transformation:

In 1944, Judge Learned Hand spoke at a ceremony in Central Park, New York, to swear in 150,000 naturalized citizens. ‘Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women,’ he observed, ‘when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it; no constitution, no law, no court can even do much to help it.’ Building or rebuilding faith in the idea of the state requires a similar transformation in mentality as much as it does in politics. Any effort to generate a rigid template for reconstructing the institutions of law and order in a post-conflict environment is therefore likely to fail. As Judge Hand recognized, the major transformation required is in the hearts of the general population; any foreign involvement must therefore be sensitive to the particularities of that population both at the level of form and of substance.” (p. 3)

Translating the idea into international peacebuilding processes, any peace process that is not adopted and embraced by the local population is all the more likely to ultimately fail (Donais, 2009a, p. 3).

Local ownership has also begun to carry significant political weight in post-war operations, and has been prone to a variety of meanings. At one end of the definitional spectrum is a simple ‘buy-in’, whereby local populations and leaders identify with and agree that an externally designed action plan represents their interests (Chesterman, 2007, p. 9). A fuller theoretical (but rarely realised in practice) definition proposes that local ownership means that a country and its people decide for themselves what sort of peacebuilding activities are conducted and in what manner. As such it is both a process and an outcome in having local actors vitally engaged in peacebuilding design and action (Pietz & von Carlowitz, 2007). Realising this fuller definition would require that external

actors avoid (or be blocked from) undermining locally existing and appropriate processes (Byrne, 2006; Chesterman, 2007, p. 9).

Practitioners and policy-builders remain unclear about the justifications for 'local ownership'. Several suggestions have been posed, but virtually no empirical evidence has been offered up as to its efficacy in peacebuilding processes. It has been suggested that ensuring local ownership will buttress international legitimacy in locales such as Afghanistan, improve the chances of sustainability after foreign withdrawal, better ensure the injection of democratic decision making processes into non-Western contexts, and ensure that reformed processes and structures are ultimately integrated into local society (Barnett, 2006; Hansen, et al., 2007; Paris, 2004; von Billerbeck, 2010). However, these justifications remain suggestions, and are largely unconfirmed empirically.

Yet, despite the unproven nature of local ownership, the confusion in regards to its meaning, and the dubious nature of its implementation methodologies, the theme of local ownership is finding its way into peacebuilding rhetoric and policy. Several examples exist in regards to Afghanistan. The *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness* (OECD, 2005) proposes that war-torn and/or developing countries such as Afghanistan should lead and manage the majority of peacebuilding work in those contexts. However, operationalising this goal in a country that lacks a service delivery structure due to decades of war has proven exceedingly difficult (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010, p. 597). In a similar fashion the 2006 *Afghan Compact* and the *Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS)*, both central documents guiding the rebuilding programme in Afghanistan, are replete with references to local ownership and partnership between international and Afghan groups (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010, p. 579).

However, there appears to be a major gap between the vision laid out in these important documents and the reality on the ground (International Crisis Group, 2007). Program implementation that achieves literal local ownership is rare (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010). It remains to be seen how this stated commitment to local ownership on the part of international peacebuilding organisations and donors can be actually realised. Donais states that, “The empirical record suggests that peacebuilding in practice more closely resembles an externally driven exercise in both state building and social engineering” (Donais, 2009a, p. 4). It appears that one could argue that a fundamental causal factor that is preventing success in the Afghan peace process and the realisation of sustainable peace is a failure to engage local populations in designing activities to that end.

Yet, there are valid reasons for this struggle, ranging from an outright lack of political will or motivation to hand over control to domestic counterparts, to the dilemma-filled nature of the journey towards increased local ownership. Proposed dilemmas include the basic but contentious question, ‘Who should be owning?’. For example, the appropriate balance between civil society and upper-level⁵ involvement in peace processes is hotly debated in the Afghan context. Also, the Afghan government often feels bypassed in current donor policies that channel funding directly to grassroots organisations. Other dilemmas faced by peacebuilders include granting increased authority to government counterparts that are known to be corrupt or incapacitated. The expectations of international organisations also pose problems. For example, what do

⁵ The term ‘upper-level’ is used in this thesis in contrast to ‘grassroots’ and ‘civil society’, and represents processes and structures usually located in the sphere of the Afghan government (and their commissioned representatives such as the High Peace Council) and the international (mostly) governmental community that includes the UN, foreign embassies, and the foreign military.

international interveners do when locally inspired human rights ‘advances’ fall short of international human rights standards? Similar to the apparent dissonance regarding the meaning of local ownership, the dilemmas and struggles faced by international and local peacebuilders remain largely undocumented and undefined, and instead rely on speculation or anecdotal evidence gathered from a limited set of contexts.

Thus, this qualitative grounded theory research study hopes to narrow the gaps identified above, and allow the voices of on-the-ground peacebuilders (the majority of whom are Afghan) in Afghanistan to define both what they experience as Afghan ownership and the dilemmas and struggles faced on the journey towards increased Afghan ownership (if the journey actually exists). This study is deeply inductive in nature and committed to allowing the voices of these peacebuilders to dominate the discussion contained within this thesis, and to direct the presentations of findings and recommendations for future theory, policy, and practice. Its inductive nature has required an openness and sensitivity to the dilemma-filled nature of local ownership, and has resulted in an intentional structuring of this report in a manner that does not shy away from competing voices and contradictions but, rather, presents the ‘ownership’ narrative in all its complexity. Fast and firm solutions and recommendations may be hard to come by within this mandate, but the recognition and validation of the plethora of dilemmas that emerge should serve to illuminate paths through the morass of local ownership implementation.

Guiding Questions and Objectives

Central to the research agenda are the following questions: (1) Given that increased local ownership over peacebuilding has been identified as a valuable policy

objective for many international peacebuilding actors, why are international and local Afghan groups and individuals still struggling, ten years after the 2001 foreign invasion of Afghanistan, to define and implement an effective strategy that leads to significant advances in local Afghan control over peacebuilding prioritisation, project design, and evaluation?; and (2) What can be done to bolster efforts at ensuring increased and literal Afghan ownership over peacebuilding activities?

These underlying questions have guided decisions regarding: (1) an appropriate research methodology; (2) have shaped the conceptual framework within which the gathering and investigation of data was conducted; and (3) have served to structure the presentation of findings. Regarding methodology, a qualitative strategy is deemed superior in burrowing underneath the official rhetoric and accessing the perceptions of peacebuilders on the ground in Afghanistan. Regarding a conceptual framework for the research strategy, this study has constructed the data analysis procedures in a manner that remains open and sensitive to inherent dilemmas in the ‘ownership’ debate (for e.g. ‘Who should be owning peacebuilding and why?’). This openness required strategic choices as to what sorts of interview questions can effectively draw out the meaningful and valuable data required to make informed recommendations regarding potential paths forward to address the current situation in Afghanistan. As evident in the interview questions (see Appendix 3), this study has interview participants: (1) define the meaning of Afghan ownership in theory and practice; (2) identify the barriers and dilemmas faced in achieving Afghan ownership; (3) explore the role of coordination structures and processes in hindering or supporting efforts at Afghan ownership; and (4) discuss the

relationship between increased Afghan ownership and their desired future directions for the country of Afghanistan.

Regarding the structure of the presentation of this study's findings, the guiding questions require a careful exploration of the problem of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding from at least four (often competing) points of view that are summarised in Figure 1 (Chapter 5), and include the foreign community and the local Afghan community, which can be subdivided into Afghan civil society/grassroots and upper-level Afghan groups. Further, the guiding questions will require the identification of key ethical, structural, and practice-related issues that have determined the complex and challenging foreign-domestic relationship in Afghanistan.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant on several levels and at multiple points. First, while there is a small body of writing concerning local ownership of select segments of peacebuilding activities (Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009b; Goodhand & Sedra, 2010; Narten, 2008, 2009; Reich, 2006; Scheye & Peake, 2005), there exists virtually no literature or empirical study of perceptions of local ownership of the broader peacebuilding project in Afghanistan. Further, while there exists a small body of literature regarding coordination of the liberal peacebuilding project (Chayes & Chayes, 1999; Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 1999; Jeong, 2005; Jones, 2002; Nan & Strimling, 2006; Serwer & Tomson, 2007), there exists virtually no literature regarding possible coordination arrangements of alternative and emerging peacebuilding paradigms that hold local ownership as a core value. The connection between local ownership and peacebuilding coordination has been identified by Paris (2009), but there exists little

theoretical investigation or empirical research to this end. Thus, this study is a valuable addition and extension to the existing peacebuilding literature.

Second, theory and research should impact peacebuilding practice. Through this investigation of the complex peacebuilding operation in Afghanistan, the theoretical and practical knowledge base guiding future international interventions into war-torn countries should be distinctly built up and strengthened. Further, the consequences of embedding liberal political and neoliberal economic structures into the politico-economic structures of countries like Afghanistan are still unclear, although emerging analysis is pointing to significant dissonance. The findings of this study provide insight into how appropriate peacebuilding structures and processes leading to increased local ownership can address the dilemma of Western-based intervention in contexts such as Afghanistan.

Third, the many peacebuilding actors responsible for establishing policy in regards to interventions into war-affected countries will be especially interested in this study. International military forces, the UN, governmental organisations, and international NGOs should be interested in facilitating increased local ownership in order to expedite their exit and ensure local ownership of sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan. However, perhaps in a contradictory and revealing manner, the research may expose a variety of reasons for the unwillingness of some international actors to empower Afghan counterparts.

Fourth, the research is of special interest to donor agency officials and government officials responsible for procuring and distributing aid monies for contexts affected by violent conflict. Even though 'local ownership' is a commonplace project requirement to access donor funds, it is becoming clear that, in actual practice, local

ownership remains ambiguous in its requirements and perhaps unachievable given current funding structures. This thesis aims to investigate the feasibility of a serious stance towards literal local ownership on the part of international donors and other peacebuilding actors given the inherent power asymmetry between the foreign donors and their Afghan clients.

Last, and, probably most importantly, this research responds to Paffenholz's (2010a) critique that in all the theorising on emerging peacebuilding philosophies and paradigms that hold local ownership as a central tenet, there is little to no voice given to the war-torn populations themselves (p. 56). This lack of voice appears to be an inherent contradiction to the very revisions to peacebuilding practices that these theoreticians and policy-builders are proposing. This study is intensely committed to filling this void by projecting and amplifying the voice of participants on the ground in Afghanistan, the majority of whom are Afghan.

Limitations of the study

The complex research environment in Afghanistan resulted in several potential research limitations associated with this research project. The principle areas of limitation were related to the participant selection process, the researcher himself, and the structure of the overall project.

A major limitation for this study was the significant security risk of conducting research in a country at war. While I experienced no security incidents, and I conducted my research in a careful methodical manner that ensured my safety and the safety of the participants, the period of research (February to April, 2011) witnessed a noticeable spike in insurgent attacks and fighting across Afghanistan. It was also deemed unsafe for me to

venture out of major urban centres, and to carefully avoid any unnecessary travel. This restriction in access to potential participants directly affected the participant selection process. The most obvious effect was the restriction of participants to two urban centres, namely Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. And, given the distinct urban-rural cultural dissonance in Afghanistan, the data represents urban voices to a greater extent, and struggles to access the voice of rural village society. For example, urban residents are farther removed from the tribal tendencies and natures that directly shape the relationship of rural populations with foreign interveners. Accessing populations in rural Afghanistan requires a team of Afghan researchers and, despite being a valuable activity, was beyond the capacity of this research project.

Partially as a consequence of the urban bias, but also necessitated by the research design, the research focuses predominantly on individuals and organisations complicit with the overall international peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan. Dissenting voices that reject any involvement with the overall peacebuilding mission are difficult to identify and access, particularly from within the Afghan community. Thus, the interview narratives must be examined in light of the fact that this study's interviewees are less unlikely to voice certain opinions, which tends to restrict the discussion of Afghan ownership in some cases. As but one example, many of the organisations interviewed rely on U.S.-based donors for project funding, which might in turn prevent individuals from sharing viewpoints that envision a revised role for the Taliban in the Afghan government since the Taliban is an enemy of the U.S. army.

In a related fashion, the research is somewhat elite-biased. As mentioned above, focusing on peacebuilding leaders requires access to a group of people (Afghan and

foreigner) with direct connections with the overall foreign intervention in Afghanistan. These leaders will tend to be highly educated, speak English, and have relatively healthy incomes. However, access to these (often) mid-level leaders did benefit the research. Mid-level leaders were able to comment thoughtfully and critically regarding the dilemmas of Afghan ownership since they have access to both upper-level actors and the grassroots level. Thus, they were probably able to comment more fully about structural hindrances and tensions in regards to the overall ‘ownership’ debate than would a body of participants drawn strictly from the grassroots level.

Focusing on urban elites allowed me to predominantly rely on English as the language of communication. English use has become very common within the peacebuilding community in Afghanistan and is a common prerequisite for local hiring. While I offered translation services to potential participants, the use of English may have served to discourage some potential participants who struggled with or did not know English. It should be noted, however, that as I approached desired participants, it was quite rare to be turned down. On the positive side, avoiding the use of translators reduced error in the data gathering process, and significantly increased data reliability.

As another side effect of the urban bias, I noticed that a distinct and fairly unified ‘peacebuilding vocabulary’ and rhetoric was used by many participants, particularly in Kabul. This common vocabulary and rhetoric may be a result of shared discussions at the plethora of meetings, conferences, coordination arrangements, and social activities attended by peacebuilding leaders. The situation is also amplified by a prevalent ‘bunkered in’ mentality, whereby peacebuilding actors avoid venturing out into Afghan

society due to security limitations but, rather, encircle themselves with ‘like-minded’ and safe contacts.

There may also be limitations in the adequate inclusion of some marginalised groups in the study. For example, due to lingering social inhibitions in Afghan society coupled with the fact I am male, Afghan female participants may have avoided responding to interview requests, or simply passed off the request to male colleagues. Also, potential participants who are youth were not accessed, partly due to the inherent ‘ethics’ restrictions which required all participants to be over the age of twenty-one, and partly due to the above mentioned research design. Additionally, while I was certainly open to interviewing current or ex-members of the Taliban, the opportunity for this did not arise since they are understandably very difficult to contact.

As another limitation, military and security actors proved more resistant to being interviewed for this project, and thus were under-represented in the research sample. Military and security actors play a major role in overall peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan, which designates them as holding an important voice in regards to local ownership of peacebuilding.

Other limitations stem from the perception and subjectivity of a foreign observer and researcher. Particularly relevant in an extremely complex situation such as Afghanistan, foreign researchers carry many cultural blind-spots and are unable to ‘see’ many locally experienced phenomena, particularly outside the limits of urban centres. Further complicating the situation is the fact that depending on where a particular participant stands in relation to the overall peacebuilding mission (e.g. some participants hold political agendas or the support of particular constituencies), sensitive issues such as

the absence of local ownership will conjure up competing and dissonant interpretations (Saltmarshe & Medhi, 2011, p. 12). This adds one more layer of complexity for reporting procedures by the foreign researcher/interpreter. However, I attempted to transcend my blind spots as much as possible by remaining faithful and reliant upon the participants' words in reporting the data.

A final limitation stems from the starting point and assumptions of the research. For example, it was assumed in the research process that the overall intervention serves a purpose, is needed to address local concerns, and can be revised and altered to better serve the Afghan people. This is obviously a contentious issue, as some critics believe that international interventions such as experienced in Afghanistan tend to be locally destructive in nature (Duffield, 2007a, 2007b). While this is a valid and defensible position, this research study is by necessity restricted in scope, and carries as its starting point the belief that the international intervention holds significant constructive potential, but can be significantly improved. Despite the intentions and motivations behind the intervention, this study assumes that bolstered local ownership will improve the odds of peacebuilding success. The interview narratives and research findings (in particular Chapter 5) justify this approach. For example, a majority of Afghan participants fear premature foreign withdrawal of the international military influence and aid money, and view the international military and broader assistance community as providing much needed security, capacity building, development opportunities, and political reform initiatives. However, strong criticisms regarding intervention ethics, motivations, and practices were also salient in the interview narratives, and served to significantly temper the justifications for foreign intervention that many participants voiced. As such, I took

utmost care to include the strongest of critiques regarding the overall international intervention, even if they proposed that the international community should exit immediately and completely in order to bolster locally led initiatives aimed at sustainable peace and development.

Chapter Overviews

This research project explores the possibility of meaningful Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. In order to effectively achieve this goal, this thesis is divided into ten chapters: introduction, context, literature review, methodology, four chapters presenting the research findings, a chapter on conflict transformation leading to increased Afghan ownership, and a conclusion. This introduction chapter provides a general introduction and justification for this research project, describes its significance, identifies its limitations, and describes the overall framework of its presentation in this document. Chapter 2 ('Context') suggests that the current international intervention in Afghanistan is not an isolated historical event; rather, it is but one chapter in Afghanistan's evolving history of conflict. As such, peacebuilding actors should be open to lessons from Afghan history regarding the difficult task of building sustainable peace in that context. Chapter 3 ('Literature Review') describes two competing versions of peacebuilding theory. The first body of theory (labelled as '(neo)liberal') largely reflects current peacebuilding practice in Afghanistan, and holds processes of liberalisation as a remedy for conflict. The second body of peacebuilding theory (labelled 'emancipatory') critiques (neo)liberal theory and pushes for substantial revisions, most notably by mandating significant and real local ownership of peacebuilding activities. Chapter 4 ('Methodology') describes the grounded theory

qualitative methodology used to access, synthesise, and present the perceptions of both foreign and Afghan peacebuilding leaders regarding the dilemmas of achieving Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. The chosen qualitative strategy relied on face-to-face semi-structured interviews, with a view to drawing out relevant critique and suggestions of reform that might guide future peacebuilding practice in Afghanistan. A grounded theory approach is particularly suited for exploring the rich and complex topic of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding, and as such is utilised in this thesis to fulfil the objectives of: (1) discovering what is actually relevant to peacebuilding leaders on the ground in Afghanistan in terms of Afghan ownership; (2) implementing rigorous, structured, and organised data gathering and analysis methodologies; (3) allowing the individual narratives of numerous peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan to shape the explanatory constructs and categories used to understand the interview data; and, (4) integrating the research procedures with theoretical development in order to explain behaviour and processes related to the ‘Afghan ownership’ theme (Charmaz, 1995).

Chapter 5 is the first of four chapters that presents both the research findings and emerging theory. It reveals that this study has uncovered a multitude of dilemmas that must be grappled with in order to carve out a path for reforms leading to increased Afghan ownership. More specifically the chapter limits the debate to only one side, that of the foreign community and its need to retain ownership and by necessity restrict local ownership of peacebuilding. Chapter 6 mirrors the previous chapter in that it explores the topic of peacebuilding ownership from the other side of the debate, namely from the side of the Afghan government and Afghan civil society. To this end this chapter investigates the necessity of government and civil society ownership and the distinct struggles and

dilemmas that have emerged in moving towards local ownership. Chapter 7 narrows the discussion in on one particular area of peacebuilding and presents the participants' perceptions of Afghan ownership of both top-down and bottom-up peace and reconciliation processes in Afghanistan. Chapter 8 concludes the presentation of the findings by exploring five key 'ownership' themes as raised by the study's participants. These themes centre on the complex and precarious relationship between local groups and outside foreign interveners and include the effects of liberalisation and Westernisation, the apparent militarisation and politicisation of peacebuilding activities, dependency and sustainability, peacebuilding project timeframes, and peacebuilding coordination.

Chapter 9 responds to the dilemmas raised in chapters 5 to 8 and insists that they should not be viewed as barriers. Rather, they should be re-conceptualised as holding constructive potential. To access this inherent peacebuilding potential, the chapter suggests the creation of a locally designed and led conflict transformation system that might help restructure local-foreign relations and advance the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Chapter 10 ('Conclusions and Recommendations') summarises the study's key findings, makes recommendations for peacebuilding practice and theory, and suggests areas of needed future research in the area of local ownership.

Conclusion

Afghanistan has experienced a massive international peacebuilding intervention aimed at ensuring security for Afghans, rebuilding political and economic structures and processes, initiating community development activities, and ensuring sustainable peace through justice and reconciliation work. The goal of this thesis is to investigate

perceptions of Afghan ownership in these areas of peacebuilding. While international rhetoric and donor funding requirements may lead an outside observer to believe that there exists the required support for increased Afghan ownership, Afghan ownership has been difficult to practically and effectively achieve. In fact, even ten years after the initial international military invasion in 2001, peacebuilding activities appear to be predominantly led by foreigners. In response, this study incorporates a qualitative grounded theory research design that relies on face-to-face interviews with local and foreign peacebuilding actors with a view towards producing theory and recommendations that might assist peacebuilders on the journey towards increased local ownership.

Chapter 2 – Context – Afghan Society, Geography, and History

Introduction

In order to build the necessary foundation for an understanding of the current intervention in Afghanistan it is necessary to explore some underlying contextual factors that serve to shape the current state of Afghan society and politics. These factors have remained quite unchanged over the centuries, and continue to strain international-domestic relations in Afghanistan, and make it difficult for the Afghan state and civil society to congeal in the current peacebuilding process.

Five contextual factors that are relevant for this study emerge from the social-political-historical literature on Afghanistan. First, the mountainous Afghan topography and Afghanistan's geographical location have served to isolate its people from central government processes as well as the wider global political development (Goodson, 2001, p. 13; Magnus, 2002, p. 64). Second, deep divisions exist in the Afghan population, primarily around ethnicity, religion, language, geographical region, and tribe. Third, while certainly acting as a unifying force in Afghanistan, Islam is also serving to divide the Afghan population because of the multitude of local variations and syncretistic blends of interpretation (Goodson, 2001, p. 17; Nabi, 2006, p. 224). Fourth, tribal loyalties and communal social systems that emphasise local politics at the expense of nationalist or central politics have dominated attempts at political development in Afghanistan. And fifth, modern Afghan history predicts the struggle faced by international interveners in Afghanistan in the post-2001 era. The history of the statebuilding project in Afghanistan and its place in Central Asia and the wider sphere of global politics should be vital concerns for post-2001 statebuilding efforts.

Geography

Afghanistan has been labelled a “highway of conquest” for expanding imperialist armies, a “crossroads of civilisations and religions”, and a “roundabout” for trading between China, South Asia, Europe, and India because of its location on major sections of the ancient Silk Road (Gregorian, 1969, p. 10). A quick glance at a map does not reveal the geographic and geopolitical importance of this small, land-locked country with a relatively low population of approximately 30 million. However, Afghanistan has figured as an important player on the global geopolitical scene. Afghanistan’s geographic location has made it exceptionally vulnerable to invasions from the west, from within central Asia itself, and from regions east of the country. For example, one of Afghanistan’s most notable geopolitical roles has been its status as a ‘buffer state’ between the Russian and British empires in the ‘Great Game’ during the 19th and 20th centuries. Also, during the post-WWII era the small country of Afghanistan would then prove to serve as a major player in the U.S.-Soviet Cold War, and played a major role in the demise of the Soviet Union. And again, at the turn of the century, Afghanistan launched itself into the spotlight as a country that supported Al Qaeda and has thus become a major battleground in the so-called ‘war on terror’.

In terms of geography, Afghanistan is dominated and divided by a massive mountain range, the Hindu Kush. Afghanistan’s rugged topographical features and incredibly inhospitable terrain has been a decisive factor in how foreign invaders have fared in Afghanistan. Over the centuries the forbidding mountainous topography has made it difficult for invading armies to conduct large battlefield formation warfare as they were accustomed to (Nabi, 2006, pp. 224-225), and modern armies have likewise

found it difficult to find and root out enemies from amongst endless mountainous hiding places. Its terrain has lent itself toward insurgent-style warfare, a style that Afghan fighters have perfected in their defeat of much larger and better-equipped armies from Britain, the USSR, and the U.S.

The rugged mountainous terrain has also shaped Afghanistan's people and, in particular, the political development of its citizens. A significant portion of Afghanistan's rural population live in isolated mountain valley villages, sometimes completely cut off from the rest of the country due to the seasonal impassability of roads and mountain paths. This isolation has limited the reach of central authority structures and the development of a sense of Afghan nationalism in the face of tribal pressures.

The rugged terrain has also hindered physical development by restricting transportation, trading, and communication. Roads have been extremely difficult to construct, and railroads remain virtually non-existent. The first modern section of railway was finally opened in 2011 in northern Afghanistan between Mazar-e-Sharif and Termez (Uzbekistan). In terms of roads, only with massive post-2001 international aid has a functional series of inter-city roads (the 'Ring-road') been built. Thus, internal and external trade has consistently stalled due to transportation infrastructure inadequacies.

A Divided Population

Social division in Afghanistan revolves around and relates largely to ethnicity, which incorporates further identity divisions such as religion, language, geographical region, and tribe. Afghanistan is not an ethnically homogenous nation, but has four major ethnic groups that make up the majority of the population, namely the Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. However, there are numerous other smaller ethnic groups. While

the term ‘Afghan’ has historically been used to mean Pashtun, the translation of ‘Afghanistan’ as the ‘Land of the Afghans/Pashtuns’ certainly does not do justice to the incredible ethnic diversity within its borders (Magnus, 2002, p. 11; Maley, 2009, p. 8). Thus, the term ‘Afghan’ in this study refers to any citizen of Afghanistan despite their ethnicity.

The Pashtuns constitute the majority of Afghanistan’s population (estimated 40 to 60 percent), and have historically established their social and political dominance (Gohari, 2000, p. 118). The Pashtuns are a ‘tribal’ ethnic group, and two confederations of tribes (the Durrani and the Ghilzai) encapsulate the majority of Afghanistan’s Pashtuns. The most powerful tribe, the Durrani, has dominated the Afghan political scene since the mid-1700s. The Durrani has several sub-tribes - including the Popalzai, the tribe of the current Afghan president Hamid Karzai. Sub-tribes can be further divided into lineages, and again subdivided into clans (family groups) (Rubin, 1995, p. 28).

The political dominance of the Pashtun tribes has given prominence to their social code of values and norms, the *Pashtunwali* (Glatzer, 1998, p. 169). The *Pashtunwali* serves as both an ideology and a body of common law (Roy, 1990, p. 35), and speaks to social norms governing hospitality for guests, the right to asylum, blood revenge, bravery, manhood, persistence, righteousness, the defence of property, and family honour (Goodson, 2001). Certain parts of the *Pashtunwali* have consistently defied the establishment of secular centralised legal and political structures. For example, the injunctions to maintain family honour at all costs (including honour killings) as well as enact revenge at all costs are impossible to embody in national bodies of law (Gregorian,

1969, p. 41), thus creating constant friction that has eroded central control over tribal areas.

The Pashtun *Jirga* (tribal assembly) serves as a form of Afghan government. The *Jirga* structure typically includes only adult males in a community and requires consensus in political and social decisions (Rubin, 1995, p. 42). The *Jirga* can be convened at any of the various tribal 'levels', but is most common at the lineage level. However, since the 1920s the Afghan state has institutionalised a partly non-tribal body, the *Loya Jirga* (grand council) to oversee national concerns for the Afghan state. The *Loya Jirga* has been utilised repeatedly for post-2001 Afghanistan rebuilding purposes. In regards to language, the Pashtun people have their own language (Pashto), with the remainder of Afghanistan's ethnic groups speaking primarily Dari, a regional dialect of Farsi.

The second largest ethnic group, the Tajiks (26 to 30 percent of the population), have established themselves as a powerful ethnic group as evidenced in their sustained resistance to the Taliban under Mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, and their dominance in post-Taliban political structures (Rais, 2008, p. 31). Because of their traditionally higher education rates compared to Pashtuns, Tajiks have played a prominent part in the country's civil service and intellectual community. The Uzbeks constitute about 8 percent of the population, and are concentrated in the north. The Hazara ethnic group (approximately 7 percent of the population) is the primary ethnic group in Afghanistan that adheres to the Shiite tradition of Islam, and has historically been oppressed and marginalised by the ruling Pashtuns (Glatzer, 1998, p. 171). Complicating the situation is the fact that three of the major ethnic populations overlap

international borders into neighbouring countries, the Pashtuns into the North West Frontier of Pakistan, Tajiks with Tajikistan, and the Uzbeks with Uzbekistan.

Historically, the various ethnic groups in Afghanistan have coexisted for long periods without major conflict in a sort of ethnic balance (Rais, 2008, p. 35). However, the Pashtuns have primarily driven the gradual construction of a national Afghan identity. For example, Pashtun ethnic symbols and cultural expressions were adopted into a 'national' culture. Thus, even with the presence of a wide variety of ethnic groups, the construction of a national identity has been based upon Pashtun social codes (Rais, 2008, p. 36). Further evidencing Pashtun dominance, the majority of national leaders throughout the last three centuries have been Pashtun (Glatzer, 1998, p. 172).

Minority groups such as the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras have struggled with the Pashtun-based national identity and social and political dominance and have historically felt excluded from national identity-building processes. This exclusion has led to significant ethnic violence in the post-Soviet era in Afghanistan. For example, Pashtun conceptions of reuniting the country after Soviet withdrawal were divergent with those of the minority ethnic groups. The Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras, emboldened and empowered by their Mujaheddin victories against Soviet troops, believed a redefinition of social contracts between various ethnic groups to be in order (Rais, 2008, p. 45). In contrast, the Pashtuns believed the Taliban to be key in re-establishing traditional Pashtun-dominated social and political structures across Afghanistan.

Central Authority and Islam

While Islam serves to bind Afghans together across the ethnic chasm, it is challenging efforts at establishing a clear central authority in Afghanistan. Underlying

this dilemma is the fact that the notion of an Afghan nation is relatively recent, and the state is still viewed as largely external to society, especially with populations outside the capital city of Kabul (Nabi, 2006, p. 234). Thus, the Afghan people's allegiances remain intensely focused at the community level, which becomes particularly challenging for centralised statebuilding. And thus, because the practice and expression of Islam in Afghanistan is situated primarily at the local community level, it becomes a primary concern in statebuilding processes.

The dominant Islamic sect in Afghanistan is the Hanafi Sunni sect, and is adhered to by approximately 85 percent of the population. Unlike its Shi'a counterpart, Sunni Islam has historically remained resistant to hierarchy and centralisation (Magnus, 2002, p. 74). A complex system of dispersed religious authority throughout rural Afghanistan has made state control at the district and village level unworkable in many cases. 'Local' religious authorities that remain prominent are the *ulama* (religious scholars), *sayyids* (families that trace descent from the prophet Mohammad), village *mullahs* (local religious leaders/preachers), and Sufi spiritual leaders (Goodson, 2001). Village *mullahs* remain the primary face of Islam for the majority of Afghans however. And because of the increasingly politicised nature of Islam since the Mujahideen-Soviet wars during the 1980s, their position is also provided a political voice. One concern is that many *mullahs* remain uneducated.

Islam has also separated many Afghans from central power structures by providing the ideology behind *jihad*, the religion-inspired resistance to foreign 'infidels' and internal enemies. As evident throughout Afghanistan's history, jihad serves to unify divided tribes and ethnic groups, and serves to justify the massively elevated levels of

violence experienced by the Afghan population. For example, the Taliban called upon the requirement of Islamic jihad to rally the Pashtun community in the effort to gain control over the entire country (Goodson, 2001, p. 18).

Rural Islam is a barrier to effective governance over Afghanistan's rural population in at least two areas over the past century. First, the uneasy coexistence and difficult relationship between *shari'a* religious law, the *Pashtunwali*, and 'modern' statutory/civil law creates an immensely complicated situation for central Afghan lawmakers and constitution builders. Some commentators have argued that Islamic *shari'a* law has maintained a strong footing during periods of civil war in Afghanistan, and has consequently helped to resist the type of massive social breakdown and genocide as experienced in Rwanda for example⁶. However, current attempts to reinstate statutory law and structures throughout 'post-war' Afghanistan are facing significant challenges and have barely begun in many rural areas. Complicating the situation is the addition of *Pashtunwali* social codes. *Pashtunwali* has proven itself dissonant with both *shari'a* and statutory law. *Pashtunwali*, as a system of common law, has developed its own set of institutions and sanctions (Roy, 1990, p. 35). For example, Roy (1990) provides examples of how *pashtunwali* and *shari'a* differ in dealing with adultery, women and property rights, the rules of dowry, and enacting vengeance for wrongdoing or dishonour (pp. 35-36). He argues that the Taliban actually relied upon *pashtunwali* in developing their harsh forms of justice all the while claiming they were requirements of Islamic *shari'a* law.

⁶ Lecture by Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi at The American Institute of Afghanistan Studies, Kabul, March 2011.

Second, traditional Islam and, in particular, the Islamic education of youth and young leaders, has not lent itself to appropriate development leading to central control. Thus, central authorities have consistently eroded the traditional religious education system over the course of the last century. By the 1960s the traditional religious establishment was displaced as the primary provider of education and replaced by public schools and universities (Magnus, 2002, p. 77). However, local resistance and decades of war have hindered the spread of public education leaving millions of Afghan children without any form of education. Thus, literacy rates plummeted during the 1980s and 1990s. The state of public education, however, has improved dramatically in the post-2001 era with foreign assistance.

Tribal Social Systems and Loyalty

Kinship remains the primary means to mobilising political and economic resources for the majority of the population in Afghanistan (Rubin, 1995, p. 23). An entrenched male-dominated tribal system of loyalties, power networks, and honour undergirds Afghan society, and has continually eroded any institutionalised power structures such as the central state. This section explores this system, starting with its male-dominated nature.

Patrilineal family relationships and inheritance customs that favour male kin and children are central to propagating the dominance of males in access to economic, political, and social power. At the heart of this patrilineal system is the practice of polygamy, which allows powerful or wealthy men to further increase their power through marriage (Rubin, 1995, p. 23). Marriage relationships are not built upon individual preference but, rather, are a result of a public relationship between two families, and

serve to solidify social standing, and create economic wealth through increased labour potential and substantial brideprices. Thus, the ideal marriage occurs between cousins, as is common in Afghan tribal society, in order ensure that increases in wealth and power remain within a particular family.

Distinct gender roles emerge from within the Afghan male-dominated social system. Maintenance of power requires men to carefully defend the honour of their family, and ward off any threat to family break-up through sexual misconduct on the part of their wives or family members (Rubin, 1995, p. 24). Public sexual dishonour is punished quickly and violently, often with death or extreme ostracism. On the other hand, women are valued by the men for their economic productivity in home-based economies such as carpet-making or gardening, and are viewed as indispensable in strengthening the family by raising many children. Maintaining these roles and ensuring male control is achieved through *pardah* (separation of women from men) and veiling (Rubin, 1995, p. 24). Strict codes of conduct for virtually eliminating non-family male-female interactions serve to protect families from outside intrusion and interference. Veiling in public allows women to maintain a sense of protection and honour while outside of the family home.

This male dominance underpins an even broader and more important social system, the idea of loyalty to one's social group, which is also known as *qawm* in Afghanistan. While often referring to one's tribe, *qawm* can be structured through other types of communal groups, villages, extended families, or entire ethnic groups (Goodson, 2001, p. 19). However, despite this broader definition, the *tribe* remains a basic social and political variable in Afghanistan (Saikal & Maley, 1991, p. 14). *Qawm* identity governs most social interactions, and unquestioned loyalties to those within your own

qawm are carefully maintained at all cost. This sense of loyalty and honour is broad, deeply ingrained, and often difficult for outsiders such as international invaders/interveners to decipher. It is a system that operates largely through spoken word as opposed to written descriptions or agreements (Johnson & Leslie, 2004, p. 31).

Loyalties and social honour are played out at all levels. As discussed earlier in this section, family loyalty and honour is paramount, and Afghan women are seen as carrying a family's honour. Women must carefully abide by social codes to maintain and improve a family's public standing. Beyond the boundaries of the family are massive webs of relationships that dictate social conduct. The Afghan people compare these loyalties to concentric circles that define social space (for e.g. one's own village, then neighbouring villages, then the local valley in which the villages are situated, and so on) (Johnson & Leslie, 2004, p. 35). However, these *qawm* loyalties are not restricted by physical proximity. Even if an Afghan moves to a major urban centre or to another country he is still required to remain loyal to those in his network. As another example, attendance at a particular high school or higher education institution allows an individual into a particular *qawm* and may be called upon, even decades later, to assist in obtaining a job or other benefits.

The *qawm* is often governed by a *jirga* or *shura*, which are usually made up primarily of men who have achieved a sort of unspoken authority in the group they are representing (e.g. tribe, or village). The decisions of these authority groups have a powerful impact on Afghan society. It thus becomes obvious why the *qawm* and its decision-making structures are perceived as dissonant with the exertions of power by the centralised state. Authority and leadership within the *qawm* is fluid, tenuous, and difficult

to control (Olesen, 1995, p. 29). To ease this tension, local elected leaders such as *maliks*, *arbabs*, or *khans* are charged with facilitating a relationship between the *qawm* and the state (Goodson, 2001, p. 19; Gregorian, 1969, p. 40). Also, the *qawm* has infiltrated the state structures to a large extent. Loyalty to the *qawm* by government leaders forces decisions to favour a particular group, ensures that other *qawm* members are hired into leadership positions, and serves to allow for ethnic dominance in particular government Ministries and departments. Also interesting to note is the tenuous relationship between *qawm* and civil society. Can a useful civil society exist in a society governed by the *qawm*? Civil society is ideally supposed to act as a counterbalance to the state, and hold it accountable. Since the *qawm* has penetrated the state, it is unlikely that civil society in Afghanistan has remained unaffected by the *qawm*. Thus, common and powerful networks of loyalty may exist that span the civil society-government divide, and may compromise civil society's independent and outside role.

Afghanistan's History: A Difficult Legacy

The previous four themes have developed and evolved within Afghanistan's unique history. It is thus instrumental to explore Afghan history and locate the country's place in Central Asia and the wider realm of global geopolitics. From a survey of Afghan history emerges a tale of virtually endless invasion by regional and international powers that have consistently been met with fierce resistance and independence on the part of local peoples. This violent history has left an indelible footprint on the local context, has transformed the Afghan peoples, and has shaped the Afghanistan as experienced by the current peacebuilding 'interveners'. Thus, Afghanistan's history holds important lessons for the current foreign peacebuilding intervention and its implementers.

Afghan History (Up To 1747)

The great conquerors Darius the Great (550 – 486 BCE) and Alexander the Great (356 –323 BCE) passed through and subjected the lands of the Afghans to their empire-building ventures. Since them, numerous other political and military leaders have attempted to control the area of the current Afghan state as a stepping-stone for further incursions into prized territories. Some of these movements pushed westward, attempting to conquer Persia (modern-day Iran), and some pushed eastward, with eyes on China and India. The harsh lands of Central Asia, including the land of the Afghans, are situated at the crossroads of the prized lands of Persia (Iran), China, and India and, thus, hold significant strategic advantage because of its immediate proximity. Four successive historical examples of invasion are noteworthy. By 1250 Genghis Khan and the Mongol invasions had subjected much of Central Asian and Persia and destroyed much of Afghanistan's infrastructure (particularly in the north). The powerful Mongol empire quickly fragmented, however, and gave way to the great Central Asian empire builder Timur (1336 –1405), also known as Tamerlane. Timur achieved control of lands stretching from Baghdad to northern India, and included all of the current Afghan land. One of Timur's direct descendents, Babur (1483 – 1530), formed his own dynasty (also known as the Mughal dynasty) by combining territories stretching from northern India, Kandahar in southern Afghanistan, and up to present day Uzbekistan into a unified kingdom. And finally, the Persians under Shah Abbas (1586 – 1628) drove back the Uzbek-centred Mughals and captured the majority of the Afghan territories as part of the powerful Iranian Safavid dynasty.

It was at this point, during the early part of the 18th century, that the Afghans began to assert themselves against the powerful Uzbek (Mughal), Persian (Safavid), and Indian dynasties that surrounded them. Under the leadership of Ahmed Shah in 1747, many of the disparate tribal leaders and Warlords across southern Afghanistan joined together and formed what could be loosely described as the first unified Afghan state (Seddon, 2003, p. 180). This confederation of tribes was named the Durrani confederation, and has constantly competed with its archrival, the Ghilzai Pashtun confederation, for prominence up to the current day.

Tribal Confederacy, Nation-building, and the ‘Great Game’ (1747 – 1919)

As mentioned earlier, Ahmed Shah succeeded in creating a tribal confederacy that pushed back the Persian, Indian, and Uzbek powers. However, in their place two new powers rose up and pushed in on Afghanistan in the hopes of expanding their territories, namely the Russian and British empires. The fledgling tribal confederacy under Shah served to initiate a political process amongst the Afghans that led to the necessary tribal acquiescence for the gradual construction of a central government in Afghanistan. However, the journey towards centralised power over the emerging nation was long and faced significant barriers. The tribal *Jirga* remained the primary form of centralised decision-making, and tribal rebellion continually threatened any central power that could be mustered in Kabul. This period also witnessed the rise of an ethnic consciousness and, in particular, the increased recognition of Pashtun dominance, an increasing non-Pashtun resistance to this dominance, and the forced migration of tribal rebels to ethnic minority areas (Goodson, 2001, p. 31). Yet, although the enhanced ethnic consciousness did not

lead to increased nationalism, it did lay the foundations for the ethnic relationships that would lie at the heart of the eventual independent state of Afghanistan.

Externally, enormous political pressures built up around Afghanistan during this period. The British-Russian competition over the Afghan lands, labelled the ‘Great Game’ by Rudyard Kipling in his book *Kim*, served to solidify the modern borders of the Afghan state. Although the motivations behind this Great Game do not need to be explored for the purposes of this chapter, the Great Game entailed the constant eastern expansion of the Russian empire through Central Asia towards the ‘riches’ of British-held India and the possibility of a warm water port to its south, and was aimed at weakening British imperial power. The tribal lands of Afghanistan served increasingly during the 1800s as a buffer zone in this geopolitical chess match. Afghan territories were constantly encroached upon, local rivalries were exploited in order to gain power, and the “seeds of war” were implanted into the Afghan context (Goodson, 2001, p. 33). During this period, the British fought two wars in Afghanistan, labelled the First (1842) and Second (1878 – 1880) Anglo-Afghan Wars, and were both initiated in order to establish British control over the Afghan government out of fear of Russian influence in Afghanistan. Both wars ended with decisive Afghan victories.

During this period, Amir Abdur Rahman (1840 – 1901) emerged as an important central Afghan leader. Rahman’s vision was to break down the tribal and feudal structures in Afghanistan, and through almost twenty years of bloody civil war he achieved central control over the majority of present-day Afghanistan including the non-Pashtun groups in the north of the region. He created a provincial government system, a centralised civil administration, and a strengthened central army (Goodson, 2001, p. 35;

Magnus, 2002, p. 36). Despite his significant advances towards centralised control, he was viewed as a cruel leader that ruled with terror over the local population. Following Rahman's death (from natural causes) in 1901, first his son Habibullah, and then his grandson Amanullah seized power. Amanullah was a staunch nationalist who decided to push for complete independence from outside (primarily British) control and initiated the Third Anglo-Afghan War in 1919. The war ended in the Treaty of Rawalpindi that granted Afghanistan a full independent status.

20th Century Afghan Statebuilding (1919-1979)

As a new member to the sovereign state system in 1919, Amanullah undertook an aggressive programme of modernisation including a system of taxation, private property and land rights, transportation networks, dictates requiring Western dress, the banning of the *burka*, and educational development including the education of women (Cramer & Goodhand, 2002, p. 893; Seddon, 2003, p. 188). However, by 1929 a significant religious and tribal resistance to his attempts at modernisation had arisen, and the Musahiban family led by Nader Shah assumed leadership, reversed the programme of modernisation and restored some degree of calm in the country. The Musahiban family would remain leaders until the communist coup in 1978. Nader Shah ruled until 1933 before he was assassinated and replaced by his son Zahir Shah.

During the reign of Zahir Shah, Afghanistan made significant advances towards modernisation, albeit at a much more reserved pace than under Amanullah. Secular perspectives were tolerated in Kabul, higher education institutions were fostered for elite education, banking systems were introduced, and improved agriculture methods were developed (Magnus, 2002, p. 47). Political systems were also liberalised, and reforms

leading to democracy were introduced including the allowance of open criticism and a free press. Zahir Shah's Prime Minister, Daoud, pushed forward with an aggressive modernisation strategy that aimed to reduce the influence of the religious *ulama* and the tribal structures.

This period also witnessed the increased influence of the USSR in Afghanistan. Because of a tense relationship with the newly formed state of Pakistan in the 1950s, Afghanistan increasingly relied more upon its neighbour to the north. With Pakistan controlling any access to the sea to its south, Afghanistan increased trade with the USSR, and grew to accept significant aid from the USSR. This increased trade and aid reinforced Afghanistan's status as a rentier state, and it became utterly reliant upon foreign aid and subsidies. Afghanistan did reach out to the United States, but received little attention in return (Rasanayagam, 2003, p. 31). Not so with the USSR. Between 1956 and 1978 Afghanistan accepted about US\$2.5 billion in economic and military aid from the USSR, which secured Afghanistan as a close Cold War ally for the USSR. Afghanistan's trade and economy became closely interlinked with the USSR. By the 1960s about 50 percent of Afghanistan's trade was dependent on the Soviet Union (Magnus, 2002, p. 52). Likewise, Afghanistan was excluded from Western-led defence agreements, and thus turned to the USSR for military support.

Daoud was forcefully removed from office in 1963, and his absence ushered in a new period of democratic reform labelled the 'New Democracy' period (1963 - 1970). A new 1964 constitution favoured democratic reform and structures, and included an elected lower house called the *Wolesi Jirga*, which aimed to strengthen a new system of government and exclude the royal family from the political executive (Maley, 2009, p.

15). Social reform was attempted also. Daoud called for the voluntary abolition of *pardah* (seclusion of women) and the lifting of the veil (*chadri*) (Hyman, 1982, p. 51). Likewise educational opportunities were developed for both genders, and free elections were successfully carried out in 1965 and 1969.

However, these reforms faced serious problems and initiated a period of instability. Political parties remained outlawed, which provided a chaotic and inefficient atmosphere in which to conduct politics (Maley, 2002, p. 15). The Afghan bureaucracy failed to govern effectively, and suffered from extensive corruption. Nepotism remained widespread, and deserving officials and military officers were regularly blocked from advancement in favour of those close to the royal family. Also, government officials failed to gain legitimacy in many rural areas. The problems came to a head with a serious famine in 1972 that received an indifferent and careless response from the central government. As a result, the former Prime Minister Daoud overthrew Zahir Shah in a palace coup in 1973. Yet, Daoud's new republican regime proved to change little in Afghanistan. Rather, a change in foreign policy aimed at distancing Afghanistan from the USSR would be one of the factors unleashing perhaps the most traumatic events in Afghan history, namely the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet forces.

In addition to the increasing influence of Soviet aid and policy in Afghanistan, the Soviets were also actively cultivating an Afghan communist movement, which was primarily expressed through the creation of the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) in Kabul in 1965. The communist party quickly split into two factions (the Khalq and the Parcham) and remained small and without significant power throughout the 1970s (Goodson, 2001, p. 52). However, targeted Soviet influence in the

Afghan military and amongst government workers would allow the PDPA to wield the power necessary to overthrow the Daoud government in a coup in April 1978, which became known as the 'Saur Revolution'. While the coup was a success, the rule of the PDPA was a failure. It was brutal, a shock to the traditional Muslim society, terrorised the local population, and plagued by fierce infighting between the Khalq and Parcham factions (Maley, 2002, pp. 28-29). The subsequent chaos, national uprisings, and mass killings by the PDPA alarmed Soviet rulers, who believed that the communist regime would not survive without their direct assistance. So in December 1979 they decided to invade Afghanistan.

The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan (1979 - 1991)

The 1979 invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet troops initiated a period of utter destruction in Afghanistan. By most accounts, the Soviet invasion can be described as a disastrous plunge into a quagmire of resistance. The Soviets sent over 350 000 troops into Afghanistan (but never had more than 120 000 on the ground at any one time). Soviet casualty figures are difficult to obtain, but are likely as high as 85 000 dead (Seddon, 2003, p. 191). The Afghan war proved to be intensely unpopular in the USSR, and raised significant internal criticism and resistance.

Following the Soviet invasion, the PDPA government under the leadership of Babrak Karmal was propped up with almost endless economic and military support. The party attempted to carry out revolutionary reform in Afghan society through violence and terror, which only served to spur on greater resistance and a rejection of the communist ideologies. However, in response to the relentless resistance faced by Soviet and Afghan army troops, USSR leader Gorbachev encouraged the PDPA to work alongside of other

political forces. Consequently, Karmal was replaced by Najibullah, who in turn established a *Loya Jirga* in 1987 to form a new constitution that allowed for elections to a parliament. Under Najibullah's rule the government became less totalitarian, and open to liberal reforms including increased support for Islam, democracy, and market economics (Rubin, 1995, p. 109). However, effective governance proved impossible in a situation of chaos and war.

While the USSR certainly expected resistance in Afghanistan, it was utterly unprepared for the massive, well-organised, sustainable, and determined resistance it faced (Maley, 2002, p. 57). The violent resistance to the PDPA and its Soviet backers began as small uprisings in rural areas, and gradually solidified under Islamist leaders living in Pakistani exile. Pakistan, the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Iran, along with several other foreign powers, began to provide aid and weapons in order to support the forming resistance movement. Aid and weapons imports skyrocketed and led to the massive arming of Afghan society.

Despite starting out as an apolitical movement, resistance leaders began to form Islamist political parties, who also formed alliances with one another in order to strengthen their overall resistance efforts. These Islamist parties received the recognition of Pakistan and its intelligence services (ISI), through whom they would receive aid and resources to build their movement. Tens of thousands of local and international fighters received training in Pakistan, before being sent back over the border to fight as *Mujahideen* (Freedom Fighters). Fighting was intense against the superior Soviet weaponry, but supporters such as the U.S. began to provide the resistance fighters with

ultra-sophisticated weapons such as laser-guided anti-aircraft missiles (Rubin, 1995, p. 181).

The resistance was effective, and broke the will of both the Soviet soldiers and the Soviet population and political leaders. Large sections of the east and south fell under Mujahideen control. The Pakistani ISI and the U.S. CIA continued to actively support local Mujahideen commanders despite a looming Soviet withdrawal. Prominent commanders within the resistance and, in particular, Ahmad Shah Massoud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, solidified their political power by gathering around them well trained, heavily armed, armies of fighters. By 1985 the Soviets were beginning to prepare for troop withdrawals, and by 1991 had withdrawn all of its troops. However, the costs were massive for the Afghans in this apparent 'victory'. About 1.5 million Afghan lives were lost, and about 5 million Afghans (30 percent of the population) were forced to flee to Iran or Pakistan as refugees (Thomas, 1990, p. 3). The war also had broader ramifications. The struggle had in many ways initiated a regional and global geopolitical struggle that would prompt both the break-up of the Soviet Union and encourage a global resurgence in Islamism across the world's Muslim populations (Goodson, 2001, p. 53).

The Mujahideen Wars and the Taliban (1991-2001)

The withdrawal of Soviet troops coincided with the withdrawal by U.S. President George Bush of U.S. influence in the region (Rashid, 2008, p. 11). Various Mujahideen parties now broke up into warring factions to compete for prominence in the resulting power vacuum in Kabul. The country quickly disintegrated as ethnic based Warlords (primarily Uzbek, Hazara, Tajik, and Pashtun) carved out fiefdoms and battled over the

ruined capital city. The central government became effectively non-existent, had virtually no relations with external states, and lacked any legitimacy with local populations.

This political void enabled and tolerated the organisation of fundamentalist Islamic radicals into a political and military force called the Taliban (the word *Talib* means ‘Islamic student’). This “ragtag” group of armed religious students promised moral order and justice to Afghanistan and proceeded to take control of most of the country by 1996 (Crews & Tarzi, 2008, pp. 4-5). The Taliban movement started in the expansive network of *madrassas* (religious schools) mostly located in Baluchistan and the North West Frontier provinces (NWFP) of Pakistan. From these madrassas were recruited thousands of Pashtun religious students, many of whom had grown up in Pakistani refugee camps and had learned fighting skills from the various Mujahideen groups based in the NWFP (Rashid, 2000, p. 23). Because they had grown up in Pakistan, madrassa students were typically unfamiliar with their home country and were ignorant of history, clan and tribal systems, and traditions. Typically quite young (14-24 years old), impressionistic, uneducated, and untrained, these young men proved to be ideal candidates for religious and nationalistic indoctrination by Afghan Mullahs and Pakistan’s Islamic fundamentalist parties. Training at the madrassas eschewed the typical topics of math, science, history, and literature and, rather, focused on rote memory of the Koran along with interpretation of Islamic law by barely literate teachers (Rashid, 2000, p. 32). A highly politically charged version of the Deobandi tradition of Islam that focused on the necessity of jihad, oppression of women, and widespread intolerance was advocated in the students’ training (Crews & Tarzi, 2008, p. 117).

Recruited by the Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, these religious students formed the core of an expansive and formidable military force which, by the time of their fall in 2001, controlled over 90 percent of Afghanistan (Sinno, 2008, p. 60). The Taliban's stated goals were to restore peace by disarming a heavily armed population, and enforce a strict version of *shari'a* law (Rashid, 2000, p. 22). They viewed themselves as 'cleansers' and 'purifiers' of a country gone astray, a corrupted social system, and an Islamic way of life infected with internal and external contaminants (Rashid, 2000, p. 23).

The Taliban's definitive and unexpected surge to military and political dominance relied upon direct support from Pakistan. Support for the Taliban by Pakistan was so extensive and multifaceted that the Taliban could possibly be considered Pakistan's proxy army in Afghanistan (Goodson, 2001, p. 110). Throughout the Taliban's offensive to bring Afghanistan under their control, Pakistan aided in recruiting and training, weapons and ammunition, financial assistance, logistical support, and the direct involvement of intelligence officers and regular forces (Goodson, 2001, p. 111). Interestingly, Pakistan has consistently denied the provision of direct support for the often-uncontrollable Taliban.

Pakistan's intensive support for the Taliban was premised on several factors. Continued lawlessness and instability in Afghanistan resulting from warring between Mujahideen factions was spilling over the border and was carrying with it numerous refugees. At the height of the refugee crisis, there were an estimated 3.3 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, costing the government and the UN over \$367 million a year

(Goodson, 2001, pp. 148, 151). The fundamentalist discontent that fomented amongst the refugees would prove to be a threat to Pakistan's internal security.

The Taliban's drive to military dominance began in 1994 with the capture of the border town of Spin Bolak south of Kandahar, after which they seized a sizable weapons depot (Davis, 1998, pp. 45-46). The Taliban then positioned themselves to take control of southern Afghanistan by capturing Kandahar from local Warlords. Emboldened by their sudden success, conquering the rest of Pashtun southern Afghanistan occurred quickly. Local Warlords either fled from the advancing troops or surrendered easily to them (Rashid, 2000, p. 30).

Capturing the capital city of Kabul and the western city of Herat proved much more challenging. In the spring of 1995 General Ahmad Shah Massoud's Tajik forces drove the Taliban out of Kabul in their first major military loss (Davis, 1998, pp. 58-59). Concurrently, the Taliban were decisively beaten in Herat, suffering at least 3000 casualties. However, in September of 1995, Herat was captured by an invigorated and tactically prepared Taliban. The Taliban then turned its attention back to Kabul, and after an eleven-month siege, the subdued city finally capitulated to Taliban control in September 1996. The Taliban immediately proceeded to impose the strictest version of Islamic *shari'a* law anywhere in the world that included severe restrictions on individual freedoms, gross human rights violations, and oppressive policies towards Afghan women (Rashid, 2000, p. 50).

In early 1997, the Taliban initiated a military offence against the only remaining major city, Mazar-e-Sharif in the north. The Taliban were, however, unsuccessful, and lost over 600 combatants in bitter street warfare against local Hazara and Uzbek citizens

who ambushed Taliban soldiers from the rooftops in the maze of city streets (Rashid, 2000, p. 58). In a renewed assault the next summer, the Taliban overran the Uzbek Warlord General Dostum's headquarters in Sheberghan and captured Mazar-e-Sharif, and conducted widespread ethnic cleansing in which thousands of Hazara civilians died. For the next three years the Taliban continually battled against the only remaining viable force, Massoud's Tajik forces in the Panjsher Valley of northeast Afghanistan. By 2001, the Taliban had gained control of 29 of 30 provinces and controlled 97 percent of the country.

The September 11th al-Qaeda attacks on the U.S. brought about the sudden termination of Taliban rule. After refusing to expel al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, the U.S., Britain, and Northern Alliance forces launched a joint air and ground assault in late 2001 that gained control of all of the Taliban's territory and caused the collapse of the Taliban regime.

Conclusion

The current international intervention in Afghanistan is not a unique, first-of-a-kind event, but can perhaps be viewed as solely one chapter in the evolving story of conflict in Afghanistan. It appears that current peacebuilding interveners, despite giving lip service to Afghanistan's history and traditional society, have largely failed to situate the current intervention and struggle in the history of foreign interference in Afghanistan. The optics of current peacebuilding leaders are focused intensely on the post-2001 period, and this leads to ignorance regarding the immense wisdom offered by Afghanistan's history and a failure to relate current struggles to recurring struggles over the last century in particular. Many barriers faced today are not novel or new, they have

emerged before and history could have accurately predicted many of the current barriers to 'peacebuilding' success. Thus, it is informative to pause and reflect on some of the notable lessons that emerge out of Afghanistan's history that may speak to current intervention efforts.

A plethora of lessons do exist, a couple of which will be discussed here:

(1) The Afghan people have enormous experience of foreign invasion and influence. In some ways, dealing with foreign invaders has become a central part of the Afghan communal psyche, which was something that was largely overlooked by Soviet occupiers during the 1980s and, arguably, by NATO and U.S. troops in the current intervention.

(2) The Afghan people have consistently mounted a fierce resistance and exhibited an intense independence in the face of these outside forces. According to war historians, the Afghans have developed and displayed tremendous martial skill and excelled at guerrilla warfare throughout their recorded history (Goodson, 2001, p. 23). The combination of hit-and-run ambush tactics and the rugged mountainous terrain has provided a massive challenge for all invaders. The tribes of the mountains have shown themselves willing and able, again and again, to mount a violent guerrilla resistance against both outsiders and internal tribal enemies.

(3) The Afghans have mastered the art of political duplicity, and have consistently been willing to enter political and military alliances for strategic ends, only to rapidly break alliances or change sides when the advantages appear to be shifting (Goodson, 2001, p. 25).

(4) The tribal-based Afghan society, despite any internal strife (of which there is often plenty) is willing to quickly unite in the face of an outside invader. The anthropologist Louis Dupree (1973) described one example, “The two Pashtun tribes [Ghilzai and Durrani] might fight each other to the death for control of Herat, Farah, and Qandahar, but any external invader welded them together in a common cause” (p. 330). This sort of situation is evident throughout Afghan history. However, the opposite has also been true. One tribe has often proven willing to join with an outside invader in opposition to another internal group (Goodson, 2001, p. 26). Thus, the tendency towards short-term alliances and temporary political bonds typically leads back as quickly as possible to the traditional balance of tribal competition and fighting.

(5) Twentieth century Afghan history illustrates that Afghanistan has experienced long periods of relative peace, development, and democratic growth. These periods of peace (even if they were often largely ‘negative’ in nature) and democratic political development may have some lessons for current practice and, at a minimum, serve as a reminder that the post-1979 period of warring and destruction can be viewed as something to be transcended on the journey to restore sustainable peace in Afghanistan. Afghan society and politics have surely been scarred, but still hold significant potential.

(6) It becomes evident that peacebuilding success will hinge on tremendous creativity in easing the tensions between tradition and modernisation. For example, many modern Afghan women are unwilling to again return to stricter versions of *pardah*.

(7) The competition between tribal-decentralised and centralised power structures continues to affect Afghan politics. Must current top Afghan leaders be chosen according

to tribe? And what are the roles for tribal structures and methodologies such as the *Jirga* and the *Shura*?

(8) It appears that any legitimate Afghan government must earn the backing of Afghanistan's Pashtun population. Afghan history reveals that it has been the Pashtun population that has shouldered the bulk of the nation-building project in Afghanistan. However, even with the selection of Hamid Karzai, a Durrani Pashtun from Kandahar, to head the government, many Pashtuns believe they are being unfairly excluded from political power as a punishment for their support of the Taliban (Rais, 2008, p. 48).

(9) Years of war have magnified the Pashtun/non-Pashtun divide. Non-Pashtun groups have taken advantage of external support during the Mujahideen years to build up their political potential and expectations, despite historically playing only a minor role in Afghan politics. For example, the prominent role of Tajik leaders in the current government does not reflect the relative size of the Afghan Tajik population.

(10) The tensions of foreign intervention must be resolved. Some of the consequences of the current intervention are deeply appreciated by the Afghan people such as an end to open warfare in Kabul. However, there also remains a deep unease with having foreign forces on Afghan soil.

Chapter 3 – Literature Review

Introduction

Post-Cold War civil warfare and, more recently, the elevated fear of terrorist activity on Western soil, have motivated the burgeoning support for foreign intervention into war-affected contexts. Supported by international permissions and a reduction in the scope of sovereignty the world community (most prominently the United Nations and the United States) has responded to civil violence across the globe with complex peacebuilding projects incorporating a diverse troupe of actors. However, the results have been contentious. In many cases, despite the best of intentions, war-torn nations have failed to acquire sustainable and positive peace and, in some cases, have quickly fallen into renewed competition and violence as foreign actors retreat.

Reflection on peacebuilding lessons learned in the post-Cold War world has an increasing number of scholars and practitioners wondering whether an absence of local ownership over these peacebuilding missions and activities is a key component to its struggle and failure (Boughton & Mourmouras, 2002; Chesterman, 2007; Donais, 2009b; Goodhand & Sedra, 2010; Narten, 2009, p. 252; Scheye & Peake, 2005). For example, in Afghanistan, the contextual focus of this study, peacebuilding has remained an extremely “internationalised affair” with international leaders and organisations remaining firmly in control of peacebuilding activities (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010, p. 583). Externally-led transformation processes such as security reform, democratisation, and economic reform remain beyond the control of local leaders and citizens, resulting in inadequate popular support, dissatisfaction, and resistance (Tadjbakhsh & Schoiswohl, 2008). For this reason local ownership, or in this case Afghan ownership, must be thoroughly investigated.

Approaching the topic of Afghan ownership requires travel through the field of international peacebuilding theory as currently conceived and put into practice. Thus, this literature review critically surveys two competing versions of peacebuilding theory as a stepping-stone for a more finely tuned inquiry into processes leading to Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. The first body of peacebuilding theory largely reflects actual peacebuilding practice as experienced in Afghanistan. This body of theory (which I label ‘(neo)liberal peacebuilding’) holds liberalisation as a remedy for conflict, and justifies its philosophy and ethics with the liberal peace thesis, which is the belief that liberal democratisation and neo-liberal marketisation will inevitably lead to greater peace (Paris, 2004, p. 5). Thus, intervention tactics are by necessity quite intrusive with the transition to local ownership only a marginal concern. Further, ‘transition’ strategies are primarily concerned with the hand-over of security and other upper-level structures and processes to local authorities.

The second set of theory (which I label ‘emancipatory peacebuilding’) is much more critical in tone. It pushes beyond the status quo and critiques the underlying philosophies to (neo)liberal peacebuilding and explores the tentative emergence of an alternative peacebuilding paradigm that is much more in tune with local voices. A basic tenet of emancipatory peacebuilding is a fundamental concern for local ownership of peacebuilding. Because of its emergent nature, the discussion has significant gaps, is based on theory largely untested in the field, and has an uncertain trajectory and conclusions. However, it is crucial that theory remain on the cutting edge in order to distil down holistic, emancipatory, and practical suggestions for peacebuilding practice in the quest to support sustainable peace in war-torn contexts.

The theory on emancipatory peacebuilding contains an investigation into a third area of theory, that of local ownership itself. The literature on the topic is small, virtually non-existent in the case of Afghanistan, but is gaining momentum. In some respects it may be leading the charge in practically working out what a transformed and more emancipatory peacebuilding strategy might look like.

(Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding

Post-Cold War peacebuilding ventures such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, East Timor, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Darfur, and southern Sudan, amongst others, have become predominantly a project of Western industrialised nations, often times legitimated by and enacted through inter-governmental organisations, primarily the United Nations (United Nations, 1992). The growth of peacebuilding practice has been rapid and arguably chaotic, with its central priorities continually debated. The term ‘(neo)liberal’ can be used to describe these missions to reflect their common strategy of encouraging neoliberal economic transformation and liberal political reform in the creation of a market democracy in host war-torn contexts. (Neo)liberal peacebuilding missions such as in Afghanistan incorporate large-scale multi-dimensional approaches to peace, particularly the establishment of a ‘liberal peace’ through liberal political peacebuilding interventions and, as such, are primarily concerned with statebuilding. The main focus has remained on upper-level and ‘outside-in’ official processes with international ‘experts’ prescribing their knowledge, procedures, and structures and has, thus, resembled more a system of governance as opposed to a reconciliatory process (Richmond, 2010, p. 25). This section aims to survey (neo)liberal

peacebuilding definitions, theory, and practice as currently experienced in contexts such as Afghanistan.

Towards a Definition of (Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding

Although peacebuilding is widely conceived of as incorporating some sort of external intervention in order to prevent the resumption of violent conflict, there exists significant terminological variance and uncertainty regarding its conceptualisation and operationalisation (Barnett, Kim, O'Donnell, & Sitea, 2007, p. 36). A wide variety of competing conceptions of peacebuilding theory and practice have been carried into international interventions in war-torn contexts, and there exist many important differences in how actors view the complex task of building peace. The prevailing organisational mandates and networks of intervening actors certainly shape how peacebuilding is defined and what particular priorities are focused upon (Barnett, et al., 2007, p. 37). For example, some organisations clearly prioritise stability and the establishment of security, while other actors prioritise the enhancement of civil society and the related development of justice and the rule of law.

A foundational definition used in the peacebuilding enterprise as experienced in locales such as Afghanistan is Boutros-Ghali's original formulation in *The Agenda for Peace*: "Action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict" (United Nations, 1992). Boutros-Ghali expanded on his original definition in his 1995 *Supplement to an Agenda for Peace* and clarified the essential goal: "the creation of structures for the institutionalisation of peace" (United Nations, 1995, para. 49). The (neo)liberal peacebuilding intervention movement, as a whole, has embraced this doctrine. These reports outlined a new vision

for the UN following the tumultuous period of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Boutros-Ghali envisioned an empowered and emboldened UN system as actively and effectively engaging in preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peacebuilding. To this end, the *Agenda for Peace* makes clear the aims of the UN to intervene earlier, more fully, and more frequently in conflicts around the globe. Consequently the UN has moved well beyond its traditional peacekeeping roles, and has taken on responsibility for complex and multidimensional peace missions aiming to cement the foundations for stable and legitimate governments that can ensure sustainable peace (Doyle, 2001, p. 532).

Roland Paris (2004) defines peacebuilding in a similar fashion to Boutros-Ghali, “...action undertaken at the end of a civil conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of fighting. A peacebuilding mission involves the deployment of military and civilian personnel from several international agencies, with a mandate to conduct peacebuilding in a country that is just emerging from a civil war” (p. 39). Lidén (2006) points out, however, that it is the *Brahimi Report* in 2000 which more clearly links UN conceptions of peacebuilding with the aims of liberalisation and the liberal peacebuilding project (p. 10). He points out the UN’s “support of a broader process of democratisation and civil society building that includes effective civilian governance and a culture of respect for basic human rights” (Brahimi, 2000, para. 38).

Other scholars focus on what is indeed occurring in practice as a basis for their definitions. Barnett et al. (2007) surveyed twenty-four governmental and inter-governmental bodies currently involved in peacebuilding in order to summarise current conceptions of peacebuilding. They identify three dimensions of post-conflict

peacebuilding, namely “stability creation, restoration of state institutions, and addressing the socioeconomic dimensions of conflict” (Barnett, et al., 2007, p. 49). With similar results, Jeong (2005) distils from the literature four priorities, namely security and demilitarisation, political transition, development, and reconciliation/social rehabilitation.

More recently, scholars have turned their attention to the underlying philosophical and ethical foundations of peacebuilding and the pursuit of the liberal peace (Chopra & Hohe, 2004; Jacoby, 2007; Lidèn, 2006; Mac Ginty, 2008; Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009; Paris, 2004; Pugh, 2000; Richmond, 2009a; Richmond & Franks, 2007). Many of these scholars have added the term ‘liberal’ to definitions of peacebuilding in order to emphasise the political nature of peacebuilding (Lidèn, 2006, p. 7). This study prefers the term ‘(neo)liberal’ to more accurately reflect the neoliberal turn over the last decade in particular. The (neo)liberal peacebuilding project is aimed at establishing peace through liberalisation, and is based on the pillars of democracy, human rights, a free-market economy, and neoliberal development. The liberal peace framework has as its objective a “self-sustaining peace within domestic, regional and international settings, in which both overt and structural violence are removed and social, economic and political models conform to international expectations in a globalised, transnational setting” (Richmond & Franks, 2007, p. 29). It is argued by an increasing number of scholars and practitioners that these ‘liberal’ assumptions have become central to most policy formulations by the UN and other governmental organisations regarding peace and security issues (Paris, 2004; Richmond & Franks, 2007, p. 29).

Underlying Theories for (Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding

Underlying the modern peacebuilding project are the interrelated concepts of human rights, human security, and the ‘responsibility to protect’. Widespread concern for human rights emerged after World War II and became a major concern of the League of Nations and the UN. The UN-sponsored *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) has significantly shaped worldwide thinking, has legitimated concern for human rights, and has been incorporated into many national constitutions (Barash & Webel, 2009, p. 383). The human rights movement initiated a fundamental shift in reference from a strict concern for states and their sovereign borders to a focus on the individuals within these borders. The UDHR serves as the basis for numerous other legal instruments including several covenants, conventions, treaties, and declarations. Thus, the human rights movement has taken on a distinct legalistic tone with a focus on universal standards and legal rationales (Merry, 2006).

The post-Cold War concept of ‘human security’ is indebted to and expands upon the human rights movement. The concept of human security, in a similar vein to the concept of human rights, is focused on individual rather than state security. The concept of ‘human security’, as explicated by Mahbub ul Haq in the *1994 Human Development Report* expands on traditional conceptions of security (i.e. national border integrity), and includes economic, health, food, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 2004, pp. 24-25). The ‘human security’ doctrine is central to changing conceptions of humanitarian intervention and, in particular, military intervention into the affairs of a weak or conflict-affected state. Traditional conceptions of security attempt to maintain the integrity of state boundaries and make external interventions into internal

affairs problematic. The ‘human security’ doctrine, however, lays forth guidelines (and in fact obligates) states to intervene in the internal affairs of another state out of concern for the security of its population. Thus, human security has become foundational to the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project (Cockell, 2000).

The closely related ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine stems from a lack of clarity on responsibilities and appropriate actions on the part of concerned states in the face of human rights abuses in another state where the “national systems of justice either cannot or will not act to judge crimes against humanity” (ICISS, 2001, p. 14). As such, a report by the Canadian-led International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001) developed new standards of behaviour and laid out acceptable methods of enforcing these standards. In particular, the ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrine states that every state has the responsibility to protect its population from mass crimes such as genocide, ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity and, if a state is unable, the world community carries the responsibility to aid the struggling state to rebuild its capacity in this regard. If efforts at building a state’s capacity do not appear to be working, the international community carries the responsibility to intervene, primarily through diplomacy but, occasionally, with force as a last resort.

However, the ‘human security’ and ‘responsibility to protect’ doctrines have ignited significant debate. Critics accuse them as justifying intervention to ensure the global systemic status quo and the maintenance of the rich nation’s power in the world system (Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 119). Further, they accuse the doctrines of ensuring that the majority of security threats are located in the South, thus creating imaginary dangers in the South, which allows global inequalities and exclusion to remain unaddressed in the

face of “security talk” (Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 119). For example, it remains unthinkable that a developing nation would intervene in the industrialised world to address human rights concerns. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh (2010) proposes, however, that despite the many valid criticisms, one must not lose focus of the fact that threats to human dignity have been (and need to be) identified despite the response to them from the international community. It is ethically imperative that threats to “human security” be noticed and dealt with. She recommends that instead of jettisoning the human security theory, we need to rather widen the definition (which ironically was the original intention of Mahbub Ul Haq) and adopt a broad approach that would “argue for the universal applicability of the subject ... no matter where they live geographically”, even in the industrialised societies in the North (Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 120).

(Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding Priorities

Surveys by Jeong (2005) and Barnett et al. (2007) of past achievements and failures, current *de facto* practice, and emerging trends, reveal four broad (neo)liberal peacebuilding priorities: (1) security and demilitarisation; (2) political transition; (3) social and economic development; and (4) reconciliation, justice, and social rehabilitation.

Security and demilitarisation. The transition from war and civil violence to sustainable peace is a grey zone, and is ambiguous, unpredictable, and precarious (Tanner, 2000, p. 86). Peacebuilding scholars propose an interdependent intervention process that is a mutually synergising program of confidence building, DDR (demobilisation, disarmament, and reintegration), and security sector reform. However, the interventions in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) have added a new dimension to

security intervention. In the majority of peacebuilding missions between 1989 and 2001, international interveners claimed to be conducted in a supposedly 'neutral' manner. To contrast, in the Iraq and Afghanistan interventions the foreign peacebuilders arrived as invaders and conquerors, and chose clear sides in the conflict (e.g. siding against the Taliban and with the Northern Alliance in the invasion of Afghanistan). This change in operational philosophy was again evident in the NATO support of Libyan rebels in the 2011 Libyan civil war. These missions invoke active warfare against local resistance to create security for both local populations and the international intervention community who require a modicum of security to conduct their multi-sectoral activities.

Active confidence building measures can reduce suspicion amongst former rivals, allowing for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former combatants. While having obvious military significance, demobilisation carries weighty symbolic meaning since it solidifies mutual commitments to peace (Jeong, 2005, p. 45). Demobilisation and disarmament are complex procedures, requiring significant time and substantial human resources to monitor the process, collect weapons, and register combatants. Further, demobilisation processes are often fraught with trickery, desertion of soldiers, the collection of weapons in poor condition, and often tend to sharpen the security dilemma if conducted rapidly (Jeong, 2005, p. 47; Tanner, 2000, p. 78). However, the reintegration of ex-combatants allows them to re-join the social, economic, and political life of their civilian communities as well as detach from their military past (Knight & Ozerdem, 2004, p. 500). Reintegration processes typically involve compensation (often lump sums of cash), technical/employment training, temporary

employment, provision of tools and credit, construction of homes, and counselling (Kingma, 1997, p. 162).

Cooper (2000) addresses the increasingly prevalent problem of demilitarisation and ensuring the ‘post-modern peace’, where armed forces and military aid have been consistently reduced through effective arms embargos but has instead witnessed increased commercial trade in state-of-the-art weaponry and mercenaries and the burgeoning growth of the black market and arms diffusion processes (Cooper, 2000, p. 55). Global networks, diasporas, and the exploitation of international aid are increasingly used to finance armed activities.

This post-modern problematic certainly affects demilitarisation policy. The combination of economic motivations for local and international actors to prolong the conflict, the widespread availability of easily transferable small weapons, and the increased ability to quickly move arms across borders, make it exceedingly difficult to ensure rule of law and order (Cooper, 2000, p. 57). In response, Cooper (2000) recommends strategies of ‘structural arms control’, which “raise the cost of conflict, and lower the price of peace” (p. 70). Central to these strategies are gun buy-backs and funding the re-integration of combatants into civilian life. However, wider strategies involve subsidies, embargos, and restrictions on the abilities of combatants to purchase arms (Cooper, 2000, p. 70).

Despite diplomatic peace agreements and the initiation of disarmament processes, elevated levels of risk for renewed flare-ups in violence and war often continue indefinitely (Darby, 2001, p. 38). Thus, the liberal peace project insists that threats to security justify external assistance to establish security, not only in security sector reform

and in instituting effective civilian security structures and processes, but also more recently with active foreign military engagement with local resistance. At a minimum, the deployment of peacekeeping forces serves to ensure a social environment that allows citizens to restore daily activities in safety. However, international militaries, particularly the U.S. and NATO have shown themselves increasingly willing to actively engage in open warfare to establish 'security'.

One particularly challenging but underlying motivation for security intervention is to convince the population "to surrender the responsibility for its physical safety into government hands" (Hansen, 2000, p. 35). To this end, proponents of the liberal peace project believe that international security assistance is required to remove and/or transform the prevalent culture of violence that saturates post-war societies, where the threshold for resorting to physical violence is extremely low. The establishment of legitimate and respected military and civilian security structures will allow citizens to resolve conflict through non-violent conflict management mechanisms such as legal justice and rule-of-law institutions, the police, and occasional early warning systems. However, lengthy transitional periods and local mistrust for non-traditional conflict resolution systems are making this process extremely difficult in locations such as Afghanistan.

The formation of a professional civilian police force can protect democratic institutions, ensure citizen rights, and maintain public order (Jeong, 2005, p. 65). However, the transition from military conflict to police-enforced order will require extensive third-party monitoring, intervention, and training for emerging police units.

The recruitment of police personnel from rival groups is mandatory to ensure police neutrality and legitimacy in the eyes of local populations (Jeong, 2005, p. 66).

Political transition. The (neo)liberal peacebuilding project is rooted in the ‘highest’ of liberal principles, chiefly individualism, universalism, egalitarianism, meliorism⁷, human rights, and democracy (Lidèn, 2006, p. 44). It is widely purported that these principles and values are best ensured through their institutionalisation within democratic state structures and processes. Therefore, democratisation and intensive statebuilding projects are central to facilitating political transition during modern peacebuilding missions. Roland Paris (2004) notes that “perhaps the most remarkable feature of the peacebuilding operations in the 1990s was that they all pursued the same general strategy for promoting stable and lasting peace in war-shattered states: democratisation and marketisation” (p. 19). Democratic political transition typically involves: (1) intensive statebuilding processes; (2) enshrining democratic structures and processes; and (3) conducting democratic elections.

The state has been “rendered the only possible mode of governance for the world” (Milliken & Krause, 2002, p. 763). Thus, the promotion of a strong state as a solution to social and economic upheaval and war has become the norm and is inherent to (neo)liberal peacebuilding missions. Historical state formation processes have bequeathed the state with three core functions, namely providing security, representation, and welfare (Milliken & Krause, 2002, p. 756). A failure to provide in these core functions has resulted in states being labelled ‘failed’, ‘collapsed’, or ‘weak’. So called weak and failed states have been a breeding ground for violent conflict as central

⁷ The belief that the world can be made better by human effort.

governments lose political legitimacy, relinquish control to provincial leaders and Warlords, fail to protect vulnerable minorities, fail to monitor and enforce borders allowing for the smuggling of weapons and drugs, and permit the establishment of powerful criminal organisations (M. Brown, 2001, p. 215). In response, statebuilding processes have become central to the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project. Statebuilding processes aim to establish credible and legitimate avenues for citizens to resolve their conflicts non-violently and resist criminal enterprises (e.g. justice systems, police) (Call, 2008, p. 12). Further, statebuilding should accelerate the withdrawal of international troops and other external actors, increasing stability and support for emerging institutions (Call, 2008, p. 13).

Inside the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project “it has become axiomatic that democracy is the only political system, good for all countries under all circumstances” (Ottaway, 2007, p. 603). Thus, democracy promotion and coercive democratisation processes have become central to international interventions regardless of existing conditions and citizen’s preferences in war-torn states. As a supposed complement to peace processes, these countries are rapidly forced through formal steps aimed at making democracy a reality. However, case study evidence has revealed that coercive democratisation is problematic and, in many cases, has proven to be itself a source of conflict that can destabilise a society, at least in the short run (Barnes, 2001, p. 88; Ottaway, 2007, p. 614). However, it is difficult to avoid the centrality of political transition work to the overall (neo)liberal peacebuilding project in order to avoid peace process failure and the resumption of war-making and violence (Call & Cook, 2003). Further, the international community has struggled, or perhaps been unwilling, to

formulate alternative policies to replace the practice of coercive democratisation (Ottaway, 2007, p. 606). This is understandable given the current worldwide popularity of democracy and the general unwillingness to “challenge at the theoretical level the idea that democracy is a political system superior to all others” (Ottaway, 2007, p. 604).

(Neo)liberal peacebuilding actors have struggled with choosing and/or developing political institutional design structures that reinforce local dynamics most conducive for peace in post-war contexts (Sisk, 2001, p. 793). Several options exist. Three power-sharing political structures, namely consociationalism, federalism, and integrative approaches, as well as direct rule and partition have been debated. Consociationalism focuses on accommodation by political elites in the central government to regulate conflict and provide a representative voice to all ethnic groups (Byrne, 2001, p. 333; Lijphart, 1969). In a consociational model, major ethnocultural divisions are accepted, institutionalised, and granted decisionmaking power by proportionally assigning government offices to the dominant and minority group(s) (Jeong, 2005, p. 94). In a similar fashion, federalism regulates conflict by using ethnic divisions but, as opposed to consociationalism, it restricts central political power in favour of regional autonomy. Integrative power-sharing regimes are dependant on peace settlements that provide incentives for ideological moderation, multiethnic cooperation, and the formation of coalitions (Sisk, 2001, p. 792). Partition involves the creation of independent homogeneous socio-political entities and often leads to population exchanges and dislocation. Direct rule involves the revival of the ideas of trusteeship and the colonial protectorate and creates a system of governance in which a foreign body shares

sovereignty with the local state such as with the UN in Kosovo (1999) and East Timor (1999) (Krasner, 2007, p. 665; Matheson, 2001).

Peacebuilding efforts in the area of political transition must be intentionally multi-level. Political elites have posed a special problem for intervention actors following violent ethnic conflict since they often maintain control over military and other armed personnel and thus threaten to act as spoilers. External intervention actors are faced with a dilemma of trading guaranteed immunity for their cooperation or pressing for prosecution for those who have committed war crimes (Mansfield & Snyder, 2001, p. 124). In general, for peace processes to gain a foothold, moderate elites from both sides of the war must be integrated and encouraged to work together (Licklider, 2001, pp. 701-702). Conversely, international assistance should aim to support civil society associations that are undertaking cross-cutting activities, in order that civil society can endeavour to avoid the reification of divisive identities (Barnes, 2001, p. 99; Byrne, Thiessen, Fissuh, Irvin, & Hawranik, 2008).

Economic and social development. Moving to the economic realm of the modern (neo)liberal peacebuilding project, liberalisation is conceived of as a process of marketisation, or the adoption of market economics (Paris, 2004, p. 5). Economic liberalisation in post-war contexts has seen the rapid Adam Smith-style reform of economic institutions and processes to limit government intrusion in the economy, expand the freedoms of individual economic actors to pursue their interests, all with the hope of quickly achieving sustainable economic growth in order to suppress the potential of renewed violence (Paris, 2004, p. 5). Economic liberalisation in post-war contexts is motivated and shaped by the worldwide movement towards market-oriented economics,

and has become something of a ‘global theology’ (Paris, 2004; Sachs, 2005, p. 22). As well, evidence has shown that (neo)liberal economic policies contribute to peaceful relations between liberal states (Oneal & Russett, 1999). Paris articulates that “market democracy took on the qualities of a universal antidote to misery and conflict” (Paris, 2004, p. 35).

The legacy of a civil war goes far beyond physical destruction; it forces profound changes in the economic sphere. Economic growth is stifled or obliterated, exports plummet with a reduction in production, and a sectoral shift to subsistence and informal economic activities are typical economic legacies of civil war (Bruck, FitzGerald, & Grigsby, 2000, p. 10). Further, civil wars alter the economic structures of the national economy in that a “conflict economy” becomes entrenched, and is not easily supplanted by a “peace economy” during peacebuilding projects (Kamphuis, 2005, p. 185). For example, during war a state’s formal economy often becomes intricately intertwined with informal, criminal, and international aid economic structures (Kamphuis, 2005, p. 208).

Peacebuilding actors must attend to the transformation of conflict economy structures given their natural tendency to instigate renewed conflict and violence. Therefore, external actors involved in instituting economic policy must have a comprehensive knowledge of the local conflict economy. As an initial step, Woodward (2002) states that ‘reviving the economy’ requires the provision of basic economic structures and processes in order to secure legitimacy for the peace agreement and the new government structures (p. 185). Crucial at this stage is reducing the conflict potential by thwarting the ability of conflict actors to benefit from security problems by providing convincing financial reasons to integrate into a peace economy (Kamphuis, 2005, p. 188).

To this end, economic policy must ensure high levels of employment in the formal economy for both war-affected citizens (e.g. refugees, IDPs) and ex-combatants who may easily integrate into the criminal economy (Kamphuis, 2005, p. 193).

Financing the peace requires securing funding to meet the commitments of peace agreements and financing political transition priorities. International economic aid holds significant potential to support the implementation of peace agreements (Byrne, Thiessen, & Fissuh, 2007, p. 7; Byrne, et al., 2008, p. 106). External actors can bring important resources to the negotiation table and provide important incentives for post-settlement attempts at democratic economic policy formation. Financing is provided by international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the IMF and the World Bank, and sometimes has stringent (neo)liberal structural adjustment requirements attached. While becoming more sensitive to the destructive social effects of structural adjustments, IFIs have continued to expect rapid liberalisation processes in the face of the social upheaval of war, or what Naomi Klein (2007) labels ‘the shock doctrine’.

Collier (2007) differs from many scholars and proposes a predominantly economics-based theory as to why violent rebellions occur. He proposes that precise contextual economic factors (dependence on primary commodity exports, low average incomes, slow growth, and large diasporas) prove to be significant predictors of civil wars (Collier, 2007, p. 205). These factors make it economically feasible for a rebel movement to foment, finance their operations, and succeed in recruitment. In many cases, the rebellion’s leaders manufacture a sense of grievance in order to justify its actions, gather recruits, and procure financial resources from locals and diasporas. Collier (2007) believes the international peacebuilding community can reduce the risk of civil war by

ensuring liberalisation processes are undertaken, which includes the diversification of economies dependant on commodity exports, generating rapid economic growth, convincing diasporas to end financial support for rebels, and institutionalising guarantees to minorities. Even though grievances are largely manufactured in the pre-war period, they must be systematically dealt with in the post-war period to reduce the risk of renewed violent conflict.

In the social development realm, the underlying liberal principles of human rights, individualism, and egalitarianism have motivated the international peacebuilding community to undertake a daunting array of social initiatives. Important initiatives are in the areas of social infrastructure (schools, hospitals, clinics), human capital (migration, displacement, nutrition), and social capital (trust, work ethic, respect for property, land, community) (Bruck, et al., 2000, p. 14).

Four sectors of social development are crucial in the immediate aftermath of violent conflict, namely education, health, land transfer/reform, and refugee resettlement and integration. The revival of schooling and education programming can serve a conflict-dampening role as disparities in educational opportunities are addressed (Degu, 2005, p. 139). Educational opportunity can also initiate widespread tolerance within a society, serve to 'de-segregate the mind' (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000), cultivate an inclusive citizenship, contribute to a culture of peace through peace education programming (Harris & Morrison, 2003), and serve as a constructive channel for a response to oppression and inequity (Freire, 1970). Health-related project work is typically one of the early sectors to receive international funding and support, and because of its status as a common concern for all parties following a conflict, can serve as an entry point into post-

war cooperation by transcending the immediate concerns of the warring parties (Jeong, 2005, p. 150). Land transfer programming addresses local roots of violence by considering issues surrounding land distribution. Because land ownership is central to ensuring a livelihood, land rights can be allocated to returning refugees and demobilised combatants in order to assimilate those most at risk to being caught up in renewed fighting (Jeong, 2005, p. 147). Support for refugee repatriation and integration serves to ensure economic recovery for war-displaced individuals, as well as support struggling communities to absorb large numbers of returnees (Jeong, 2005, p. 137).

Justice and reconciliation. A distinct gap in the literature exists with regards to the relationship of the liberal peace to reconciliation. Although the process and state of reconciliation definitely reflect the core issues of the liberal peace such as human rights and the rule of law, Daniel Philpott (2009) believes that the concept of reconciliation is a far more holistic term. The liberal peace is primarily concerned with justice, and works closely with human rights activists and international lawyers who call for trials and disqualification from political office as central tasks in ensuring the rule of law and accountability (Philpott, 2009, p. 391). Key performers in this task are the UN, the World Bank, the International Criminal Court, human rights NGOs, and many of the powerful Western states.

The (neo)liberal peacebuilding project is more comfortable with top-down national reconciliation processes, and has been accused of being dissonant with and even competing with bottom-up community and personal reconciliation processes. For example, Merwe (2003) found that upper-level reconciliation was pursued at the expense of local processes in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and

a study of peacebuilding in Northern Ireland found that community leaders held significant hope for reconciliation processes at the community level, but were noticeably fearful of peace process failure at the upper-political level (Thiessen, Byrne, Skarlato, & Tennent, 2010).

A central dilemma facing liberal conceptions of reconciliation seems to be the ambiguous relationship between justice and peace. Is justice central to reconciliation? Or does justice often need to be “traded off in the interests of peace” as when granting amnesty for former combatants (Darby, 2010, p. 299)? Undergirding the argument is a belief that simply burying the past and attempting deliberate forgetting is mostly counterproductive and destructive, as justice must be served and punishment dished out. However, it must have as its main purpose the vindication of victims (Biggar, 2003, p. 11). This focus on vindication stands in contrast to dominant conceptions of justice as being primarily retributive in nature.

Biggar (2003) discusses the tension of peace and justice in the peace processes of South Africa and Northern Ireland. The granting of amnesty for politically motivated crimes was contentious in South Africa. However, the application for amnesty requires the public confession of crimes, which certainly contains a certain element of punishment in the face of public opprobrium. Further, these public confessions serve justice by discrediting past political regimes and bolsters support for the new political regime.

In Northern Ireland the Good Friday Agreement allowed for the controversial early release of political prisoners, particularly from the PIRA and Loyalist paramilitary groups. However, Biggar (2003) argues that justice was served since these perpetrators were convicted and publicly sentenced, and have served a portion, if not most, of their

sentences. There is also the continued requirement that reversion to the paramilitary path will annul their release from prison.

Other scholars add to this fundamental debate. Darby (2010) asks, “How can one ensure an equitable society while constructing a harmonious society” (p. 300)? Equity and harmony are often in conflict with each other since the push for equity will typically highlight communal divisions and perhaps strengthen perceptions of difference. Lederach (1997) expands the justice-peace debate and states that reconciliation processes following protracted conflict “must be dynamic, adaptable, and practical, weaving back and forth between the different but interdependent energies pushing for Truth, Mercy, Justice, and Peace” (p. 28).

The (neo)liberal peacebuilding project, however, prefers to limit reconciliation to ‘Truth’ and ‘Justice’, and has tended to focus its energies on national reconciliation strategies. It has thus linked reconciliation to transitional justice schemes during transitions out of violent conflicts. Since the 2004 statement by the UN Secretary-General on *The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies* (United Nations, 2004), the international community has increasingly conceived of rebuilding rule-of-law and transitional justice as intertwined with post-war peacebuilding (Sriram, 2010). Transitional justice mechanisms have often featured criminal prosecution at international or national courts, and truth and reconciliation commissions.

Citizens of countries that have experienced abusive authoritarian rule or armed conflict will have often suffered significant human rights abuses or violations of international humanitarian law and, thus, are likely to expect some form of ‘justice’ (Sriram, 2010, p. 280). In response, transitional justice procedures have incorporated

legal accountability processes through an international court system. Recent examples of legal accountability are the referral of war crimes cases committed in Libya, the Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo to the International Criminal Court (ICC), the creation of a Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Iraqi Special Tribunal, and the Special Tribunal for Lebanon to investigate the February 2005 killing of the former Lebanese Prime Minister.

The search for ‘truth’ is often organised in truth commissions and tribunals, most notably the South African TRC. However, similar commissions under various names were conducted in Argentina, Chile, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Korea, and East Timor, among others. At these commissions, facts are established, attached to individuals, and acknowledged by perpetrators. Martha Minow (1998) proposes that truth commissions “promote psychological healing for individuals, groups, victims, bystanders, and offenders” while serving to “punish, exclude, shame, and diminish offenders for their offences” (p. 88). She believes that truth commissions may be as or more powerful than prosecutions in achieving reconciliation across polarised groups (Minow, 1998, p. 89).

Coordination of the (Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding Project

Given the previously described multiplicity in both actors and peacebuilding foci, scholars and practitioners are increasingly calling for the establishment of coordination structures, authorities, or schemes to better expedite peacebuilding success (Chayes & Chayes, 1999; Crocker, et al., 1999; Jeong, 2005, pp. 187-220; Jones, 2002; Nan & Strimling, 2006; Paris, 2004, pp. 228-232; Serwer & Tomson, 2007). The theoretical discussion surrounding coordination and cooperation regarding the (neo)liberal

peacebuilding project is centred on the international community interveners in war-torn contexts; there is very little voice given to local populations or even local/national government structures. Thus, cultural issues are situated within the international organisational sphere and concern the international actors involved in a particular peacebuilding project. Thus, coordination concerns are primarily horizontal amongst peacebuilding organisations.

A failure to coordinate peacebuilding efforts is destructive to the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project and its efforts of establishing sustainable peace. Institutional turf battles are common within peacebuilding missions, and efforts often work at cross-purposes to each other (Paris, 2004, p. 228). The absence of an overall coordinating mechanism makes it difficult to accumulate experience and expertise that could serve peacebuilding authorities in other war-torn contexts (Paris, 2004, p. 228). And even more concerning is the fact that un-coordinated efforts can prolong human suffering as local populations unnecessarily suffer from tensions and failures to reconcile, flare-ups in violence, underdevelopment, project inefficiency and overlapping, and the omission of vital services. Opponents to peace in a post-war context (e.g. spoilers) can manoeuvre between the cracks in an un-coordinated peacebuilding operation to inflict a fatal blow to the operation (Jones, 2002, p. 89). Similarly, self-serving local actors can take advantage of an un-coordinated implementation, which can compromise the overall mission.

Coordination structures within a peacebuilding operation adapt to support the parallel needs of the multitude of actors, and what results are often very complex working relationships spanning organisational mandates, resources, and sector focus (Jeong, 2005, p. 208). A survey of the literature on liberal peacebuilding coordination reveals

challenges and purported solutions in at least two dimensions, namely *vertical-strategic* and *horizontal-operational* coordination and cooperation (Jeong, 2005, pp. 208-214).

Vertical-strategic coordination - ‘Who gets to be boss?’ The vertical-strategic dimension of peacebuilding coordination involves the manner in which the activities of each peacebuilding actor are linked to the activities of other actors in a multi-level and, often hierarchical, structure. A chief issue that arises is who has the legitimacy, authority, scope, and logistical capacity to lead interventions and create an interagency framework that governs peacebuilding practice across the breadth of sectors discussed earlier. Has ‘unity of command’ been established? Is the wealth of knowledge from organisations involved at the grassroots channelled upward through the structure and does it shape policy? A related issue concerns the level of ‘buy in’ and cooperation with the legitimated coordinating authority and its peacebuilding vision.

Despite the flexibility provided by an ‘ad hoc’ approach to peacebuilding, several scholars are proposing the structuring of interventions under a standardised strategic framework (Jones, 2002; Serwer & Tomson, 2007). Strategic frameworks need to be multi-faceted, synchronous, and dynamic, since a wide range of actors work on different aspects of the project simultaneously (Serwer & Tomson, 2007, p. 373). As such, they would govern a sequenced course of action that would match appropriate intervention activities to the stage of conflict escalation/de-escalation and address the complex range of forces feeding the conflict (Byrne & Keashly, 2000; Fisher & Keashly, 1991).

A significant challenge facing efforts at strategic coordination concerns disagreement with regards to who will receive authority to lead liberal peacebuilding interventions. The primary contender is the United Nations, albeit with increasing

challenges from other actors. UN Special Representatives to the Secretary General (SRSGs) are central to many UN coordination efforts. However, SRSGs are dependent on the UN's ability to secure a central role in an intervention and on early use of the SRSG in the peace process (Jones, 2002, p. 97). The UN has also participated in integrated missions that incorporate a joint structure composed of several key organisations each with responsibility for various aspects to the overall intervention. For example, in Kosovo, the EU, the OSCE, and UNHCR each provided a deputy SRSG to the mission and were each responsible for isolated (but interrelated) components to the intervention. As mentioned earlier, the recent creation of the UN Peacebuilding Commission is intended to strengthen the UN's coordination capacity.

An important and recent development is the creation of a permanent Peacebuilding Commission in 2005, which recognises the need for a “coordinated, coherent and integrated approach to post-conflict peacebuilding and reconciliation with a view to achieving sustainable peace” (United Nations, 2005, p. 24). The core mandate of the Peacebuilding Commission includes the support of countries emerging from violence by bringing together relevant actors, and providing an organisational structure, advice, and information necessary to sustain international attention to countries under reconstruction (United Nations, 2005, p. 24).

In both the Afghanistan and Iraq theatres, the military (primarily the U.S. army/coalition forces and ISAF/NATO) have adopted a coordinating role, have conducted humanitarian aid work with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), and have attempted to build relationships with INGOs and UN bodies (Strand, 2002, p. 14; Weinberger, 2002). Afghanistan is serving as a testing ground for a new intervention

strategy. The Canadian version is labelled “3D” (Defense, Diplomacy, Development) or “whole of government”, and calls for cooperation between all government agencies involved in the overall intervention, particularly DND, DFAID, and CIDA. However, critics (some of the most vocal are humanitarian actors such as INGOs) accuse the plan of being heavily weighted in favour of DND and, thus, the 3D plan simply serves to put a humanitarian face on the military venture in Afghanistan (Travers & Owen, 2008, p. 691).

A few scholars have proposed the suitability of civil society actors for coordinating roles. For example, Herbert Kelman (2006) has called for the creation of a non-governmental ‘International Facilitating Service’ that would facilitate dialogue between politically influential actors within conflict zones. Moreover, Ron Fisher describes the potential of interactive problem-solving workshops in coordinating efforts of Track 1 and Track 2 actors (Fisher, 2006).

Perhaps the most innovative and promising solutions are emerging from rare attempts at using coordination networks in coordinating peacebuilding activities. For example, Friends Groups are widely used in Latin American with significant success. Friends Groups are thoughtfully created and inclusive in order to bring together key governments with the goal of achieving a unified focus and approach when dealing with regional conflict (Jones, 2002, p. 99).

Horizontal-operational coordination – ‘How do we all get along and work together?’ The horizontal-operational dimension of peacebuilding coordination is necessary to prevent organisations in the same context from working in isolation from, or counter to, each other (Jeong, 2005, p. 208). Coordination in this dimension determines

whether strategic frameworks and coordinating authorities are able to impact field operations, and to what extent. Are partnerships formed that span sectoral areas and institutional type? How are strategic decisions translated and divided by the multiplicity of actors in the face of widely divergent organisational cultures, overlapping boundaries of responsibility and expertise, and varying levels of legitimacy in the eyes of the local and international community?

Restricting efforts at horizontal-operational coordination and cooperation is institutional and organisational cultural dissonance. Cultural conflict between the individual actors within a peacebuilding operation will occur as competing and seemingly irreconcilable organisational cultures create opportunities for inefficiency, ineffectiveness, power and control struggles, overlapping of activities, and the omission of important peacebuilding activities.

Divergent notions of coordination arrangements across the governmental/non-governmental divide are challenging. The UN and other governmental bodies and structures typically establish overarching hierarchical frameworks that invest authority in specialised management structures that are expected to adjust their programming in accordance to institutional policy (Aall, Miltenberger, & Weiss, 2000, p. 9; Strand, 2002, p. 2). Conversely, INGOs and other civil society actors are typically quite decentralised, eschew elaborate hierarchical structures, allow widespread independence, and value consensus in decision making (Aall, et al., 2000, p. 97). Thus, many civil society actors are, understandably, wary of upper-level coordination efforts.

Another dimension of organisational conflict occurs along the civil/military axis. For example, NGOs and other civil society groups are quite vocal in their opposition to

the Canadian 3D philosophy. The blurred civil/military line in this policy increases the risk for civil society staff as insurgents find it increasingly difficult to differentiate between the civil and military actors and realise that aggression towards one actor negatively affects other actors inside of an integrated coordination structure (Thiessen, 2008, p. 103) Unfortunately, this blurring of roles has resulted in a spike in deaths amongst civil society actors. Further, NGOs see civil/military coordination as simply a “means of accomplishing military objectives” (Travers & Owen, 2008, p. 692).

Emancipatory Peacebuilding⁸

Many scholars argue that the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project is in crisis, and is uncertain how it will proceed (Duffield, 2007a; Jabri, 2010; Lidèn, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2008; Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009; Richmond, 2009a). Despite reports on the steady reduction in war-related deaths over the last decade (e.g. see the *Human Security Report Project* (2009)), there appears to be significant dissatisfaction with, and increasing resistance to, the liberal peace as experienced by local populations around the world (Tadjbakhsh & Schoiswohl, 2008; Taylor, 2007). It is seen as “ethically bankrupt, subject to double standards, coercive and conditional, acultural, unconcerned with social welfare, and unfeeling and insensitive towards its subject” (Richmond, 2009a, p. 558). The inner contradictions and inherent unsuitability of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding methodology for contexts emerging from war has motivated academic critique, but little self-reflection or transformation on the part of peacebuilding actors. So far, theoreticians or practitioners

⁸ Passages from this section were previously published in: Thiessen, C. (2011). Emancipatory peacebuilding: Critical responses to (neo)liberal trends. In T. Matyók, J. Senehi, & S. Byrne (Eds.), *Critical issues in Peace and Conflict Studies*. New York, NY: Lexington Books. A letter of permission permitting their use here has been provided by Lexington Books.

have provided few, if any, comprehensive solutions to the (neo)liberal peacebuilding dilemma. This inability to provide solutions may be due to a hesitancy to explore new terrain for fear of where it would lead; perhaps a sharp critique of capitalism, dominant conceptions of democracy, and the Western mindset and way of living. However, the academic literature is now starting to explore these inner (neo)liberal peacebuilding struggles and has opened up an ethical discussion on the (neo)liberal peace project, as well as accepted and incorporated theory from the established archives of more critical disciplines (e.g. Conflict Resolution, Peace Studies, Critical International Relations), which were previously considered impractical and unrealistic. The emerging version of peacebuilding does not, as yet, have a widely agreed upon name (if that were possible), yet this study follows the lead of Oliver Richmond (2007, 2010) and Mark Duffield (2007a) in labelling the reformed, hybridised, and much more localised version of peacebuilding as ‘emancipatory’. Donais (2009a) labels the same emerging paradigm ‘communitarian’, while Lidén (2009) labels it ‘social’.

Emancipatory peacebuilding, at this point, is primarily defined by what it is not. Thus, this section aims to move beyond the critique of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project (of which I will provide a summary) and investigate some philosophical underpinnings of an emerging peacebuilding alternative, and explore implications for the peacebuilding priorities as defined in the first section of this chapter. I also explore retooled conceptions of peacebuilding coordination and cooperation and their role in cementing sustainable peace through new forms of international-local partnerships, revised peacebuilding discourse, and locally-legitimated decision-making processes.

The (Neo)Liberal Peacebuilding Critique

Following the Cold War there was a widespread (and mostly unquestioned) belief amongst the powerful Western political actors that political liberalism and economic neoliberalism offered a panacea to the social, political, and economic woes of war-torn nations. However, hindsight has revealed significant challenges in most reconstruction efforts, particularly when rapid liberalisation strategies were employed. Thus, the legitimacy of (neo)liberal peacebuilding has come under scrutiny because of its performance. One of the clearest portrayals of this struggle is Roland Paris' *At War's End* (2004), which systematically critiques all fourteen major peacebuilding operations between 1989 and 1999. Paris points out major peacebuilding "missteps", and surveys the failure of post-war elections to secure sustainable peace in Angola (1992), Rwanda (1994), and Cambodia (1993), and the manner in which economic liberalisation in El Salvador and Nicaragua exacerbated the very socio-economic inequalities that served to initiate conflict in the first place. Paris's (2004) conclusion is concerning, "The case studies do suggest that the liberalisation process either contributed to a rekindling of violence or helped to recreate the historic sources of violence in many of the countries that have hosted these missions – a conclusion that casts doubt on the reliability of the peace-through-liberalisation strategy as it has been practiced to date" (p. 155). In response to its failures, the UN revised its statebuilding practice in Sierra Leone (1999), Kosovo (1999), and East Timor (1999) and was met with moderate success. However, efforts to replicate these moderately successful strategies in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003) have severely weakened the credibility of liberal international statebuilding due to

a lack of international and local legitimacy, and continued resistance and violence and general insecurity (Lidèn, Mac Ginty, & Richmond, 2009, p. 587).

The changing global political and economic climate has also served to de-legitimate (neo)liberal peacebuilding processes. The rise in power of China, Russia, Iran, and India, as well as regional organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU), and the Arab League, has certainly impacted the Western-dominated (neo)liberal consensus, particularly within the UN security council (Lidèn, et al., 2009, p. 588). For example, the Arab League was essential to NATO assistance in Libya (2011) and to addressing anti-protester violence in Syria (2011).

A body of deeper, more philosophical critiques has also emerged that assesses the underlying values of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project. The reaction of the U.S. to 9/11 and, in particular, its declared ‘war on terror’, has “given liberalism an aggressive face in global politics” and has called into question its appeal as the purported carrier of human rights and democracy (Lidèn, et al., 2009, p. 587). The initial focus on human security has given way to traditional heavy-handed security operations and, consequently, has provoked local distrust and resistance in most cases.

The ‘war on terror’ has also served to strengthen the critique that Western peacebuilding is simply a form of neo-colonialism (Jabri, 2010; Williams, 2010), or another form of liberal imperialism (Duffield, 2007a; Jacoby, 2007). Jabri (2010) and Williams (2010) analyse peacebuilding discourse and believe that the liberal peace project is centrally projected as a ‘rescue’ mission, primarily using the tools of security to manipulate developing populations to secure the security of the West (Jabri, 2010, p. 42). Thus, the liberal peace is a project of war and inherently concerned about the propagation

of the Western liberal self into the social realms of the 'other' (Jabri, 2010, p. 43). Williams tends to agree, and notes how indigenous forms of social and political organisation are written off as 'tribal', 'clan-based' and lacking in modern functionality, thus justifying the injection of Western versions of organisation into non-Western contexts (Williams, 2010, p. 60).

Tim Jacoby (2007) takes a sharply critical stance towards U.S. hegemony and its motivations in leading the charge in many post-war reconstruction projects, particularly in Iraq. He perceives the US role in Iraq as clearly defending and propagating US/Western hegemony (Jacoby, 2007, p. 534). The "shock and awe" destruction and consequent rebuilding of the country is intended to warn potential adversaries from aspiring to power in the current world system. Furthermore, post-war reconstruction serves as a methodology for ensuring Western prosperity by limiting state sovereignty in order that the country can be taken advantage of by Western corporations and the world market (Jacoby, 2007, p. 535).

Other critiques question whether (neo)liberal peacebuilding methods are socially and culturally appropriate in many contexts (Tadjbakhsh, 2009; Taylor, 2007). For example, in communally based social structures, democracy and competitive economic structures may be viewed with suspicion. This suspicion may partly result from the neoliberal-motivated omission of much needed welfare schemes in devastated war-zones. In the Cambodian context, Richmond and Franks (2007) note that the peacebuilding effort has established only a 'virtual' peace. A 'virtual' peace has limited impact on citizens and is recognised primarily by internationals as opposed to local populations (p. 44). This 'virtual' peace could be partly due to the liberal propensity for 'top-down'

peace processes, all the while providing inadequate attention to grassroots actors. Other commentators are concerned with the extensive control international actors exert over local populations. Duffield (2007a) (borrowing from Foucault) labels liberal methods as “biopolitics”. Biopolitics is “a form of politics that entails the administration of the processes of life at the aggregate level of population” by foreign intervening powers (in the case of Afghanistan for example) (p. 5).

The Emergent Emancipatory Peacebuilding Project

The above critique points to the urgently needed reformation of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project, or perhaps its abandonment. Peacebuilding theorists are divided on this point. A minority of scholars call for the termination of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project, but for various reasons. For scholars such as Duffield (2007a) and Jacoby (2007), the imperialist nature of (neo)liberal peacebuilding justifies its replacement by a fundamentally different strategy, which neither author explains in much detail. In this respect, an important gap in the literature currently exists. Others point out that the ‘victor’s peace’ (allowing a clear and dominant victor to gain power) has historically shown itself to be more sustainable, and thus civil conflicts should be allowed to ‘work themselves out’ without foreign peacebuilding interference (Luttwak, 1999). Realist scholars invoke different reasons for abandoning the project, and are fundamentally critical of intervening for the sake of humanitarianism as opposed to national interests (Drezner, 2008; M. J. Smith, 1998).

Most current critical scholarship, however, calls for reformation of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project as opposed to its abandonment. For example, Paris (2010) believes that even though the critical analysis of the project has laid bare

important challenges, there is nothing in the current critique that justifies the jettisoning of (neo)liberal peacebuilding and its replacement with an entirely ‘post-liberal’ alternative (p. 340). However, he proposes that the above critiques do point to much needed reformation of approaches and methodology, but not of the underlying liberal orientation of the project.

Richmond is perceptive of emerging practice and the need for ‘emancipatory’ peacebuilding values. However, even though he, in places, labels these emancipatory reforms as ‘post-liberal’, he does not call for the abandonment of the liberal project but, rather, describes a liberal-hybridised alternative that places more weight on ‘bottom up’ policies, peace at the ‘everyday’ level, and the participation of local actors (Richmond, 2007, 2009a, 2010). Donais (2009a), also, believes that sole reliance on either grassroots or upper-level peacemaking resources will lead to failure, thus forcing the necessity of a “negotiated hybridity” (p. 14). Tadjbakhsh (2010) too, calls for reform. Central to her peacebuilding ‘solution’ is an expansion of the prevailing constricted liberal conceptions of human security that simply serve to maintain the status quo in the international system of power that has lost sight of its original intent as an international movement to emancipate populations and ensure global justice and equity. Tadjbakhsh believes that abandoning the liberal human security doctrine would be ‘throwing the baby out with the bathwater’.

So what might a revised and more emancipatory peacebuilding practice look like? Oliver Richmond (2009a, 2009b) and Kristoffer Lidén (2009) believe that an emancipatory (Lidén labels it ‘social’) peacebuilding methodology by necessity must diverge significantly from the (neo)liberal project. It is much less coercive (particularly in

regards to international actors), is not evangelistic in regards to universal liberal conceptions of politics, economics, and human rights, and may not birth liberal market democracies; although this is certainly a definite possibility if local populations believe it to be to their benefit. Emancipatory peacebuilding, in short, broadens the narrow top-down state-building focus of liberal peacebuilding, and holistically redirects the project as a grassroots, bottom-up activity, engaging with the local and the marginalised. Local and ‘local-local’ (those excluded from the active and often privileged civil society structures) decision-making processes are allowed to determine the basic political, economic, and social developments in the post-violence period (Richmond, 2009a). As such, emancipatory peacebuilding is intimately interested in the ‘everyday’ needs of a conflict-affected population (similar to Burton’s (1997) ‘basic needs’), and the culturally adapted provision of vital resources, political agency, and economic opportunity (Lidèn, 2009, p. 621). Political organisation and any state-building activities are negotiated between local and international actors, which is void of pre-determined political models and outcomes. Further, versions of human rights and rule of law should be included in the ‘local peace’ that reflects the consensus of local groupings as well as broader international expectations (Richmond, 2009a, p. 579). In this way, emancipatory peacebuilding allows local conditions and capacities to determine what type of peace will emerge in a particular context (Lidèn, 2009, p. 621).

This sort of revised peacebuilding project is identified as ‘communitarian’ in character (Donais, 2009a, p. 6; Lidèn, 2006, pp. 77-83, 2009; Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 126). As a reaction against liberalism and, in particular, its universal pretensions (especially John Rawls’ *A Theory of Justice*) and its devaluation of community, communitarianism

argues that both tradition and social context prove essential to moral and political decision-making and action (Bell, 2009). Whereas the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project purports that its central tenets are universal in nature, communitarians suggest that any peacebuilding solutions must be derived from the potentially non-liberal local populations affected by the conflict who should, consequently, be granted the power to make their own choices regardless of their dissonance with (Western) international norms (Donais, 2009a, p. 6).

As such, emancipatory and communitarian versions of peacebuilding practice embrace and prop up (albeit not uncritically) indigenous peacebuilding structures and processes. For example, Mac Ginty (2008) describes a system of international peacebuilding that rests solidly on traditional and indigenous peace-making processes (p. 149). In the currently dominant liberal peacebuilding methodology, locally inspired peacebuilding processes such as village consensus-based decision-making, restoring human-environmental systems and balance, traditional rituals, and reciprocal compensation and gifts are viewed as far removed from, and dissonant with, foreign ideologies of peace. Thus, emancipatory indigenous-based peacebuilding paradigms will be wary of imposing a foreign culture onto the local culture. However, it must be noted that despite its current popularity in emerging policy, indigenous-based methodologies are coming under serious criticism as unable to stand their ground in the face of powerful foreign influence and globalisation, and as preventing local cultural identities from flourishing in the face of locally legitimated and desired modernising processes (Lidèn, 2009, pp. 629-630; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 157). In Afghanistan, for example, significant

portions of the population (particularly from urban areas) intensely desire to engage with international development processes and modernisation.

Philosophical and Ethical Bases for Emancipatory Peacebuilding

The emancipatory peacebuilding project is undergirded by at least two philosophical and ethical themes: (1) local ownership and agency⁹; and (2) embracing the guidance of critical theory.

Local ownership and agency. The first theme concerns the voice and ownership of the ‘local’ (and often ‘indigenous’) in peacebuilding processes. On the surface, the theme of local ownership may seem like nothing new since ‘local ownership’ discourse is present in the orthodox (neo)liberal project. However, in practice, (neo)liberal goals have by necessity restricted local ownership to local elites and their cooperation with the overall peacebuilding scheme. Thus, the (neo)liberal project has been unable to transcend its top-down bias (Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 157). In response, and perhaps as a corrective, there is a surge of interest in indigenous and traditional approaches to making peace following civil violence and war.

Emancipatory peacebuilding has as a central dilemma the elusive objective of reconciling “its ‘global’ objectives and the local conditions for their realisation” (Lidèn, 2009, p. 618). Because some form of external intervention is necessary in many conflict-affected contexts to secure the space for meaningful local ownership and the adoption of indigenous peacemaking practices, it becomes vital to consider the feasibility of a complimentary relationship between external and local actors, and more specifically the

⁹ The theme of local ownership is central to this thesis, and as such could stand alone as an independent underlying theoretical paradigm for this study. However, its significance as a central component to emancipatory peacebuilding ethics necessitates its insertion at this point.

challenge of ensuring local ownership of peacebuilding activities. In order to unpack this complex and insecure relationship, this section: (1) investigates the philosophical and ethical imperatives allowing this relationship to flourish; and (2) surveys the emerging literature that explores the inherent contradictions and dilemmas in achieving local ownership.

Emancipatory discourse. Central to the international-local dilemma is the prevailing discourse of peacebuilding. In a similar fashion to a parallel and more matured discussion in development studies (Crush, 1995; Escobar, 1995), the manner in which war-affected contexts are written about, conceived of, and narrated in mainstream peacebuilding text and discourse serves to frame these contexts as dysfunctional, failed, weak, irrational, and immature (Donais, 2009a, p. 8). This mainstream discourse props up the West as the peacebuilding authority and saviour, and situates expertise solely in the laps of experts from Western countries. The discourse also serves to legitimise therapeutic action whereby the international community assumes responsibility for a population no longer able to care for themselves and in need of rescue (Donais, 2009a, p. 8). Paternalistic attitudes abound, as locals are viewed with pity and as incapable of meaningful agency, or as requiring careful and overbearing supervision.

Emancipatory peacebuilding calls for a fundamental change in voice and tone. Scholars such as Cockell (2000) and Lederach (1995) eschew international-centred language and insist on viewing the 'local' as both a vital source of peacebuilding resources and instrumental in shaping peacebuilding methodology. Cockell (2000) is quite exclusive, "Sustainable peace can only be founded on the indigenous, societal resources for intergroup dialogue, cooperation and consensus" (p. 23). Emancipatory

peacebuilding requires an elicitive stance whereby resources are not imported and imposed by outsiders, but draws upon local knowledge and processes (Lederach, 1995, p. 56). Such a stance will prove dissonant with the disempowering nature of ‘failed state’ discourse and the manner in which it silences alternative voices and visions. Rather, it will be receptive to locally-legitimated social and political structuring leading to peace (Milliken & Krause, 2002).

‘Everyday’ Welfare and Bottom-Up Agency. Driving down the discussion of peacebuilding to the level of the local will invariably raise important but difficult questions, not least of which is what the local population envisions as crucial peacebuilding work, and who will best fulfil these visions. Richmond (2009b) insists that the liberal peacebuilding project has “failed to deliver on their promise of a liberal peace for all”, but has created only shells of institutions and benefited predatory domestic elites (p. 324). Conversely, benefits have not had significant or adequate impact on the everyday life of populations. Emancipatory peacebuilding, however, is comprehensive and relational (Lederach, 1997), and focuses on individual and communal perceptions of needs, aspirations, and opportunities, while rejecting the central status of models, states, and institutions as the objects and subjects of peace (Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 128). Thus, the politics of peacebuilding should “spring organically from the agency of the people involved” (Tadjbakhsh, 2010, p. 133). For example, Pugh (2010) points out that neoliberal economic intervention policies have ignored socially and historically embedded welfare arrangements and has assaulted welfare as a social contract in many conflict-affected contexts (pp. 262, 273). In response, the emancipatory peacebuilding

project must engage in elicitive negotiations with local communities where local voices are taken seriously, and reconceptualise “atomised societies as collectives” (p. 274).

What role for the ‘local’? Hemmer, et al. (2006) and Van Tongeren, et al. (2005) investigate how grassroots citizen peacebuilders are able to influence upper-level peacebuilding processes. In order to achieve this difficult stance with the upper-level, Hemmer, et al. (2006) integrate theories of Track II diplomacy, citizen peacebuilding (Byrne & Keashly, 2000; Diamond & McDonald, 1996; Lederach, 1997), civic democratisation (Boulding, 1988), and social movements (Hawken, 2007; J. Smith, Chatfield, & Pagnucco, 1997; Van Tongeren, et al., 2005) to present a case for the agency of a grassroots “peacebuilding organism.” This organism would consist of a broad network of peacebuilding organisations and would be able to influence diplomatic negotiations by transforming the local political landscape. Pugh (2010), however, is more sceptical of locally inspired transformation, unless it is accompanied by massive global economic restructuring (p. 274). This would seem extremely unlikely, however, in the short-term. However, opportunities may arise from within the current global economic turmoil.

Local ownership: Dilemmas and possibilities. Scholars are increasingly viewing the ‘local’ as both a vital source of peacebuilding resources and instrumental in shaping peacebuilding methodology¹⁰ (Lidèn, 2009; Narten, 2008, 2009; Nathan, 2008; Reich, 2006; Richmond, 2009a, 2009b). They propose that local decision-making processes must be allowed to determine basic political, economic, and social developments in the post-violence period (Richmond, 2009a). As such, political organisation and any state-

¹⁰ The majority of ‘local ownership’ scholarship in the area of peacebuilding addresses security sector reform - thus revealing a significant gap in the peacebuilding literature.

building activities could be negotiated between local and international actors, and would be a process void of pre-determined political models and outcomes. In this way, emancipatory peacebuilding allows local conditions and capacities to determine what type of peace will emerge in a particular context (Lidèn, 2009, p. 621). And, as mentioned earlier, local ownership within the emancipatory peacebuilding paradigm will make room for systems of indigenous peacebuilding and traditional peace-making processes (Lidèn, 2009, pp. 629-630; Mac Ginty, 2008, pp. 149, 157).

In practice, however, these idealistic conceptions of local ownership have remained elusive and largely unrealised in practice, and have been accused of overestimating both the local and international community's capacity and political will. Peacebuilding scholars have only recently begun to investigate the dilemmas and inherent obstacles to local ownership in post-war contexts (Boughton & Mourmouras, 2002; Donais, 2009b; Goodhand & Sedra, 2010; Narten, 2009, p. 252; Scheye & Peake, 2005). While there is wide support for the idea of local ownership as a valuable principle within the policy debate, it is challenging to both define conceptually and practically implement (Reich, 2006, p. 3).

Boughton and Mourmouras (2002) challenge the idea of local ownership at the conceptual level. They argue that conceptual ambiguity and vagueness have made the term intellectually incoherent. The ambiguity of 'local ownership' stems from difficulties in observing its effects and empirically evidencing its existence, its dynamic and changing nature, disparity between potential owners, and the heterogeneity of government structures. Thus, they conclude that the concept is difficult to pin down and work with. Along similar lines, Reich (2006) believes that a journey towards literal 'local

ownership' may be fundamentally impossible given other structural concerns. For example, the dependent nature and roles of local beneficiaries within current peacebuilding projects makes any sort of deeply held local ownership doubtful (p. 16).

Other scholars highlight numerous practical reasons why 'local ownership', as explicated in peacebuilding policy, has struggled to square up with reality (Narten, 2009; Scheye & Peake, 2005). First, 'local owners' are often resistant to requirements of reform as laid out by outside interveners since the local owners often control the institutions and structures requiring reform (Scheye & Peake, 2005, p. 241). Competing expectations of reform can then ground a peacebuilding effort. Second, it is overly idealistic and impractical to expect a wide range of local stakeholders to achieve widespread agreement on peacebuilding processes given the inherent disparity in stakeholder beliefs, which are also sometimes undemocratic (Scheye & Peake, 2005). A common division lies between civil society and its government. A third dilemma is related to the difficulties in choosing appropriate local partners (Narten, 2009, p. 260). In many cases, partners are identified from within warring groups, which risks both empowering potential spoilers and alienating local populations who suffered at the hands of these groups. However, in many cases these partners enjoy strong bases of support, which is certainly a necessity for successful statebuilding ventures. Furthermore, this strategy risks only applying ownership to a small clique of local elites (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010, p. 597; Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 157). Fourth, even if appropriate local owners are identified, it must not be assumed that the owners have the capacity, capability, or willingness to carry out the required reforms (Scheye & Peake, 2005, p. 244). War environments will often decimate the necessary human resources, institutional structures, and infrastructure required for

successfully carrying out peacebuilding tasks. Capacity building efforts must often precede the relinquishment of ownership by the international community. A fifth dilemma relates to appropriate intervention timelines (Narten, 2009, p. 258). A shortened timeline may facilitate increased levels of local ownership, but may overlook essential capacity building requirements. Conversely, a lengthened timeline may support self-sustainable institutional development, but may result in debilitating and harmful dependency on outside assistance. As an example, when an economy is dominated by foreign funding, accountability tends to be directed towards the foreign donors as opposed to the local population as is necessary in a democracy (Suhrke, 2009). In this way donors retain more of a voice than parliamentarians and other government leaders. Last, increased local ownership may simply result in increased isolationism and the unwillingness of Afghan government leaders to engage with the international community, especially in terms of international expectations for human rights and democratic reform.

And yet the aforementioned criticisms do not justify inaction or the jettisoning of ‘local ownership’ as a means and a goal in peacebuilding operations. It is difficult to escape the notion that peacebuilding work leading to sustainable peace must involve local processes, and create the “space for local actors to start a conversation that will define and consolidate their polity by mediating their vision of a good life into responsive, robust, and resilient institutions” (Chesterman, 2005, p. 175). A handful of scholars are struggling to re-conceptualise (and arguably resuscitate) the concept of local ownership as a means to locally legitimated and sustainable peace. For example, Donais (2009b), Nathan (2008), and Narten (2008) argue that achieving authentic local ownership is possible within current foreign-led peacebuilding structures, albeit not without a

penetrating exploration and re-conceptualisation of the relationship between local and external actors. Moreover, Nathan (2008) argues for placing local actors squarely in the drivers seat, albeit with international actors and donors as bossy backseat drivers. In her view, foreign donors should be deeply involved in defining what peace and security should look like, and become actively involved in building the capacity of locally chosen partners and support vulnerable groups suffering from insecurity and feeling unprotected under local security policy (Nathan, 2008, p. 31).

Narten (2008) adds to the discussion by addressing the timeline of local ownership. Narten (2008) defines local ownership as an “internationally managed process of a gradual transfer of externally held power to legitimate and democratically elected local representatives after building up the necessary local capacities and functioning institutions” (p. 375). In his case study research of local ownership in Kosovo, he concludes that the longer international peacebuilding powers withhold the possibility of authentic local control the more likely local actors are to challenge the legitimacy of the peacebuilding agenda and view the project as foreign imposition (Narten, 2008, p. 387).

Donais (2009b) and Goodhand & Sedra (2010) enrich the emerging theory by differentiating between regime ownership and national ownership. Regime (state) ownership is obviously essential since statebuilding and social structural reform depend significantly on its involvement (Donais, 2009b, p. 124). Non-state ownership, unfortunately, has largely eluded the view of international peacebuilding actors and thus remains a largely untapped peacebuilding resource. Despite significant challenges in engaging and procuring support from the wider peacebuilding constituency,

peacebuilding theoreticians believe efforts focused on involving non-state groups in the design and implementation of project work appears to be essential for sustainable peace.

Other scholars, while certainly valuing the end goals of 'local ownership' efforts, view the discourse of local ownership as currently evident in peacebuilding policy as largely empty rhetoric and lacking substance (Chesterman, 2005, 2007; Reich, 2006). As such, 'local ownership' is viewed as an inappropriate means to this desired end. They believe that 'local ownership' in practice does not carry its literal meaning, in the sense of actually owning a process and having a majority stake in the design and implementation of project work (Chesterman, 2007, p. 3). Rather, 'ownership' has come to mean 'buy-in' and reflects the state of power relations between international and local stakeholders. In order to better reflect the intervention necessities of most post-war contexts, Chesterman (2005) proposes that international actors be open regarding the trustee-like relationship between insiders and outsiders and ensure transparency about the powers that will be exerted at various stages during the transition towards sustainable peace (p. 160). Openness will expose the true nature of the role of international interventions and allow international actors to be clear with local populations about how they will purposefully diminish their exertion of power. Diminishing their power will hopefully lead to increased trust and reduced frustration and resistance from local actors. In this way Chesterman (2005, 2007) argues for the necessity of a heavy-handed intervention. International actors cannot run from international control and the temporary abrogation of sovereignty. If this were not necessary, there would not be a need to intervene in the first place.

In a similar vein, Reich (2006) argues that the push for local ownership in current peacebuilding policy is largely counterproductive; it simply serves to cover up the ‘business as usual’ approach where official rhetoric and the reality of actual peacebuilding practice remain largely dissonant (p. 4). Put another way, current intervention structures simply do not allow for literal local ownership but, rather, enforce a patron-client relationship. She proposes that since this relational dynamic cannot be avoided without major revisions to donor structures, the least that can be done is to make explicit and transparent the insider-outsider power relationships to ensure that they are not falsely portrayed as ‘equal partnerships’.

Critical Theory and Emancipatory Peacebuilding Ethics. A second philosophical theme emerging from the emancipatory peacebuilding literature is the project’s grounding in critical theory. This theme is certainly related to the previous ‘local’ theme in that critical theory accuses (neo)liberal peacebuilding of not addressing local interests. However, critical theory broadens the scope of the critique of (neo)liberal peacebuilding through its focus on the global dimensions of peacebuilding (Lidèn, 2006, p. 53).

Critical theory responses to international peacebuilding and peacekeeping have arisen in response to recent revisions to official UN peacebuilding and peacekeeping policy, most notably in the *Brahimi Report* (2000) that focused on how to better manage peacekeeping personnel to produce more effective peacekeeping results; the focus on ‘human security’; the UN’s *Millennium Development Goals*; and the *Responsibility to Protect* (2001) doctrine that attempted to reconcile conceptions of national sovereignty with human rights protection. While seeing positive movement in these revisions towards

care of the 'local', some peacebuilding scholars believe that this rethinking of theory and practice is not going nearly far enough; it is failing to interrogate the role of (neo)liberal peacekeeping and peacebuilding in the wider processes of global politics (Bellamy & Williams, 2004a, 2004b; Duffield, 2007a; Lidèn, 2006; Pugh, 2004, 2005; Woodhouse & Ramsbotham, 2005). These scholars have initiated a more radical discourse in the challenge of rethinking peacebuilding/peacekeeping practice, and utilise critical perspectives to both deconstruct orthodox practice and construct a more critical agenda for peace operations.

Pugh (2004) proposes that (neo)liberal peacebuilding serves as a "management device" to maintain the current version of global politics and economics "that privileges the rich and powerful states in their efforts to control or isolate unruly parts of the world" (p. 39). As such, peacebuilding is viewed as serving a narrow purpose, i.e. "to doctor the dysfunctions of the global political economy within a framework of liberal imperialism" (Pugh, 2004, p. 39). Thus, while (neo)liberal structures are inherently interested in maintaining the status quo of the world system with its embedded instabilities and inequalities, critical theory is able to expose injustices that stem from (neo)liberalism and provides a philosophical and ethical basis for the construction of structural transformations to emancipate conflict-affected societies (Pugh, 2004, p. 40). Pugh contends that many conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts simply "smooth the functioning of the system" and serve the purposes of existing world system powers (Pugh, 2004, p. 40). More radical critical work is needed that spotlights larger issues such as globalisation-induced inequality, and global economic structural violence.

For Bellamy and Williams (2004a), a critical response starts with a new peacekeeping agenda intensely focused on hearing the voices of locals in the planning and execution of peace operations (p. 199). They point out, however, that this agenda must be situated within a program focused on local democratisation, the creation of local non-violent conflict resolution structures, and structured cooperation across political borders. Beyond this, a critical agenda needs to move its eyes outward and upward. The hegemonic position of the US in the global system must be addressed and, in particular, its willingness to act unilaterally without international support, and its ambivalence to international law and the International Criminal Court (ICC) (Bellamy & Williams, 2004a, p. 206).

A critical agenda must come to terms with the predominant ‘failed state’ discourse. This discourse does not make evident the fact that in most cases conflict-affected states are not void of state power; however, it may be obscured because of the state’s illiberal methodology. Thus, peacebuilding strategies may need to be directed at civil society and the opening up of space for dialogue (Bellamy & Williams, 2004a, p. 207).

Pugh (2004) proposes UN Security Council reform such as its replacement by a revamped population-weighted UN General Assembly, which would make intervention decisions democratic at the global level (p. 53). He also proposes the outright replacement of international financial institutions (IMF, World Bank, and the WTO) with more democratic structures that are more relevant to the poor. In terms of peacekeeping forces, Woodhouse and Ramsbotham (2005) suggest the creation of a permanent UN

force that would align, not with the interests of the world powers but, rather, with the powerless inside conflict zones.

Emancipatory Peacebuilding Priorities

In order to flesh out the above formulations of emerging conceptions of emancipatory peacebuilding, this section investigates revisionist proposals in the four priority areas of orthodox (neo)liberal peacebuilding, namely security, political transition, economic and social development, and reconciliation and justice (Barnett, et al., 2007; Jeong, 2005). Further, it explores the implications of the emancipatory project on peacebuilding coordination.

Security and Emancipation. Booth (1991), shortly after the end of the Cold War stated that, “emancipation, theoretically, is security” (p. 319). Booth identified a post-Cold War transformation in security thought, a movement past realism and neorealism and the adoption of a more critical stance to security, primarily expressed through the human security doctrine. The human security narrative has served to awaken some traditional security actors to the plight of oppressed populations, highlighting the manner in which poverty and underdevelopment leads to insecurity for all. However, human security is coming under increased scrutiny. Duffield (2007a) views human security as simply another “technology of governance”, enacted by the North over the South for ultimately self-serving ends (p. 112). In addition, Christie (2010) argues that human security has lost its critical edge, has become a new orthodoxy, is unable to amplify the voice of peoples in the South and is, thus, unfit as a basis for necessary systemic change (p. 186).

Not so with emancipatory conceptions of security. Emancipation, as a chief aim of security, requires bottom-up approaches where individuals are empowered to voice, negotiate, and develop forms of human security tailored to their particular situation (Richmond, 2007, p. 461). Local agency becomes central to security work, resulting in increased legitimacy and effectiveness. For example, Jabri (2010) believes that the ‘enemy’ of the people in Afghanistan (the Taliban) is being defined by the liberal intervenors, thus providing the Taliban with an inflated political and social agency, all the while precluding any form of localised resistance to the Taliban, which inadvertently denies the population political agency (p. 56). A more appropriate and progressive emancipatory response would be to support local non-violent resistance and extend “solidarity to progressive forces of emancipation in that society” (Jabri, 2010, p. 56).

Political Transition and Local Participation. Emancipatory transitional political structures allow local voices expression and participatory power in the transformation of cultural and political foundations as part of any state-building process, even if the processes do not result in Western-style democracy or integration into the capitalist world system. For example, Chopra and Hohe (2004) propose a democratic system of participatory intervention where indigenous paradigm(s) are allowed to coexist with, or evolve during the establishment of modern institutions (p. 289). Central to this process is the active local participation of local administrative structures, which should ensure representation upward throughout the government structure, thus increasing the likelihood of its social viability, as well as local identification and ownership.

While Chopra and Hohe’s system is inherently democratic, Brown et al. (2010) resist mandating a ‘democratic’ requirement and put forward the concept of ‘hybrid

political orders', which describes the coexistence of different models of governance and government. Stemming from both Western models and local indigenous traditions, hybrid political orders are shaped by both globalisation and societal fragmentation (ethnic, tribal, religious). As opposed to the usual and dominant discourse of statebuilding that is derived from modernisation and the ideal 'stages of growth' (Rostow, 1960), the authors believe that hybrid political orders may be better able to allow for the establishment of viable, participatory, and democratic political community in the aftermath of violent conflict (A. Brown, et al., 2010, p. 100). By labelling these hybrid political orders as 'fragile states' or 'weak', Western governments and peacebuilding actors may miss crucial opportunities for constructive peacebuilding as established and locally legitimated local political forms underpinning the fragile peace in post-war contexts are ignored (A. Brown, et al., 2010, p. 101). This is however, a contentious suggestion, particularly in a context experiencing an active resistance to statebuilding like in Afghanistan.

Rethinking Economic and Social Development. Emancipatory economic and social development refocuses the means and broadens the narrowed ends of (neo)liberal economic and social development. In regards to economic development, scholars are increasingly arguing for a break-up of the marriage between economic development policy and neoliberal economic policy. Galtung (1996) argues for an eclectic development which would broaden its American capitalist roots and incorporate socialist and 'African local' structures (pp. 177-178). Others argue that Western development actors should eschew "historical templates for new and evolving situations" and allow for locally generated reconstruction programmes even if they fall short of the high, and perhaps ethno-cultural-centric, standards set by the 'liberal peace' (Williams, 2010, p.

62). Other authors such as Duffield (2007a) offer a harsher critique. Duffield believes that development has been reinvented as a strategic tool in managing conflict-affected contexts and their populations and hence development aid has become ‘securitised’. Thus, aid and development actors ultimately serve the purposes of the dominating North, which leads to the conclusion that the entire enterprise should be revamped or perhaps dropped.

Pierce and Stubbs (2000) use a case study of UNDP project work in the town of Travnik in Central Bosnia to illustrate the linked concepts of social development and hegemony. They envision peacebuilding processes moving past an “inventory approach” (see for example Junne & Verkoren (2005)) with the usual mix of peacebuilding activities, and propose that social development’s central role is challenging hegemony in the local social context (Pierce & Stubbs, 2000, pp. 157-158). They propose that conflict/post-conflict zones need to be viewed as “highly complex structures, rather than simply as places where warmongering ‘hard-liners’ have ensured the acquiescence of the population” (Pierce & Stubbs, 2000, p. 158). Peacebuilding processes are thus conceived of as a counter-hegemonic project inside this complex social structure.

Reconciliation and Justice. Peacebuilding theorists such as Lederach (1997), Mani (2000, 2005), Philpott (2009), and Sriram (2007, 2010) propose that the liberal restriction of ‘reconciliation’ to rule-of-law and human rights work is inadequate. While the rule-of-law and human rights are certainly crucial in ensuring justice in a post-war context, the liberal peace will struggle to attend to the deep wounds inflicted by war and political violence. Further, rule-of-law and human rights work will fall short in the empowerment and healing of victims, prove inadequate in reforming and reintegrating

perpetrators, and avoid the powerful legacy of emotions that can lead to revenge and renewed violence (Philpott, 2009, p. 392).

Emancipatory peacebuilding pushes for the centrality of reconciliation in the politics of peacebuilding theory and practice, and for deeper healing than possible through trials, Truth and Reconciliation Commissions, and human rights work. Reconciliation activities should be located at the community level and be aimed at reasserting established social codes and processes, healing communal trauma, and regaining trust, unity and peaceful coexistence. To this end, scholars such as Herbert Kelman (2006), Ronald Fisher (2009), and Jay Rothman (1997b) have been developing the conflict resolution methodology of dialogue groups and problem-solving workshops. Dialogue-based strategies aim to build bridges by creating a safe space for antagonists to engage with each other in a constructive and controlled manner. Other conflict resolution practitioners interested in initiating community reconciliation processes are increasingly recognizing the power of storytelling, narrative, and proverbs (Cox & Albert, 2003; Lederach, 1995, p. 78; Senehi, 2002, 2009b).

Another strand of important reconciliation theory is emerging from the field of restorative justice. Restorative justice theorists and practitioners propose revisions to criminal justice processes. They eschew the dominant conception that criminal justice is primarily retributive in nature and rather adopt the vindication of victims as a central priority (Biggar, 2003, p. 11; Mani, 2005, p. 521; Woolford & Ratner, 2009).

Challenges and Progress in Emancipatory Peacebuilding Coordination

Central to achieving meaningful local ownership are appropriate coordination structures and processes in the peacebuilding project. One of the major challenges facing

this project is to develop coordination methods and structures that are attuned to the distinctive requirements of achieving meaningful local ownership.

Strategic coordination of the (neo)liberal peacebuilding project is heavily invested in hierarchy, Western outlooks, expressions of Western power, upper-level control, and ignorance of local wisdom. This structure proves to be dissonant with the emancipatory project. The emancipatory project will resist direct transfer of (neo)liberal coordination methodology because of its fundamental epistemological and ontological differences. As opposed to being primarily concerned with the horizontal integration of activities amongst international actors, emancipatory coordination concerns will be largely vertical in nature and between the 'international' and the 'local'. It is interested in how internationally assisted peacebuilding can be controlled, directed, or guided by the 'local'. Thus, a discussion of emancipatory coordination will tackle 'multi-level' challenges, and be interested in projections of power and conceptions of culture at each level.

There does not, at this point, exist any literature dealing directly and systematically with the coordination of the emancipatory project, which certainly reflects the ambiguity regarding the role of international actors in the paradigm, and because the paradigm has not been adopted in practice to a large extent. However, at an even more fundamental level, there may be widespread hesitancy to explore practicalities such as peacebuilding coordination because the theoretical requirements of an emancipatory stance have not been fully explored. There remain significant challenges within the model that may prove unbearable for the model, which do not stem from inherent contradictions, but from a shortage of political willingness to make the tough choices

necessitated by the model. Pugh (2004) is one of the few peacebuilding theorists venturing into this contentious territory. He believes that Northern peacebuilding powers have shown themselves unwilling to “consider fundamental questions about the extent to which the statist structure and neoliberal value system fosters the kinds of political and social instability that require policing, protection or exclusion” (Pugh, 2004, p. 54). Thus, peacebuilding operations have become “vehicles of system management” for oppressive global politico-economic structures, with peacebuilding actors serving as managers within a system that is primarily interested in the security of the North and the maintenance of its way of life (Pugh, 2004, p. 54).

The interface between the international and the local is situated within a dominant (neo)liberal politico-economic-cultural milieu, where Western-based ‘universals’ are embedded in localised developing contexts. Thus, emancipatory peacebuilding coordination is dependent on retooled global liberal political and neoliberal capitalist economic structures, and an end to the exploitative relationship between the North and the South, which is no small task indeed. Without such changes, the emancipatory project will consistently be ground down and burdened with insupportable amounts of (neo)liberal baggage.

However, many scholars are more hopeful, and believe that humanitarians cannot be paralysed by the daunting requirements and distant ideal structures described by Pugh (2004), and concentrate on reformist steps (even if small and inadequate) that make a better world more likely for war-affected populations. Booth (1991) describes this slow reformation as ‘process utopian’ (a phrase coined by Joseph Nye): “At each political crossroad, there is always one route that seems more rather than less progressive in terms

of global community-building” (p. 324). Many of the authors surveyed in this chapter hint at inherent coordination necessities in the emancipatory project that can be achieved or pushed for despite the disempowering politico-economic systems within which we live. The essential item they struggle with is the manner in which the international community can work alongside the local community, all the while granting the local community power over and voice in peacebuilding decisions.

John Paul Lederach (1997, 2005) has constructed a theory of ‘multi-level’ action that is much more reliant on grassroots forces for change than (neo)liberal peacebuilding theories. Central to his theory is the elite-grassroots nexus, which means that strategies at the upper national level must feed on the energy of processes at the grassroots level and, concurrently, national level policies can ameliorate tensions at the community level. In negative terms, transformative progress at the grassroots level is significantly impeded with insecurity at the national elite level, while a failure to address basic needs at the grassroots level creates societal instability and threats of violence that handicap macro-level transformative activities. Lederach’s ‘multi-level’ theory is important for the coordination of emancipatory peacebuilding processes. International actors must serve as facilitators for elite-grassroots interaction. International actors must not dictate the outcome of this interaction, however, but use their resources and power to ensure its occurrence, which perhaps justifies the use of coercion in some cases. Further, his theory highlights the necessity of coordination structures engaging all levels of society.

Fast, Neufeldt, and Schirch (2002) deal more directly with the ethics of international-local interactions undergirding the emancipatory peacebuilding coordination project (p. 199). They construct a theory of international-local interactions based on: (1)

the individualist human rights of inherent worth and dignity and the right to make decisions that affect their lives; and (2) the communally relativist principles of the ability of communities to define their own common good, and the value of authentic relationships. Purposeful international-local interactions guided by these principles should, according to the authors, result in decision-making structures that are open to communal expertise, guided by local leadership, and inclusive of all parties, even extremists.

Yet, perhaps some practical advances can be made within the current (neo)liberal structures that lend themselves to local ownership and can be seen as moving towards more emancipatory forms of peacebuilding practice and structures. Basic to these advances is addressing the ambiguity that upper-level coordinating actors (e.g. governments, the UN, etc.) hold in regard to 'lesser' civil society actors. Some scholars such as Galtung (1996) believe more egalitarian organisational structures such as networks can ensure the diversity required for inclusion of a wide range of actors (p. 272). Network structures have the ability to effectively embrace complexity, and may give birth to creative methodologies that achieve high levels of local ownership at both the upper and grassroots levels. In a similar fashion, Dee Hock's (founder and CEO Emeritus of VISA) advice for corporate structure may be instructive here as well. He believes that "North American companies control their organisations with tight, formal, hierarchical, bureaucratic, detailed rules, policies and procedures." Rather, organisations must become 'chaordic', "self-organizing, adaptive, non-linear and complex, with behaviour that harmoniously blends characteristics of both chaos and order" (Hock, 1998, p. 40). As an example of this type of organisation, Ricigliano (2003) proposes the

viability of a “Network of Effective Action (NEA)” approach to achieve greater integration amongst various peacebuilding actors. NEAs operate ‘chaordically’, a process that embraces the principles of “chaos and order, competition and cooperation” (Ricigliano, 2003, p. 456). This type of organisation is a loosely structured network of groups working together on a common problem. Networked groups share purpose and principles of conduct throughout the network, decentralise their organisations in order to be free to collaborate with others, empower their members and maintain malleability to best serve other members, and ensure inclusiveness. These principles provide order, but the sequencing of activities and the type and number of activities and actors would be determined on a more ad hoc and chaotic basis. In this way a NEA resists being a formal centrally planned hierarchical coordination structure but, rather, becomes a “communication network with a common goal and some shared rules of the road” (Ricigliano, 2003, p. 457).

Chayes and Chayes (1998), too, suggest that the rapidly morphing nature of modern civil conflict does not respond well to central planning, and therefore propose a solution involving “radical decentralisation of operational responsibility to the field”, with clear directions to develop a fully cooperative and integrative approach with other peacebuilding actors (p. 281). Fixed, hierarchical structures are eschewed in favor of lateral structures. These new structures often include team-based organisational forms that are functionally designed, project-oriented, hold short life spans, and are flexible and interdependent. They are focused on problem-solving, and are particularly responsive to situational demands, with significant information flow, and respond to authority

grounded in knowledge (Chayes & Chayes, 1998, p. 282). These sort of structures are likely to be more open to local authority, control, and voice.

Other authors are starting to address another thorn in the side for emancipatory peacebuilding project coordinators, namely the tension between international standards/norms (e.g. human rights, environmental, accountability, justice, etc.) and competing local conceptions and systems (Avruch, 2006; Donais, 2009a; Lidèn, 2009; Mac Ginty, 2008; Schwarz, 2005; Stacy, 2009). The central tension is the extent to which international rights/norms are considered ‘universal’ as opposed to being ‘relative’. It seems that scholars are increasingly resisting either extreme in the debate and are emphasizing a healthy tension between the two. Theory in the debate is starting to converge, however. Attempts at reconciling local ownership with international norms requires the eschewal of conceptions of culture as static and unchangeable, and, rather, culture is viewed as changing and socially constructed, and as holding transformative power (Merry, 2006). Emancipatory coordination efforts, therefore, need to avoid romanticising the ‘traditional’, not blindly equate everything traditional with ‘good’, and not label everything stemming from the West as harmful and culturally inappropriate (Mac Ginty, 2008, p. 150).

One last word of warning is in order. Emancipatory peacebuilding and its coordination must remain wary of the potential for peacebuilding practice to simply support the ‘non-locally owned’ status quo in the context of international intervention. For example, the ‘coordination’ problem can be used as a convenient catch-all for a wide variety of problems faced by the peacebuilding project (Paris, 2009). However, there is a growing recognition that even though it is important for peacebuilding actors to work

smoothly and well together, it may be too easy to “prescribe improved coordination as a remedy for the shortcomings and contradictions of statebuilding, which run much deeper” (Paris, 2009, p. 53). Thus, it is enlightening to dig beneath the procedural-technocratic prescriptions for better coordination and explore the requirements of coordination in the emancipatory peacebuilding project.

Conclusion

International (neo)liberal peacebuilding has begun to expose its inherent contradictions and struggles. As a technology of the global liberal politico-economic system, it is certainly creating conflict and dependency (Duffield, 2007a; Lidèn, 2009, p. 631). Thus, it appears necessary to critically transcend current peacebuilding practice and strive for more emancipatory and culturally empowering methodologies. To this end, a couple of imperatives in regards to international interventionist practice seem instructive. First, the international community cannot become paralysed by the ‘emancipatory’ critique because it is imperative that we not abandon conflict-affected citizens. Inaction has serious consequences as evident in the Rwandan and Darfurian cases – it is clearly inhumane to leave whole societies vulnerable to suffering. Second, international actors must increasingly adopt a critical(ly) self-reflective stance and be honest with local populations in regards to their interests (they will always hold some), be particularly sensitive to any attachments to current versions of global capitalism, democracy, and our Western mindset and way of living, be empathetic and compassionate in their practice, and be intensely dedicated to the improvement of the life-chances for war-affected individuals and communities. Third, and perhaps related to the previous point, international actors must be ‘thinking’ and ‘judging’ actors by guarding against becoming

simply a “cog in the administrative machinery” (Coulter & Wiens, 2002, p. 19). The emancipatory paradigm requires actors embedded within the peacebuilding system to avoid abdicating their individual responsibility to think and judge in order to maintain their transformative potential.

Chapter 4 - Methodology

Introduction

This research project explores the possibility of meaningful Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. While there has been significant support for the idea of Afghan ownership as a valuable principle within the peacebuilding policy debate, it has proven challenging to practically define and effectively implement. In fact, peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan continue to be largely designed, implemented, and evaluated by international actors (Goodhand & Sedra, 2010). Thus, using a qualitative grounded theory research design that relied on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with local and foreign peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan, this study explores perceptions of Afghan ownership and potential reforms to intervention structures and processes that may further advance the possibility of increased Afghan ownership over peacebuilding.

Research Strategy

Qualitative Research Strategy

Qualitative methodologies hold significant potential to explore the phenomenon of local ownership and conceptions of intervention structures and processes in war-affected contexts such as Afghanistan. While unable to correlate between variables and generalise between cases like quantitative approaches, qualitative designs can investigate perceptions of ownership with greater precision and rigour, and enter into the black box of both local level and state level processes to decipher linkages between international intervention practice and local perceptions of ownership in war-torn contexts (Ripsman & Blanchard, 2003, pp. 319-320).

Further, qualitative social researchers are able to adopt a ‘human-centered’ approach by viewing research participants as thinking and motivated actors (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 7). A human-centred approach necessitates a phenomenological approach, which highlights human agency in perceiving and making sense of one’s world, giving meaning to one’s perceptions, and identifying the effects of those meanings (Palys & Atchison, 2008). Thus, qualitative researchers believe it fundamental to their project to ‘get into people’s heads’ and seek directly the participants’ perceptions of their world.

At a basic level, qualitative methodology is better suited for ‘writing people into’ the research. According to Mac Ginty & Williams (2009) several factors have served to write people ‘out’ of many research projects in areas of violent conflict. Research has often tended to adopt a technocratic stance that prefers manageable number manipulation and graphing as opposed to the complex and messy world of human perceptions and experience. Research can also become ‘programmatically’, which expects certain outputs given set inputs. It can also become ‘solution-based’, in many cases undertaking a problem-solving role and, in order to maintain simplicity, ignores local voices and ‘indigenous’ solutions (Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009, p. 8). In contrast, qualitative research is better suited to access the wide variety of voices constituting the ‘local’ in Afghanistan in regards to local ownership, and is able to embrace the bewildering social complexity experienced in the context of a post-war intervention in a context such as Afghanistan.

Regarding their methodology, qualitative researchers are *inductive* in that they are careful to allow their explanatory categories and theoretical perspectives to emerge from

the data analysis. They also aim to be *interpretive*. The analysis of socially meaningful action is fed by direct observation of participants in their natural settings (Neuman, 1997, p. 68). An inductive and interpretive stance dictates the research proximity. Effective researchers must ‘get close’ to participants in order to access perceptions, motivations, or feelings regarding the topic at hand. (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 10). Further, qualitative researchers adopt a *social constructivist* worldview. The phenomena under investigation cannot be fully understood without looking into why, how, and to whom the phenomena applies (Palys & Atchison, 2008). Thus, the research relies upon the participants’ ability to make meaning of and understand the world in which they happen to exist (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). These meanings are complex, varied, and often forged in interactions with other people (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). Consequently, the investigation moves beyond the individual, and takes into account the wider social community and the communal meanings that are produced (Creswell, 2009, p. 8).

Qualitative Interpretive Communities

Qualitative researchers operate within various (and often overlapping) interpretive communities, each with its own body of literature, and a pervasive lens or perspective on the overall research project (Creswell, 2007, p. 23). Two interpretive communities, critical theory and postmodernism, are instructive for this research project into Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Both of these interpretive communities are inherently a critique and refutation of positivist (typically quantitative) methodologies. A positivist (also called ‘postpositivist’) research stance is typically associated with quantitative methodologies, and relies on quantitative data gathered through experiments, surveys, and statistics, and aims for rigour, exactness, and objectiveness. Positivism contends that

the scientific method allows the researcher to discover truths about the social world and, in particular, social meanings and intentions (Gliner & Morgan, 2000, p. 17). Positivism embraces the realist perspective, which asserts that “there is a reality out there that awaits our discovery” (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 4). Positivists aim to reveal the facts, realise the theory and principles underlying the facts, and develop the techniques appropriate for measuring and testing these facts (Palys & Atchison, 2008). Further, positivism is preoccupied with causes and effects in the observable world (Neuman, 1997, p. 64). Thus, only the external and observable ‘actions’ of social beings are considered, while inner forces and processes such as thoughts and motives are carefully avoided (Palys & Atchison, 2008, p. 5).

In response, critical theory and postmodernism interrogate “taken-for-granted assumptions about the ways in which people read and write science” (Agger, 1991, p. 106). Critical theory has its roots in the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt/New York, and was initially interested in explaining the absence of widespread resistance and socialist revolution in the face of burgeoning capitalist structures. Critical theory viewed positivism as an ideology that allows capitalism to continue. It accused the positivistic view of becoming a new mythology, “in the sense that it fails to understand its own investment in the status quo” (Agger, 1991, p. 109). Positivism proposes that the researcher can perceive and view the world ‘as it is’, and does not require a questioning of the nature of the phenomena under investigation, thus leading one to believe in the ability to make uncritical observations of reality. The world appears to be rational, thus suppressing the urge to change the world (Agger, 1991, p. 109). In contrast, a dialectical imagination, as proposed by Marx and the critical theory scholars, suggested that the

world can be changed, and holds potential for an improved future, thus making acquiescence to the status quo unnecessary. Thus, in scientific inquiry, a critical theory stance will push the researcher to dig beneath the objective appearance of ‘truth’ as a way of transforming class power differentials, patriarchy, racism, and other dominations (Agger, 1991, p. 111). For Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), research then becomes an emancipatory activity and critically analyses power relationships between people and groups, and attempting to expose forces that prevent people from shaping the decisions that affect their lives (p. 308).

A postmodern research stance is based on the work of Foucault and Lyotard, who reacted to ‘grand narratives’ that “attempt to explain the world in terms of patterned interrelationships” (Agger, 1991, p. 116). Likewise, postmodernism cautions against the ‘iron cage’ nature and totalizing tendencies of modernisation (Bloland, 1995, p. 524). Lyotard suggests that one cannot pretend to tell the story of the world but, rather, scientific inquiry must examine the world from multiple perspectives (e.g. class, race, gender, age, etc.). Postmodernism also interrogates the underlying presuppositions of the positivist scientific method. Every knowledge is historically and culturally contextualised, which places doubt on the universal claims of positivist research and, rather, attempts to explain a social phenomenon for a particular group at a particular time (Agger, 1991, p. 117).

Grounded Theory Research Tradition

The qualitative research tradition into which this study situates itself is grounded theory. Grounded theory aims to move beyond mere description of a phenomenon and generate a theory regarding the experiences of participants (Creswell, 2007, pp. 62-63).

As such, grounded theory approaches are intensely inductive and are not simply satisfied with describing a particular phenomenon. Thus, a grounded theory methodology will strive to identify major constructs and categories that emerge from the data, and explore their relationships with the context and between each other (Becker, 1993). Thus, research questions remain quite open and are shaped and altered as theory emerges during the research process. In this way data collection and analysis occur simultaneously. For example, unexpected or apparently extraneous comments made in an interview can be followed up in subsequent interviews. This process also allows the researcher to use purposive sampling to increase the ‘density’ of data within each of the emerging theoretical constructs during the data collection process. Also, in order to maintain the ‘groundedness’ of the approach, the researcher must be careful to minimise the effect of pre-existing constructs that emerge from the previous literature on the topic and, rather, allow theoretical constructs and categories to emerge from the data alone. This is, however, difficult when required to write a research proposal that includes a literature review before the data collection is initiated.

Charmaz (2005) argues that constructivist versions of grounded theory offer a suitable structure in which to integrate critical theory methodologies in the study of issues such as local ownership. A ‘critical’ grounded theory approach can “anchor agendas for future action, practice, and policies in the analysis by making explicit connections between the theorised antecedents, current conditions, and consequences of major processes” (Charmaz, 2005, p. 512). In other words, the approach provides a path to change through critical investigation. It should be noted, however, that Charmaz (2005) believes we should not abandon the traditional positivist quest for empirical detail but,

rather, advance it, albeit with its biases and values exposed. Contentious studies regarding local ownership or its absence will likely challenge the status quo and, thus, must be backed by thorough data collection and interpretation in order to be credible and instigate needed change.

Participants and Location

The international peacebuilding project in Afghanistan has experienced difficulties in developing and ensuring Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. In order to access perceptions of the journey towards Afghan ownership and the dilemmas to that end, sixty interviews were conducted over eight weeks (February to April 2011) in two urban centres in Afghanistan, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

Participants' Demography

This research project included sixty semi-structured interviews with a total of sixty-three participants (3 interviews included two participants). The participants' demography can be defined along several dimensions, namely nationality, gender, organisation type, peacebuilding sector, and location.

A note is necessary regarding the exclusion of ethnicity as a defining variable in this study. I decided against having the participants identify their ethnicity during the interview process for a couple of reasons. First, due to the brutal ethnic violence experienced by many of the Afghan participants, I believe that requiring such sensitive identification may have created a sense of conflict for the participants resulting in guarded or, perhaps, exaggerated/biased responses to the interview questions. Second, the sample size for this study may not be large enough to adequately tease out differences of perceptions between various ethnic groups. Third, because the majority of interviews

were conducted in Kabul, a very multi-ethnic city, I hoped that my participant selection process would naturally include members from the major ethnic groups. However, I was not able to ensure that my participants adequately represent all the major ethnic groups in Afghanistan. Fifth, I believed that general statements regarding ethnicity and local ownership would naturally emerge from the interview narratives, which was the case.

Nationality. Two broadly defined groups underlie this research study and structured the manner in which interview participants were approached and chosen. The first group consists entirely of Afghan leaders who reside full time in Afghanistan, and the second group consists of participants from foreign nations working in Afghanistan. A choice was made to amplify the voice of Afghan participants by ensuring a greater number of local participants when compared to foreign participants. Thus, 33 (55 percent) interviews were conducted with Afghans, and 27 (45 percent) interviews were carried out with foreign participants. The foreign-local divide served to enrich the data analysis by providing the opportunity to compare views in reporting.

Table 1: Demography – Afghan/Foreigner Split (n=63)

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Afghan	34	54%
Foreigner	29	46%

Amongst the foreigner group, an effort was made to access the voices of participants from a range of countries. Additionally, I ensured the inclusion of numerous Canadian participants in the sample.

Table 2: Demography – Foreigner Nationality (n=29)

<i>Foreigner Nationality</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
U.S.	8	28%
Europe	8	28%
Central/South Asia	7	24%

Canada	6	21%
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Gender. A majority of peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan, particularly from the Afghan group, are male. However, this study attempted to access a significant number of female participants. The fact that I am male likely reduced the number of female Afghan participants who agreed to be interviewed. Out of 63 total interviewees, 49 were male (78 percent) and 14 were female (22 percent).

Organisational type. Afghan participants were drawn from a cross-section of both upper civil society and middle elite leaders, primarily from within the middle tier of social leaders as identified by Lederach (1997, p. 39). Thus, Afghan participants were selected from the UN, the central and provincial governments, Afghan governmental organisations, the High Peace Council, human rights groups, local and international NGOs, universities and other educational institutions, community organisations, and the business community. The participants were chosen according to their ability to comment thoughtfully on the peacebuilding project in Afghanistan, and in particular with respect to local ownership. Thus, a majority of Afghan participants have had direct involvement in the overall peacebuilding project in Afghanistan.

Foreign participants were drawn from within the international peacebuilding community. They typically worked for international NGOs, the UN, international governmental organisations, foreign embassies, international donor organisations, and the international military and police. The overall breakdown for both Afghan and foreign participants according to organisational type can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Demography – Organisational Type (n=63)

Organisational Type	Number*	Percentage
UN	15	22%
Local NGO	14	20%
International NGO	12	17%
Afghan Government	11	16%
International Government	6	9%
Other Afghan Civil Society	5	7%
International Donor	4	6%
International Military/Police	2	3%

* Does not total to 63 because some participants had more than one job/role and because of some organisational overlap.

Peacebuilding sector. I made an effort to include participants from a range of peacebuilding sectors. This project follows the division of peacebuilding activities as defined by Jeong (2005), namely security and demilitarisation, political transition, development, and reconciliation/social rehabilitation. The participant breakdown by sector is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Demography – Peacebuilding Sector (n=60)

Peacebuilding Sector	Number*	Percentage
Development	29	45%
Political Transition	15	23%
Reconciliation, Justice, Social Rehabilitation	14	22%
Security and Demilitarisation	7	11%

* Does not total to 60 because some peacebuilding activities overlap sector divisions.

Location. Both the Afghan and foreign participants were chosen from two cities in Afghanistan and their immediate surrounding region, namely Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan and the central hub for a majority of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Thus, it contains a significant population of both foreign and Afghan peacebuilding actors. Mazar-e-Sharif is the major centre in Northern

Afghanistan, and also houses a significant peacebuilding population. Fifty-one interviews were conducted in Kabul, and nine in Mazar-e-Sharif.

Herat, in western Afghanistan, was originally included in the list of desired locations, but elevated security concerns during the interview process ensured reduced and ‘essential only’ travel. Also, upon reviewing the potential interviewees in Herat, it appeared that including that city would add little additional depth to the study. The inclusion of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan would have certainly added more depth to the study and a broader perspective on the topic of Afghan ownership, particularly from the Pashtun perspective. Yet again, security concerns prevented me from travelling to the city.

Role of the Researcher

Conducting effective qualitative research that considers local conceptions of local ownership and peacebuilding coordination in war-affected contexts required me, as the researcher, to abandon a distanced and objectivised role, and position himself as closely as possible to where the action is. Further, war-torn contexts such as Afghanistan require careful consideration of the researcher-participant relationship. Particularly in regards to Afghan participants, the researcher can maintain/restore the humanity of participants by listening to and valuing their perceptions of the overall peacebuilding project, and account for their experienced reality (Pouligny, 2002, p. 206). The researcher must believe that the participants: (1) are capable of affirming and asserting themselves as authentic actors; (2) hold significant knowledge about their personal and contextual experiences; and (3) are able to comment on these experiences (Pouligny, 2002, p. 204). Such a stance will also require that the researcher not pre-define the research variables,

avoid making claims about the experienced reality of local ownership and coordination and, rather, defer to the participant's interpretations.

It was necessary that I be aware of the theoretical paradigm from within which I aimed to work as I collected and analysed the interview data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.24). For this study, I attempted to work out of the critical theory paradigm. Thus, research on Afghan ownership of peacebuilding holds emancipatory potential as forces are exposed that prevent Afghans from shaping peacebuilding decisions. A critical theoretical approach to research recognises my expectation that my work will result in bringing about change (Schram, 2003). Thus, my research is an ethical and political act that will benefit a certain group (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.22). Working within the critical paradigm requires me to ensure that my research benefits the powerless in the struggle for ownership of peacebuilding.

To illustrate the transformational potential of the research process, there were several occasions where I perceived that new ideas were introduced to participants during the interview. Even posing certain types of questions can serve to impact a participant's thinking. These new ideas have the potential to flourish and ultimately change the course of action in the participant's work. This cannot be underestimated given the powerful positions held by many of the participants. Thus, I was not a neutral actor as I influenced the thinking of peacebuilding leaders to instigate change. Other incidents also had transformational potential. For example, I gave a presentation to NGO leaders on incorporating peacebuilding into their project work, and actively facilitated connecting participants with other peacebuilding leaders to their benefit.

The ‘positionality’ of a researcher will inevitably bias the research. For example, as a university-educated white male from a wealthy Western country, I had to carefully consider my stance towards participants during all interactions. Further complicating the situation is the fact that I hail from Canada, which is a belligerent nation in the Afghan conflict and a major donor to the overall peacebuilding venture in Afghanistan. Canada’s active role in the conflict and its generosity in aid money may shape the participants’ responses somewhat.

My previous experience working for an international NGO in Afghanistan may have also influenced the data collection. Having an in-depth knowledge of the terminology and lingo used in the peacebuilding community may have affected each interview in ways differing from an interview conducted by someone with no experience in the peacebuilding field. However, I found that my previous experience in Afghanistan gave me credibility and opened doors to participants that would have perhaps remained otherwise inaccessible.

Procedures

Selection of Participants

In order to recruit suitable participants, I conducted an extensive investigation on potential participants from both the local and international peacebuilding community in two Afghan cities, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. This investigation resulted in an extensive list of potential organisations and candidates gathered primarily from information available on relevant websites and in the *The A to Z Guide to Afghanistan Assistance* (2010) published by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in Kabul. This *Guide* presents an apolitical and uncritical listing of local and foreign government and non-

governmental organisations including the United Nations, but excludes most multinational aid corporations and private security companies. Both Afghan and foreign participants were then chosen through purposeful sampling that aimed to attain maximum variation by drawing participants from across both Afghan society and the overall peacebuilding project. Guiding the sampling strategy was a concern to procure participants from a wide variety of organisations conducting peacebuilding activities in four sectors: (1) security and demilitarisation; (2) political transition; (3) development; (4) and reconciliation/social rehabilitation. Also, I placed importance on approaching potential participants with appropriate knowledge and experience for the purposes of the study. The sampling procedures also incorporated a ‘snowball’ strategy whereby Afghan and foreign contacts or interview participants connected me with appropriate participants in other organisations and peacebuilding sectors (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). While a snowball strategy may tend to introduce a bias since participants are likely to recommend ‘like-minded’ potential interview candidates, many individuals in upper-level organisations and military groups will not respond to interview requests unless referred to by an acquaintance. Thus, referrals and introductions become a central strategy in accessing individuals and groups in certain peacebuilding sectors.

The selected organisations and individuals were contacted through email or phone and informed of the purposes of the study. Email contacts included a letter of invitation and highlighted the research’s project description, justification, methodology, human ethics assurances, and my biography. The letter of invitation is included in Appendix 1. If a potential candidate was willing to be involved in the research, he/she was requested to contact me directly by phone or email. If an organisation or individual did not respond,

they were not contacted a second time and another similar organisation or individual was then contacted. If an administrative person received the initial contact they would most often put me in direct communication with potential participants to discuss their participation. However, whenever possible I made an effort to contact participants indirectly through another person to allow them to decline participation without having to communicate directly with me.

Data Gathering Techniques

In order to conduct a study of local and international people's perceptions of Afghan ownership, I collected data through sixty face-to-face semi-structured interviews in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. Fifty-seven of the interviews were audio recorded on my iPod. Three participants declined to be audio recorded and I instead took copious notes on my laptop computer during the interview. All interview audio recordings were transcribed for analysis. The interviews were conducted most often in the participants' places of work, and lasted approximately 50 to 90 minutes. The majority of interviews were conducted in English since a common prerequisite for involvement in the international peacebuilding project is proficiency in English. Thus, most of the Afghan participants could communicate in English, while four interviews required an English-Dari translator.

In order to better prepare the participants for the interview, a copy of the interview questions was provided ahead of time. This allowed participants time to reflect and think about their interview responses in order to provide descriptive data regarding their experiences. In order to reduce bias in the interviews, the theory and propositions

put forth in the literature review of this thesis were not discussed unless initiated by the participant.

Interviews were most often conducted in the participant's location of work. Accessing these locations was sometimes a logistical challenge since many office buildings housing international organisations and the local government are protected by heavy armed security. Gaining entry required careful communication and planning ahead since I was often required to receive security clearance. Care was needed when travelling to each interview site since many of the office buildings were located in a part of Kabul that was the constant focus of insurgent attacks.

Research Instrument

In order to explore the theme of Afghan ownership in the context of the overall peacebuilding project in Afghanistan, I developed an interview guide inspired by a reading of the relevant literature and a survey of the overall peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan. The interview questions were grouped under four interrelated themes and can be viewed in Appendix 3. The 'main' questions under each theme are listed followed by several 'probe' questions that were used to direct and structure the interview process as needed.

It is important to note that the interview data represents images and 'perceptions' as opposed to the realities on which they are based (if that were actually possible). Perceptions are important in their own right since they inform the researcher more about the meaning of phenomena such as local ownership than 'facts' (Donini, 2007). 'Facts', per se, may simply reflect the official and internationally-defined sense of local ownership. Local 'perceptions', thus, can dig beneath official and empty definitions and

rhetoric and access 'actual' definitions on the ground in Afghanistan. Further, perceptions certainly do influence behaviour and are symptomatic of the current peacebuilding project in Afghanistan.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis required me to systematically search and organise the narratives in the interview transcripts to build the arguments presented in the 'findings' chapters of this thesis (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p.159). The qualitative analysis software HyperResearch[®] was used to code the interview data, and organise and search the interview narratives for quotations. This process necessitated the development of a coding system that reflected the regularities, patterns, and topics that were salient in the interview data. Enacting this coding system required me to carefully read through all of the interview text files, and cumulatively construct a list of salient thematic codes that point to relevant data items in the interview narratives. Upon completion of the coding process, these thematic codes structured the content of the data presentation in the findings chapters. Thematic codes were arranged and grouped together to form the overall argument for each chapter, and the searchable set of quotations gathered under each thematic code was used to provide evidence for and flesh out the theory that is grounded in, and emerges from, the interview data. This process allowed me to weave together individual interview narratives into a larger fabric and a broader story. This larger and coherent narrative should present a picture of the communal views and perceptions of the group of participants all the while remaining sensitive to the individual opinions and statements that may, in fact, contradict each other.

Ethics Approval and Maintaining Confidentiality

The University of Manitoba granted human ethics approval before I approached any of the participants. All participants in this study were adults over the age of 21 and were provided with a consent form prior to conducting the interview. The consent form is contained in Appendix 3. Although I know the identity of the participants involved in the research, the participants' names as well as organisational identifications have remained strictly confidential and will not be used in any reports stemming from the research including this thesis. Because reporting of the research relies upon extensive quoting of the participants' words, all identifying characteristics of both the participants and their organisations are carefully deleted from these quotations. Thus, I have chosen to restrict my introductions to quotations to the type of organisation that the individual worked for (e.g. UN, local NGO, Afghan government, foreign embassy, etc.). If no mention of location is made, it can be assumed that the interview was held in Kabul. Interviews conducted in northern Afghanistan are mostly identified as such. Additionally, I have indicated for the reader if two quotes occurring close together (on approximately the same page) in the thesis text can be attributed to the same source. Otherwise, it can be assumed that each quote stems from a different source.

During the research period, the interview transcripts were not printed out and were kept in digital form to better ensure security. The transcript files and digital voice recordings of the interviews were stored on a computer with a password protected hard-drive. These transcript files and digital voice files will be erased at the conclusion of the study.

No deception was used in conducting the research. Information was not deliberately withheld from the participants and the participants were not deliberately misled in the research.

There were no benefits, financial or otherwise, provided to the participants. It is conceivable that participation in this study may have posed a risk to the participants given the precarious social and political milieu within which they live and work. However, the methodology was designed to minimise these risks. For example, most interviews were conducted in locations where it remains quite common and, sometimes extremely common, for foreigners to come and go from. In virtually all cases my presence did not seem out of the ordinary. Additionally, participants were clearly asked to weigh any perceived risks before agreeing to be involved as an interviewee in this study.

Validation and Reliability

Validation is a contentious area in the literature on qualitative research, with many competing viewpoints emerging (Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). I, like Creswell (2007, pp. 206-207) and Druckman (2005, p. 331), view validation as an attempt to assess the ‘accuracy’ or authenticity of the research findings while keeping in mind that any reporting is a representation made by the researcher. Creswell (2007) outlines several strategies and techniques for achieving validation. First, having work experience in Afghanistan and a basic understanding of local culture should assist me in ‘accurate’ reporting. Second, the triangulation of data, whereby multiple sources of information and data were incorporated, was attempted in the research process. I carefully considered a wide variety of data sources including organisational reports and publications, internet-based documents and information, project annual reports, and

photographs. In addition, I conducted an extensive literature review on relevant themes. Also, interview questioning was often used to explore statements made in previous interviews in order to test my interpretation of these previous statements. Third, during the research process I utilised my peers in the field to provide a bit of an external check on the research process. Several people in my network of contacts were able to comment on the emerging meanings and interpretations from the interview process. Fourth, I attempted to identify my biases, which should reduce disorientation in the interpretation of the interview data. Fifth, I have attempted to provide a “rich, thick” description (Creswell, 2007, p. 209) in the presentation of the findings that provides the necessary details and perspectives to allow the reader to make his/her own decision regarding the transferability of the findings.

Reliability, or the ability of two independent researchers to reach the same conclusions given similar research methods, remains primarily a concern of quantitative research studies. Qualitative researchers do not generally hold this expectation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 39). The complexity of social phenomena such as local ownership can be studied from a multitude of angles and with a multitude of qualitative strategies. Yet, reliability was still aimed for in this study, and was enhanced in several ways. In this study, I maintained careful field notes, and used a high-quality audio recorder for the interviews. All recordings were then carefully transcribed. The coding and analysis process was aided by computer software that allowed a large volume of data to be effectively and efficiently considered.

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the methodology utilised for a qualitative study of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The subject of Afghan ownership is complex, filled with competing viewpoints and dilemmas, and is extremely rich. Thus, a qualitative strategy was chosen that relies upon open-ended interviews with Afghan and foreigner peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan. By incorporating a grounded theory strategy, I was able to draw out relevant peacebuilding theory that may serve to guide the peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan as it transition from foreign to local control.

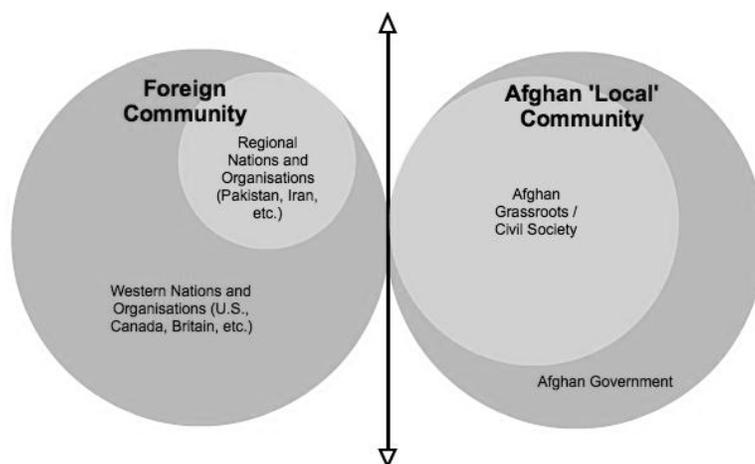
Chapter 5 - Dilemmas of Foreign Ownership – Necessities, Struggles, and Ways

Forward

Introduction

Ten years after the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan the question is being asked, “Who should be owning the peacebuilding project in Afghanistan?” While there is not a clear-cut and concise answer to this question, the reality on the ground in Afghanistan reveals a constantly shifting combination and balance of foreign and local ownership. The current intervention narrative of withdrawal of foreign influence, organisations, and troops has perhaps accelerated a steady transition towards the ‘Afghan ownership’ side of the scale. As discussed in the literature review, there is a growing consensus that increased local ownership of peacebuilding is desperately needed. However, the transition to local control is a difficult, ambiguous, and a rhetoric-laden process that has not been seriously investigated, and has very few (if any) international peacebuilding precedents to use as a guide towards promising practices.

Figure 1: Foreign-local axis in the ownership debate



Clear axes that define the ownership debate emerged from the study's interview narratives. The overarching and defining axis, as already eluded too, is the foreign-local relationship. The 'foreign' community in Afghanistan includes a plethora of international governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and military forces that are predominantly from the West. However, one notable sub-division of the international community that must be carefully considered are the regional nations surrounding Afghanistan, particularly Pakistan and Iran, but to some extent India, Russia, China, Saudi Arabia, and other Central Asian nations as well. Even though some of these nations may be indirectly involved in the Western-led international peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan, their role was viewed by my participants as predominantly destructive in nature, and as overtly and covertly resisting Afghan ownership of peacebuilding progress in Afghanistan.

In a similar fashion, the 'local' community can be sub-divided into two primary divisions, i.e., the government-civil society and the rural-urban split. Because my Afghan participants were selected from across the government-civil society divide, intense discussions as to which 'level' of Afghan society should be leading the advance towards Afghan ownership emerged as a salient concern in the interview data. However, this study struggles to directly address the rural-urban variable since all interviews were conducted in major urban centres, though revealing data regarding this topic does emerge.

An exploration of the aforementioned axes reveals intertwined, delicate, and insecure relationships, and forms the basis for inherent dilemmas. Traditional wisdom teaches us that at least two sides to every story should be considered. The phenomenon of

Afghan ownership is no different. For most arguments related to Afghan ownership there exists a valid counter-argument that is another piece to the overall puzzle. Thus, the analysis and discussion in this study is structured around dilemmas, with few clear-cut answers provided. Complexity, however unsettling, needs to be embraced and, as one circles the dilemmas voiced by the participants, constructive paths forward begin to be illuminated. However, it should be noted that these paths are not necessarily transferable to other contexts, or to other phases of the Afghan intervention, but speak to the current situation and potentially the immediate future.

This chapter is the first of four chapters of data analysis that begins a more rigorous exploration of transition from foreign to local control, and the struggle to build authentic and effective Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The first two chapters are counterparts, looking at the ownership debate from two different viewpoints. This chapter explores dilemmas surrounding *foreign* ownership of peacebuilding and the barriers stemming from within the *foreign* community preventing effective transition to Afghan-local control. The magnitude, pace, and reach of transition activities is certainly dependent upon the very powerful and influential international community in Afghanistan. Towards this end, this chapter summarises the significant role that participants believe the international community should be playing in Afghanistan. Then, this chapter surveys the struggles and dilemmas that must be addressed in order to lubricate the process of transition to Afghan ownership.

However, not all power remains in the hands of the international community, and the Afghan-local community plays a significant role in the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Thus, Chapter 6 explores the flip side of the coin, that is the

necessity of and dilemmas of *local* ownership by the Afghan government and Afghanistan's civil society, and the barriers from within Afghan society that are hindering the realisation of local ownership.

The Justification for Foreign Ownership of Peacebuilding in Afghanistan

An investigation into the possibility of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding certainly requires a careful inspection of the perceptions of the role of foreign organisations and troops in Afghanistan. The intervention's efficacy is significantly shaped by local perceptions of the intervention as a whole. Local perceptions certainly do influence behaviour and are symptomatic of local support and/or resistance in Afghanistan. Thus, peacebuilding success is dependent upon the perceptions held by the local constituency since perceptions can, and often do, shape reality (Donini, 2007).

Accessing local perceptions in a context of war such as Afghanistan is difficult. Media and official reports, as well as the political narratives emerging from troop-sending countries to Afghanistan like Canada, are unclear and serve up competing conclusions because of political bias. This study attempts to fill this gap, and asserts that it remains fundamentally important how Afghans, along with those intimately involved in the intervention on the ground, view the overall peacebuilding mission. These perceptions can serve as a starting point for exploring the possibility of increased Afghan ownership within the precarious foreign-local relationship in Afghanistan.

Fear of Premature Foreign Withdrawal

So how do participants in this study view the foreign intervention? A strong majority of the participants in this study view the current foreign intervention as both necessary and desirable. Further, a significant number of participants fear a resumption of

civil war and significant developmental and political ‘loss of ground’ upon foreign withdrawal. This finding is cautiously submitted due to the restricted population from which the participants were drawn as discussed in the Methodology chapter. A fuller and more revealing perspective needs to be assembled from a broader population more inclusive of rural Afghans. The views of rural Afghans is open to conjecture but may be less supportive of the overall intervention. For example, media reports of rural anger in response to nighttime NATO house raids offer a glimpse of views for a limited segment of the rural population. Being more inclusive of rural Afghans, Doninni’s (2007) study found that foreigners were “well tolerated”, but at the same time noted a significant malaise amongst Afghans in regards to the overall aid effort, which is a finding that is corroborated in this study.

While expressing distinct support for the overall foreign mission in Afghanistan, the participants offered up significant criticism regarding, and reflection upon, intervention ethics, motivations, and practices. These responses form a strong justification for the necessity of foreign intervention in Afghanistan, all the while arguing for significant structural and practical changes that would allow for increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities.

The interview narratives illustrate the participants’ perceptions of the foreign intervention. At a basic level, over a quarter of the participants expressed as one of their biggest fears that the foreign community would disengage and pull out of Afghanistan. In most cases these admissions of fear by participants, when situated within the remainder of their interviews, indirectly reveal support for the intervention. Security concerns and,

in particular concern regarding the resumption of civil war, dominated these expressions of fear. An Afghan civil society leader lamented:

One of the fears that I have is that the international community will disengage, and they will reduce their involvement in Afghanistan, and it will turn again to civil war in Afghanistan and a battleground for the countries around here.

An Afghan human rights leader, attempting to express the severity of the situation, put it this way:

This time you will see a worse civil war than what you saw in the 90s or during the Taliban era. This time when they pull out even animals on the street will be killing each other. Normal Afghans will be killing each other.

Concerns and fears extended beyond the realm of security. A human rights leader feared that a “hectic” withdrawal would result in the Talibanisation of the Afghan government with autocratic and authoritarian tendencies. A senior Afghan government official doubted their ability to achieve necessary statebuilding goals in the absence of international technical assistance. In the development sector, a senior donor official believed that current efforts were unsustainable, and post-withdrawal insecurities would render “a lot of money and effort wasted.”

There are indications that the fears of premature and imminent foreign withdrawal are grounded in reality. A foreigner working for a local research group warned of premature withdrawal:

We know that this year the security situation is going to get very bad - it is getting very bad very quickly, and it is likely to escalate. It is going to escalate until the foreign forces find a way out; they will find a way out. Right now they are all scrambling for some kind of information to be able to say, “It is good enough, we can go.” ... and they want to persuade themselves, or their constituencies or whomever at home, that it is good enough. Then they could find some ways, to say, “Okay we have done our job, we can get out of here.” Then they will continue to train a few Afghan

police and military officers and leave them in charge and then they will leave too. And they will never say, never acknowledge publicly, that they have lost the fight.

Foreign peacebuilding officials and military leaders are confirming this. An international security forces member revealed:

The shine has come off the Afghanistan file - without question. The appetite back home, certainly with the Americans and the international community is, "When is it over?" When is it that they can say, "Okay, pack your bags, turn over your keys, hand it over to the Afghans." ... I don't think the appetite is there for the international community to keep spending the money that it is.

Reasons given for premature withdrawal are varied. A UN official noted significant "donor fatigue in terms of the military and developmental agenda." Another senior UN official believed that support from foreign constituencies had dried up, the political will to back the mission was waning, and that financial pressures stemming from intervention costs as well as from the current economic downturn would accelerate withdrawal.

The Perceived Role of Foreign Organisations/Troops in Afghanistan

The participants moved beyond the perhaps ambiguous calls for continued foreign engagement and provided details about their perceptions of necessary peacebuilding foci and foreign peacebuilding activities. The interview narratives revealed three major themes, discussed here in an order that reflects their prevalence in the interview data: (1) enforcing security and peace; (2) capacity building and other political reform; and (3) mobilizing foreign aid and development activities.

Enforcing security and peace. When asked to identify barriers to the realisation of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding, over half of the participants raised the issue of insecurity. Insecurity was described as a hindrance to Afghan ownership more often than

any other factor. In this way, insecurity emerged as one of the major themes underpinning the interview narratives.

Perceptions of insecurity. Before delving into the participants' perceptions of the manner in which insecurity hinders the flourishing of Afghan ownership, it is instructive to survey the perceived state of security in early 2011. The last quarter of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011 witnessed a dramatic rise in violent attacks by anti-government elements in Afghanistan. Notable trends included increasingly violent attacks on locations frequented by foreigners including supermarkets, guesthouses, offices, and restaurants. Areas in the North and North East of Afghanistan that have remained relatively secure since the 2001 invasion are becoming increasingly insecure and are suffering heavy civilian casualties from suicide bomb attacks. It is believed that the emerging Peshawar-based Haqqani *Shura* is responsible for much of this recent violence in the North and North East. The Florida Koran-burning incident also incited significant rioting across Afghanistan and the April 2011 storming of a UN compound in the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif in which seven foreign UN staff were murdered.

Many participants warned that the security situation is spiralling downward, and perhaps out of control. A foreign researcher/journalist gave details:

But unfortunately it is now a downward journey, but you now see this over-optimism in the international narrative, but in their hearts they believe that it will spiral.

A senior UN official upheld this view:

But the security situation is absolutely horrible, and getting worse...They are not winning the war, they're kidding themselves.

Several others predicted that the immediate future would witness an increasingly volatile environment, increasing risk for foreign civilian workers, and significant civilian

casualties. Security has required attention “on an hourly basis unfortunately” (senior UN official), and foreign organisations have been forced to live with the constant threat of bomb attacks and the possibility of collateral damage. Afghan civilian leaders also described their personal insecurity; they face the constant fear of abduction by criminals looking for cash payments, feel little protection from the government, police, or army, are weary of the ongoing insurgency, and have no hope of the insurgency relenting in the foreseeable future.

Insecurity and local ownership of peacebuilding. Insecurity resulting from the continuing insurgency is perhaps dealing a fatal blow to efforts aimed at securing local ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The consequences of violent insurgency are numerous and varied. First, the insurgency-induced insecurity is effectively resisting intervention efforts, hindering economic development, and thwarting peacebuilding goals. A UN official alleged that a major attack on a foreigner guesthouse in Kabul had significant consequences for his project:

The UN guesthouse attack in October 2009 really threw us off our implementation track. There was a withdrawal of international staff and our organisation particularly had trouble replacing the international management staff ... so we are basically catching up in terms of our knowledge base and implementation base.

Insecurity has also impeded the liberalisation of the economy and, in particular, has obstructed efforts at procuring much needed foreign and local investment. It was noted by participants that large projects such as the Turkmenistan-Pakistan natural gas pipeline, or the natural gas fields near Sheberghan in the North were not attracting needed investments and international interest. In addition the 2007 U.S. Geological Survey has revealed significant mineral wealth underneath Afghanistan’s mountainous terrain

(USGS, 2007). Two senior donor officials correlated the inability of Afghans to access this resource wealth because of insecurity with the struggle to secure Afghan ownership:

I think that one key challenge to increasing Afghan ownership is that they don't have any resources at the moment themselves. I mean, it is kind of stating the obvious, but if Afghanistan could start really benefiting from its natural resources, supposedly there are a lot, I would think that they would be in a better position. And we as donors would better support more strongly what they want to happen in this country. At the moment it is really the donors saying what is happening in this country.

It is not necessarily the best environment to come in with private investment either. If I wanted to put in 200 or 300 million [dollars] for a power plant in a gas field with all the bombs going off, I would be really skittish, to put some kind of investment here.

To further aggravate the problem, a couple of participants complained that prominent and wealthy Afghans were instead investing their money in Dubai, UAE, a rapidly developing urban centre a short direct flight away from Kabul.

In a related issue, some respondents perceived that insecurity is forcing the foreign community to retain greater levels of ownership, act unilaterally, and limit consultation with local Afghan groups and individuals. A senior government official explained:

Again it all depends on security. If we have no security we can do nothing. Even if we have the capacity both at the national level and at the local level, the ownership will again be taken from us - the international forces will go there and they will make their own decisions without consulting the local Afghan authorities.

This type of foreign stance is certainly evident in Kabul where entire city blocks have been shut down to local traffic in order to secure foreign office space or embassies, all the while intruding upon and interrupting local residents and making them feel like “3rd class citizens in their own country” (comment by an Afghan NGO director).

Second, the threat of insurgency violence and attack is hindering both foreign intervention organisations and the Afghan government (particularly its central Ministries and bodies) from extending their reach beyond the capital Kabul and into the rural regions, all the more problematic since approximately 79 percent of the population is rural. Foreign governmental and non-governmental organisations are often restricted to major urban centres and are unable, in some cases, to even set up sub-offices in smaller regional urban centres. Project work conducted in the rural districts is at the mercy of local security conditions and is thus sporadic and unreliable for local populations. In many cases the placement of foreign staff or Technical Assistants increases the security risk for local staff and local populations. Many large organisations and donors such as USAID have thus chosen to conduct their project work under the supervision of expensive and unpopular private security firms, and often contract out entire projects to for-profit development companies.

The Afghan government Ministries are also struggling to extend their reach beyond the confines of Kabul. Even the highly successful and touted National Solidarity Program (NSP) is currently unable to operate in 30 percent of the country because of the insecurity for its staff. Central government officials are often unable to visit their areas of responsibility, with elected Members of Parliament, Provincial Governors, Mayors, and other locally residing officials sometimes protected by confinement within local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) military bases. In a related issue, a senior Afghan government official noted that security threats were driving educated and influential Afghans into more secure urban centres, thus reducing rural capacity and thwarting efforts at regional-rural local ownership.

Third, insecurity is suppressing the emergence of a vibrant and effective civil society in Afghanistan. Civil society groups and leaders face the constant threat of attack, and receive virtually no protection from their government. A civil society leader called attention to this issue:

The main challenge that we are facing in Afghanistan as civil society is the social protection - unfortunately we don't have it. Which means that security has been a very strong obstacle in front of everybody. We are unable to move properly around the space that has been given by the law to the civil society. Having civil society is a new phenomena in Afghanistan, it is also difficult to explain the status and sphere of responsibility for civil society to the government.

Other civil society leaders spoke about the dangers of travelling in rural areas, even to provinces in which they grew up and were familiar with. Here again, civil society groups are often unable to implement countrywide programming and are forced to limit coverage based strictly on the security situation.

Insecurity and international military forces. The previous section illustrates the intense and salient concern for security within the interview narratives. A majority of participants were of the opinion that insecurity is blocking peacebuilding success and efforts at Afghan ownership of this peacebuilding. However, a consensus doesn't exist on what should be done about security from a military standpoint. Interview responses concerning the desired role for international military forces were tentative, ambiguous, and surprisingly rare. The international military's role is a definite dilemma since the Afghan people can't appear to live with them, or without them.

There is a general support for the international military's presence, as communicated indirectly in the previous section describing fears of premature foreign withdrawal. The participants generally perceived the international military as key actors

in enforcing security, and as a stopgap in preventing the overrunning of Kabul and the country by the Taliban-backed insurgency. A couple of participants shared with me the point that their young children were part of the first generation in a long while that did not live through widespread open war, widespread population displacement, and confinement to refugee or IDP camps. The horrors of war are vivid in the social memory in Afghanistan, and Afghan participants perceived the international forces as central in preventing a return to civil war and the horrors it brings.

However, the desired future for the international forces remained ambiguous for my participants. An Afghan member of the High Peace Council called for a long-term foreign military presence perhaps through permanent military bases. He contended that the looming military withdrawal needs to be thoughtful, purposeful, and gradual:

The [Afghan] army and the police are not capable of securing Afghanistan. So we don't need overnight withdrawal of the international forces. So they should work parallel for development of the Afghan army and security, and they should gradually limit their involvement, and they also should fight the Al Qaeda or the opposition, whoever it is, so that way things are developed from grassroots. And on the other side, you are limiting gradually your operation and give more prominent role to the Afghan army so they will be capable of securing the security. The international security used to play a bigger force, but put them in the back and they can be a backup force.

He seems to describe the emerging military strategies on the part of coalition partners. A foreign military leader shared with me his ideas regarding the current movement towards pulling back from combat roles and rather adopting a role as trainers and advisors under the auspices of the NATO Training Mission (NTM). Training military leadership has become a primary concern since a majority of Afghan security personnel are illiterate and without combat experience.

This training mission, despite its apparent timeliness, faces significant challenges and needs to be thoughtfully undertaken. An analysis of military transition, while directly related to Afghan ownership, is beyond the scope of this study. However, it should be noted that some participants expressed serious concern with military development and the training mission in Afghanistan. Is the Afghan army strategically, operationally, and ethically prepared to maintain security in Afghanistan? The size of the training project is massive and perhaps undoable according to some participants. The predominantly U.S. funding (approx. \$12 billion per annum) is channelled towards training 9000 to 12 000 soldiers at any one time, with a final goal of increasing the Afghan National Army to about 260 000 troops by 2015. The dominant position of the U.S. is causing problems however. Some participants suggested that U.S. military culture, stature, and goals were at odds with other troop contributing nations. One foreign military participant provided an example:

Regarding military culture, amongst the US forces there is much more of this reverence for their leaders as gods, much more of an authority structure, looking out for their own interests. Amongst our forces much more so there is a sense of looking out for the Afghans, being here for them, and doing things in a way that is best for them. But this becomes difficult when 96 percent of the aid comes from the US. Countries like ours, if they have a problem regarding something, are drowned out by the overpowering force of US funding. If they want to fund something, then it is done. For example, [we] questioned whether it was sustainable to fund 170 000 more police forces, how was Afghanistan going to sustain paying for this. But the US was willing to fund it now and thus that was the number that was used in recruitment.

Several participants also called attention to the apparent disparity between army and police training. Two issues became apparent. First, the Afghan National Army (ANA) was perceived as receiving disproportionate attention when compared to the Afghan National Police (ANP) and, as a result, has become much more professionalised.

Second, ANP training has often been conducted under the military training programme, with police officers receiving training from military trainers. This creates serious problems according to one participant from the international police mission. For example, he noted an almost complete lack of community policing capabilities. Also, a police culture differs significantly from military culture. Police culture encourages consultation, the questioning of superiors, and group decisions, as opposed to rigid lines of authority and individual decision-making. This cultural dissonance creates difficulties in training for community policing procedures and investigations. One training official even noticed that the few foreign police involved in police training activities quickly adopted a more 'military' style posture towards their trainees as they worked along with their military colleagues.

The political situation is also complicating efforts. A couple of participants even went so far as to predict the return of the Taliban to political power in the next year or two, having an obvious impact on military training and insurgency combat. Others noted the increasing number of lethal attacks on foreign trainers by their Afghan military/police trainees.

In addition to these critiques, several other participants believed it was time to re-envision foreign military objectives (both NATO and the U.S. Army) in Afghanistan. At a basic level, a senior embassy official believed the foreign military establishment was inappropriate to carry forward the peacebuilding programme in Afghanistan because it is institutionally and culturally incapable of ensuring Afghan ownership. Other participants insisted that it was essential for the peace process in Afghanistan that foreign troops terminate their combat role. A foreign embassy official advised:

Right now they are fighting and pushing for peace at the same time, but that doesn't sit well with many many people. And they find it disingenuous. And they say once the United States agrees to peace everything will change.

Instead, a senior donor official believed that the necessary epicentre for combat needed to be on Pakistani territory from now on. He believed that the international community needed to throw its weight behind the effort of combating the insurgency in North West Pakistan in order to quell the Afghan insurgency and to achieve stability.

Capacity building and other political reform. The foreign role in capacity building and governance work emerged from the interview data as a prominent and widely recognised theme.

Capacity Building. Capacity building programmes are viewed as undergirding any attempts at achieving a sense of Afghan ownership in several respects. One senior UN participant labelled it as the “only answer” and a necessary prerequisite to local leaders being able to eventually “take over from the internationals.” A foreign embassy official commented:

I think it is actually one of the best tools for Afghan ownership, for a legacy, and for a sustainability in the communities. It is probably one of the best investments that the international community has made. ... If they have taken a course or if they have been trained it will always be with them, it can be never be taken away.

According to an Afghan civil service trainer, capacity building in Afghanistan is the primary path on which Afghans will escape the dependency that has developed over the last ten years of foreign intervention.

However, effective capacity building is difficult to achieve. One government deputy minister believed that much of the capacity building in his Ministry was failing. The primary methodology of capacity building, particularly within the Afghan

government, is the insertion of foreign Technical Advisors into the Ministry. These advisors are typically highly educated and well-experienced, and carry significant skill-sets that are desperately needed in many government departments. In many cases, participants shared how these advisors simply do the job for their Afghan counterparts.

Another shortcoming is the reliance upon ‘training’ as a tool for building capacity. While certainly an essential component to any capacity building scheme, training, particularly through more generalised courses, is not achieving the needed results. Rather, effective capacity building has the Technical Assistant work alongside and with his/her counterpart, developing policy, responding to daily issues, and managing operations together with them. It appeared to me that there might be an over-reliance on training project-work as opposed to the more difficult on-the-job capacity building. However, significant and successful programmes are in operation.

So what is the way forward in capacity building? This study’s participants laid out several promising practices that may maximise the impact of the presence of foreign capacity in Afghanistan. First, the participants felt it was crucial not to view the local workforce as void of capacity, rather it is important to utilise the significant capacity and abilities that do exist. Several participants felt that the ‘lack of capacity’ had perhaps become a simplistic and pat explanation used by foreigners when describing the challenges they faced. A UN consultant echoed the sentiments of several participants:

There is phenomenal capacity in this country, it is just a question of getting used to the culture and the way things move, and then trying to maximise what you can get from the people. The capacity exists, I have seen it in this programme, there is phenomenal capacity which exists - technically they are very competent.

However, the scope of these comments must be kept in mind. The vast majority of participants believed the lack of capacity to be a major barrier preventing local ownership from being realised. These participants were attempting to highlight other, perhaps ignored, reasons. For example, overly bureaucratic administrative structures and systems, unclear communication and expectations on the part of foreign counterparts, and an outright unwillingness to recognise capacity on the part of foreigners were mentioned as stifling local capacities. A couple of participants believed this unwillingness was based on an underlying lack of trust for Afghan counterparts and a failure in relationship-building on the part of Technical Advisors. Unlike Western institutional culture that does not necessarily precondition efficiency with relationship, work processes are certainly smoothed by rapport amongst colleagues in communal cultures like Afghanistan.

Existing Afghan capacity can be allowed to proliferate and reproduce inside of international organisations if intentional efforts are made to promote Afghans into leadership and managerial positions. In a similar fashion, foreign organisations are increasingly developing Afghan Technical Assistants to work with government counterparts as opposed to relying on foreign Technical Assistants. A foreign NGO project manager explained that utilising local but foreign trained Afghan staff served as “translators and interpreters” between the foreign community and local government counterparts. Another practice utilised by the UN is to have government Ministries temporarily assign some of their staff to the UN for on-the-job training.

A second ‘best practice’ highlighted by participants to develop local capacities involves the strategic placement of international organisations and their staff either within Afghan counterparts and Ministries, or in very near proximity to them. Some examples

were provided. For example, a foreign-led research organisation was considering relocating inside a local University. An important consideration, however, was the potential loss of independence and being faced with the often destructive internal politics of the University. One government department had established its office inside of a UN organisation in order to learn the day-to-day operations from experts in their field. Many other international organisations involved in capacity building could be located within counterpart Ministries or at least within their compounds. A senior government official reasoned:

Regarding the building, don't rent your building far away and operate independently. Come to the Ministry and ask for an office, they will provide one for you, or within the compound of the Ministry build your own offices. Or rent an office next to the Ministry, so you and the Ministry can work together.

A third practice that will allow for increasingly effective capacity building is permitting local organisations and government Ministries to be involved in defining capacity shortcomings, to design capacity building programmes, and to participate in hiring and training Technical Assistants. For example, a UN programming official shared an example:

The Ministry, say that they have a requirement, then when we conduct the interviews or the recruitment process. The representative from that counterpart Ministry is always there throughout the process. And he/she is who makes the final call on the advisor that has to work with them, because they know the requirements.

This UN official claimed that government ministries retained significant voice when hiring new staff.

Other political reform and support roles. While capacity building dominated the interview data, other political roles were defined for the international community. In

particular, the international community must use its political weight to motivate needed governance reform. Foreigners have secured for themselves levels of authority in the eyes of top political leaders that are unattainable for many Afghans in leadership positions. A UN official had this to say:

If I were to make one of my regional managers, who is an Afghan, to go and meet the governor and tell the governor about a new policy, “And this is going to be done in this particular matter - no questions asked”, he cannot do that. Because the governor is on a higher plane, there is a lot of respect involved, in dealings with each other. And at times if the governor is doing it a bit wrong, the regional manager, who is Afghan, would have to sit back and respect the cultural relationship. But at times if he has the backing of the international staff, then he could always take the international along with him, and go and tell him, “Sir, Mr. Governor, you are right, what you're doing is absolutely right, but maybe you could think about this also, and this may give you better results and better advantages. Why don't you look at this also?” For an Afghan to tell that to another senior Afghan, at times it gets difficult because of various constraints. So there comes the occasion where you need some people to give you that push.

While posing an obvious dilemma for attempts at ensuring Afghan ownership of political reform, foreigners do carry significant weight in the face of authority, and are granted a listening ear when Afghan counterparts are ignored or unable to push for needed change. Adding to the dilemma is the internal organisational culture of the foreign peacebuilding community. It was perceived by a participant and hinted at by many others that foreigners prefer to relate to other foreigners. An Afghan NGO official believed it beneficial to have an expatriate director for his organisation: “But for a foreigner it is easier to talk with [foreigners] or understand them. For that reason it is better that the [director] is an expatriate.”

There are several areas in which the international community can put pressure on the political powers in Afghanistan. First, an Afghan human rights leader hoped that the

international community would both support government evolution, leading to a deeper democratic experience for citizens and a more responsive and responsible government towards its people. Second, an Afghan civil society leader hoped that the international community would disengage from the current “political mafia” and Warlords that they have placed in power and allow new reformist political leaders to emerge and, most importantly, carefully protect them from the previously mentioned status quo. He believed that current political and economic power holders, as well as drug and crime leaders, “will never want to see a new group emerge as a political force. So the international community has the responsibility to identify such individuals and groups across the country and protect them first and, second, support them and they have to be the future leaders.” Third, several Afghan participants pointed out the utter ineffectiveness of the current political party structure in the Afghan parliament, and argued that the international community should be intervening directly by pushing for policy and laws that would encourage the creation of meaningful political parties with effective opposition and advocacy capacity to create a more democratic experience for the people of Afghanistan. In a similar fashion to the previous point, an Afghan political watchdog leader believed that the current political, economic, and crime leaders were intensely resisting the formation of effective political parties in order to cement their control over parliamentarians and other elite political leaders.

Fifth, a major role for the international community is dealing with corruption. A UN project director shared regarding the dilemmas surrounding the combat against corruption within government structures:

But it is a bit difficult because for example I have a government counterpart. Now I have to give lead to him for the embedding of Afghan

ownership. So if I give lead to him then he does the favouritism in hiring. If I don't give lead to him then again I am kind of opposing Afghan ownership. He is my counterpart, good or bad. So it is a very difficult balance to make.

The solution as described by a couple of foreign participants was to instil and insist upon modernised and transparent systems of governance and administration at the beginning of programming in order to ensure a sustainable and locally owned resistance to corruption within Afghan organisations.

Mobilising international aid and development funding and activities. Many participants recognised a third role for the foreign intervention community in Afghanistan in terms of using its economic weight, wealth, and mobilising abilities to ease suffering through aid and initiate much needed development processes.

Mobilising the world community. The study's participants were cognizant that the attention of the world's wealthiest and most powerful countries was upon them. The public face (at least globally) of this attention has been revealed through a series of international conferences in Bonn (2001), Berlin (2004), London (2006), Rome (2007), Paris (2008), Moscow (2009), The Hague (2009), London (2010), and Kabul (2010), where the international community has procured aid commitments and has solidified a strategy and goals in terms of the overall intervention.

However, this study's participants (particularly Afghan participants) worried that this opportunity and attention was being squandered and not taken advantage of. The Afghan participants recognised that the foreign intervention, despite its underlying motivations and intentions, had brought into Afghanistan significant assistance, funding, expertise, capacity, and developmental potential. Despite the strong critique of, and problems faced by, the foreign community (discussed in subsequent sections), many

Afghan participants are recognizing the benefits of international attention, and the sacrifice made by many countries to intervene in Afghanistan. Afghans recognised, in particular, the development potential and the focus on democracy building. An Afghan civil society leader stated:

But with the current attention of the international community, I think there is a golden opportunity for us to get the benefit, the advantage here. So the international community is here for the sake of their own interests, but we can better benefit. Unfortunately this intelligence, this understanding is missing within the political leadership of Afghanistan – they don't have this thought. The current political parties and current political leadership is very naïve to address these problems and take the advantage, the best benefit for the Afghans - which is a disaster for us.

For others the foreign intervention represented a new start, and a chance to redirect Afghanistan's tragic historical trajectory. Another participant believed that Afghanistan could use the weight of the international community to assert itself regionally and establish favourable foreign policies that would address regional meddling in Afghan affairs and encourage local wealth creation through trade.

In addition, participants believed that a long and sustained international engagement was necessary and desirable. A UN worker responded to one lingering fear in Afghanistan, that the foreign community will abandon Afghanistan immediately after the security situation stabilises or a precarious political solution is reached:

My hope is that if there is any stability established on the security end of things, I don't predict the outcome, but that the support of the international community will be sustained and demonstrated by a long-term commitment to democracy here.

In a similar fashion, a former government minister asserted that the work of the international community was only half finished, and withdrawal at this point would negate much of the progress achieved to date. They must ensure that Afghans “have the

capacity to stand on their feet very quickly.” Also, an Afghan civil service trainer feared that a truncated engagement would not suffice in securing Afghanistan from regional meddling and conflict.

Provision of humanitarian aid and development opportunities. Ten years into the international intervention, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest and unhealthiest countries on earth as evident in the *Afghanistan Human Development Report 2011* (UNDP, 2011). However, the overarching ‘transition’ narrative is distracting the international attention away from the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. However, a couple of participants insisted that Afghanistan must receive significant humanitarian attention immediately. Much effort seems to be focused on disaster preparation and response, and conflict-induced crisis and suffering. In some places local populations have to face both fighting and disasters simultaneously. In many cases, conflict IDPs are forced to settle on the edges of urban centres in swelling impoverished settlements with limited abilities to support themselves.

The international community’s role in initiating economic and social development was a particularly salient concern emerging from the interview data. Development, however, has become a contentious and divisive topic and is evident in subsequent chapters. In many ways, it seems that the possibilities and end goals of development have remained elusive. Thus, expectations have perhaps been both too low at the macro level and too high at the micro-grassroots level. So what can be achieved developmentally in Afghanistan? A recent geological survey of Afghanistan’s mineral and energy wealth has awakened Afghans to development potential in the country (USGS, 2007). An Afghan NGO director stressed this point:

So one has to keep hope for this country, we have rich resources, and it has great potential for economic development, but that requires strong leadership and it requires strategic partnership with the international community.

An agricultural leader made clear the development potential in the farming sector.

The hope is that the country has enormous production in agriculture ... the country has a lot of rich agricultural land, a lot of water. And it grows a variety of crops, double cropping for wheat and rice, barley, vegetables. A number of fruits of high quality are grown in this country so there is a big potential, provided again that there is investment, and the vision must be food production.

Other participants pointed out that Afghanistan's relatively small population (~30 million) should not prove too daunting for development actors.

So what kinds of development achievements from the last 10 years do participants consider noteworthy? Several participants (foreign and local) emphasised the tremendous amount of development work that has gone on, and exuded a sense of optimism. Highlighted areas included the drastically improved school enrolment rates (including girls), increased literacy levels amongst adults, significantly improved coverage by basic health services, the improved participation of women in the public workforce, and a flourishing market and trade connections with the foreign community. Infrastructure advances included 24 hour electricity in the cities and the growing rural coverage with the power grid, advanced communications infrastructure such as cell phone service and satellite internet, the near completion of the 'ring road', a major highway that encircles the country and connects all of Afghanistan's major urban centres, the many improvements to city streets and smaller rural roads, and improvements to both small and large irrigation infrastructure and networks including water dams.

The interview participants gave some indication of the future role of the international community in the development sector. Most importantly the participants recognised the economic power wielded by the international community. A couple of participants hoped that this economic weight would translate into significant investment into the country, that is “priority investments like energy, water, underground minerals, and maybe tourism as well - things that will involve a lot of people” (Afghan UN official). Several other participants also agreed and advised the international community to focus on large-scale projects that would noticeably impact the lives of large segments of the population, and on what is truly “life-transforming here” (Afghan university professor). For them, large-impact work would include large projects that create essential infrastructure (e.g. pipelines, dams, roads, and housing, etc.) or provide widespread employment opportunities (e.g. mines, and the oil and gas industry, etc.). They claimed that the focus on small-scale development projects, while serving a purpose, were noticeably falling short in the battle against poverty and unemployment. This is concerning since poverty and unemployment are both identified as triggers for recruitment into the insurgency.

The International Community’s Struggle to Ensure Afghan Ownership

In addition to sharing perspectives on the appropriate peacebuilding role for the international community in Afghanistan, participants offered up an extensive critique regarding the peacebuilding strategy, practice, and ethics of the foreign peacebuilding intervention in post-2001 Afghanistan. The critique cuts deep and, perhaps, even calls into question the legitimacy of the overall peacebuilding project in Afghanistan. The study’s participants illuminated eight areas of struggle. The struggles are discussed in

order of their prominence within the interview data, starting with the most mentioned theme.

Donors are Dictating Peacebuilding Policy and Practice

Unrelenting insecurity and criminal activity has crippled government efforts to secure adequate internal revenue and has required an almost total reliance on international assistance. International bilateral and multilateral aid accounts for about 90 percent of all public expenditure in Afghanistan (Waldman, 2008). Thus, international aid donors hold significant power as key actors in the overall peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan. Donors have used their influence to push for specific and widespread change inside Afghan institutions, which is certainly understandable given the significant institutional devastation under the Mujahideen and Taliban rule during the 1990s. However, participants perceived donor power as a significant challenge in the face of realising Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

Donors and policy formation. The participants accused donor organisations of dictating policy inside Afghan institutions and government Ministries and Departments. Several participants believed that large international donors directly affected major government and institutional policies. The Afghan government and other organisations have grown dependent upon international funding, and are understandably swayed in policy and practice by the priorities of donors. A civil society leader shared his perspective:

However the relationship is more of a top-down approach than a bottom-up approach. The international community feels that it is necessary that they should say what areas should be funded and what areas should not be funded. Unfortunately because civil society is very new in Afghanistan, we are suffering from a lack of resources - particularly funding to tackle a number of issues. Now the funds are only available if the international

community prioritises it. So that is a disaster for us, if you see it from the other way around. ... But because we are not in the driving seat, and we cannot suggest a number of issues, and that is the agenda of theirs, so this is where the clash happens. And we have always been accused of being dependent on the foreign funding, of being a puppet of the foreigners.

What is particularly alarming is the perception that policy in Afghanistan is written by foreigners, presented and negotiated with Afghan authorities, and then presented to the public as an 'Afghan government' policy. A foreign embassy official angrily shared how significant sections of a major overarching policy, all the while presented and framed to the Afghan public and the world community as coming from the Afghan government, were drafted by a foreign official from another embassy.

My colleague drafted the policy and he took that policy and gave it to the [program leaders] to basically take it and adopt. But that's not Afghan ownership.

This quote would not be quite so worrying if the policy he is talking about had not been carefully presented as written by Afghans. Another international participant involved in policy analysis confirmed his concern with another example.

Pressures are increasing right now, the international community really wants everything to line up, and for Afghan officials to join in the game more, but there is no appetite for real Afghan ownership - it would have upset the whole narrative overarching what goes on in this country with the international community, and you see that in the run-ins with security companies. In all government strategies, they are often drafted by international advisors, joint meeting processes and working groups, and then presented as Ministry strategies. And this is simply rhetoric of ownership, but a limited number of people involved, very little links to what people think the institution is for. In other words at the end of the day the international community is guiding and directing a lot of the policy formation, but it is presented as coming from the government institutions themselves, but they actually have very little input into the direction and development of these new policies and practices. The recent 'bridging strategy' (Researcher's note: This strategy relates to Karzai's dictum to remove all security companies from the country) presented as the government's 'bridging strategy', presented as government documents, but the reality is that this policy was developed by the international

community and negotiated and fought over by the international community in relation to the government.

She alleged that both the US and NATO were maintaining control over a lot of important policy-making processes, but were carefully giving them an “Afghan face.”

Donors and project design. The participants also voiced concern over the manner in which donors dictate project design according to their agendas and interests, and attach unhelpful conditions to project funding. While certainly appreciating the generous funding that they do receive, some participants gave details of how rigid donor guidelines often did not match local realities or needs on the ground. An Afghan director for a local NGO provided an example of a hurriedly designed, and overly homogeneous country-wide health programme that they had implemented, that was not resulting in increased access for rural folk to health services. The NGO bravely and silently altered the project implementation to better address local needs. The donor discovered the changes, but after noting clear evidence of its superiority, the donor blessed the unexpected changes to strategy.

Some participants revealed how agendas in their project sector area were driven by donor wishes. A civil society leader explained in regards to his peacebuilding work:

So it is based on the agenda that has already been set by the outsiders, rather than the assessment of the real situation and the ideas that come from the civil society themselves. I think that this approach has to be reversed. They can see that we are here to support but they should note what we are specializing in, and how we access the problem and how we can solve it, and then support us in those areas. Before setting an agenda let's go with the agenda that the people can come up with from their own experience and assessment of the situation. And in that way they [civil society] will learn more and their experience will be very good and as a result capacity will be developed, and they will learn through these processes. And they will feel more ownership since this is the project that they had designed, this is the specialty they have.

He called for increased and authentic partnership in donor-civil society working relationships. In a similar fashion another Afghan NGO director shared how conditions attached to funding limited their decision-making authority on the ground and, sometimes, put his staff in danger in insecure areas. An Afghan government official also underlined the fact that a large percentage of international funding to the Afghan government remains beyond government control and is pre-assigned for certain international priorities. An added level of complexity in this respect is the commitment of donors to international policy frameworks such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Donors are required to ensure MDG requirements are met in funded project outcomes, whether the project is feasible or fits the context of Afghanistan or not. This requirement has led to many project failures according to an Afghan participant who is a policy analyst. While these priority programmes and MDGs may in fact be essential to peacebuilding success in Afghanistan, they certainly pose a challenge for developing Afghan ownership of peacebuilding.

The participants also claimed that, in some cases, project design was tailored to the reporting and evaluation requirements of the donors. A foreign NGO official involved in local government capacity building shared:

For me at least Afghan ownership is having a Mayor who is really passionate about being a good leader for his city as opposed to just having a Mayor who cooperates with us so we can get our projects planned out. Sure that is probably part of it, but his job is not to work with us as an NGO, his job is to run a city. But I think that because sometimes you get into this very 'task-oriented' mentality, because it is not our task to work with him on some things like his own leadership and management of his team or city, because that is not on the list that we check out and we get paid for, it sometimes falls off the radar. For me [our project] would encourage more local ownership if the Mayors viewed our project as a tool that they could use for a bigger goal in the city versus kind of the project as the end goal in itself.

She argued for donor funding to be increasingly flexible and holistic, and to enable political leader recipients to actually strengthen accountability relationships with their constituencies as opposed to holding accountability with the international donor as a primary concern. In a similar fashion, an Afghan civil society leader claimed that his organisation had been forced to completely revamp its mission in order to secure funding.

He explained as follows:

The reason that we shifted from [our previous focus] was because there was no interest from the donor community to fund that type of work because they can't report on that type of work to their constituents. They have to report back something of what we did, and what change we have brought for the nation and our specialty work does not produce quick impact or quick outputs so it is a lonesome process, a lone specialty and you can see the changes not in one year, but in many years, perhaps in five years. For a donor to report back to the constituency, waiting five years is also very difficult. So they want projects to be handled very quickly, and he reported back very quickly to the constituencies.

Sadly, the participant's organisation had been conducting specialty work crucial to the strengthening of civil society in Afghanistan.

Donors and organisational control. The participants emphasised that international donors were achieving direct control over Afghan organisations and government Ministries and Departments through funding arrangements. In the area of donor-government relations, the participants' complained that USAID intentionally bypassed local government structures (senior government department official), while another participant pointed out excessive control of government business by donors. A senior government finance official exposed donor control in his organisation:

This is what I see in terms of ownership, no matter what you put on paper, big visions, policies, you can discuss it amongst your people, but in terms of financial support and implementation, first of all what is required is a good deal of consultation and discussion with donors – to find out whether

they like it or not. And if they like it, that will go ahead. But this is the story of ownership here.

He, along with other government officials, provided evidence of significant constraints on government practice and policy. Perhaps most telling is the fact that some government officials will often first attempt to secure international programme funding before they actually design their programming. This process was perceived as being backward, since donors should be adapting their funding strategies according to the needs raised by the government department. However, in order to avoid wasting significant human resources and time, government employees are squeezing programmatic needs into donor priority moulds. This government-donor dissonance poses significant challenges to governmental legitimacy in the eyes of Afghans, given the struggle of donors to address the actual situation on the ground. Further, donor-government dissonance is exaggerated since each is accountable to different constituencies. The donors are accountable to international constituencies, while the Afghan government should be accountable to its own population.

One consequence of this disempowering donor-government relationship is apathy and unquestioned dependency on the part of Afghan officials. A foreign participant involved in political analysis shared a story of how a high ranking Afghan police officer, in a meeting with a foreign counterpart, would “switch off”. He had “decided early on in the process, assumed that the other side knows better, and taken it as his duty to just nod and let the international person say what they want to say.”

Unfortunately the situation is little different on the civilian side of the peacebuilding mission in Afghanistan. Civil society in Afghanistan was seen as

intimately linked to the donor community, both strategically and practically. An Afghan NGO official shared this about the project planning process from his experience:

The request should come from the community to the NGOs, and the NGOs make their assessment, and the assessment goes to the donor. But unfortunately it is not the case. Here the process is donor driven, it is not demanded by the people. The request does not come from the community, from the below to up, it comes from the donor. The donor says yes, we have money in this area, to spend there.

In some cases donor involvement goes far beyond project approval or guidance. Some major donors, like USAID, are insisting on retaining heavy control over civil society implementing agencies, such as in approving work plans and the hiring of senior management.

An Afghan NGO director talked about escaping the constraining binds of donor control by looking to define their own agenda and in securing their own local support:

The more we as civil society organisations define our own agenda, the more this definition of our identity and our work comes from Afghan society the better it is for ownership and also for the emergence of civil society as an independent force. But there are still a lot of constraints to it, a lot of things are donor driven because civil society organisations are dependent on funding from donors, donors give them funding only on a project basis, and there is no other source of funding to sustain the structure. So basically you will get the capacity and everything once you have the funding for the project, but once it is finished it becomes an empty structure.

However, this is easier said than done. Donor assistance will be crucial to civil society development for some time yet. Civil society work is dangerous, locally misunderstood, and very difficult to conduct in impoverished provinces where civil society leaders must first and foremost take care of their families' basic needs.

Enablers for donor power and control. The participants' shared extensively regarding the manner in which donors dictate Afghan policy on the ground. First,

virtually all international organisations, and even many Afghan organisations, maintain foreigners in top leadership and decision-making positions. Even though the foreigner-Afghan leadership disparity has been drastically reduced from the early years of the 2001 intervention, some participants gave evidence that most of the key positions in their organisation were filled by international staff. And, as such, participants believed that they were often more in tune with the overall objectives of foreign donor organisations, can ‘talk-the-talk’ of the donors, and travel in the same social circles as donor officials inside Afghanistan.

Second, donors are able to ensure policy regulation through international advisors and technical assistants. For example, one large international NGO described its considerable access to major government decision-making bodies such as the President’s office and other Ministries, and its organisation of major government conferences. Through project staff and advisors this single Western NGO was able to have a hand in developing new political processes and structures in Afghanistan. As another example, several participants from the UN described how their Technical Advisors are directly involved in advising on and creating government policy. A senior Afghan government official admitted that these advisors “are the brains of the Ministries right now” who “dominate the work.” An Afghan civil service trainer observed that in many cases Afghan government staff have become dependent on these Technical Assistants. A UN official noted that expatriates wrote the majority of funding proposals in his counterpart government Ministry, which concerned him in terms of moving forward with Afghan ownership.

The reach of these advisors and Technical Assistants into government structures and processes may seem to be the ordinary requirements for any intense post-war capacity building project. However, a couple of participants were sceptical and fear that hidden motives and agendas are in play by the foreign community. An Afghan participant involved in policy research stated:

When the donors went with their technical assistance program into the government institutions, of course they have their own agendas. So the Technical Advisors were working in the context of these donors - they would work for the donors. They will push the donor's agenda as opposed to thinking very independently about the programmes and policies.

He contended that a primary role played by Technical Advisors is to ensure that donors have influence over government policy. A foreign embassy official took the critique of Technical Advisors to a deeper and more alarming level. She believed that the majority of government advisors were carefully reporting on the activities and policies of Ministries and Ministers back to their respective foreign embassies and other international authorities.

Third, donors are able to 'prove' the effectiveness of their priorities and programmes through research. However, several participants who were familiar with the research community in Kabul and Afghanistan were quite critical of the research referenced by the international donor community in self-evaluation of their activities. They pointed out that most research in Afghanistan is certainly not independent, and is often funded by the very organisation that is using the results to justify its practice. A research leader described this worrying phenomenon:

In Afghanistan there is not a lot of real research done here. ... If you look at it, a lot of agencies will say that they based their work on research, a lot of the research is oriented, is positive evaluation that they pay for. I have friends who run NGOs working on research or doing work in the field,

very high quality stuff, and actually some large bilateral agencies basically wanted to buy them out. They will offer huge amounts of money, with the money they were ready to put on the table, was enough for the next 30 years of operation. And you are going to do our evaluations, basically thinking that [the donor] would own a respectable NGO to get them to rubberstamp their projects. ... So a lot of people will claim that they conduct research, but it is not real research that is being done.

He believed research on policy and programming in Afghanistan needs to be independent, publicly available for public scrutiny, and ideally based on core organisational funding not tagged for particular projects.

Soaring Project Costs, Inefficiencies, and Wasted Aid Money

A second critique levelled against the overall foreign peacebuilding project in Afghanistan is economic in nature. Many of the participants (predominantly Afghan) identified glaring financial inefficiencies and wasted aid money in peacebuilding project work. The volume of aid to Afghanistan and money spent on the post-2001 invasion is staggering, and has led to significant expectations amongst local populations in terms of security, development, health, and the fight against poverty. A couple of Afghan participants shared how many rural Afghan people were struggling to grasp how, despite billions in aid and development funding, there was not any noticeable change in their life after ten years of intervention. An Afghan government official remarked:

If it continues the same way it has been going it will increase the anger of the people. The poor people who live below the poverty line, it's too hard for them to listen that billions of dollars have been donated for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and that poor guy has not seen a single dollar.

These participants were critical of aid spending, and blamed massive inefficiencies and waste on the part of the international community. Again, as discussed earlier in this

chapter, positive perceptions on the part of local populations are central to peacebuilding success.

It has become extremely expensive for foreign organisations to operate in Afghanistan, particularly if they utilise foreign staff rather than local Afghans. The costs of housing and the salaries of international staff have become exorbitant in the insecure war environment of Afghanistan. It is difficult to justify salaries in the tens of thousands per month for international staff and consultants when local counterparts may be getting 5-10 percent in terms of salary. The disparity is so extreme that one participant insisted that it could accurately be labelled as corruption:

If an [international] project of \$100 million through a donor is going to be executed, 50 percent goes to the administration cost. While in the government only 8 percent or 10 percent of the money goes to administration cost. So with the 50 percent administration cost you go and buy fancy vehicles, you have good guesthouses to live in, you have very good communication means, you have everything very good, all these things that are not allowed by law in the system of the government, and you provide all these things for yourself. So what do you call this? We call this corruption. So if it is not corruption in your system, in our system it is corruption. ... So there are lots of R&R's, a lot of trips outside the country, a lot of fancy workshops and seminars abroad. All of this money is going for things which do not affect the lives of the people in the country. But they are counted for Afghanistan. So the people like to be accounted for the money that they have not seen - they have not enjoyed it. The money that has not contributed to the growth of their economy, even though it is said that it has gone to the Afghan people - they don't like this. Because you see the GDP and the per capita income has not increased as much as the funds that have come to this country. We call all of these things corruption. The international organisations and the large donors bring in a lot of foreign consultants, they pay them 20 or \$30,000 each month, and the output when they leave is nothing, or it is only to the extent of an Afghan expert, who receives only \$1000 or \$2000 or \$3000 a month - so it is corruption. Why do you not build an Afghan capacity?

His argument, along with those of other participants, certainly begins to justify the rapid reduction of international staff and the redirection of international aid through

government structures. One international director of a large organisation admitted that his organisation could produce the same output with a 30 percent reduction in funding and with fewer foreign staff.

Similarly, Afghan participants found it problematic that project work conducted by the international community cost significantly more than project work conducted by Afghan organisations or the Afghan government. For example, one government official called attention to cost disparities between the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) and international PRT school building projects:

Giving you an example of a school construction, the school construction through the NSP, that was a government implementation system through the local people, with the contribution of the people, it was around \$40,000. The same design, the same school, the same classrooms, through USAID by a PRT, it has been contracted for between \$250,000 and \$350,000.

Cost disparities were clearly frustrating for some Afghan participants, especially when they considered what might be possible with the volumes of aid pouring into the country.

Another government official contended:

You can [learn] two things here. One is that doing things through government is cost-wise and efficient. The second thing that you find is that development in Afghanistan is not expensive - it is cheap, it is possible. It's just up to you to find the right approach to do development.

One major reason for soaring development and peacebuilding costs in Afghanistan is the growing use of private security companies to secure both the project work and its staff. An international researcher gave a scathing report:

Corruption is rampant in the foreign aid industry. One of the most shocking developments is the use of private, for profit, development companies by USAID. For example, one of these companies has a contract for \$1.2 billion, more than the EU's aid provision altogether. For example, given a \$100 million contract by USAID, \$40 million will be used up quickly by fees, consultants, profit margins, etc. - money that never gets to

the Afghan people. \$30 million will be paid to security companies to secure the projects. These are foreign companies, who hire Special Forces from some of the worst places in terms of human rights. They commit murder, torture, and are abusive and dismissive of justice systems here. Finally the last \$30 million may be used for some development work, but even some of that may not actually reach the ground. The key for these companies is 'burn rate' - they take a commission on however much they spend - thus spending is the key.

The presence of these security companies has become a contentious issue. President Karzai has recently decreed that they will no longer be allowed to operate in the country, setting off a flurry of political negotiation by the foreign community who relies on these companies to guard their residences, office compounds, army bases, and project sites.

A side effect of the rising cost of development and peacebuilding is that it inflates the cost of similar work for Afghan organisations and the Afghan government who do not have access to the same levels of funding as the international organisations. In short, the local economy is being distorted. An Afghan government official involved in development shared with me that normally standard infrastructure projects such as roads or health clinics would vary in cost by about 10 percent between similar projects being conducted simultaneously in the same area. However, his experience has shown that there can be a 300 percent or 400 percent variance in costs if USAID and the PRTs are involved. He explained the problem as follows:

So it creates a problem for the government because when the donor is providing a lot of money for the same project and the government does not, the contractors do not like to work with the government because they don't get paid as well. And they like to have the same project with a lot of money from the nongovernmental organisations.

Again, my respondents perceived that the international community is wasting significant amounts of money.

While the intensity of security threats is certainly driving up the costs of working in Afghanistan, some participants believed that deeper forces were at work. Some Afghan participants believed that a subset of foreigners were benefiting financially from an extended foreign mission in Afghanistan. In short, they believed that insecurity was making certain foreigners in the mission with vested corporate interests very wealthy (see Ahmed Rashid (2000) for background information on this issue). Similar charges were levelled against certain corporations and individuals in the U.S. Iraq intervention. An influential NGO director gave the example of an international corporation who had convinced Afghan government officials to twist the truth in order to score major de-mining contracts and other consulting services. Other examples given by the respondents included the corporations who provided services to the international troops and military bases in Afghanistan. Some of these corporations have individuals tied to the governments and defence departments of intervening countries.

Sidelining the Afghan Government

A third salient critique in the participants' narratives addresses the sidelining of the Afghan government in international strategy and its effect on attempts at Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Foreign participants are recognizing that intervention structures have omitted the voice of their Afghan counterparts and, are only now ten years into the effort, attempting to "Afghanise" (term used by several participants) their project methodologies. For example a foreign embassy official shared with me how the concept of Afghan ownership was only recently emerging as a concern at the U.S.-led *Rehearsal of Concept Drills* ('ROC' Drills), an elite international-Afghan forum that regularly reviews civilian and military efforts in Afghanistan. He stated that even so, "the

mantra of Afghan ownership is a little bit hollow these days.” Another senior donor official whose work focuses on the Afghan government stated:

Everyone, all of the donors, signed on to the lovely term 'Afghanisation', and having bowed to that god, they'll proceed to work the way they do, which is talking about the Afghans as opposed to talking with the Afghans. I think that is a general weakness, we all suffer from it, we all have to pull ourselves up from time to time and remember that this isn't our country and we need to coordinate a bit better.

This “general weakness”, as he put it, is perhaps most painfully noticeable in coordination meetings. Some participants noted the absence of influential Afghan government staff at some important planning exercises and decision-making meetings.

Moving to the project level, a couple of Afghan government participants lamented that the international community was choosing to sideline government structures and processes and travel the non-governmental road, particularly in the economic and social development sector. An Afghan government official gave as a counter-example the widely successful National Solidarity Program (NSP) as an argument against the predominant international methodologies:

Coming to the success of [the NSP], how we were able to build the capacity here and make this program successful, it's actually donors at the beginning who chose which way they wanted to take - there are two ways to do this. One way is less sustainable, and one way is sustainable. The way they have taken for the NSP, to build this capacity, has been the sustainable way, and that way is to work through the government of Afghanistan, despite difficulties, despite bureaucracy, despite the weakness of capacity. We have to work through to make the capacity, overcome the challenges so that one day it will stand on its own feet. So that is the way. But donors sometimes choose to take a shortcut way, leave the government [aside] and hire the contractors, NGOs, UN agencies to do things quicker, just counting on the immediate capacity that they have. ... So that is how I would explain it. At the beginning it is the donors who choose which way to take, and that is why the road that has been taken for the NSP has been the one that is sustainable.

One must keep in mind, however, that there are very few, if any, Afghan government programmes that have achieved even a fraction of the NSP's success, perhaps justifying to some extent the non-governmental road taken in many international initiatives.

However, middle ground must be found on the road to Afghan ownership. USAID, the major donor in Afghanistan, has failed in this sense according to the study participants.

Two Afghan government participants shed light on USAID's aversion to working with local government structures. And a non-US embassy official shared with me how the US government had asked her country to increase its share of funding directed through local government coffers, to relieve the U.S.-government of its commitments in recent multi-lateral funding agreements, which aimed to increase the amount of funding directed through the Afghan government.

By choosing to bypass government structures in its programme delivery, the foreign community is creating a parallel structure that serves as a parallel government for the people. A government official gave details of how having a parallel structure serves to waste resources and time in his Ministry, because little is communicated to him regarding his foreign counterpart's initiatives. In some cases he would invest in community surveys and project design only to find out that the international community had already started a similar or overlapping development project in the same location.

The presence of this parallel structure and alternative service delivery system creates a very awkward situation for Afghan government authorities; how are they to establish legitimacy and authority in the eyes of their constituency? Having a large, powerful, and immensely wealthy international community serves to encourage local Afghan perceptions of its government as weak, incapable, and unresponsive to the basic

needs of the population. An Afghan government official described it this way, “The bridge between the people and the government is now very long.” These perceptions are certainly exaggerated by such things as military operations and village raids at night conducted with no coordination with Afghan security forces or other government authorities.

The current president, Hamid Karzai, is struggling to garner authority in the eyes of Afghans. One government Department leader believed his many admissions in TV announcements that the international community was not cooperating with him delegitimised him in the eyes of the population. He himself viewed President Karzai as a “puppet” chosen by “colonisers” to help impose their will upon the Afghan people.

In a similar fashion, some participants believed that the international community was also sidelining provincial governors. In one particularly telling example, a UN official shared how the governor, as head of the Provincial Development Committee, had drawn up an excellent development plan in 2007, which was to guide the next five years of development in the province. However, now four years later only about 10-15 percent of the plan had been realised. The UN official described the consequences:

So the governor is now saying, “Listen, we submitted a plan but no one is paying attention to this. Why should we follow this? We don't need these extra forms and work.” You know, his concerns are understandable, but the same situation is in other provinces as well...At the same time hundreds of projects, thousands of projects have been completed and have been planned outside of this plan. This shows a very poor coordination between aid agencies, between the government and provinces, and between the UN and other agencies as well.

Stories like this illustrate why Afghan officials are struggling to realise Afghan ownership of development.

The presence of a dominant non-governmental authority such as the international community also subverts governmental accountability to its people. A foreign NGO official observed that, in many cases, government officials had become more concerned with accountability to international supporters in order to maintain the funding and assistance flow than with accountability to their constituents.

Efforts to reverse the debilitating trends in the international-local nexus are often framed and discussed in terms of the looming 'transition' process, that is the very ambiguous roadmap for the next three years to plan out and coordinate the gradual takeover of internationally led processes by the Afghan authorities. 'Transition' talk has now entered the social and political narrative. However, very little is clear at this point about what this really means in most, if not all, peacebuilding sectors. President Karzai has created a Transition Commission to oversee the transition that is headed by Ashraf Ghani, a well-known and experienced leader in Afghanistan. Certain provinces and parts of the capital city Kabul that are experiencing relative security are currently slated to undergo official transition from international forces to Afghan forces in the summer of 2011. However, one official from the PRT in northern Afghanistan believed that the transition had largely occurred in his province already. The PRT housed only a relatively small number of soldiers that were actually on patrol and engaging any sort of insurgency. Anti-insurgency operations were basically conducted by the ANA, but could still rely on callback support from international forces, most notably air support.

A major challenge facing the Afghan government and its individual international counterparts is establishing effective national priority programmes to ensure development, health, and security across the country, especially in areas still experiencing

significant insecurity. Unfortunately this now covers a majority of the country. Key to establishing effective national priority programmes will be a willingness on the part of the international community to maintain significant funding commitments. A UN official had these questions:

Are they willing to give [their money] to Mr. Karzai and his government? Do they have the confidence that this money will be spent in a manner that is for what they intended? This is why Mr. Karzai's statements require a great deal more work and I think that is why everyone is scrambling on transition as fast as possible - the UN, the NGOs, ISAF, the member states, and the Governors of Afghanistan to understand what this all means.

Unfortunately, if history is a lesson, the U.S.'s aid commitments are quite proportional to its armed personnel on the ground in war-affected contexts. The participants are expecting the same scenario in Afghanistan with drastically reduced assistance as soldiers are withdrawn.

Inappropriate Stance Towards the 'Local'

A fourth critique by participants drives down the discussion to the individual and personal level, and addresses the individual motivations, attitudes, knowledge, and actions of foreigners working in Afghanistan as part of the international peacebuilding mission. The participants raised a couple of issues. First, it was perceived by many interviewees that many foreign workers are coming to Afghanistan with questionable motivations. The participants often noted in the interviews the considerable salaries paid to foreigners, and believed that the large amounts of money easily tainted motivations, which are then quickly doubted by locals. The integrity, legitimacy, and effectiveness of the foreigners are then compromised.

Moving beyond wealth, opportunities for personal advancement or status promotion were also seen as drawing international professionals to work in Afghanistan. An Afghan policy analyst very connected with the research community in Kabul gave an example:

The internationals that are working here, they are also human beings that have their own self interests, and this is not something obvious, but everybody realises it and feels that they have their own gains, and they work for their own petty interests. They are also afraid that if we hand over ownership to Afghans and more Afghans move forward, then they may not be able to benefit from this situation as they are now. So there is also some politics because everybody wants to be in key positions, everybody wants to be doing more than what they do.

An international director for a research organisation believed that many NGOs and international organisations attracted foreign workers “without much of an edge” over Afghan counterparts, but who were in country for the “experience” and who don’t feel obligated to show any kind of reasonable output. He stated further:

They belong to a very, very superficial group, a group of people who pretend that they know about Afghanistan, who are using Afghans in the same way that people from many development agencies or companies are using Afghanistan - quick, dirty, and not a lot of understanding about the background. They adopt a competitive spirit, flaunt their knowledge, attempt to control their Afghan colleagues, and do not acknowledge their Afghan colleagues for project input in attempts to personally advance.

Second, some participants believed that international peacebuilders were untrusting of Afghans. While certainly stemming from valid concerns regarding low capacity and rampant corruption that will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, trust is certainly foundational to transition activities leading to Afghan ownership. An Afghan participant believed that, while perhaps justified ten years ago, significant growth in Afghan capacity did not warrant mistrust any longer.

Much of the participants' critique of Western peacebuilders was framed in a more positive sense, and described a more appropriate international stance towards Afghan counterparts in order to achieve Afghan ownership. Calls for partnership, local empowerment, and mutual collaboration were dominant in the participants' comments.

They argued that civil society would not be able to develop sustainability unless it was able to partner with the international community as opposed to being directed by it.

A distinct change in the international position will be needed to facilitate increased partnership. Keeping in mind that the international community remains the powerhouse economically and militarily, some of my participants listed gentleness, non-abrasiveness, avoiding imposition, respect for the Islamic religion, and a willingness to sacrificially contribute as central to effective partnership. Other interviews with foreign participants revealed that "partnership" has certainly entered the dominant narrative guiding the overall intervention, but that it is still questionable at this point whether this narrative remains rhetoric or reflects actual moves towards practice that might emphasize empowering Afghans.

A theme that is directly related to any sense of partnership is transparency. Are international groups and individuals being transparent with their Afghan counterparts and recipients of assistance? Some participants noted the unwillingness of the international military forces to provide information to local populations. Other participants in the NGO sector shared how they were currently

developing policy that would increasingly communicate with recipient populations how aid monies are spent and what objectives are being pursued.

The participants believed that Afghan ownership would be served well by trusting Afghan counterparts with increased responsibilities and by elevating Afghans in both power and position, which appears to be occurring. Some organisations gave evidence of their transformation from an organisation dominated by foreigners to one with only a few foreigners remaining, albeit in key top positions. A UN official in northern Afghanistan shared that, in his experience, Afghan leaders emerging into government and UN positions were suitably competent to conduct their responsibilities effectively.

The participants were also concerned with the picture that foreigners painted of Afghanistan for their home constituencies through the media and other research activities.

One UN official commented:

It is easy just to sound negative, which is also more sexy, to be negative and to say that everything is not working well.

An Afghan NGO director felt that the media was severely distorting the situation in Afghanistan by overly focusing on negative events:

Sometimes we do hear from the media and sometimes we see pictures from the media that represents Afghanistan in another way. For example we see and hear that they are saying that “Afghans are terrorists”; “Afghans are killing each other”; “They are not good people.” But, if you come and see, it is different.

Another NGO leader encouraged me to help release a positive message that would encourage policymakers to improve their strategies in Afghanistan. Strictly negative messages can be limiting in their transformational potential.

Meddling by Regional Nations

For many of the participants the locus of the struggle in Afghanistan is not even situated on Afghan soil; it is situated beyond its borders in neighbouring countries, particularly in Pakistan, and to some extent Iran, along with a handful of other regional nations including India, Russia, China, and Saudi Arabia. Thus, participants identified a fifth barrier to Afghan ownership to be the extensive regional meddling in Afghan affairs. When asked about their fears for the future of Afghanistan, regional national meddling was one of the most mentioned fears.

According to my study's participants, Afghanistan's fate is not controlled from within its borders but is rather intricately tied to its neighbour's foreign policies. This unfortunately, is not unique to post-2001 Afghanistan. A leading civil society leader explained a bit of the history of international meddling in Afghanistan:

So Afghanistan should not become a battleground for the rest of the other interests, the conflicting interests of different countries - it has always been. If you go back in the history of Afghanistan it was treated as a buffer strip between Russia and the British, but later on it became a battleground between the West and the former Soviet Union. And now it has taken another shape. Before this time, during the Taliban, after the collapse of the Communist regime in Afghanistan, it had become a battleground between neighbouring countries, Iran, Pakistan, India and all of those different groups - they were fighting. And the fear is that really if the Americans withdrew, and I'm sure they will, it will become the same, the same situation can come again - there will be a civil war.

He argued that Afghanistan has historically been a giant chessboard on which the power moves of international and regional players are completed, all with devastating consequences for the Afghan people.

The participants do not view the situation as any different now, even with the heavy influence of Western troops. Two perpetrators in particular, Iran and Pakistan,

were named by numerous participants as the primary meddlers in Afghan affairs. They are both accused of arming anti-government elements in Afghanistan, and of influencing government members and processes for self-serving interests. A UN official working in northern Afghanistan summarised the concerns of several participants:

The intervention of neighbouring countries is my greatest fear; they are acting against the government and the international community. Iran and Pakistan, both in comparison to Afghanistan, they are both powerful. They can influence the government, have their way at the borders, and I don't trust that these neighbours will work for Afghan prosperity if NATO is not here. But it is in the hand of the Afghan people, they must choose peace, or otherwise they will kill each other, and find a solution. I hope that the international community will divert the attention of the meddling neighbours and deal with that.

The reasons for regional meddling in Afghanistan remain ambiguous and unclear for most participants, and conspiracies abound. However, there is consensus amongst the participants regarding their destructive interference. One foreign embassy participant shared with me that Pakistan had “infiltrated this country to such an incredible degree that they are running things and it is out of Afghan hands. They can't control it.” The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is extremely complex. They share a long indefensible border with the ethnic Pashtun tribes spanning the border. In essence these tribes become the gatekeeper for Taliban and other insurgents as they travel across the Afghan-Pakistan border. The Taliban has set up camp within Pakistan's North-West Frontier Provinces, and enjoys a complex relationship with both Al-Qaeda and the Pakistani intelligence services (ISI). Two groups, the Quetta *Shura* and the Haqanni *Shura* have emerged as the primary violent instigators in southern and northern Afghanistan respectively. The Taliban groups that face Pakistani military offensives in the north-western provinces are viewed as different from the Taliban groups supported by

the ISI to instigate insurgency activity in Afghanistan. Several participants noted a further layer of complexity. India is perceived as manoeuvring against its archenemy Pakistan by infiltrating into Pakistan's 'backyard' of Afghanistan.

The second major protagonist, Iran, is also perceived as supporting the Taliban and other anti-government elements. Various study participants believed that they were actively maintaining connections with Al-Qaeda, supplying Iranian made weapons and explosives for the insurgency, all with the intention of countering U.S. initiatives and deflecting attention away from its nuclear aspirations.

Both Iran and Pakistan were perceived as having a vested interest in seeing democracy fail in Afghanistan. A stable and democratic Afghanistan would effectively resist outside influence within its borders, and would likely chase out its violent religious extremists into neighbouring countries in Central Asia. Further, a couple of participants believed that a strong democratic Afghanistan would serve to de-legitimize the so-called democracies in both Iran and Pakistan that are heavily influenced by religious and other power-holders.

Regional meddling into the affairs of Afghans has dealt a significant blow to efforts at achieving Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. There is a very real concern that Afghans are not able to take control of their own concerns, and that the self-serving interests of outsiders continues to shape the future directions of the Afghan nation. A foreign funding official went so far to say that any efforts towards Afghan ownership are futile since "Pakistan is running their own show, and the Afghans are not running their own show." For example, a couple of participants believed that many top government

officials, including cabinet ministers, “belong to” Pakistan, India, and other regional powers.

So what can be done about this clearly disempowering situation? Some of my interviewees suggested resistance along several fronts. First, there is a growing realisation that the locus of military activity against the Afghan insurgency should be within Pakistan, and not Afghanistan. However, because the U.S. does not have ownership of the battle space in Pakistan as it does in Afghanistan, it is struggling to ‘bring the fight’ to many Taliban groups and its leadership. Thus, several participants called on the international community to use its political and economic weight to pressure Afghanistan’s neighbours to cease their destructive interference.

Second, a couple of participants asserted that Afghanistan needs to establish and project a vastly revamped foreign policy and regional diplomacy. This is certainly a tall order given the struggle of Afghans to congeal as a unified nation across ethnic divides, and the destructive ties that some ethnic groups hold and guard across state borders with their ethnic kin (Pashtuns-Pakistan, Tajiks-Tajikistan and Iran, Uzbeks-Uzbekistan, Turkmen-Turkmenistan). A unified, strong, and consistent regional diplomacy will be better suited to consider the fears and interests of regional powers such as Pakistan, and allow for the creative resolution of issues (comment by a government deputy minister).

Third, a couple of participants did not believe isolation was constructive in countering regional meddling but, rather, proposed increased regional economic ties and activity. A senior government official explained:

We also need to work with our neighbours and develop and establish a good mechanism of trans-boundary issues, and also need to work on the economic forum between Afghanistan and Pakistan and Iran and give it a regional perspective. Because we are a landlocked country we will remain

dependent to their permission for trade and transit all the time. This is what they use as a sort of threat for Afghanistan. So working on big mega projects, manage the security forces around them, give employment and opportunity to the young generation - that would be a starting point. Then work with neighbouring countries in terms of that - they should understand that a safe and secure Afghanistan is in their benefit.

His opinion that trade reduces conflict is popular but controversial.

Finally, some UN participants noted active policy changes that were increasingly pushing for “South-South cooperation” and the hiring of personnel from regional countries to come to Afghanistan to work on local capacity development. Regional capacity development staff have fewer struggles with language, culture, and other institutional barriers faced by Western staff.

Ineffective Capacity Building

Capacity building has emerged as an urgent task for the international intervention community in Afghanistan. However, interviewees identified ineffective capacity building practice as a sixth barrier blocking Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Despite the hiring and placement of thousands of international advisors, Technical Assistants, and other capacity building personnel, several participants decried a widespread failure of capacity building ventures. Reasons for its failure are varied, ranging from critiques of its inherent methodological appropriateness to failures in practice. Methodologically, there are questions as to whether current attempts at capacity building are in fact doing just that. A senior Afghan government official gave details:

But we are still stuck in a government of TA's - Technical Assistants, ... there is no well-planned approach to transferring skills even to the nationals, you just learn by sharing or shadowing or just being involved. We need to improve our skills of transfer of skills, the transitioning of activities to create the proper home for activities and a system for them. And that will mean reduction in the international TA's, but it will not end the need for them.

He suggested that capacity building in war-torn countries has not been adequately investigated or planned out. Another Afghan government official suggested that only a fraction of the applicable skill and knowledge capacity held by foreign capacity builders and advisors were being transferred to local individuals.

Interviewees also offered up an insightful critique of capacity building practice. First, the most common critique of international capacity building staff pointed out that in many cases advisors and Technical Assistants are doing all the work for Afghan counterparts and have been “negligent in bringing along our Afghan colleagues and counterparts who are our equivalents to do the types of things that we do by heart” (foreign embassy official). Another Afghan official gave further opinions:

In the government Ministries I can give you an example. International or national advisors are working, and they are doing all the jobs, but there are also civil servants there. They don't do anything. And then they pretend that they are building the capacity of civil servants. No you're not building capacity, you are doing his job. You are performing the key activities in the Ministry. You are taking the key decisions instead of him. So if they are not involved in the activities, if they are not involved in doing the job, how can you say that you're building the capacity?

In essence, the participant's quote reveals that capacity is not being built; rather it is being replaced and undermined.

Second, a foreign NGO official spoke about the struggle of international staff to develop an adequate understanding of the Afghan context and how they missed many of the cultural and social nuances necessary to effectively meet their objectives. Some of this struggle was blamed on the short-term nature of capacity building assignments, often about six months. Third, two participants described how the work of advisors and TAs can become focused on the donor as opposed to the local Ministry. For example they will

sometimes focus on hurriedly completing the tasks mandated by the donor as opposed to focusing on bringing government counterparts along and taking the necessary time to transfer capacity.

Finally, a couple of interviewees noted more covert failures. As mentioned earlier, one participant believed that many Technical Advisors and other capacity building personnel were in fact gathering intelligence for international embassies and other international groups inside government Ministries. Other participants believed that Technical Advisors were intentionally resisting the transfer of capacity to prolong dependency on them in order to justify their presence and extend their employment opportunities in Afghanistan.

Distorted Post-intervention Work Environment and Economy

The presence of the international community in Afghanistan has significantly distorted the local economy. It has elevated the costs of property, rents, food, as well as all costs related to development and peacebuilding. Other aspects are also apparent. For example, there are significantly more high salaried jobs related to the peacebuilding operation. This scenario poses a dilemma for Afghan ownership. An Afghan government official explained, “We have a fake economy right now. And when will we stop this dream and wake up to the actual world? That is what we fear right now.” If Afghan ownership is realised and large segments of the international community withdraw, the economy will be severely shaken, with potentially disastrous results. Another Afghan government official lamented:

They are paying us a very good salary, not as it is paid to internationals, but they are paying us good and we are used to it. So when the money stops, who will pay us? And we will not be able to accommodate ourselves with a government salary.

Professional Afghans have enjoyed high salaries and a wide selection of jobs and fear the future as the international community pulls back. Currently, an Afghan with fluency in English and even minimal training can hop jobs and quickly climb the ladder to a high paid position inside of international organisations.

A related challenge concerns the desertion of positions inside of Afghan organisations and government Ministries to join international organisations that typically offer superior salaries and benefits. Local organisations and the local government thus struggle to retain their most experienced and skilled employees, creating obvious problems as responsibilities are increasingly transitioned into the hands of these local groups.

Abuses by NATO Military Forces

The last barrier to Afghan ownership as described by interviewees concerned the perceived abuses at the hands of NATO troops. Several participants offered up tales of civilian deaths from misguided military activity, the commonly violent and invasive home invasions, and the many arrests of Afghans with no warrant as proof that Afghan ownership certainly does not exist. Interviewees called on the international community to abide by the international human rights agreements in their military activity in a similar fashion to their expectations of the Afghan military (comments by a University professor). An Afghan human rights leader was deeply offended by comments made by US officials and media personalities that referred to civilian deaths in aerial attacks as “collateral damage.” He had this to say:

And by no means does anybody have the right to kill Afghans under the name of collateral damage. That is simply inhuman, it is as absurd as it gets. So first of all, please consider Afghans to be human beings and

understand that they have rights. For example if in America a police officer cannot ask a driver to pull over if the driver does not commit any crime, or does not show any signs of being a criminal, you cannot do that. If you cannot do that in the U.S., then please understand that you cannot go to people's houses at night, break the doors and scare the children and wives, and understand that Afghans have their own culture. In our culture, for example, in the provinces or in other places people do not come to your house without permission, there are so few men that can. You don't go to a woman's house and meet their wives and children, men sit separately and women sit separately. So if in America somebody breaks into your house, your doors or gates, it is called trespassing. If it is called trespassing there, I am not sure how it can be lawful here in Afghanistan.

His quote regarding the conduct of the international military illustrates the struggle of Afghans to feel that they, or local authorities, have any control over security activities. Rather they perceive that international groups are dictating and controlling security activity.

Analysis and Discussion

This chapter has highlighted the collective voice of participants. What emerges from the interview narratives are a plethora of dilemmas around which swirl competing perceptions and beliefs regarding the role of the international community in Afghanistan. Perhaps the chapter has raised more questions than it has provided answers for. However, more definite paths through the fog engulfing the Afghan intervention are explored in Chapter 9 ('Conflict Transformation...'). Four groupings of dilemmas are evident in this chapter's discussion: (1) dilemmas tied to intervention ethics; and dilemmas surrounding the peacebuilding foci identified by participants as central to the mission of the international community: (2) security; (3) capacity building and political reform; and (4) foreign aid and development.

The Dilemmas of Intervention

This study's participants are grappling with the dilemma of international intervention in war-torn contexts. The interview data reveals that the international community is relied upon by participants to deliver a wide range of services in various sectors, particularly in the areas of security, governance, and aid and development. However, the peacebuilding project seems to be increasingly viewed as spiralling out of control, on a collision course with unknowable but destructive consequences and, perhaps, facing ultimate failure. The participants did not propose to abandon the project, but they advocated for a change of course. The current project trajectory seems to fall in areas where the international community will likely be unwilling to go, and toward a future where the opposition (i.e. the Taliban) to the government holds the upper hand.

The rhetoric of partnership, local ownership, and effective transition of peacebuilding activities was also apparent in interviews. However, the study participants were also willing to confide to me that actual attempts to achieve partnership and local ownership were faltering and wallowing in uncertainty about how to proceed. The interview data, when viewed collectively, reveals the inherent struggle of intervention actors to achieve their stated goals of transitioning toward local control. There is a questioning of the legitimacy of the intervention in the sense that Afghan-style international intervention may not actually be able to succeed in transition to real local ownership, which is certainly a serious dilemma. Behind this argument is a growing realisation of unworkable international-local power differentials. While they were once viewed as indispensable for intervention 'success', they are now revealing themselves as barriers to local ownership. It is being questioned whether true partnership is possible

between Afghans and foreign groups that hold the military, political, and economic advantage. It is becoming quickly apparent why the underlying challenges to local ownership seem insurmountable. The comparably powerful international community has invaded the country without the consent of the local people, has unilaterally defined the ‘enemy’ (Taliban) and ‘friends’ (Warlords and other local power brokers) of the Afghan people, has charted for years the peacebuilding path while largely disregarding the voice of large swaths of the Afghan constituency, has dominated the design and structure of the overall peacebuilding project, has dished out billions of dollars in aid in the face of a complete inability to procure local peacebuilding funds, and has defined Afghanistan’s future. This disempowering history and political milieu would seem to stifle any effective transition and calls into question the possibility of real genuine international-local partnerships.

These power differentials are socially and psychologically debilitating. The presence of a powerful intervener (or ‘invader’ according to some Afghan participants) inhibits the formation of normal social and political processes destroyed by years of violent conflict, creates unhealthy and binding dependency, and cements a domination/submission relationship that bars the actual transition of power and control. The evidence and effects of this dependent relationship is explored further in a subsequent chapter. This social-psychological conflict has deeper historical roots. As evidenced in Chapter 2, Afghans have always resisted interveners, sometimes violently and overtly and, sometimes, covertly, by ‘cooperating’ with foreign designs all the while planning the rejection and expulsion of their foreign ‘friends’ (Hopkirk, 2001).

Some participants also argued that an intervener-local relationship would prevent sustainable and locally desired social and political change from taking root in Afghanistan. They call into question the ability of outsiders to effect deep insider change in Afghanistan. While partly connecting with the previous critique of the intervener-local psychological relationship, there are also dilemmas surrounding the ‘knowledge-view’ of the international community. In other words, does the international community actually know better than local groups? Are heavily capacitated and experienced international groups better able to broaden their view beyond short-term pressures and concerns, and ensure a view towards long-term peacebuilding benefits despite the short-term pain and apparent sacrifice? For example, my study’s participants were quick and very willing to accuse donors of dictating project priorities and designs to the detriment of actual peacebuilding advances. However, it can be argued that, although initially misunderstood and seemingly foolish, donor-led priority setting may be laying the necessary foundation for further and increasingly deeper and invasive reform. Some participants recognised the ability of donors to see the bigger picture and cautioned that moves toward increased local ownership should not require wholesale adoption of traditional methods and structures, but would necessarily transform unhelpful (and sometimes traditional) processes with increasingly more modern and ‘Western’ processes. However, it is hard to ignore the evidence provided by participants that donor priorities and practices are occasionally (or perhaps often) severely dissonant with realities on the ground in Afghanistan. The process of transformation also needs to be reconsidered. For example, the access to seemingly unending funding for government programme formation can severely constrain any incentives to creatively think about the government’s role and

work in a post-war environment. Thus, some participants noted that government Ministries were developing key leadership skills and honing basic prioritizing practices.

However, my study's participants were also somewhat aware of competing sides in the 'intervention' dilemma. They also recognised the constructive potential of the large-scale, all-encompassing, and intrusive projection of international power in Afghanistan. First, the extensive warring in Afghanistan has reshaped the Afghan identity and culture, and has resulted in the entrenching of destructive social processes and the continuation of violence, oppression, discrimination, and poverty. The presence of a 'benevolent' intervener is perhaps able to interrupt these destructive processes, shock the system into change, and provide the necessary protection and social support needed to start Afghanistan down new paths leading to 'positive peace' (Galtung, 1996) and the provision of 'basic needs' (Burton, 1997) for the majority of Afghans. At a minimum, the participants believe that fewer people are dying now than if the international community would ignore Afghanistan as in other periods of recent Afghan history, most notably following the withdrawal of Soviet troops and American influence in 1989.

In many contexts civil society would take an active lead in social transformation and in challenging its government to ensure the provision of care for its constituents (Paffenholz, 2010b). The participants argued that Afghan civil society suffers from grossly inadequate social protection, and has been decimated to such an extent that the direct intervention of the international community has been required.

Afghanistan's history of war has also provided the conditions necessary for numerous individuals and groups to gather to themselves large militias, arms, and the social support required to actively resist the plans of the central government. Because this

phenomenon is occurring in a context of tenuous central-regional power relationships between Kabul and the provinces it has enabled the continuation of violent anti-government activity that is immensely destructive for Afghans. For example, massive civil violence was witnessed in the civil war between competing Mujahideen groups in the early 1990s, and was largely suppressed by the emergence of the Taliban. However, the international community and the majority of Afghan participants that were interviewed do not wish to see another Taliban-led government in Afghanistan. For many participants the only acceptable option is the intervention of a more benevolent force, the U.S.-led international intervention. In a similar fashion, it was also argued that the regional dynamics, particularly the willingness of Pakistan and Iran and other regional powers to meddle in Afghan affairs, has necessitated the use of a heavy hand by the international community.

The Dilemmas of Security

Squeezing the predominantly rural and tribal Afghan society and economic system into the global economic and political structure would seem to be an incredibly violent process if one observes the history of similarly massive social transformations (e.g. Bolshevik and Maoist revolutions in Russia and China, the European colonisation of North and South America and Africa). However, massive bloodshed has not been acceptable to the international community in Afghanistan, and it has been expected to conduct operations with minimal civilian casualties. However, despite their ‘care’, resistance to international security actors is strong and consistently on the increase, and has morphed into a very important concern for the international community. The revival of the Taliban in Afghanistan (and Pakistan) seems to be part of a “wider supra-

nationalist jihadist movement,” which views its attempts at collapsing the Afghan government as a crucial battle in the mobilisation of the world’s Muslims against the West (Giustozzi, 2008b, p. 182). In contrast, the ‘pre-2001’ Taliban seemed to have primarily local, albeit oppressive, political power ambitions.

Confronting the Taliban has necessitated and justified increased foreign ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan, since the interveners are not just acting out of benevolence to the Afghan people but are intensely concerned with looking after their own interests such as protecting their home constituency from terrorism and maintaining their powerful status in the global political and economic hierarchy. However, alarming international military casualties¹¹, unpalatable intervention costs (particularly for the U.S.), noticeable failures in stabilisation and in addressing insecurities, and Afghan-led pushes for a quick transition of control in the security sector have forced international security actors to face tough dilemmas in the journey towards increased Afghan ownership. Underlying this dilemma is the general understanding, as expressed by my study’s participants, that Afghan security actors are incapable of ensuring security for Afghan citizens, and that massive foreign intervention is necessary to address anti-government security threats and to train the Afghan army.

The foreign-local tension over ownership of the security sector’s peacebuilding activity has resulted in a second group of dilemmas that are identified by this study’s participants. Three security related questions emerged from the interview narratives and the discussion in this chapter: (1) What levels of violence are justified in order to stabilise

¹¹ As of March 2012: U.S. – 1910 deaths, U.K. – 404 deaths, Canada – 158 deaths.

the country? (2) What are the roles of the various security actors?; and (3) How can regional meddling in the internal affairs of Afghanistan be addressed?

Acceptable levels of violence. The participants identified insecurity in Afghanistan as a primary challenge to increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Continuing violence has spurred an intense focus on establishing security so that ownership can be passed off to Afghans. Establishing security and stabilising insecure areas has raised questions about acceptable levels of violence. How much violence are Afghans willing to put up with in order to ensure security on the ground for Afghan citizens? The proliferation of anti-government elements, the saturation of Afghan society with weapons, the prevalence of violent community conflict resolution processes, and enduring ethnic and religious division have made the path to peace long and difficult.

Despite the fact that international interveners have significant military power and weight, and have successfully suppressed any attempts at widespread civil war, they have struggled with preventing the growth of the insurgency. This failure to suppress the insurgency has caused some to question whether more invasive, direct, and violent anti-insurgency tactics are needed, despite the fact that they would surely produce increased civilian casualties. Insurgency warfare is, by necessity, quite invasive since the enemy is hiding amongst local civilians, often using them as human shields.

The increasing transition to local Afghan control will also create many dilemmas. Do the Afghans desire that the international community pull back and increasingly let the Afghan security forces deal with the insecurity with their own methodology and tactics? Are the Afghan people ready to accept the consequences of increased control by an

inferior and ethically careless local military who might be willing to commit many atrocities in order to secure peace and security?

The role of international security actors. The accelerating transition to Afghan control within the security sector has also illuminated ambiguities and dilemmas surrounding the role of various security actors such as international military forces and private security companies.

International military forces. The majority of my study's participants were supportive of the international military forces' willingness to engage the insurgency in Afghanistan and secure major cities such as Kabul from attack. It must be kept in mind, however, that all the participants were from two major cities in Afghanistan. There is at this point a widespread belief that Afghan security forces would be unable to deal with the current insurgency alone. However, the participants identified at least four dilemmas that should be grappled with by international military decision-makers. First, there is the possibility that the international forces have, to a large extent, been defining and labelling who the enemy of the Afghan people is, all the while supporting other 'enemies' of the Afghan people, sometimes overtly and sometimes by ignoring them. In other words, the international community has exclusively focused on the Taliban as the primary enemy, while other Warlords, strongmen, and ex-Mujahideen groups, often with known ties to criminal activity, are given positions of power enabling them to acquire significant riches in the post-invasion economy. This is problematic in a couple of ways. Labelling the Taliban as the primary threat has likely strengthened the Taliban by elevating its status, thus allowing it to procure increased support from the broader anti-Western/U.S. resistance in the region and world. There is a growing sense that the Taliban are perhaps

not the only concern for Afghanistan's future security, rather the numerous Warlords currently in power are also preventing the establishment of sustainable peace in Afghanistan. And further, the Afghan people have had limited opportunities to decide for themselves who the real enemy of the people is, which certainly suppresses many potential creative grassroots strategies that might address these enemies.

Second, a couple of participants questioned the efficacy of continuing the combat role of international forces. They wondered whether the insurgency has actually been more motivated to travel more destructive and violent paths in the face of international resistance, and whether attacks might actually be reduced and a more political path chosen if the international community would terminate its combat role. Others, however, believed strongly that the country would descend into civil war if the international forces relented in their combat operations.

Third, the process of arming and training a massive Afghan army is certainly keeping people awake at night. The Afghan army is receiving weaponry, air power, military machinery, strategic advice, and guided warfare experience from the strongest and most advanced army in the world, the U.S. army. Significant risks are obvious in this scenario, especially when one takes seriously the opinion of one participant who believed that Afghan soldiers were simply on hire to the highest bidder. The current highest bidder is the coalition forces. He worried that after foreign withdrawal the Afghan government would struggle to 'hire' these soldiers and they would simply rally around former Warlords and other local and regional powerbrokers, thus opening the door for a resumption to bloody civil warring, albeit with more training and bigger guns.

Fourth, the struggle or, perhaps, unwillingness of the international community to assist the Afghan National Police (ANP) to develop a community policing philosophy is problematic in a context void of a functioning formal justice system. The ANP are consistently avoided and excluded from most situations requiring conflict resolution in society, and have rather become either relegated to static guarding at checkpoints, or have become militarised and an extension of the Afghan National Army (ANA).

Private security companies and security contractors. There was virtually no positive feedback from participants regarding the role of private security companies and security contractors. However, they are relied upon heavily by many international organisations to guard their premises, and are relied upon by international military groups to conduct military activities and missions in resisting the insurgency. Yet, according to my study's participants, they do pose a significant challenge to any moves towards Afghan ownership. Private security companies and security contractors operate with little or no accountability to the Afghan people or the Afghan government, have little incentive to follow the laws or customs of their host country, and have little incentive to work themselves out of a job by developing local justice and security procedures and systems. They have also seemingly been able to operate outside the realm of concern for international human rights in many cases.

Regional meddling and security. Afghanistan cannot isolate itself from its regional neighbours because it is reliant upon them for economic prosperity and any sense of border security. On the other hand, authentic and sustainable Afghan ownership may be out of reach unless the problem of Pakistani and Iranian interference into the affairs of Afghanistan are dealt with and prevented. The interviews revealed a sense of

hopelessness in regards to local Afghan efforts at addressing regional meddling. It would thus appear that the international community remains central to any diplomatic or coercive attempts at convincing regional nations to withdraw their destructive influence. Yet the international community has struggled to effectively deal with regional problems. The U.S. has struggled with deteriorating relations with Pakistan following their May 2011 unilateral attack on Osama Bin Laden and the November 2011 killing of 24 Pakistani soldiers by U.S. 'friendly fire'. Further, the U.S. has achieved virtually no constructive interaction with Iran. And yet Pakistan, in particular, seems to be the locus of insurgent activity as most Taliban action is planned and directed from within Pakistan. In this sense, success in achieving Afghan ownership will depend to some extent on the international community's success in convincing Afghanistan's neighbours of the regional benefits to a stable, peaceful, prosperous, and independent Afghan state. It has so far remained unclear whether the U.S. and its Western backers are able to accomplish this objective.

The Dilemmas of Capacity Building and Political Transformation

The foreign community in Afghanistan has identified capacity building and political transformation as primary tasks in the development of democratic governance. However, even after ten years of foreign-led capacity building efforts, it remained unclear for many participants whether these ambitious plans involving extensive capacity building, technical advising, and coerced political reform were even effective or were, in fact, achieving desired ends.

Capacity building. For some participants, capacity building efforts were inadequate for a variety of reasons as discussed earlier in this chapter. This is a key

concern for the international community's efforts at ensuring Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. Handing over control to incapacitated individuals and groups is likely to create destructive situations and hinder overall peacebuilding success.

Unfortunately there has been very little research conducted on the efficacy of capacity building, or into best practices. However, participants in this study voiced some concerns and spoke about potential advances in practice. They argued that a central dilemma of capacity building was the propagation of Western mindsets, processes, and structures. The participants identified the tension between introducing an institutional culture that would mesh with the Afghan culture. To this end, they explored the need for replacing destructive aspects of Afghan institutional culture with processes more conducive to accountability and democracy.

It has also been challenging for international peacebuilders to define what local capacity means and looks like. Several Afghan participants believed that local capacities were misunderstood, unrecognised and, in some cases, ignored by the international community. Again the requirements of revamping and replacing local processes and structures in favour of ones crucial to modernisation seems to overrun efforts at local ownership. However, international decision-makers insist that the introduction of modern processes and structures will by their very nature create conflict and make existing/traditional local capacities irrelevant and unworkable. One practical outcome is the reliance on recent university graduates to run senior government agencies that are overseeing governance transformation in Afghanistan. Emerging university graduates are open to newly introduced institutional philosophies and cultures. Relying on young

leaders is problematic in a communal society with strictly engrained social structures that insist upon the respect of elders and the elevation of their voice.

Regarding the path forward, some participants suggested that the practice of capacity building needs to be carefully scrutinised and re-imagined. In these revamped conceptions of capacity building there would be a new focus on authentic empowerment of Afghan leaders, a genuine and constructive partnership between foreign leaders and their Afghan counterparts, the active replacement of foreign leaders with Afghan counterparts, and sincere commitments on the part of donors and other international groups to work closely with these Afghan leaders.

Technical advising. The injection of international technical advisers (TAs) into Afghan political structures is widely used strategy in Afghanistan. While related to capacity building strategies, technical advising tends to be more directive in nature. Like capacity building, technical advising is often ignored by researchers and, thus, deserves more attention and critical thought. Again, international planners face the dilemma of achieving instant results through intrusive and controlling TA activities as opposed to patient and longer-term partnership. Afghans cannot wait too long for reform since cynicism and resistance will set in if reform results are not experienced rapidly. There is certainly pressure to achieve quick results and strengthen institutions rapidly, albeit in forms suitable to the overall democracy-building project.

As evidenced previously in this chapter, thoughtful changes are needed in the personal stature of foreign TAs and other international advising staff. First, my study's participants argued that clarity and clear accountability is needed on what intelligence is gathered by TAs and given to international organisations. Second, personal motivations

need to be evaluated and critiqued, especially in a context where high salaries are offered to employees due to the intense security risks faced by international staff. Third, while increased trust for Afghan counterparts must be mandated in international-led project work in order to advance Afghan ownership, foreign workers believe, perhaps justifiably, that local counterparts must first earn their trust and prove their suitability. Finally, foreigners must resist personal beliefs of superiority, while locals must resist dependency and feelings of helplessness. A reformed foreigner-local relationship is difficult to achieve given the very educated, experienced, and powerful international staff that accept positions in Afghan peacebuilding. Bringing in the most capable foreign staff obviously pays dividends but, at the same time, can hinder Afghan ownership.

Political reform. Political reform decision-makers and leaders face several dilemmas. First, is the scale, pace, and sequencing of political reform appropriate? The participants are questioning whether too much is being done too quickly (which is interesting to contrast with other comments that too little is being achieved). There seems to be a growing realisation that a slower and failure-filled process may be necessary, whereby local political leaders fight for local reform, imperfect as it is, as opposed to having powerful international experts designing an ideal, but unsustainable and unworkable system. What would likely result would perhaps be similar to Paris' (2004) *institutionalisation before liberalisation* (IBL) strategy. Strong and effective systems are cemented before demands of accountability and democracy are dealt with seriously. Initial structures may be less democratic, more coercive, elite driven, and exclusive of civil society's voice. The obvious risk is that such a process might only fire further grassroots frustration and resistance and ultimately fails.

A second dilemma concerns authority and accountability in the government-grassroots relationship. Are local populations in Afghanistan going to be willing to legitimate local political structures after 'submitting' to a strong foreign authority for over a decade? And conversely, can local political structures also redirect their lines of accountability away from the powerful and resource-rich international community towards local populations?

The Dilemmas of International Aid and Development

Virtually the entire peacebuilding project in Afghanistan is funded by international sources, which creates its own set of dilemmas.

External donor money. Afghan ownership of development is struggling to take root in the face of massive funding by donors for peacebuilding work. This complex struggle has caused many participants to question whether donor funding, behind its appealing power potential and apparent advantages, also has a dark side. Can massive donor funding also have negative consequences for sustainable peacebuilding? As alluded to throughout this chapter, the problem seems to lie in the fact that donors and their implementing partners have achieved a powerful stature in relation to Afghan groups and government Ministries. Much of the political reform and development taking place in Afghanistan is funded exclusively by international monies. In some ways, donors have become the final authority, beyond that of even the central government in Afghanistan. Local officials and their organisations grow dependent on improved salaries, and fear the day when donor monies are reduced or cut off. Yet, conversely, it is difficult to imagine how reduced donor monies can really be any better for Afghans, which creates a difficult dilemma.

Further complicating the situation is the continual struggle of the Afghan government and civil society to procure its own funding. For example, a combination of poverty at the grassroots level, an unwillingness to invest in large scale economic development, and rampant corruption has reduced the ability of local governments to gather adequate taxes.

The participants are starting to wrestle with potential solutions. New strategies must be considered. A starting point may be directing an ever-increasing amount of funding through the government as opposed to the non-governmental route. In addition, donors may want to consider the possibility of increasingly involving local organisations in prioritizing and designing peacebuilding projects that deserve funding. Further, donors might consider relinquishing control over funding monies and resist earmarking money for specific tasks and, rather, contribute towards general funding baskets that may be used at the discretion of local peacebuilding actors. Contributing to general funds will cause problems for current conceptions of accountability and project evaluation as donors lose sight of how their money is spent. Other means of accountability can perhaps be designed, and evaluations can perhaps be more general and holistic in scope and conducted in cooperation with other donors.

Costs of peacebuilding. Donors will need to carefully address the soaring costs of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Given the inability of Afghan groups to procure local funding for their operational costs, the ability of local groups to take over ownership of peacebuilding is obstructed by the daunting costs associated with peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The participants are perhaps realising that Afghan ownership will only occur after a massive ‘bubble-burst’ whereby the economy adjusts to the removal of

massive foreign funding. While enabling local groups to take over peacebuilding activities due to remarkably lower salaries and project costs, the economic downturn may prove to destabilise Afghanistan to the extent that further peacebuilding activity becomes impossible to conduct. This potential ‘bubble-burst’ needs to be carefully considered by the international community and its economic experts, and creative solutions are desperately and urgently needed.

Conclusion

The collective voice of both foreign and Afghan participants is revealing in an investigation into the possibility of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. What emerged from the interview narratives was a strong justification for continued foreign engagement and foreign ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. However, in addition to this justification, participants offered up an extensive critique of the international peacebuilding strategy, practice, and ethics in terms of the prospects for sustainable Afghan ownership of those activities. Their views can be summarised by a series of dilemmas that must be creatively addressed by international actors if Afghan ownership is to be achieved. Yet the story does not end here as only half of the picture has been revealed. The participants exposed another whole set of critiques and dilemmas, in particular those stemming from within the Afghan community itself. Chapter 6 now turns to the possibilities of *local* ownership of peacebuilding, and the barriers faced to that end that have emerged from within both the Afghan government and Afghan civil society.

Chapter 6 - Dilemmas of Afghan Ownership – Agency, Struggles, and Future

Directions

Introduction

As a counterpart to Chapter 5, this chapter explores the local Afghan side of the ownership story and, in particular, the possibility of real ownership of peacebuilding activities by Afghan individuals and groups in their war-torn country. As in the ‘foreign’ story, the journey towards ownership by Afghans is riddled with dilemmas. This chapter aims to present these dilemmas as described by the participants. Namely, the participants identified the government/civil society split of ownership of peacebuilding as a major dilemma in the ownership debate. The government/civil society split has directly shaped the discussion in this chapter. However, several other related divisions emerge as fundamental to the topic of ownership, including the traditional/modern, religious/secular, urban/rural, central (Kabul)/regional, gender, and rich/poor axes. These sub-axes can be effectively rolled into a discussion of the over-arching government-civil society theme.

In identifying the government-civil society axis as underpinning the Afghan ownership question, participants were beginning to explore a central philosophical and ethical peacebuilding dilemma. This dilemma can be described as the choice between elite-driven top-down and grassroots-driven bottom-up peacebuilding methodologies as the focus of international and local attention. In other words, which ‘local’ should own peacebuilding? This question points to my reasoning behind the predominant use of the term ‘Afghan ownership’ as opposed to ‘local ownership’ in this thesis. While the latter

lends itself in common usage more to the civil society/grassroots/village level, the term ‘Afghan ownership’ is perhaps more inclusive of upper-level/government actors.

To this end this chapter first explores the agency of the Afghan government in peacebuilding activities and the necessity of government ownership over such activities. Next, the struggles and barriers on the path to ownership that emerge from within the government itself are summarised. The second half of the chapter mirrors the first half but from the point of view of Afghan civil society, including its agency and ownership of peacebuilding followed by its struggles to achieve increased ownership.

Government Ownership of Peacebuilding

The participants in this study argued that the Afghan government needs to be a primary focus of efforts aimed at bolstering Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. The central task to this end has been in enabling the Afghan government to shoulder more responsibility, and in supporting them to assert authority over a wide range of peacebuilding sectors. One director of a major UN agency asserted that this was becoming a major item in both its organisational policies and practice in recent months. He, along with other participants, recognised that non-governmental groups had perhaps received disproportionate international attention and money; and thus were both attracting the best Afghan leaders away from government posts, and were perhaps leading the peacebuilding project in some sectors. Sustainable transformation is based upon balanced development at both the community and upper institutional levels, both regionally and centrally.

This section presents some of the major themes in the area of government ownership over peacebuilding. Both the necessities of government ownership and the struggles to achieve this ownership are explored through the participants' stories.

Necessity of Government Ownership

The interviewees believed that the government should be given increased control over international aid, should have its coordination authority over national priority programmes strengthened, should have the authority to take on increased responsibility in decision making, be an active partner with civil society, and act as a go-between for Afghan citizens and the international community.

Government control over international aid money. Underlying most discussions regarding peacebuilding ownership are funding concerns. There is a growing realisation that international donors have been too controlling over the process of channelling funding. Donors are only now considering new possibilities for funding dispersal that may positively impact Afghan ownership. For example, at the 2010 Kabul international conference world leaders agreed to work toward delivering 50 percent of their aid through Afghan government structures in order to bolster the looming transition to Afghan control of peacebuilding.

At this time, however, there exists a wide range of practice in the channelling of funding. On one end of the scale are countries like the U.S. who are mandated to maintain strong control over their foreign aid. A foreign funding official commented on the different funding strategies between the U.S. and Sweden for example:

The other is that the United States has made a request to Sweden that Sweden make its developmental assistance directly to the [local] government. The United States has a bit of a difficulty with our Congress in terms of the debates that going - we like to control our money. And as a

consequence of that we have asked our coalition partners to foot the bill a bit more with the central government, and the Swedes have been very accommodating in that regard.

Even though the U.S. has committed itself to honouring the commitments made at the Kabul conference, the situation will not improve substantially for local government structures since the overall funding levels from the U.S. are expected to drop dramatically as it withdraws its troops over the next couple of years. A foreign aid official confirmed a dramatic reduction in aid:

There is a longer-term plan to be reducing the assistance to Afghanistan as the Afghan government stands up in transition. So as a consequence of that, I'm not sure that there will be a substantial increase in the amount of funding going to the government channels, rather it is an increase in percentage of what we bring to the table ... So a higher percentage of a smaller pie does not mean that the gross total is going to be [that] different.

However, another major non-U.S. donor shared that it was currently directing over 99 percent of its substantial funding through government structures. However, this participant did admit that this practice is “very rare, other donors don’t do that” (foreign director of a donor organisation).

The participants recognised that there were significant benefits to increased governmental control over aid monies. One Afghan government official believed the ‘government channel’ was significantly more sustainable; it ensured that local capacities were built up for the future. Other participants believed that government structures and officials were better able to develop their institutional abilities and functions. Gathering a greater amount of foreign funding under the watch of the Afghan government allowed for increased Afghan ownership over project prioritisation, facilitated the tracking of project effectiveness and completions, and allowed for some control over the implementation

costs that seem to be spiralling out of control under the watch of the international community. Another Afghan government official believed that entrenched dependency on the international donors was rooted in the government's inadequate control over aid money. Local government control, he argued, would move towards breaking this dependency. Increased funding will also extend the Afghan government's reach and visibility in the local community. An ex-government Minister shared his experience regarding advocating for increased funding for his Ministry:

We kept lobbying and we kept telling our international friends that there is no alternative to a government in the country; NGOs and the international organisations are not substitutes to the government. So if Afghanistan is supposed to become stable, and peace is to prevail, then the government of Afghanistan should be seen by the people in the position of delivery... these nascent government institutions, which came into existence after 9/11 will not learn to serve its population – it will not learn to fulfil its basic functions ... the government still remains absent, because the government has no funds to reach out to its population.

Strengthened national priority programmes. The government of Afghanistan, along with its international advisors, has identified a series of priority programmes that serve as a framework for the development of the Afghan nation. At the 2010 Kabul conference a series of 23 national priority programmes in governance, development, and peace and security were instituted that, according to a top UN official in Kabul, “are evidence of the transition to Afghan responsibility and leadership” (United Nations, 2010).

One national programme in particular, the National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was consistently referenced by my study's participants as an example of what can be achieved under government leadership in terms of service delivery to the Afghan people. The NSP is implemented by the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and is

focused on rural social and economic development and the reduction of poverty. A government official explained that NSP success is based on the creation of effective Community Development Councils (CDCs) that determine and prioritise local developmental needs. The CDCs are granted block grants that are used to fulfil the community's identified needs, thus ensuring that local voices are heard in a 'bottom-up' and participatory process of development. The CDCs also act as a gateway for other government Ministries into the community.

The participants identified the primary reason why national government programmes such as the NSP hold significant peacebuilding potential in Afghanistan. Years of war and an absence of the central government's reach into the rural regions of Afghanistan have left rural citizens disconnected from and unsupportive of their government. Conversely, the government is unable to provide essential services to its rural constituency, thereby reducing its credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people. The NSP is seen as (re)connecting the government with its people, and providing a sense of care and protection for the vulnerable rural population. An ex-government minister shared the following in this regard:

In a post-conflict situation, particularly in the context of protracted conflict, where conflict has lasted for decades, you know what happens is the separation between the state and the population. Because during the conflict the state cannot reach out to the population to provide services. ... Then the credibility of the state in the post-conflict situation very very, much depends on the visibility and the reappearance of the state in those areas which were not under the control of the state. This is been the case in Afghanistan ... Because in Afghanistan in the contexts of continual insurgency the international community and the people of Afghanistan always emphasise the need to win hearts and minds of the people. But one thing that the international community has missed completely is *who* is to win the hearts and minds of the people of Afghanistan - the government or the PRTs of different nations? ... And one of the reasons why the NSP was so successful was that it had the people's ownership and government

leadership. We always emphasised the design of the programme in a way to ensure that there is a national government leadership and people's ownership. ... We kept lobbying and we kept telling our international friends that there is no alternative to a government in the country - NGOs and the international organisations are not substitutes to the government. So if Afghanistan is supposed to become stable and peace is to prevail, then the government of Afghanistan should be seen by the people in the position of delivery.

Another benefit of strengthened national priority programmes is the increased support for government coordination over peacebuilding. As increased funding is channelled through these programmes, the government is able to better direct funding towards key areas and in a systematic and sequenced manner, which has been slow in coming. A top foreign funding official shared how foreigners have been largely unwilling to “get out of the driver seat and let them take over.” Some participants shared with me that even though the national programmes are perceived as stemming from government organisers, there is a heavy foreign influence and perhaps foreign domination in the design of these programmes. Another foreign UN official shared the struggle of advancing his institutional priorities at the expense of the government's. It was continually tempting to “bring in our own priorities on the table and [go] ahead with projects which may give us mileage rather than mileage to the government of Afghanistan.”

Increased government responsibility. While perhaps related to the previous discussion, the interview narratives justify further emphasis in regards to the need for increased government responsibility over peacebuilding decision-making. Arguably this has happened, but has caused conflict in some cases. Over the last year the government's rhetoric has become increasingly critical of international structures such as PRTs. This rhetoric is not well received by the international community. It appears that even though

‘transition talk’ abounds, when actual action is needed, handing over control to Afghan authorities is proving to be challenging. However, many participants believed that increased Afghan government control over peacebuilding activities was essential. One Afghan civil service trainer summarised the advantages like this:

Some of the advantages would be that we usually make better decisions because it is our country and we know more about our problems compared to anyone else who comes from another country to Afghanistan.

Is this actually happening on the ground? The participants shared a variety of ways in which local government structures were realizing more control in decision-making. They shared with me how, in some cases, government bodies were increasingly involved in drafting policy documents and laws. Another UN official gave an example of how large internationally developed national payroll and human resources systems are now being ramped up for government takeover. Further, a different UN official outlined how, in many cases, the advisors it places within government structures are Afghan nationals trained by the UN and no longer procured internationally.

Government partnership with civil society. An interesting development emerged from the interview data. Several participants suggested that the government and civil society might work together effectively as a team in service delivery for the people of Afghanistan. For example, the NSP programme has effectively created a structure of government leadership together with grassroots implementation by civil society groups (mostly NGOs). A UN director suggested that this format might also be appropriate outside of the community development sector. This sort of government-civil society partnership appears to be an appealing solution in several ways. The participants repeatedly noted inadequate government coverage in its programming across the country

due to incapacity, inadequate resources, and inadequate personnel. NGOs, on the other hand, are the recipients of significant funding, and have thus built up impressive levels of coverage, capacities, and personnel. Conversely, there is a growing realisation amongst civil society actors that the government does, indeed, need expanded coordinating authority over its work. Thus, the marriage of government and civil society in the area of service delivery seems to be a good fit. Instead of the prevailing sense of competition and dissonance, the Afghan people may benefit from government-civil society partnership in order to maximise the comparative advantages of each group of actors.

Other participants, while recognizing the apparent short-term benefits of this arrangement, saw it as a temporary fix only, and perceived that long-term development and stability required a strong and effective government. An Afghan NGO official had this to say:

To be honest what I mean is that there should be a transformation in the role that civil society plays and there should be a transformation in the role that government plays. The other civil society in Afghanistan that you see is a completely service provider, this is not what the people of Afghanistan wish to see and this is not what really works I think. I myself don't agree that civil society should be service providers. NGOs are not that big to cover a large area or a huge area of people, they may cover villages or districts, but not more than that. I think that the government should be the service provider, and they should have support of governments. We should have a strong government. For God's sake who is going to control this country - not the NGOs - the government should do it. But what we have in Afghanistan is a very weak government. I don't want to accuse the international community in all cases and say that would be conspiracy, I don't like it, no we have to be realistic. There is a lot of problems in the government but it doesn't mean that we have to ignore them, we have to work with them, we have to work by them, they should be the service provider. Civil society of Afghanistan should monitor the process.

His counter argument calls for the eventual termination of high levels of NGO service delivery and the adoption of a more critical monitoring and advocacy role. In the

meantime, another international NGO director believed it was up to the NGOs to bend the most and to fit themselves inside of government priorities.

The Struggles for Government Ownership of Peacebuilding

In addition to outlining the important role that the Afghan government plays in an effective peacebuilding program, my study's participants offered up a penetrating critique of Afghan government structures and processes that highlighted several debilitating factors that are currently serving as barriers to the realisation of Afghan government ownership over peacebuilding activities. Five areas of struggle were described by the participants: (1) low capacity; (2) rampant corruption; (3) inadequate government reach; (4) ineffective leadership and decision-making; and (5) ineffective government structures. The discussion of these destructive factors is presented in the order of their prominence within the interview data, and starts with the most salient.

Low capacity of government leaders and structures. The most commonly mentioned barrier (referred to by a majority of both Afghan and foreign participants), in the face of efforts towards Afghan ownership, was the incapacity of government leaders to conduct their duties in Afghanistan. A majority of participants expressed concern over the prospect of increased Afghan ownership because they believed that Afghan political leaders were not capable or not ready to take over responsibilities. An Afghan government official stated, "There are chances of ownership to be taken, but we are not ready right now, that is my personal view." 'Low capacity' was mentioned repeatedly during most of my interviews. What does low capacity entail? The respondents revealed four major themes in their narratives, namely: (1) inadequate/insufficient education; (2)

inappropriate leaders; (3) the inability to implement necessary government programming; and (4) dissonance with Western institutional processes and idiosyncrasies.

Inadequate/insufficient education. Decades of war have decimated educational systems and choked educational opportunities for most Afghans, which certainly impacts the effectiveness of post-2001 political leaders in Afghanistan. Illiteracy is, unfortunately, still not uncommon amongst top political leaders, particularly in the regional cities, districts, and villages. For example, one participant pointed out that some mayors of major cities remained illiterate. Also, a majority of ANA and ANP recruits are illiterate (approximately 80 percent according to a participant), and only recently did the NATO training mission make literacy training a priority as all recruits are to now achieve a grade one reading level before graduation. Within another top Afghan national security body, only 22 percent of its employees had obtained a high-school degree.

Inadequate education is debilitating for Afghan leaders. An Afghan NGO director argued that other educated Afghans easily intimidate uneducated Afghan leaders:

For example Kabul University is full of professors who spend more than half of their lives teaching Afghan youth, and they are professors in different areas. But I have seen that they are never contacted and [government leaders] never talk with these professors and never use their knowledge. And why is this? If the Minister is not an educated person he thinks that if he brings a lot of educated people in, finally his interests and position will be in danger. So that is why he rarely tries to bring in educated people surrounding him to solve the problems, so he does by his own way.

Another perceived effect is the increased vulnerability on the part of Afghan leaders to extremist ideologies, and an inherent resistance to constructive and forward-thinking changes amongst uneducated leaders. The participants believed that a fear of new ideas and the unknown, and a general distrust for those different from themselves, prevented

uneducated leaders from wandering from the ‘safety’ of destructive (and sometimes traditional) ways of thinking.

With regards to the Afghan educational system, my participants believed that it is unable to keep pace in the provision of necessary requirements for modern political and economic systems. And exaggerating this systemic shortfall is the use of archaic and ineffective teaching methodologies, the failure to provide adequate schooling opportunities for Afghan females, and the prevalent ‘brain-drain’ as educated leaders move abroad in search of security and better employment opportunities. Canada, for example, has accepted a sizeable Afghan population including many Afghan leaders. In response, my participants believed that short-term peacebuilding success required that international post-secondary institutions establish programming inside Afghanistan at a reasonable cost, allow innovative local programmes to be accredited with their institutions, or provide increased opportunities for Afghan leaders to travel abroad to study in various peacebuilding sectors.

Hiring incapacitated leaders. The participants believe that the entry capacity when hiring government leaders was inadequate, thus preventing necessary governance reform and the formation of functionally democratic structures. While perhaps tied to the subsequent discussion of corruption in this chapter, the placement and hiring of inappropriate leaders has strong links to the maintenance of power for many Warlords, clans, ethnic groups, Mujahideen groups, political parties, or other ideological groups.

Because of the rampant placement of inappropriate leaders into positions of authority, widespread dissatisfaction amongst the Afghan population has ensued, particularly in respect to non-elected positions such as government Ministers and

provincial governors. In other political structures such as in Canada, even though a Minister may be placed in power over a Ministry for political or ideological reasons and lack the required capacity for the position, a second level of civil service bureaucracy tempers any adverse affects and ensures a modicum of stability, continuity, and the assurance of vital services for the population. However, this is not the case in Afghanistan. A leading Afghan civil society leader pointed out that a second level of bureaucracy was never established in Afghanistan, rather, the “Minister is everything.” This unfettered power and control for government Ministers is problematic given rampant ethnic and factional hiring practices and the strong ties between political and military groups. Ministers have often taken their government Ministries down ideological and often destructive paths, which serves to prolong the suffering of the Afghan people.

Instead, several participants called for the adoption of merit-based hiring practices. This practice is in contrast to current hiring practices for top government positions that often reward ties to either Mujahideen groups and/or to the 2001 American-led military invasion of Afghanistan. Instead, two Afghan government officials described ideal and revised hiring practices that would be based on merit, the commitment of the leader to the people of Afghanistan, and their commitment to a progressive future. In addition, an increasing number of top positions such as provincial governors would be filled by democratic elections as opposed to presidential decree, which certainly has security implications since many of these posts are filled by ‘ex’-Warlords. Convincing these leaders to leave their posts will certainly require creativity, poise and, potentially, some measure of coerciveness.

Government capacity and programme implementation. Inadequate government capacity to conduct its duties has hindered the effective provision of government programming. Even with moderate advances in policy formation due to extensive aid from the international community, the Afghan government is struggling to extend its reach outside of Kabul in terms of service delivery in some areas. Service delivery programming is shortsighted, untimely, and in many cases entirely inadequate or non-existent. For example, during the 2010 fiscal year, most Afghan government Ministries had only disbursed about 40 percent of their development budgets, that is the money provided by the international community to the government to carry out projects as opposed to paying for general running costs, thus illustrating a complete lack of local capacity. This lack of capacity makes it difficult for government structures to ensure widespread legitimacy or achieve actual ownership over peacebuilding activities.

The interview narratives illuminated several areas of struggle for the Afghan government in the area of project implementation. At a basic level, the peacebuilding needs in Afghanistan are overwhelming; they are deep, complex, and in virtually every possible sector. A senior donor official commented:

Here the needs are so overwhelming it is like a guy who walks out of his house and gets pelted by every neighbourhood kid with 100 snowballs. Which one do you dodge first? Or which would you catch? There is that much need here.

In many cases the scale of international programming to address these needs is large, cumbersome, and complex. Several participants believed that at this point the transitioning of these programmes to Afghan control seemed daunting and undoable. Further, supportive and necessary policies, laws, governing bodies, experts and, in some cases, entire professions do not exist. For example, a UN official believed that there were

less than 400 certified attorneys in all of Afghanistan, and that some districts and provinces had none. Studying law was traditionally avoided because of prevailing cultural norms, in particular the heavy reliance upon informal justice systems and the avoidance of legal mechanisms.

Struggles in meshing with Western idiosyncrasies. Several participants (both foreign and Afghan) pointed out how Afghan political leaders, structures, and processes were struggling to adapt to the requirements of modern Western political and economic formats and institutional cultures. Afghan participants recognised that there existed more efficient and effective procedures and work methodologies in addressing the complex needs faced by Afghans. An Afghan NGO director accused the local government offices of being unorganised and lacking in uniform procedures and policies:

Right now if you come to the government departments, they are a lot of people working in an old-style way and sitting over there having a cup of tea, and people coming over there and case-by-case they see the papers, without any program - without any policy or plan. They sign the paper and advise the people in very dispersed way - it is very difficult.

Government departments are required to submit recurring proposals for funding and subsequently must also submit extensive reporting and evaluation documentation because a significant percentage of government project work is funded by international aid. However, government Ministries are unable to muster the resources to produce reporting that is acceptable to the international community. For example, one UN official averred how her department assisted heavily with drafting reports on advances in human rights policy for the human rights committees in Geneva. Another UN official shared that almost all funding proposals submitted by his counterpart government Ministry were indeed written by expatriate consultants. In a similar manner to other internationally-

aided peacebuilding programmes for societies emerging from political violence (c.f. Byrne, Thiessen, & Fissuh's (2007) description of proposal writing and reporting in Northern Ireland) reporting expectations have outpaced local abilities and have arguably lost touch with reality and practicality, thus necessitating specialised consultants who are attuned to the ambiguous and obscure reporting and application requirements.

Unfortunately this soaks up a lot of valuable resources.

In the area of project implementation, a UN humanitarian official shared how his Afghan counterparts did not hold the technical abilities required by international aid schemes, particularly in the areas of measurement, evaluations, prioritizing, and reporting. He questioned:

[Do they] understand how to effectively gather information, to triangulate and to provide data that they feel comfortable with as being true and accurate? Do they have the ability to do assessments, which are based on humanitarian norms, and scales of measurement?

Afghan organisations are struggling to adopt the precise and inflexible methodologies developed by international organisations.

Rampant corruption. Next to inadequate capacity, corruption was mentioned as the second most prominent barrier facing efforts to harness the benefits of Afghan ownership over peacebuilding activities. The participants seemed particularly perplexed and hopeless regarding the prevalence of corruption in Afghan society. Their perceptions do seem to correspond to external evaluations (Torabi & Delesgues, 2007). Transparency International (2010) rated Afghanistan as the world's second most corrupt society, with only Somalia rated worse. The participants shared with me their ideas regarding: (1) the relationship between corruption and Afghan culture; (2) the corruption in filling government jobs; (3) how top government leadership were primarily looking out for

personal interests; and (4) the devastating toll of corruption on efforts aimed at increasing Afghan ownership.

Corruption and Afghan institutional and government culture. A culture of corruption has unfortunately infiltrated Afghan institutional, government, and perhaps wider social life (Cheng & Zaum, 2008, p. 305). A couple of older participants who had lived through pre-Russian, Russian, Mujahideen, Taliban, and post-2001 political regimes noted disturbing changes. For example, one elderly Afghan NGO director noted the escalation of bribery in the military when compared to his military service circa 1975:

Two times I went into military service with very little money - a long time ago. It was compulsory service for one or two years, and I passed the service myself without asking for money from anybody. Now, if you don't give the Afghan soldier Pepsi and money they will not work with you.

He along with several other participants from the non-governmental sector believed that working with the government had grown quite difficult unless an NGO was willing to utilise bribery, take advantage of relationships with government officials, or use other corrupt methods to win government contracts. They perceived that competition based solely on strong program delivery and strong internal mechanisms was often not possible.

Corruption in filling government leadership positions. The most common accusation of corruption concerned inappropriate hiring practices for government leadership positions. Several participants raised the issue of ethnic preference (predominantly Pashtun vs. non-Pashtun) in hiring, and accused certain government Ministries of being dominated by particular ethnicities. They believed that the placement of government Ministers into posts was often ethnically motivated. In turn, these Ministers surrounded themselves with like-minded individuals as leaders within the

Ministry, thus shaping the overall direction and policy formation processes of the Ministry in favour of their particular ethnic group.

In a slightly different stream of critique, my study's participants believed that power brokers such as Warlords and other human rights violators were put, and kept, in political power with the backing of the international community and the broader Afghan government structure. A leading Afghan civil society leader had this to say:

It goes back to the whole political development process in Afghanistan whereby key Ministries and key positions in the government were divided up based on ethnicity and other affiliations ... If you look at the whole government structure, you will find a lot of the people that have committed a lot of the atrocities in the community. So a culture of impunity still continues, and that is because these groups have made an alliance with the American-led intervention in Afghanistan, so they fought on the ground while the Americans were bombing, and they defeated the Taliban. So they had to receive that as an incentive through the senior political development process ... Warlords were put back into power, and human rights violators were put back into power structures, so they have been given external legitimacy.

Unfortunately, the situation does not seem much better in democratically elected positions. Accusations of election fraud continue to arise nearly a year after the September 2010 parliamentary elections.

Personal interests and corruption. Many participants believed that Afghanistan's top political leaders are primarily concerned with maintaining their own power-status and self-serving agendas and interests, and are widely ignoring their responsibility to ensure development in the Afghan nation. One NGO director said the following out of frustration with corrupt officials:

If you take a look today who are the most powerful people economically and politically, those are the people who are against the development of the country. Still they are in power.

A commonly cited example during the research period had to do with the 2010 Kabul Bank scandal in which upwards of \$1bn USD was lost to shady insider loans. The scandal has positioned Afghanistan on the edge of economic collapse, yet not one person was charged and held responsible for the theft and fraud. What really bothers Afghans is that several of those responsible were the brothers and family members of the Afghan President and Vice-Presidents. Afghanistan's political elite has grown ultra-rich, and is perceived as more interested in personal gain than the plight of the millions struggling in grinding poverty. A prominent civil society leader stated, "They are day by day becoming millionaires and billionaires but the other side, the general population, is getting poorer and poorer and poorer."

A couple of participants blamed this type of corruption on the inherently tribal nature of Afghan society, where one's primary responsibility is to look after one's family and clan at the expense of outsiders and the nation. It seems that tribal relations and concerns have trumped the best interests of the nation.

Corruption and Afghan ownership. A UN official stated that "It's very ironic that the biggest barrier to having a full-fledged, realistic, on the ground Afghan ownership is Afghan favouritism, which prevents the rightful Afghan ownership." Corruption has posed a serious dilemma for international peacebuilders intent on transitioning authority to their Afghan counterparts. While firm international support for the Afghan government is perhaps a necessity in the face of insurgency, corruption has made it difficult for many foreign peacebuilders to trust their Afghan government partners. A foreign funding official described how the foreign community was waiting for the Afghan government to prove itself:

I think you have to put more pressure and more demands on the Afghan government to deliver and to be honest, and to work for the Afghan people and not for themselves which is really hard. ... Maybe the most crucial issue is that the Afghan government ownership is hard to trust. So I would say that what has to happen is that they perform better and they show that they have a commitment and they show that they can deliver and that they believe in their own country. And I have heard now that they invest in property in Dubai - the Ministers. Do they believe in their own country? Probably not.

The participants shared some specific dilemmas they faced in regards to corruption and Afghan ownership. A foreign NGO official shared this:

We get a lot of requests from the national level that sort of say, "Well let us be involved in the hiring of the [staff that you place in your projects across the country]. Okay, we would like to find ways to do that, but we would like to find ways to do that that doesn't mean that we have to hire your cousin. So how can we work that out? Yes you can have a say in that, yes of course you are the Afghan government, you should have a say in what kind of people we are putting in your [offices], but how do we do that and still ensure transparency in that?"

She battled with the seemingly competing imperatives of providing the political structures a real voice in how her project was run, and the imperative to maintain a corruption-free project.

In a similar fashion another participant, a UN official, stated:

In recruiting them there is a lot of favouritism. A lot of politics. And it goes beyond the point where you cannot fight this here because fighting this means that you have to completely bring things to a stop. So you have to make bargain of whether you want to have things keep going and deliver some of it, or totally put [the project] to a stop. So obviously you want to have things going. But it compromises the quality of the people I are recruited ... That is common to most development activities - that's a dilemma. And over the years the international community kind of starts ignoring it, starts playing to it, and that becomes a big barrier.

She feels pressure to allow greater government ownership over important decisions, but realises that pushing forward quickly may support the entrenched culture of corruption.

Government reach and Warlords-turned-politicians. The participants talked extensively regarding the struggle of the Afghan government to extend its reach into the regions, provinces, and far corners and valleys of rural Afghanistan. A distinct gap between the rural population (and its local government structures) and the central government in Kabul was identified. The participants focused in on one reason in particular for this struggle, namely the placement and empowerment of local powerbrokers and Warlords in government positions at both the regional and central levels.

Regional/rural/grassroots separation from the central government. Conflict-affected contexts such as rural Afghanistan are exceptionally difficult to govern. The residue of war and ongoing insurgency activities have eroded government credibility and legitimacy across Afghanistan's vast rural areas. A former Afghan government Minister stated: "Unfortunately the disillusionment is growing fast among the population with their own government." A foreign embassy official supported this sentiment and believed that "the government does not even exist way out in a far-off province." The virtual non-existence of the central government in rural Afghanistan and/or its dissonance with the Afghan people provides a distinct barrier to Afghan ownership of peacebuilding, since the realisation of ownership must occur at both the grassroots and elite-government level.

The participants also noted considerable dissonance between regional/village government structures and central government structures. For example, there appears to be a distinct lack of effective coordination between regional and central government structures. Other dissonance is perhaps necessitated by central government policy directions. A foreign donor official highlighted how one central Ministry was

purposefully bypassing and excluding local government structures in the provision of services to rural communities, thus creating a significant amount of conflict.

Others believed that regional government structures were responsible for dissonance. For example, regional-central fragmentation has occurred as local government structures opposed and trumped initiatives from the central level. An Afghan-American academic believed that it has become clear to many peacebuilding practitioners and leaders that the central government is perhaps destined to struggle in providing governance to rural regions and, will by necessity, need to rely on informal structures and systems. For example, in the justice sector the centrally sponsored structures such as the ANP and the court system are routinely ignored in favour of informal structures such as village *Shuras*. The Afghan government, the UN, and some other policy-forming organisations are beginning to explore ways in which formal and informal justice systems and processes can be joined together, all the while avoiding central regulation and institutionalisation. One foreign UN participant described how her project in grassroots-level justice was, despite being a project supported directly by the central Ministry of Justice, attempting to remain a civil society-driven project. Up to this point justice processes outside of the formal system are illegal, yet central structures are waking up to the fact that the majority of ‘justice’ is occurring beyond its sphere of influence and inside of civil society-driven informal structures. Central government policies are now beginning to affirm and recognise this fact.

Empowering Warlords and other local powerbrokers in government. Afghan Warlords played a central role in the ousting of the Taliban by Western coalition forces in 2001. In return, many Warlords were granted top positions in the central government,

were appointed as provincial governors, and were mostly allowed to accumulate incredible wealth and power (Mac Ginty, 2010, p. 586). Despite ugly histories of human rights abuses, these Warlords continue to be supported by the international community and the Afghan central government, and enjoy legitimacy on the backs of the internationally demonised Taliban.

Two streams of opinion became evident as participants shared their opinions regarding the widespread dissatisfaction with local and central government structures. The study's participants who reside in northern Afghanistan are living under the rule of a powerful Warlord turned provincial governor named *Ustad* Atta Mohammed in Balkh province Nour (see Mukhopadhyay (2009) for more information). Some of these participants pointed out the constructive features of having a powerful Warlord as a governor. They perceived that having a strongman as governor had noticeable security benefits for Balkh's residents. An Afghan UN official had this to say:

It is also interesting to note the dilemma of having Warlords as governors and in the government. They are difficult to live with, but here people have said that they see Gov. Atta as a stabilising influence in this region - not only in Balkh but across the North. The local population struggles to see how the central government will protect them from insurgency and so forth, and they perceive the presence of peace and development here is due to a strong regional power, the governor, who holds a significant amount of military power, albeit perhaps in the background and perhaps either hidden or amalgamated into the ANP, but very willing to protect the interests of the governor if need be.

In a similar fashion, an NGO official believed that the presence of a strong Warlord as governor with significant connections to the military could better ensure security in the area.

The participants also mentioned development benefits. A UN official pointed out that the local Warlord/governor, having invested a significant amount of money in the

local real estate market and in local business ventures, was certain to “protect his own investments as a businessman.” Thus, there was an increased sense of stability allowing for development progress. Additionally, the control of a strong Warlord was seen as advantageous in ensuring a modicum of Afghan ownership over this development by forcing elevated levels of cooperation and coordination with the international community.

However, the majority of participants who talked about Warlords disagreed, and believed that the presence of Warlords in the regions was hindering efforts to legitimise central governance in those areas. Warlords were identified as destructive in several ways. First, although short-term benefits might seem to justify the appointment of Warlords into government positions, they quickly move beyond the control of central authorities and become a ‘thorn-in-the-side’, thus creating a long-term dilemma for central authorities and the international community. Long-term difficulties soon outshine short-term gains. For example, as mentioned earlier, some participants believed the risk of a resumption of civil war was heightened by the presence of Warlords. Second, a human rights official believed that accepting Warlords as leaders served to entrench a culture of corruption and injustice within the state. He gave the example of human rights reports being quashed in order to protect powerful people in government:

The mistake that the US and the international community made was to incorporate all of those people who had committed heinous crimes into the government. And today the type of government that we have - the corruption, the lawlessness - they have become big headaches, so get rid of them. ...For example, in 2004 or 2005 the Human Rights Commission wanted to release a report about war criminals, and there were some very big names, big names of people who were part of those crimes who were mentioned in that, and I think that the Afghan government stopped the release of that report simply because the people, those individuals, were named and mentioned in that report were part of the government, or key figures. Pres. Karzai thought that if I punish them, if the report comes out, and I do not punish them, and even if I do I cannot do it, so the report was

not there. ... So if you want to talk about human rights, justice is very important and this should be implemented and justice should prevail in order to have a better Afghanistan.

Third, the Afghan government is suffering from a drastically reduced legitimacy by keeping Warlords on board. A civil society leader had some worrying comments regarding this theme:

[The Afghan people] see you as supporting these war criminals. The whole country of Afghanistan, unfortunately, is now run by a small number of people that I call political and economic mafia. With this arrangement here in Afghanistan, by being in power positions they have access to economic resources and this increases their economic resources. Every day through very illegitimate means the government is involved in drug and corruption. So as the money increases they also have their supporters, so they can be elected as MPs, they can stay in power. And the majority of the population will not benefit from this, and they are again divided in different political and ethnic lines. But for economic interest they will come together. If you make a profile of the Governors, a profile of the Ministers and the Chief of Police and all the key people at the sub-national level and national level you will find the links they have with a political-military group, the link that they will have with the mafias, and the link that they will have with the criminals.

The Warlords have refused to separate from their traditional anti-government backers such as organised crime, which creates an obvious legitimacy dilemma for how the government is viewed by its constituents.

The destructive influence of Warlords goes far beyond the Afghan government and also creates problems for grassroots Afghans in at least two ways. First, it prolongs under-development and worsens poverty. There is a general sense that as the Warlords and other powerbrokers are becoming increasingly wealthy, the masses struggle from worsening poverty. At a minimum, the gap between the rich and poor has become dramatically widened, as evidenced by the ‘million-dollar’ neighbourhoods in Kabul such as in parts of Wazir Akbar Khān. An Afghan NGO director stated, “And again the

Warlord came to power, and they captured the land from the poor people - the poor became poorer and the rich became more rich.” Warlords-turned-politicians are perceived as primarily concerned with their own position and self-interests. The plight of their constituency remains secondary, and they offer little assistance or government support.

In a sense, a small rich powerful political ‘mafia’ has taken advantage of a combination of massive international money being injected into the country, a re-established and largely unregulated free-market system, and their personal economic and power leverage. In some ways the international peacebuilding projects are structured to enrich local Warlords. A UN official explains:

All the [international] support goes to the people who want this war to be ongoing [Laughter]. For example lots of money is spent on road building. The construction companies have to give money to the security companies to ensure security. The security companies have to pay the local Warlords to ensure security [Laughter].

And ‘former’ Warlords have become major players in the private sector by buying up construction companies, security companies, and other companies that contract with the international community. The participants believed that many of these companies were corrupted and produced inferior work quality.

Second, Warlords-turned-politicians reduce the collective voice of the Afghan people and hinder democratic transformation. This grassroots disempowerment is rooted in the 2001 Bonn process, and in most of the subsequent international conferences, where the voice of Afghan civil society has been largely excluded. A civil society leader bemoaned the fact that the 2001 Bonn process was strictly inclusive of the largely conservative voices of former Warlords and military groups, all the while excluding the younger generation, and more educated and liberal groups and political parties. And

confronting these Warlords through ‘Arab-spring’ style people movements seemed extremely difficult given the multitude of Warlords (as opposed to one strong leader in Egypt for example).

Ineffective leadership and decision-making. In addition to the Warlord problem, participants pointed out several other leadership struggles inside of Afghan government structures. At the core of this leadership struggle is the unique war-affected military-political milieu that has taken root in Afghanistan. An Afghan civil society official commented:

In Afghanistan, and we never had this kind of arrangement before, where you have these imposed leaders, artificial leaders, created during the wartime. Some supported by Pakistan, by Arabs, some by Iran, all of them supported eventually by the U.S. and Western countries to fight the Russians. And they were not necessarily the ones accepted or considered as a leader in their communities and so on. ... So at every level the structure of the community was replaced by these imposed leaders, and now we suffer from that eventuality. And so they have been given weapons, resources, money, and external legitimacy. But, in the past, traditionally, the only people that could have been accepted as leader of the community at different levels up to the national level was based on the personal charisma, a more volunteerism type of thing, having more sympathy towards the community, someone who is well respected to everyone. But, now the leaders are the ones who have done more criminal things.

The current political leadership system is dominated by ex-Mujahideen commanders and the appointment of other violent powerbrokers, and is out of sync with the historical and traditional manner in which societal leaders are chosen. He perceived that the current practices for identifying leaders were fundamentally opposed to any chances of sustainable peace in the country. A prerequisite for improved leadership selection will be the adequate political will within the international community to disengage with current political leaders and allow Afghans to choose appropriate leaders. This empowering

process would certainly require careful protection for newly identified leaders from a violent backlash as current leaders are removed from power.

The participants were, however, willing to describe their perceptions of what effective leadership might look like in the Afghan context. One former government official pointed out from his past experience what effective leadership looked like:

What we did was to create a space and an environment for the staff to feel that they are a part of the process in the first place. And second, as a leader I made myself accessible to the staff, I didn't lock up myself in a room with a few people surrounding me. I was surrounded by the entire staff. And the second key to success was actually our ability and willingness to travel to the provinces. So I and my senior colleagues didn't restrict ourselves to Kabul, to our own offices - we were a moving Ministry. ... Without sitting with our staff at the provincial level, we would not have been able to know each other, and we would not have been able to understand each other. And also to learn from our people.

His innovative leadership ensured successful programming that continues to this day.

An international NGO director shared his perspective regarding another initiative aimed at transforming leadership in Afghanistan. His NGO conducted leadership training for Afghan peacebuilding and private sector leaders using a 'servant leadership' model.

He explained:

It is basically how to be a better leader, using some 'servant leadership' models, that a leader who is one who has influence, influence that he should use for good, to help and to build teamwork and unity and trust in whatever sphere they are working in, whether it is business, government, NGO, just community, they should be doing their service for the good of others. That is a revolutionary concept in this country.

He shared how the course alumni had now started their own association committed to spreading the training using the model, even to surrounding countries. A foreign military participant also shared how the idea of a leader empowering those beneath him/her was largely foreign in Afghanistan. Decisions are typically made at the highest levels only,

with no notion of decentralised decision-making. Government leaders are often seized with the notion of being the most powerful individuals in the country.

Finally, a couple of participants identified a generational dilemma in the move to transform government leadership in Afghanistan. They pointed out that while older leaders may have the socio-political weight and authority to effectively conduct their duties, they remain committed to outdated and sometimes destructive methodologies. Conversely, one Afghan government official described how he preferred to hire recent university graduates who are “not used to stealing; they are not into accumulating wealth.” An international funding official believed his young Afghan leaders were more willing to make the “harder decisions” essential for tough peacebuilding progress.

Structural and procedural inadequacies. The participants identified noticeable structural and procedural inadequacies affecting the ability of the Afghan government to conduct its duties effectively. Thus, the likelihood of increased Afghan government ownership over governance is also decreased.

Structural Inadequacies. My interviewees noted some glaring structural inadequacies. First, two participants talked extensively about the absence of effective and influential political parties in the Afghan government structure. Without an effective party structure, the Afghan parliament has struggled to achieve any sense of cohesion, and has been unable to fulfil its duties. According to the participants what has happened is that individual powerbrokers and Warlords have been able to dominate parliamentary proceedings, thus creating a sense of chaos. These Warlords and the elite political leaders are resistant to the formation of strong political parties, probably out of fear of reduced power and influence for themselves.

Second, the mandates of many government structures are either inadequate or overlapping in scope. A foreign director of a donor organisation identified a paradox. In his view, the government contained far too many Ministries, with qualified personnel spread too thinly on the ground. Conversely, the country was missing many key governing bodies and authorities and a multitude of key policies and laws. For example, he pointed out that Afghanistan has recently constructed its first stretch railway, but has not yet created a railway authority.

The third point is a bit more ambiguous. A couple of participants talked about an inadequate unity of purpose across and inside government institutions. An Afghan government official stated:

The government really needs to act as a unified package to donors. Consensus among Afghans is very important. ... That consensus and one picture to outsiders will give us the strength to go for more ownership. That is very much important.

Procedural hindrances. Several concerns were voiced regarding procedural hindrances to government effectiveness and ownership. First, the overly bureaucratic nature of government institutions was a primary concern. Both UN and NGO officials outlined the logistical difficulties and inappropriate timeframes required to partner and cooperate with government Ministries.

Second, government decision-making structures need to be modernised, empowered, given authority, and then trusted. One government official described how fellow staff did not understand the prioritisation, planning, and implementation requirements of large national projects. An Afghan NGO director believed that another barrier that needs to be addressed is the lack of decentralised decision-making authority. Moreover he said that only the top officials in many Ministries are making key decisions.

A third procedural concern was the growing tension between the Afghan government (particularly the President's Office) and the international community. An international military representative made this prediction:

I would suggest that the international community will either inevitably soon, or not too far out in the distant future, face a crossroads in terms of their relationship to the President of Afghanistan - one that is in the end likely to infuriate the international community, and that which I am afraid might have a direct effect on the continued commitment after 2011 - after this year. Yes it is a limiting issue and it has been looming for a number of months.

The Afghan government has recently insisted on greater ownership, and has made decisions that are perceived as opposed to the plans of the international community.

Civil Society Ownership of Peacebuilding

Even though it has made strong advances, Afghan civil society is struggling and it believes that major peacebuilding actors have sidelined it. Of primary concern is the under-utilisation of grassroots peacebuilding and transformational processes at the community level. However, civil society leaders are raising their voices and building an agenda for strengthening civil society despite constant insecurity, danger, isolation, ignorance, and lack of funding. This section discusses the themes that emerge from the interview narratives in regards to the necessary role for civil society in Afghanistan, its struggle to achieve ownership over peacebuilding, and the key dilemmas facing particular sectors and actors within civil society.

The Necessity of Civil Society Ownership

So what should the stature of civil society be in a war-affected country like Afghanistan? The participants believed that: (1) an empowered civil society should be vitally shaping future peacebuilding and development processes in Afghanistan; (2) civil

society should be active in choosing a new set of Afghan leaders; and (3) civil society groups are playing an important role in ensuring Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in a wide variety of sectors.

Grassroots empowerment in peacebuilding. The necessary empowerment of civil society to participate in peacebuilding decision-making was a major theme emerging from the interviews. An international NGO director described the inherent necessity of facilitating local decision-making processes:

If people create their own decision-taking and problem-solving mechanisms they will endure, whereas if people have solutions imposed on them they will sing the song as long as you are there and then they'll start singing their own song when you're gone. We don't want people to sing the song of some other piper; we want them to sing their own songs.

For several participants, real Afghan ownership at the grassroots level was achieved as communities (including the marginalised) felt empowered to ask for and demand what they need. Despite some major barriers such as corruption, insecurity, and physical isolation, a couple of interviewees perceived the wider grassroots community as deeply concerned with peacebuilding processes and its impact on their communities. Their actual involvement, however, will require exceptional creativity and persistence.

A slight progress in civil society empowerment was also noted. After years of exclusion, some civil society leaders were recently invited to sit on major decision-making bodies such as the high-level Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) and the High Peace Council (HPC). However, there is considerable frustration over who is chosen to represent civil society, and the very limited time allowed for them to speak at these gatherings. Some key civil society leaders with significant and pertinent expertise feel consistently excluded and/or ignored. In addition, some participants believed a

distinct lack of civil society unity was obstructing progress in this area. For example, can one representative from one small sector of civil society claim to speak for other sectors? One participant argued that only a widespread civil society movement could achieve such unity.

Stepping down a level, several participants who were mostly from the NGO sector talked about how increased participatory development processes and decision-making were empowering rural Afghan communities. An international NGO director described the way his NGO entered a community:

In the community development activities we see that our goal is to empower the community's groups to make their own decisions, and what they decide is not as important to us as the fact that they have the ability to make their own decisions. And once they have that ability, not as individuals, but as groups, to make the decisions that they feel are appropriate to address their own needs, then we see ourselves as successful. ... We see this as a very powerful tool at the grassroots level, bringing community cohesion.

A UN official even claimed that the communities themselves are designing some proposals within his organisation. An Afghan government official emphasised that only a participatory development stance could effectively build up the social, physical, and financial capital of rural Afghan communities.

Unfortunately, participatory development philosophies were perceived as quite rare in the overall Afghan development scheme. It has certainly entered the development narrative and rhetoric heard in Afghanistan, but remains stuck there, with development leaders unable to practically implement its methodology given the massive project objectives and stringent project timelines. This inability to increase local participation led one UN official to state, "Complexity needs to be considered, small is beautiful. With big money you destroy structures."

Choosing new grassroots leadership. Choosing leaders at the community level has traditionally been an ‘elite-captured’ phenomena, with Warlords and economically powerful individuals dominating local informal power structures. However, internationally funded development work has required the democratic election of local leaders in villages and districts to guide local development decisions. The most notable example of this phenomenon is the network of Community Development Councils (CDCs) inside the government’s NSP programme. This fundamental shift in leadership election was achieved through secret ballots. A government official explained this phenomenon:

People always lived in this kind of perception that the leadership of this village is always the elite, the rich man, the commander, the powerful person. And the powerful also lived in an illusion that he is being chosen as leader because the community regards him as a leader. But in many cases, when we run the election, the Warlords or the commanders or the elites found that when it is secret, and communities understood that their voting would not be disclosed, they would automatically vote for someone who is junior, poor, but knowledgeable, or more fair, and honest. ... When they discover that their votes will not be disclosed, it was a good way for them to get rid of these leaders and elites, a good way to get rid of those that they hated to see in the leadership, which is a true democratisation process.

Traditional processes appear to be culturally bound and unable to confront domination and abuse, perhaps most notably for the marginalised in society. However, this is a contentious issue. Some peacebuilding leaders predict that substantial peacebuilding success must rely upon the leadership of the traditional elite leaders.

Civil society success in ownership. The participants shared their ideas regarding the perceived success of Afghan civil society to achieve ownership of peacebuilding. While certainly very limited, there were some notable and encouraging stories of success. For example, one participant highlighted the story of a woman-led human rights

organisation that was attempting to establish an Afghan-led agenda for human rights work. In addition, several watchdog organisations have emerged that focus on themes such as government election processes and levels of transparency and corruption in the public and private sectors. The private sector is also expanding, with successful private colleges and universities meeting a renewed demand for education, and private health clinics addressing the dire health needs of the population. Afghan civil society organisations are also increasing their expertise in training, and are often taking over for international trainers in a variety of sectors. And, as is discussed Chapter 7, Afghan civil society sits ready to lead essential conflict resolution and grassroots healing processes at the community level.

The Struggles of Civil Society to Own Peacebuilding

The story of Afghan ownership at the grassroots level is filled with struggle. The struggle is of such magnitude that some participants rated Afghan civil society as fundamentally separated from the internationally led peacebuilding project in Afghanistan. My study's participants identified at least four areas of struggle. Civil society: (1) continues to be consistently excluded from peacebuilding processes; (2) remains unfamiliar with advocacy and non-violent resistance; (3) has become quite fragmented; and (4) is hindered by individual struggles on the part of civil society leaders.

Civil society's voice is excluded and unheard. It is impossible to have ownership over peacebuilding without also having a voice in what is being done. Thus, as ordinary Afghans in both urban centres and remote communities are provided a voice in shaping the larger peacebuilding project, they will better ensure peacebuilding success

and resist any local insurgency. However, my participants shared how civil society and ordinary Afghans are not realising this desired voice.

‘Democratic’ structures are failing to provide Afghans with a voice.

International intervention actors have prioritised the creation of effective and responsive democratic structures in their governance work. However, these ‘democratic’ elections and structures have consistently obstructed the voice of civil society. A foreign NGO participant outlined how corruption, power and closed-door politics, and grassroots helplessness excluded most of the population from any real political involvement.

Grassroots civil society and NGOs are finding it difficult, and impossible in many cases, to engage with the Afghan government. A leading civil society leader explained as follows:

Work for civil society organisations in the current situation is very difficult. There is no positive policy in the government to encourage civil society or to engage them in a lot of the issues that they need. ... Believe me there is a lot of very professional people who are working in the civil society, we are honest people, committed people to democracy, to humans rights, to good governance. They can provide government with very good advice, very good recommendations, but unfortunately there is no capacity in the government to listen to such advice or recommendations, or accept their support.

For example, an NGO official described how difficult it was to influence and communicate with the Afghan parliament regarding the national budget. Instead of achieving any real influence over government policy and practice, civil society organisations are feeling the pinch of unacceptable government control over their actions.

One participant outlined the undemocratic nature of current government structures:

But the present government wants that everything should come under the government, and the government like a dictator, controls everybody, and nobody should be able to talk and should not have the right to work, that sort of thing.

An Afghan civil society leader brought up another important point regarding governmental accountability:

But Karzai is all of the time negotiating with major players here in the international community. Whether that is for electoral reforms, or whether that is for peace and reintegration, whether that is for the results of the elections. So basically every time he does it we Afghans are dispossessed of the ownership of these things. That is a big problem.

As the Afghan leaders focus their negotiations upon the international interveners instead of civil society, the government moves away from an effective democracy where it responds to their constituent's wishes.

Civil society's voice in the overarching peacebuilding architecture. The participants from civil society complained that their voices were not considered at the strategic-planning level of the overall peacebuilding mission. A civil society leader highlighted that little room is given to “NGOs to give input and to know about the process, about the findings, about the issues” in upper-level planning structures and that the government wields “veto power.”

The participants gave several examples of exclusion. A foreign embassy representative believed that the members of the High Peace Council held civil society in “disdain.” Moreover, an NGO director believed the token civil society representatives on this important Council were handpicked by Council leaders, dominated and, ultimately, muted by them. Another civil society leader shared how no civil society representatives were invited to an important conference governing extractive activities (e.g. mining) despite the fact that civil society organisations were promised a role in the initial planning. Others interviewees mentioned the constant fight to have a seat at other key planning events.

Rather, the government and international donors tend to see NGOs and other civil society organisations as service providers and project implementation partners as opposed to key actors in advocacy and in ensuring accountability. Further, civil society organisations are viewed as competitors to the government in the international funding competition. Thus, the government perceives them as a key obstacle to achieving Afghan ownership over peacebuilding activities. As such, the Afghan government's peacebuilding ventures often ignore knowledgeable, capable, and expert members of civil society such as academics.

'Local-Local' exclusion. Richmond (2009a) identifies a number of levels within local civil society. The bottom tier he labels 'local-local', which are those groups and individuals excluded from an active role in organised civil society. The participants also identified groups that were not given a voice, even within civil society itself. Two civil society directors described how the poor in rural villages continued to remain powerless and unable to influence development decisions dictated to them by the village elites on local development councils.

Two factors are further complicating the situation for 'local-local' Afghans. The ever-worsening security situation makes it difficult for any organisation to travel beyond the confines of major urban centres and extend its programming to the most needy. Also, large segments of the rural population continue to struggle with grinding poverty and were "simply too busy trying to feed themselves and survive" (Afghan NGO director).

Civil society remains unfamiliar with advocacy and non-violent demonstration. A couple of participants noted that even after ten years of foreign governance work and civil society assistance the Afghan people still remain unfamiliar

and/or uncomfortable with advocacy, lobbying, and civil demonstration and resistance. While surely a telltale sign of a young democracy, one older participant claimed that many Afghans currently view advocacy as the job of foreigners, as evidenced by the predominantly foreign presence at many advocacy-planning meetings.

Some participants suggested at least three reasons for Afghan dissonance with advocacy and demonstration. First, because of the dominant and prominent role that NGOs have played in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion in 1979, civil society has become primarily linked to the development and service delivery activities of NGOs, both local and international. Thus, NGOs are considered to be the primary players within civil society to the detriment of any sort of broader civil society development. This intense focus on service delivery as opposed to advocacy has, by necessity, required many NGOs to become subservient to the requirements of donors, the Afghan government, and the insurgency in some parts of the country. The Afghan government has imposed stringent regulations upon NGOs, and the threat of revoking or refusing registration with the government is a constant concern. One leading NGO director stated that NGOs had become “soft targets” for the government in unfair taxation policies and unnecessary expectations. In parts of the country controlled by the insurgent groups, NGOs are sometimes used as pawns in order to buy or coerce the compliance of the local population. An NGO director had the following to say:

It seems that the Taliban, for PR purposes wants to show communities that they are in control of the area and at their goodwill NGOs can operate or not operate. And it has more to do with the Taliban relationship with the community than the NGO. The NGO is viewed as a service provider that will provide services that are good, but if the community doesn't cooperate, the Taliban will stop the NGO from working to punish the community as opposed to punishing the NGO.

Second, the Afghan government remains opposed to criticism emerging from civil society, and has sometimes threatened direct retaliation against such criticisms. While perhaps a normal phenomenon in many political contexts, the fragility of the Afghan political context exaggerates the severity of such threats faced by civil society actors. One civil society leader told stories of receiving threatening phone calls from the President's Office and from a government Minister.

Third, there exists a fear that any sort of civil society-led demonstration or resistance will be co-opted by violent people resulting in destruction and chaos. There was a distinct frustration in the voices of some participants who had witnessed the civil movements occurring in Tunisia and Egypt on TV, yet who realised that a similar, largely non-violent movement was unlikely to occur in Afghanistan. They pointed to evidence that insurgent groups would infiltrate demonstrations and turn them into violent affairs. Thus, demonstrations can serve the self-interests of the insurgency as opposed to the wider civil society. An NGO director raised one more concern regarding mass demonstrations. He perceived that the Afghan people did not trust the international community to protect them in case the local government or local powerbrokers were to use violence to quell the demonstrations.

The fragmentation of civil society. A couple of participants were sceptical of significant civil society ownership over the peacebuilding process in the short term because of its fragmented nature in Afghanistan. Despite the emergence of several coordinating bodies and NGOs within civil society (e.g. Afghanistan Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), Afghan NGO Coordination Bureau (ANCB), Afghanistan Civil Society Forum Organisation (ACSFO), Afghan Women's Network (AWN),

amongst others), one civil society leader pointed out difficulties in broader coordination and decision-making in civil society:

You can easily get into all sorts of trouble, not being clear about things, and just going in every direction. So it can be difficult sometimes - very easily hijacked. And you spend hours and hours talking and nothing really happens in the end because there cannot be an agreement. People have different perspectives and usually they don't have this executive decision-making mechanism, where you try to agree on things but you don't have 100 percent shared comprehension of the problems and an understanding of them, the way you should go.

These problems are surely not isolated to the Afghan context but can be witnessed across the globe.

The participants gave structural and contextual reasons for the fragmentation of civil society. Structurally, one NGO official stated that the break-up of civil society was feeding off of the international community's disjointed structure and ad-hoc programming. Specifically, competition over international money and resources had created division within Afghan civil society. And, as mentioned earlier, the dominance of internationally funded NGOs within civil society is making it difficult for groups with other mandates to emerge as leaders and coordinators.

Contextually, unity amongst the various ethnic populations in Afghanistan seemed a distant dream for several participants. The pain of war abuses is still fresh in the communal memory, which at this point is hindering the development of a national identity, a sense of nationalism, and is instead prolonging destructive division. One UN official doubted the emergence of any short-term unity unless based on financial or development benefits for the population.

Struggles and hope at the personal level. This next section drives down the discussion of civil society struggles to the personal level. The participants talked about

the social-psychological struggles experienced and addressed by civil society and its leaders. Rather than feeling entirely pessimistic, interviewees also identified social traits of Afghan people, which will serve them well on the future road toward peace and development.

Social-psychological struggles. The residue of war includes significant social wounding and damaged social processes. The participants identified at least four destructive social struggles that need to be addressed by Afghans on the journey toward increased ownership of peacebuilding. First, a couple of participants identified the adoption of a victim mentality as a key concern. A civil society leader believed that victimisation has permeated all levels of society, and was largely based on the pervasive perceptions of foreign agendas at work within Afghanistan. Second, years of conflict have eroded trust levels in Afghan society. In regards to Afghan ownership, a foreign NGO director believed that it would be difficult for an Afghan to presume top-leadership over project-work in his NGO since s/he would face suspicion and accusations of mismanagement, even if entirely untrue. Third, a lingering fear is palpable in society according to some participants. The constant threat of attack from the insurgency and the growing realisation of Taliban power is unsettling the lives of most Afghans, even in relatively 'secure' urban centres. Fourth, continuing ethnic division and uneasiness is proving to be a major barrier to advances in Afghan ownership. Government Ministries and Departments still face continual accusations of ethnic-based hiring and policy formation. According to a government official, there also remains considerable social tension amongst the wider population in terms of language (Dari vs. Pashto) and ethnic identification.

Hope in the Afghan people. There remains significant hope amongst Afghanistan's civil society leaders that they can achieve peacebuilding success. The participants noted areas of hope and necessary social direction. First, Afghans must shed any victim identities they possess, take hold of inherent responsibilities, and move towards addressing 'outsider' agendas. A government official argued that, while outside intervention and invasion have certainly shaped the Afghan social narrative, foreigners couldn't be blamed for all of their problems. Second, participants observed that civil society leaders and the Afghan people displayed an intense and entrepreneurial work ethic, were committed to the tasks set before them, and were generally eager to participate in the peacebuilding project. Foreign peacebuilding leaders outlined how their Afghan counterparts were eager to learn, carefully observed how tasks are conducted, and followed instructions carefully. Third, two foreign participants were enthralled with the 'Afghan spirit'. They had each encountered numerous Afghan leaders who they considered true heroes and heroines, who were people who had excelled in peacebuilding despite cultural, gender, or security barriers.

Fourth, numerous participants expressed hope in the youth and emerging leaders of Afghanistan. In particular they believed that the post-2001 focus on educating youth would be central to discrediting destructive and violent social practices, and constructing future change. An older Afghan NGO director and civil society leader stated the following in his story:

If [Afghan youth] are provided with some kind of orientation and capacity building and training and awareness, they can be totally a different generation and leading the country in a different way. But, if they are not given these opportunities, they will copy us. Again with the same temptations, the same competitions, and the same behaviours. So the hope is for the new generation.

A foreign NGO director corroborated this point as follows:

There is a whole new generation of younger men and woman who really do think; they know that they do not want to repeat the past. And as soon as they get into positions of authority and power and responsibility, they will do things differently. And it is already happening. So that is my hope, that they don't fall party to the same mistakes that the others did.

For most of these participants, education was seen as critical for building effective leadership, in developing critical thinking skills, and as motivation in crossing the ethnic divide.

As such, the participants viewed progress in leadership development as a long-term affair. One Afghan participant did not expect the benefits of his peacebuilding work to be evident until the next generation. A foreign NGO official warned that the international community must “wait for what organically will happen to happen.” There was also a sense that Afghan society was waiting for the ‘old guard’ to die off.

Dilemmas Facing Key Civil Society Actors

The participants’ discussion of civil society ownership of the peacebuilding process quickly narrowed in on several key actors such as local NGOs, women and women’s groups, traditional and/or village authorities, religious leaders and groups, the private sector, and anti-government and criminal groups. Each of these actors faced distinct and unique dilemmas that could determine levels of ownership.

Local NGOs. Disproportionate donor attention has propped up local NGOs as the primary face of civil society in Afghanistan. Local NGOs are undertaking major peacebuilding project-work, and are transforming and developing into large-scale implementing partners for international organisations. As alluded to earlier the current role played by many local NGOs creates a dilemma. The participants believed that local

NGOs had settled for ‘contractor’ status as opposed to ‘partner’ status. One civil society leader stated, “They [NGOs] are always seen as a contractor and an implementer of the programmes, never seen as partners.” As such, local NGOs are serving as a convenient arm of international donors to reach into Afghan society and to implement their wishes. Thus, international forces are shaping the organisational DNA of these young and developing organisations.

The same participant believed that this outside influence had pushed “civil society in Afghanistan to become more business oriented”, and out-of-touch with grassroots society and its needs. Thus, a focus on advocacy can quickly fall by the wayside in the push for increased and sustainable international funding. Another side effect of focusing on attaining funding is the increased competition between local NGOs, and a corresponding decrease in coordination and cooperation in some cases.

Women and women’s groups. A couple of participants asked a critical question regarding Afghan ownership; can real Afghan ownership be realised if women are generally excluded from decision making at both the grassroots and upper echelons? They believed this was not the case, which creates a serious dilemma for peacebuilders in Afghanistan who are keen to respect cultural and social norms but who are also dedicated to emancipatory action in regards to Afghan women. Ten years after the 2001 intervention participants still perceived women to be largely excluded from most decision-making structures. For example, men are dominant in both formal and informal justice structures at the village and district level, thus ensuring injustice, suffering, and the exclusion of female clients. A UN official argued that, as a result, the system tacitly condones violence against women by levelling inadequate punishments for male

offenders. A further consequence a male-biased system is that a significant percentage of viable claims remain unreported by women. A similar lack of women's voice is also experience in other peacebuilding sectors such as governance, security, and development, which further contributes to the fragile 'peace' in Afghanistan.

However, advances are being made according to participants. For example, an international UN official observed that:

There is a generation of young Afghan woman, some of them have been educated abroad who are coming back and working for the country. They are a minority but they are taking the lead and they are coming up. ... Woman are coming out in very large numbers and trying to contribute to this peacebuilding process and show the ownership. That is a very new phenomenon that has started - I think very recently, for a few years. And it has gathered momentum extensively over the last one year.

A foreign funding official agreed, and described how she had met many strong Afghan women working diligently for the cause of women. However, the situation is noticeably different in rural areas since women are finding it impossible (or perhaps are unwilling) to venture out in the community as leaders in many cases.

Progress is certainly noticeable at the upper levels. Women are invited to sit on upper-level decision-making bodies and were given a role in negotiations and policy formation. Many government Ministries have developed policies guiding the inclusion of women in their activities. Some women's groups were also active in shaping the current post-2001 constitution and continue to assist in shaping laws affecting human rights, violence against women, and family law.

At the grassroots level progress appears to be slower, however, there is a movement to create 'all-women' CDCs to guide development funding by directly addressing the needs of community women. And, interestingly, there is an active push to

recruit women police officers, which is certainly a challenge given the generally sexist police culture in Afghanistan according to a foreign UN official.

However, these important advances continue to face significant challenges. At the upper levels women are entering into peacebuilding work with a capacity deficit as years of inadequate education, experience, and opportunity have taken their toll. Some participants believed that women appointed onto key decision-making bodies were finding it very difficult to stand up for women's rights. For example, a human rights leader doubted that the women appointed to the High Peace Council would be able to ensure that women's rights were not sacrificed as 'peace' deals are made with the Taliban. Another participant from the UN agreed that making 'peace' with the Taliban was probably going to trump women's basic human needs in negotiations.

Another barrier at the upper-level is the general failure of Afghan leaders (especially in the political arena) to ensure that gender policies move beyond rhetoric and translate into actual progress for women on the ground. A widespread political and social unwillingness to advance the causes of women is also noticeable. A civil society leader summarised the fear: "If the women are outside of the house, who can control them? So it is not possible." Also, a foreign UN official stated that, while many government Ministries had created excellent gender strategies and action plans, it was now time "to get down and get our hands muddy and do the actual work."

At the grassroots level the lingering culture of male dominance continues to be a barrier to gender work. NGOs and other peacebuilding actors are generally unwilling to challenge entrenched beliefs and cultural norms in order to ensure the continuance of their work. For example, one foreign NGO official said that, even if project work was

exclusively aimed at women, her organisation was careful to first gain the approval of male-dominated local leadership and structures in villages and districts. In this way males remain gatekeepers to development activities.

Other resistance stems from women themselves. An Afghan NGO official stated that “women are often not ready to accept the teaching or information about their rights, and they continue to believe they are born to stay in the home, and not have an education.” This unwillingness to change has required creativity on the part of NGO project planners to get their message across. One NGO used role-playing to illustrate its point effectively.

Traditional authorities. An emerging and contentious topic within the international peacebuilding community is the role of traditional authorities such as village/district councils, *Shuras*, and *Jirgas*. These authority structures have traditionally handled the bulk of decision-making at the grassroots level in terms of local politics, local economics and development, conflict resolution and justice, and local culture. Thus, outside intervention actors have found it expedient to utilise these natural authority structures when reaching into rural areas in particular. One foreign UN country director believed that working with community elders was essential to successfully running projects across rural Afghanistan. In some ways the traditional authorities are serving as a key bridge between the informal and formal processes that are currently running parallel and in conflict to each other.

Traditional authorities are key actors in any discussion of eventual Afghan ownership. Even in the face of outside-assisted alternate power structures, or the increasing reach of the central or provincial governments, traditional authorities are

retaining their power and control in the eyes of the people. One prime example of this traditional-central power struggle is the contentious practice of bypassing traditional authorities through the creation of central government-sponsored CDCs for development and other community decision-making. Several participants believed that bypassing traditional authorities was counterproductive in the overall peacebuilding scheme. One international UN official commented:

The traditional dispute resolution mechanisms are most compatible to people's values and how they see their role at the community level. And that the CDCs, which were established pretty much by the international community so that they had predictable interlocutors through international development, these are an artificial construct. These are imposed, they don't have the confidence of the local leaders, and in fact they are very disruptive of the local economy because they come in with a lot of funding, which is more or less artificial. If it is coming from the international community then all of a sudden you have a new economic elite. So people are not turning to the local leaders, they are turning to some 25-year-old development worker working for [an international NGO] working through the CDC, so all of a sudden that is the power-broker in the community. It is unsustainable and unpredictable because these development initiatives come and go, it has nothing to do with the long-term integrity of the community. It is about winning the hearts and minds as it were. And that's a standard phenomenon.

Thus, he argues that, while CDCs may be functional at the current time, they are not sustainable and locally legitimate.

Some organisations, while recognizing the inherent strength of traditional authorities, are responding to their inherent weaknesses in peacebuilding by creating a system of hybrid traditional-peace *shuras*. These peace *shuras* are formed in similar ways to traditional village *shuras*, yet work in the area of conflict resolution in a distinctly different manner. They maintain a focus on mediation as opposed to arbitration, and ensure justice for all including the powerless, the poor, and women.

However, participants pointed out several ways in which compliance with traditional authorities can prevent peacebuilding progress and advances. First, traditional village structures appear to struggle with addressing the domination and silencing of marginalised groups. As mentioned earlier, the predominantly male makeup of most traditional authorities in Afghanistan tends to suppress female voices. Also, one Afghan NGO official believed that traditional structures were biased towards the wealthy, powerful, and influential in rural areas, and that the poor and socially powerless were denied participation and a voice.

Second, traditional authorities were perceived as resistant to externally-inspired changes and new ideas, and were seen as primarily concerned with maintaining the status quo socially, culturally, economically, and politically. This resistance to change poses a distinct dilemma for efforts at Afghan ownership since, in some cases, the status quo leaves many disempowered, in poverty, in suffering, and prone to violent conflict. Wider ownership will be empowering and emancipatory for a broader section of the grassroots, especially for marginalised and alienated groups such as women.

Of particular concern to some participants (both Afghan and foreign) is the apparent dissonance between ‘traditional’ thinking in Afghanistan and ‘democratic’ thinking. A leading Afghan civil society participant gave an example:

In a tribal and traditional mentality you say that my language is the best, my tribe is the best, and everything that I have is the best. While in a democratic society you say that I am the best but the others are also the best. So that is a huge difference. So the difference between these two statements are not mixable, they cannot mix with each other. Because in a tribal mentality, or a traditional mentality, I am the best, I'm the only one who is the best, and nobody else is the best. And the other mentality, the democratic mentality, you have the tolerance - I am the best but the others are also.

He feared that traditional authorities would struggle to encourage the tolerance and inclusiveness required to ensure positive peace in society. This apparent inability to change poses a dilemma for international groups concerned with inserting democratic structures into the Afghan context. The donor community appears to be split, and many donors are struggling to support traditional non-democratic structures.

Religious leaders and groups. The intensely Islamic context of Afghanistan has posed a challenge for the secular and humanistic methodologies of the Western-backed peacebuilding mission. Local and international peacebuilding actors are grappling with the role of Islam in creating a sustainable and contextualised peace. It is becoming clear, as evidenced by a couple of participants' narratives, that activities aimed at increasing Afghan ownership will by necessity require the participation of religious leaders. Religious leaders play key roles at both the upper and grassroots levels. The Ulema Council, composed of 3,000 mullahs from across the country, serves as a guide for Afghan Supreme Court and holds significant sway in determining the legitimacy of political leadership and its decisions across Afghanistan. A UN official commented regarding religious leaders and dispute resolution at the village level:

So if you have known your local Imam for your entire life, say you are 30 years old and this person was there at your birth, you have grown up in this community, you will trust that person to give you equity in these disputes rather than somebody that was appointed from Kabul, has no ties to community, is executing justice in an arbitrary fashion, and likely can be bought-off in the end.

So what roles can Islam and Islamic leaders play in local ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan? First, a foreign UN official argued that religious leaders are now recognised as peacebuilding actors and, as such, are trained as liaisons between the formal and informal sectors, such as in the areas of justice and dispute

resolution. Second, peacebuilding work dealing with political and justice structures and laws needs to focus on apparent compatibilities between international laws and norms and counterpart Sharia laws. As can be imagined, this is a challenge. However, a foreign UN official opined a potential path forward:

What we do in terms of ownership is we try to work out some consensus about the compatibility between international standards and Sharia law. Of course the application of Islamic law here is somewhat controversial. So there are certain foundational documents that we hope to emphasise, which represents more of a consensus of the Islamic world and the international human rights such as the *Cairo Declaration*. The *Cairo Declaration* is generated by Islamic clerics upon review of international conventions, basically looking at what they consider the most relevant for the application of human rights within Islamic contexts. It is highly critiqued too because there are certain things, particularly relating to women's rights that international and Islamic scholars do not necessarily agree upon.

He recognises that the application of Islamic law is controversial, and it cannot be avoided in a context such as Afghanistan.

In a similar fashion, an Afghan participant articulated how his NGO's public reporting in human rights carefully referenced Islamic teachings, and included interviews with respected Islamic scholars to ensure legitimacy amongst Afghans in the face of certain backlash from conservative and extremist religious leaders. He stated how writing human rights reports required careful study of the Koran, the Hadiths of the Prophet Mohammed, and the interpretations of "forward thinking" religious leaders in order to convince the public of the report's validity.

Third, the effects of religious conservatism and extremism need to be countered with more moderate versions of Islam. Some participants discussed their fear that religious conservatism was continuing to dominate socio-cultural and political dynamics in Afghanistan. The most commonly referred to example was women's rights. There is

also the concern regarding the potential return of the Taliban or a Taliban-like group to political power as a result of compromises within current peace negotiations. Their return to power would have many human rights ramifications.

One participant who worked in education believed that lingering conservatism could be countered by nurturing a culture of critical dialogue. He stated that the international community could assist in developing this culture by supporting higher education and the intellectual community. And, finally, in addition to the *Cairo Declaration*, another Afghan government official believed that Islamic leaders and scholars from other parts of the world could come to Afghanistan and discuss their interpretations of Islam and religious practice with Afghan religious leaders. He believed that this may “open up their minds.”

Private sector. The participants were torn regarding the role of the private sector in peacebuilding. They talked about both constructive and destructive elements to its involvement and its affect on the journey towards Afghan ownership. Constructively, the private sector can be an important component of economic development leading to peacebuilding through attracting investment, job creation, economic growth, and poverty reduction. Some UN programming is thus dealing directly with supporting private sector systems leading to self-sustainability. Also, one participant saw the private sector as a potential funding partner for peacebuilding work. Sustainable peace is certainly in the best interest of most commercial interests. Further, the private sector can fill the void created by under-financed and incapable government structures in post-war contexts. For example, one foreign participant described how the Afghan government is currently unable to adequately support Afghanistan’s public hospitals. Thus, health services are

also provided through the private practices of doctors. This does, of course, have a negative side, as some of these services become inaccessible for the poor.

Conversely, many participants were quite critical of private sector involvement in peacebuilding activities. Their criticism revolved around several themes. Underlying their concerns is the fact that Afghanistan remains a war zone with a war-affected economy. In this context the newly established free market has allowed private for-profit companies to conduct work traditionally conducted by the non-governmental sector and civil society. However, some participants argued that the private sector is inappropriately structured and inadequately controlled in this type of context to ensure that it remains a positive peacebuilding presence and is committed to Afghan ownership.

Some interviewees believed private sector peacebuilding work was wasteful and inefficient. One Afghan UN official talked about how private sector work in his area was often pointless and simply done because of contract requirements as opposed to the actual needs in the community. Profits, rather than the best interests of the local community, became the primary concern. Other participants believed that peacebuilding and development contracts given to private companies resulted in immense waste and unnecessary expenses. Profit margins, fees, consultants, and security companies were perceived as eating up the majority of funding money in some major projects.

A couple of participants also noted significant corruption and conflicts of interest within the private sector. They believed that many private companies working on peacebuilding and development contracts were created or bought by government leaders and a small group of wealthy Afghans with ties to the crime industry and, in some cases, the insurgency. They operated in an unfair manner due to corruption, bribery, and the

inappropriate granting of contracts as they continue to profit from the conflict in Afghanistan. Continued profits will obviously reduce any motivations for peacebuilding success.

Anti-government groups and criminal groups. A short discussion is also necessary concerning destructive groups who are vying for ownership of ‘peacebuilding’ activities in governance or development. For example, one civil society official outlined how, in some cases, local communities believed that “local authorities have been more criminal than the Taliban”, thus justifying their apparent support for local Taliban resisters. Widespread dissatisfaction with the government was even creating a situation in some villages and districts where the ‘rule’ of the Taliban was preferred over central government governance.

Criminal groups, mafias, and the drug industry are also key actors when considering potential Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. These criminal groups have created a political voice by buying-off politicians, MPs, and government Ministers. They are also indirectly influencing peacebuilding efforts by successfully muscling their way into a lot of project work through private sector contracting. That is only now being publicly recognised by US military leaders.

Analysis and Discussion

While Chapter 5 explored the ownership of peacebuilding from the point of view of foreign actors in Afghanistan, this chapter summarises the collective voice of participants in terms of ownership of peacebuilding by Afghan groups and individuals. What emerges from the interview narratives are a set of dilemmas that are shaping

current efforts and discussions aimed at increasing Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. In presenting these dilemmas, it is beneficial to start the discussion with two overarching dilemmas that underpin the movement towards Afghan ownership, namely the search for the appropriate government/civil society split in ownership opportunities, and the apparent competition between ‘traditional’ leadership, processes, and practices and post-2001 ‘democratic’ counterparts. Then the discussion delves into government and civil society specific dilemmas that are currently of concern.

Government vs. Civil Society/Grassroots Ownership

A central question grounded in the participants’ words, as reflected in the structuring of this chapter, is “Who should be leading the charge for Afghan ownership, the government or civil society?” I have attempted to limit my researcher bias towards either type of ownership, and instead allow the participants to define which avenue of ownership requires pursuing. This has required a careful reliance upon the interview narratives. A foreign funding official asked:

When you talk about ownership, what is ownership? Is it Karzai? Is it the government? Is it the people in the village? Is it the woman who is not able to go out from her house? There are so many levels in this ownership.

He points out two broad levels of ownership, the government and grassroots levels, each with at least two sub-levels contained within. Thus, Afghan ownership is complex. For example, if President Karzai institutes a policy that is dissonant with his government (a common occurrence in the current milieu of internal dissention) who is and, should be, owning the process? If the government refuses to consider the best interests and voices of its constituents (also a regular occurrence) is it worthy of ownership? If civil society and

the grassroots refuse to consider the voice of women, the poor, and other marginalised groups, are they able to take ownership?

On the one hand government ownership requires an active presence, reach, and the authority and coercion required to govern across its nation. However, localised grassroots/civil society ownership requires that local authority structures are granted and allowed decision making power, are active in local governance, dispute resolution, and the like. However, it is obvious that these two requirements will often collide and are difficult to reconcile.

It seems that future directions of peacebuilding ownership must compromise within a flexible and fluid system of parallel structures and processes, or a division of roles. This is, and will continue to be, a messy affair, with significant conflict and no immediate answers. The key will be to direct the conflict in positive and transformative directions. Active conflict resolution processes and a peacebuilding presence at the community level are required to prevent any violent backlash against the government, and active peacebuilding at the government level can ensure that it is not violent and doesn't suppress the voices of its citizens. Ensuring effective conflict resolution will be an important and difficult task given the war-induced culture of violence so prevalent in Afghanistan. Chapter 7 discusses current attempts at the ongoing cultural transformation aimed at forging a positive peace in Afghanistan.

Traditional vs. Democratic Leadership and Processes

The decision between traditional leaders and processes and democratic leaders and processes to lead the ownership of peacebuilding, while certainly related to the previous section, has its own unique dilemmas. Traditional structures rely on communal

leadership selection processes based on gender, age, tribe affiliation, history of leadership, community standing, and reputation. Traditional processes are understood, and considered legitimate by the majority of the Afghan population, giving any peacebuilding activity supported by traditional leadership a distinct advantage in achieving local ownership. On the other hand, democratic structures are individualistic, and are accepting of any member of the community despite wealth, gender, or community standing. This sort of democratic process is achieved to a large extent in Afghanistan through secret ballots to fill community leadership positions. Democratic leadership selection empowers each individual in the community with the right to choose in contrast to the assumed submission to the 'dictates' of a select few in traditional processes. Community members are able to choose alternative, younger, and forward thinking leaders willing to make revolutionary changes, and bar strongmen such as Warlords from leadership positions. However, democratic leadership structures are not sustainable, and will struggle to gain a foothold in ownership in the wider community over the long term.

The post-2001 intervention community is intensely interested in injecting into Afghanistan new social and political cultures that are more aligned with the modern world system where democracy enjoys supremacy. However, in the process, the international community has appeared to be two-faced since they have been unwilling to commit whole-heartedly to one peacebuilding 'route'. While the international community has rhetorically insisted on democratic peacebuilding processes and leadership selection, its actions are often contradictory. It has left open to non-democratic appointment the most powerful regional positions such as provincial governors. Moreover, it has

supported the placement of numerous Warlords into the most powerful central government positions. It has also provided authority to traditional leadership structures to implement the most important of their programming such as the High Peace Council or the Peace and Reintegration Programme that aims to disarm and reintegrate Taliban fighters from rural areas.

The unwillingness of the international community to commit was frustrating for several participants. Afghanistan has only realised a 'shell' of democracy based on national elections, elected parliamentarians and officials, which remains void of political meaning and largely fails to be representative of the Afghan people (Richmond & Franks, 2007). Rather this 'shell' is filled with political meaning by other means, such as traditional structures, informal structures, a ruling powerful elite or, arguably, the international community. Thus, the 'proper' democratic procedures are followed with results that make them appear pointless. The average person in Afghanistan feels distinctly disconnected and voiceless inside of this 'shell'. It is disconcerting that after ten years of effort and billions of dollars in international assistance many Afghans do not feel they have political voice.

Again, creative solutions leading to balance and compromise are necessary. Based on the interview narratives, I believe that many participants were awaiting a more pure democracy, one where appointed leaders were removed and replaced by elected officials. This renewed effort at democracy would also ensure that elected officials truly were responsive to their constituents. Central to these efforts is the necessity to effectively deal with the 'Warlord' problem. Another difficulty lies in resisting the urge to institutionalise informal traditional processes and extract them from grassroots control. It is possible that

models may emerge from the ‘Arab Spring’ movements across North Africa and the Middle East that may illustrate how communal action can support individual rights.

The Dilemmas of Government Ownership

The struggle of the Afghan government to own peacebuilding seems to revolve around four key issues: (1) inadequate capacity; (2) debilitating corruption; (3) allowing Warlords to be politicians; and (4) inadequate legitimacy.

What does capacity mean? The participants made it clear that low capacity was a significant factor in the struggle to achieve government ownership over peacebuilding. The participants believed that many Afghan government officials were struggling to meet the requirements of modern structures as envisioned by international interveners and funders. Thus, a noticeable number of successful leaders in Afghanistan were educated in foreign universities and/or were trained by foreign peacebuilding leaders. Yet, is a foreign-based skill set and institutional culture necessary for the successful establishment of governance in Afghanistan? The possibility certainly exists that locally developed and appropriate skills are being suppressed and ignored. A further discussion of this issue occurs in Chapter 8.

Corruption. The participants insisted that corruption is breaking the back of the movement towards Afghan ownership. For example, several participants proposed that increased Afghan ownership rested on the willingness of international funders to channel increased funding through the government route. In this peacebuilding leaders are facing a real dilemma; how can control and authority be handed over to a corrupt group or leader in the name of Afghan ownership? External funders and other peacebuilding officials are having to choose between ensuring a real voice for their Afghan

counterparts, and maintaining a strict and transparent programme of operation that involves ‘strings attached’ approaches, a reluctance to hand over control, and stifling control of Afghan leadership. Through this, the international community may simply be reaffirming themselves as the primary channel for accountability as opposed to the Afghan people. As such, efforts at expanding Afghan ownership over peacebuilding at upper-levels may result in little if any increase in ownership at the grassroots level.

The above situation is very awkward for both the international community and its Afghan government counterparts. Many opportunities have been missed to ensure transparent, accountable, and democratic government systems. The propping up of Warlords as political partners by the international community, combined with the massive injection of aid money, has ensured that a culture of corruption has become entrenched. It is very difficult to transform entrenched political cultures, yet political transformation must be a priority for the international community in the current scramble to exit the country.

Warlords as leaders and politicians. Ex-Mujahideen fighters and commanders and former Warlords are posted into some of the countries most senior political positions, mostly through appointment or by other non-democratic means. Following the 2001 expulsion of the Taliban, the international community and the Afghan power-elites justified the placement of ‘former’ Warlords into positions of power to address the threat posed by armed militias and to quickly stabilise the country. However, these Warlords-cum-politicians have created a difficult situation. The legitimacy of both the government and the international community has suffered,

as the general population feels generally excluded from political processes such as leadership selection.

Improving the political situation will be difficult. Removing and replacing Warlords through democratic means may result in the rearming of local militias and renewed ethnic-based regional violence. Thus, their removal would require a heavy-handed international military intervention, which is unlikely given the intensity and troop loss required for such an operation, and the increasing pace of troop withdrawal and transition across Afghanistan. One participant believed that only solution was to simply wait for the Warlords to die off in old age.

Development of the government. The capacity gap is requiring significant efforts from the international community in developing the Afghan government. However, the government has certainly not shied away from demanding increased ownership over its mandate, and has insisted on a transition timeline that appears aggressive and perhaps rushed to international advisors, which leads to a difficult dilemma. Should government institutions hold limited ownership until that point in time when a minimum threshold of capacity is attained? Or should increased ownership be allowed to initiate needed capacity building as government leaders are empowered to hone their skills and policies through trial and error? The limited routing of international funding through government structures certainly hints at current strategies but, on the other hand, the government has been unable to effectively spend much of what has been provided to it thus far. It is interesting to note that a couple of participants believed that the most significant surge in government capacity and peacebuilding success would occur once the large volumes of international aid starts to dry up.

The Dilemmas of Civil Society Ownership

Civil society in Afghanistan is struggling with a crisis of identity; its peacebuilding strategy and focus does not align with needed civil society priorities. While certainly shaped by massive international funding and the organisational requirements of acting as implementing partner for international organisations, civil society has chosen a path of service provision as an arm of the international community into the Afghan context. Service provision is an obvious and necessary activity given the widespread impoverishment, hunger, and health concerns of citizens, and civil society has excelled in many cases, conducting quality and essential work in no way matched by government counterparts handicapped by incessant civil war. However, several participants argued that times were changing, and that government development, albeit inadequate, required new roles for civil society and the elevation of non-NGO segments to positions of increased prominence. Of central concern to these participants was the deficit of advocacy and activism within civil society to act as a watchdog and counterweight to government policy and activities.

Afghan civil society is perceived as disconnected from the wider grassroots because of current activities and international funding. Elevated salaries, and hanging out in the company of elite actors, are detrimental to the attempts of civil society actors to speak for many Afghans such as rural populations. This disconnection has also reduced the opportunities for civil society movements leading to change in Afghanistan, particularly when combined with a plethora of other debilitating factors such as a culture of violence, the presence of an active insurgency, and the widespread scarring of war.

An active civil society is urgently needed in Afghanistan. People are hungry for positive peace (and will even settle for negative peace, or the absence of direct violence), and are frustrated that a select few is ruining the chances of sustained peace. The international community and the government have started to lay the framework for the realisation of positive peace. However, at the current time, they both appear to have reached a stalemate with the entrenched and pervasive anti-government and anti-peacebuilding resistance movement. Hard as it may be, any noticeable progress from this point forward may need to emerge from within civil society and the grassroots. Progress will require: (1) brave and visionary leaders; (2) a fierce commitment to democracy; (3) a deep reliance upon informal and traditional structures and wisdom; (4) a re-envisioned commitment to those who have been excluded from civil society decision making processes; (5) a willingness to submit to, and partner with, government structures when needed and appropriate, and (6) a well-thought out and reserved relationship with the international community that relies not so much on their funding as their ability to protect and build up local capacity.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored Afghan ownership of peacebuilding from the perspectives of both the Afghan government and Afghanistan's civil society. While both the government and civil society face a long difficult journey towards authentic ownership, the journey is necessary. Sustainability, effectiveness, and the reach of peacebuilding efforts depend on the transfer of ownership away from the international community. However, the realisation of peacebuilding ownership is complex and, in particular, participants discussed who should own peacebuilding, the government or

elements of civil society. They commented on the oppositional and often dissonant relationship between the two, and concluded that both groups were essential actors in any future peacebuilding activities, which justifies the empowerment of both groups towards ownership of the peacebuilding process.

The discussion to this point has been somewhat general. Therefore, Chapter 7 narrows in on one particular area of peacebuilding ownership, namely the role of both top-down and bottom-up peacebuilding processes in working towards a locally owned sense of peace and justice.

Chapter 7 - The Dilemmas of Afghan Ownership of Reconciliation, Conflict

Resolution, and Justice

Introduction

One of the primary goals of the massive peacebuilding intervention process in Afghanistan is sustainable peace. One sub-section of the overall peacebuilding enterprise addresses this goal directly, namely project work aimed at reconciliation, conflict resolution, and justice. This chapter aims to narrow in on this sector, and explore the possibility of Afghan ownership over these types of projects. As in Chapter 6, a distinct division of labour is identified in this sector that spans the upper-level/grassroots divide. Elite upper-level processes in Afghanistan are primarily the activities of the High Peace Council (HPC) and the reintegration work of the Afghanistan Peace and Reconciliation Programme (APRP). As top-down processes of the upper-level elites, these two processes are first and foremost interested in achieving some sort of agreement with the Taliban and its constituent fighters to end the direct violence suffered by the Afghan population. Grassroots bottom-up peace and reconciliation activities are much more ad hoc and small scale, and are focused on community conflict resolution, peace education, and in addressing the predominant culture of violence.

As will become clear, the upper-level/grassroots axis also serves to highlight competing conceptions of peace in Afghanistan. Upper-level processes are not so concerned with achieving justice, rather they utilise a strategy of providing immunity to Taliban fighters to gather them into the peace process. Conversely, civil society participants are much more concerned with achieving justice, and cannot envision any other sort of sustainable peace in Afghanistan without first venturing down the difficult

path of vindicating victims and by providing appropriate retribution to perpetrators. And, as discussed in Chapter 6, the international community plays an awkward role since it is funding and supporting activities on both tracks. Thus, it is important to consider their role and self-interests, and how they are affecting the ability of Afghan actors to choose a direction for peace and reconciliation work based on local conceptions of peace.

To this end, this chapter first explores upper-level peace and reconciliation processes and the participant's critique of their outcomes. As such the section is particularly interested in perceptions of the future role of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The next section turns its attention to grassroots peace and reconciliation work, summarises what sorts of peace and reconciliation activities are being attempted, and describes the barriers these efforts face.

Upper-level Peace Processes

In 2010 a distinct change of rhetoric and practice was noticeable in upper-level efforts at peacebuilding. While the majority of post-2001 peacebuilding activity was exclusive of any Taliban voice in peacebuilding processes, post-2010 peacebuilding is aiming to re-open discussions with the Taliban and 'bring them into the fold' as it were. For example, there appears to have been some feeble (but largely unsuccessful) attempts to include some Taliban leaders in discussions at the December 2011 Bonn Conference on Afghanistan. The attempted inclusion is a dramatic change of face for the international community who, by following U.S. leadership, had previously banned any contact between international peacebuilding organisations and 'terrorist' organisations.

Prominent Peace Processes

Two major initiatives currently make up the upper-level peace process in Afghanistan namely the activities of the HPC, and APRP. Afghan tribal, religious and political leaders commissioned the HPC at the June 2010 national 'Peace *Jirga*'. The *Jirga* is comprised of seventy Afghan leaders and elders who are tasked with developing a framework and strategy for talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. The HPC was given substantial international funding. According to one participant, the HPC sees its mandate as mediating between the Taliban and the government and international community. To this end the HPC has sent delegations to Guantanamo, Cuba to make connections with Taliban detainees there as well as working towards removing Taliban leadership from international terrorist blacklists. Further, they are currently working towards opening up an office for the Taliban in Turkey so that other parties can easily access them.

The APRP is a major overarching 'peace' strategy of the Afghan government and the international community that lays out a framework for reintegrating former Taliban fighters into local communities, and develops strategies to lure Taliban fighters away from their militancy with employment opportunities and financial incentives. The APRP, too, develops strategies for political discussions with Taliban leadership. As a government-led process, the APRP is intended to continue on with the work of the UN-led Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) established in 2003 to undertake disbandment, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes for the post-2001 Afghan militias. Its mandate has since evolved into efforts aimed at the 'Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups' (DIAG), weapons destruction, and continuing DDR activities.

The APRP is based on the belief that the Afghan insurgency can be quelled through providing employment and involving current and potential anti-government fighters in development programming. An Afghan government participant believed that peacebuilding must carefully ensure that development and security initiatives “go in parallel” in order to curb the Taliban tide. A UN official substantiated and illustrated how the provision of employment had drawn many anti-government fighters away from the insurgency. It is interesting to note that the only positive comments came from participants involved directly in these processes.

The Critique of Upper-Level Peace Processes

The participants in this study were quite critical, however, of current efforts at achieving ‘upper-level’ peace. Their critique ran deep, and outweighed any positive comments regarding upper-level peace processes. The critiques highlighted by participants emerged from all sectors and at all levels. However, non-governmental actors were the most critical. At least four concerns were raised: (1) the difficulty in identifying who the fractured Taliban is; (2) a lack of local ownership over upper-level peace processes; (3) pre-meditated process failure because of self- and/or political interests; and (4) the peace process’ vulnerability to corruption, impunity, and an absence of rule of law.

Who are the Taliban? The Afghan people are increasingly finding it difficult to define who the Taliban is. One Afghan participant exclaimed:

When you say peace with Taliban, who are the Taliban? Has the Afghan government been able to determine which people are Taliban? Taliban are everywhere. Every single day when something goes wrong, when there is a suicide attack, somebody calls and they introduce themselves as a Taliban speaker. So you have tens of Taliban groups. Who are they

making peace with? And the next question, what is the guarantee that the Peace Council will talk to the right people?

The Taliban movement is fractured due to international and government repression, and has splintered into several groups on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, as well as into several related, but non-Taliban, anti-government groups. Major Pakistan-based groups such as the ‘Quetta *Shura*’ and the ‘Peshawar *Shura*’ are believed to be more ideologically based, randomly destructive, responsible for the majority of destructive suicide bombings, and beyond the control of the Afghan people. Afghanistan-based groups were perceived as responding more to grievances against the Afghan government, having local community support, and having distinct political objectives in Afghanistan.

The fragmentation of the Taliban poses a distinct difficulty for the Afghan government and the international community. Of primary concern is reaching the Taliban groups that are situated inside Pakistani territory. The APRP is largely unable to reach Taliban fighters that are situated in Pakistan. This lack of reach forces other players into the game such as the Pakistani Intelligence Services (ISI), which is generally considered by Afghans to be a destructive influence in Afghan affairs. Yet, the HPC claims that it has been accessing Taliban leaders inside of Pakistan.

The façade of local ownership of peace processes. This study’s participants accused both the HPC and the APRP of lacking any meaningful Afghan ownership, albeit in different ways. The primary complaint in regards to ownership of the activities of the HPC centred on the apparent exclusion of any civil society voice on the HPC. While there are HPC members representing civil society and also women, they are not perceived as having an adequate voice in raising grassroots concerns. A foreign embassy participant

stated, “You have a handful of Warlords who dominate the executive committee and make all the decisions.” An Afghan NGO official too believed that a small core group on the HPC broadly excluded civil society members. Another Afghan NGO official believed that civil society representatives on the HPC were handpicked to ensure their limited involvement. Thus, there was a distinct concern amongst participants that any agreements made by the HPC with the Taliban would counter the wishes and best interests of the wider grassroots population in Afghanistan.

An even deeper absence of Afghan ownership was noted with regards to the APRP. A foreign embassy participant described how foreign embassy personnel had largely designed the APRP, and then packaged it for the Afghan public as an Afghan-designed programme. He stated, “That program is a silly one I have to say, if I'm being completely frank here, yes, it is not Afghan, it's a façade of Afghan ownership.” He also described how granting blanket amnesty for Taliban fighters, many of whom may have committed murder and other atrocities against the Afghan people, was avoiding any sense of ownership (and justice of course) for the grassroots Afghan population. He asserted, “There are millions of people here who have suffered from 30 years [of war]. They should be writing that policy, not [some young guy from a foreign embassy].” This sort of foreign control over policy design is disconcerting when taken alongside other participants’ comments regarding the ineffective “textbook” foreign strategies that fail to “address the real situation” and reveals a lack of “deeper understanding” (Afghan government participant).

The High Peace Council is designed to fail. Several participants believed that the HPC was subject to premeditated failure for a couple of reasons. First, participants

doubted that a HPC dominated by ‘former’ Warlords would be able to garner the trust of Taliban counterparts in order to achieve meaningful advances in peace. In some cases these Warlords were the direct enemies of the Taliban during their conquest of Afghanistan during the mid-1990s. For example, the former head of the HPC, Burhanuddin Rabbani was the representative of the Northern Alliance and interim president of Afghanistan when the Taliban conquered Kabul in 1996. His forces killed many Taliban, and are purported to have committed many atrocities against them. A human rights official questioned the wisdom of his appointment as leader of the HPC:

I don't want to sound sympathetic to the Taliban, but if you want peace and there is a Council established, is it smart of you to pick as the head of the Council somebody who was fighting against the Taliban for almost 6 years [Former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani]? Is it smart? Does that make sense to you when there are millions of people in Afghanistan, [Karzai] will pick that one person? Will the Taliban make peace with them?

His comments are certainly amplified and validated by Rabbani’s subsequent assassination by the Taliban on September 20, 2011.

Other participants believed that the self-interests of HPC members would block any sort of meaningful success. An Afghan NGO official believed that current HPC members could never muster the confidence and trust required for any peace deal or power-sharing agreement given the dominance of self-interested Warlords who have positioned themselves throughout all levels of Afghan government. He stated, “They are Warlords, they are not peacemakers. Their best interests are served in an unstable Afghanistan.” A foreign military participant believed that President Karzai was closely controlling peace negotiations, and is prepared to trump any HPC decision in order to ensure that his interests and tribal affiliations and concerns are cared for. An Afghan

government official believed that underneath the conciliatory public ‘talk’ by members lurked deep divisions that would ultimately lead to back room conspiring, sabotage, and ultimately peace process failure.

Vulnerability to corruption, impunity, and the absence of rule of law. Several of the

participants believed that upper-level peace processes were particularly susceptible to corruption, and ironically could serve as a deterrent to sustainable peace. As was discussed earlier, identifying whom the Taliban are is difficult and ambiguous, which makes it very difficult (and probably impossible) to deal directly with representatives of the overall Taliban movement. Three participants used the same story as evidence to illustrate this point. They shared that a shopkeeper from Quetta, Pakistan had recently met with representatives from the international community and had convinced them that he was a Taliban leader with influence. He was believed, given a significant amount of money, and then returned to his home, from where he revealed that he was just a shopkeeper who had swindled the international community.

Other stories were shared of insurgent fighters who would submit their weapons before winter, receive their benefits, only to rejoin the fighters for the spring fighting ‘season’.

A primary request of the HPC has been the release of detainees accused of insurgency crimes. An Afghan participant working for a peacebuilding NGO questioned the wisdom of releasing detainees from prison:

The government started to release some Taliban members from the detention centres and asked the High Peace Council to review [their cases]. The idea is good, it is good to follow-up the cases and see who is innocent and release them. But there are questions. First, why did you keep the innocent people for this long in the detention centre? Who is guilty for this? They also have to be asked why you kept innocent people

in the jail for this long? But if they are not really innocent people then why are you trying to release them? I mean, somebody here is guilty. And in order to help local Afghans to understand that you are promoting rule-of-law in the country [find out the truth]. Otherwise they are disrespecting the police in Afghanistan - they are doing a good job if they are arresting terrorists and putting them in the detention centre - nobody has the right to ask for their release. So there are a lot of problems.

He also believed that these types of activities are difficult to separate from personal and political interests, difficult to monitor, and mostly lack any sort of transparency.

Reintegration programming is struggling with similar issues, and in particular the granting of amnesty to insurgent for past criminal activities. The same Afghan NGO official shared his story as follows:

There are many cases where people say, for example, someone gives a gun to the DDR program, they receive some money for the gun, and then after a few months, for example ISAF, the coalition forces they arrest the guy in the front line and as soon as they arrest him, he shows them this letter of impunity. In this way you cannot implement a reintegration program. It needs strong monitoring when you reconcile someone, when you reintegrate someone, and you have to see if the guy is really living as a normal Afghan citizen.

An Afghan human rights official believed that offering amnesty destroyed the legitimacy of attempts at peacebuilding in the eyes of local Afghans. He believed that basic human rights principles were violated in these processes:

On the other hand if it is not based on principles and core human rights values, it simply furthers impunity and the absence of rule of law, and everybody could live very easily as Taliban and enjoy impunity and enjoy not to be persecuted by security or legal and judiciary organs. ...For example what we heard from one commission was that over 10,000 Taliban and former Hesbi-Islami fighters were absorbed and joined the commission. So we asked of them one simple question, please show us one village that enjoys peace or is calm and peaceful after absorbing these 10,000 Taliban.

These types of activities were void of many key conflict resolution activities, and were attempting to buy off fighters without addressing many of the key grievances that will have driven them to the insurgency in the first place.

‘Upset Brothers’ or ‘Enemies’? – The Inclusion of Taliban Leaders in Government

While the international community has carefully labelled the post-2001 Taliban as clear enemies and terrorists, President Karzai has at times labelled them with the meaningful term ‘upset brothers’. This designation is certainly a political message, that the Taliban have legitimate political aspirations behind their violent front. This message is a complete reversal of their strict exclusion from the December 2001 Bonn Agreement processes.

Justification for Taliban involvement. One Afghan participant involved in the upper-level peace process made the case that the Taliban should be allowed into the Afghan political structure and process and given status as a party. He compared the Taliban to other religion-based parties in other countries:

So what the Taliban does is they try to get the recognition of a political party. And they are in fact a political party. So we should treat them as one of the political parties. Even if it is fundamental or whatever, but it is a political party. Every country has a Christian party, a Labour Party. Like in Germany there is a religious party, a Christian party, a social Democrat, different kind of parties. So we should have the same. The Taliban are a group of people who want to be active and participate in the peace and stability in this country, they want to be recognised as a political party - why not - if we have a communist [party] here, why not a religious party too. And then the people’s opinions, how do they decide, should they go to the right or left, or none. They will choose between.

He believed that any stability in Afghanistan relied on their political inclusion, and that civil war could only be averted through the provision of power and opportunity for them in government structures. His arguments resonated with the words of a couple of other

Afghan participants who, when viewing post-Soviet Afghan history, believed that the Taliban had provided a credible respite from the chaos and destruction of the Mujahideen wars in the early 1990s that destroyed so much of Kabul. He was willing to overlook the Taliban's previous abuses in the name of stability. In a related example a foreign NGO official believed that the Taliban's protection of Bin Laden and Al Qaeda in the lead up to the 2001 coalition invasion was based on norms of protection and hospitality, in a similar example to Afghanistan's protection of Nazi soldiers who had fled the fight in Russia during WWII in the face of international demands to hand them over.

These (perhaps surprising) statements should spur on intense dialogue regarding the Taliban's political role as the Taliban continues to strengthen its operations, and appears to be moving ever closer to political power of some sort.

Caution against political inclusion for the Taliban. Despite the calls for Taliban inclusion raised in the previous section, by far the majority of participants who addressed the topic were sceptical of and quite opposed to a return to Taliban control over Afghanistan. They insisted that inviting the Taliban into power was venturing down a destructive path for several reasons. An Afghan civil society leader believed that "you cannot change their mentality," and that inclusion would produce difficulty for Afghans. Another Afghan NGO official feared that the Taliban would establish their political control following the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2014, which would likely make it impossible for him to continue his advocacy work. He believed his work would prove virtually impossible in a non-democratic state. He along with another participant believed that the Taliban's brutal suicide bombings against the Afghan people had decimated any trust in their potential leadership. Another concern was the conservative and restrictive

views of women held by the Taliban. An Afghan woman participant believed that Afghan women “doubt very much that [the Taliban] have changed much”, and thus was opposed to HPC efforts at building bridges with the Taliban.

Thus, some participants voiced alternative strategies in dealing with the Taliban resistance and its political demands. A couple of Afghan participants insisted that the Afghan government and the international community needs to encounter the insurgency and Taliban with an iron fist, and show no weakness by offering concessions and political opportunity. One Afghan academic stated:

I think that the [troop] surge is good. I am in favour of crushing them [the Taliban]. I do not like an association with him, I do not like integration and reconciliation and all these things. I don't think that they understand this, I don't think that they are for it, I don't think that they can be deceived and appeased with these kind of approaches. They follow bigger agendas and those who follow bigger agendas you cannot help improve the situation with this kind of moves. They are your enemy, they don't accept the independent state of Afghanistan, they want to destabilise it, they are savage, they are murderers. So people have very bad memories in Afghanistan. And they are still not ready to give up and accept the new set up and the new system. They can be a threat forever. So the best thing is to crush them, suppress them.

He, along with another academic, believed that the government and international community had chosen a path leading to an improved situation, and any resistance by insurgents must be quashed in order to not lose sight of the desired goal of a violence-free developed Afghanistan. An Afghan NGO director believed that central to this task was recognizing that the insurgency was at its heart not a “holy war” but, rather, a “business war” that is fought to “make money.” He believed that money flowing from regional nations such as Pakistan and Iran, and also the drug industry, was sustaining the insurgency, and that solutions could be found by choking off these moneymaking opportunities for individuals and the various Taliban organisations.

Grassroots Peace and Reconciliation Work

The participants elucidated the vital role of grassroots peace work and civil society efforts at encouraging reconciliation across Afghanistan. When compared to the interview narratives that were summarised in the preceding upper-level peacebuilding section, the participants' words were much more positive, contained greater hope, and significantly less criticism. It must be noted that a majority (but not all) of this positive description regarding grassroots peace work came from both Afghan and international participants working within civil society. The participants shared extensively with me regarding grassroots and civil society peacebuilding needs, civil society peacebuilding priorities that respond to these needs, and barriers blocking civil society peacebuilding success.

Peacebuilding Needs

Two primary factors have resulted in an intense need for thoughtful civil society peace and reconciliation work in Afghanistan, namely, a prevalent culture of violence, and the lingering ethnic division in society.

Afghanistan's culture of violence. The participants argued that a culture of violence had been nurtured in Afghanistan as a result of both its history of war and the continuing insurgency. The highly visible and commonplace acts of violence and destruction in virtually every Afghan community have redirected cultural development down violent paths, and have eroded social processes leading to the non-violent resolution of conflict. One Afghan NGO director remarked that "killing does not have that much meaning" in Afghanistan, and that the prevalence of soldiers, weapons, suicide bombings and threats,

and military activity had numbed and blunted Afghan perceptions to the point where the current militarisation of society seemed almost normal.

These socio-cultural ‘wounds’ continue to fester in a political milieu dominated by violent men, many of them ex-Jihadi fighters and Warlords. In addition, the active insurgency and anti-insurgency warfare has penetrated every corner of Afghanistan. Remote mountain villages experience the threat of insurgent intimidation and unexpected night helicopter searches and raids. City dwellers in Kabul constantly fear the threat of suicide bombings and attacks, and live under the watchful eye of high power cameras aboard dirigible airships that float above the city 24/7 and scour the city below for any perceived threat to its security.

The participants perceived that the Afghan government was struggling to address these violent threats. And worse, in some cases the government itself was perceived as an abusive perpetrator of people’s suffering on par with, or worse than, insurgent groups. Many Afghans simply have nowhere to turn for reprieve, support, and protection. This sense of insecurity has sometimes necessitated vigilantism and other means of informal violent social protection. An Afghan government official described how communal emotional health has deteriorated. He believed that people are increasingly jumpy, insecure, irritable, and are making inappropriate and socially destructive assumptions.

Ethnic division. A key fault line defining violence and insurgency warfare in Afghanistan is ethnicity. Stemming from traditional ethnic separation in Afghan communities that turned increasingly violent through the formation of ethnic-based anti-Soviet militias who turned on each other in the early 1990s, the potential escalation of ethnic conflict was viewed by participants as a serious threat to sustainable peace and

Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. An Afghan government official argued that the extensive civil warring during the 1990s had remained unresolved, and that ethnic identities developed during the civil wars continue to hinder political progress, motivate acts of vengeance, and threaten the resumption of further fighting. Other participants gave examples of how the ethnic issue is continuing to hinder peacebuilding progress. Pashtun/non-Pashtun conflict and separation runs deep in many communities, and has served to bolster the insurgency problem. For example, a foreign UN official noted that grievances based on ethnic violence is a primary driver in Taliban recruitment amongst Pashtuns in northern Afghanistan. On the political front, ethnic self-interests, jockeying for position, and power plays have ensured the dominance of ethnic-based political parties, have stifled the work of the Afghan Parliament, and prevented any cohesion at the upper levels amongst cabinet ministers and the country's vice presidents. Socially and culturally, an elderly Afghan NGO director lamented that "unfortunately the new generation follows us", referring to their unwillingness to bridge the ethnic divide.

Peacebuilding Opportunities

The culture of violence, militarisation of society, and continuing ethnic division are major concerns for civil society peacebuilders according to the interviewees. They described a diverse, ad hoc, but developing civil society peacebuilding programme underway throughout Afghanistan. They described activities in four key areas: (1) development and the provision of employment; (2) education; (3) community empowerment; and (4) community conflict resolution.

Development and employment. A growing body of literature is recognising that development, rather than creating a path towards sustainable peace, can be a conflict-

inducing force in developing and post-war contexts (Anderson, 1999; Duffield, 2007a, 2010; Keen, 1998, 2005; Mac Ginty & Williams, 2009; Thiessen, 2011; Uvin, 1999, 2001). The participants in this study provided a challenge to these emerging theories, and believed that development activities and the provision of employment had distinct peacebuilding potential in Afghanistan. It should be noted that these are perceptions that have not been rigorously tested through research.

At the centre of the participants' argument was that the provision of jobs to unemployed rural folk would reduce the risk of recruitment into the insurgency. One official explained the rationale as follows:

If the insurgency is going on, who are the people that are doing that insurgency? Most of them, if you go to the South, they are young people. They do not have any trust for the government because they are unemployed. They are not provided education, proper education, and they are vulnerable to many things, and they need to do something for their families or for themselves. What if you provide some sort of opportunity for them, so that they do not grow opium or join the Taliban? It can be possible.

The participants sympathised with poverty-inflicted Afghans who struggled to provide the means for their family's survival. Thus, the moderate salary provided to their fighters, as opposed to the new recruit's ideology or grievances, is perhaps driving recruitment into the insurgency. An Afghan NGO official described the situation for many Afghan youth:

One of our objectives is that how we can employ the people to bring peace. How can we bring these young jobless people and give to them for three or six months some jobs, and in some insecure provinces the reason is that people are without jobs, they don't have anything, and they are wanting to take the \$200 or \$300 that the opposition will give to them. They are graduated from the University but there is no job, they stayed in their home, their villages, one month, five months, and there is not any opportunity for them, and if they do not have a chance to go to Pakistan or

Iran, there is no other way but to join the opposition groups and receive something from them. That is the situation.

Another Afghan NGO director shared an example of how civil society efforts can alleviate the problem:

I think the best thing for the international community is for them to give important economic development in the villages, job creation, skills, so that those people are not going to [join the insurgency]. I will give you a very good example. In one province we have a community-based [project]. We hired those people who were going with the Taliban, we hired them from the community, we trained them, and we paid them monthly, and [they are working hard in the village]. Now there is no Taliban in that area, all of them are coming to us and saying, “Please hire me, give me a job.” So we give them \$300 per month - they make more than the Taliban gives them, and they are secure. They go home and they come and work for six hours and go home and they have a good life. ... Those Taliban were carrying the gun, now they are our best [workers]. He said that he is living like a human now. If we develop the community and give them jobs, more dialogue, frequent visits, economic opportunities for them, they will be encouraged and nobody will go and do silly things. I am sure that it is not their choice, but they were forced to do these things, not a choice. (Note: some details have been omitted)

In a similar fashion, the successful grassroots driven NSP is attempting to extend its reach into increasingly insecure areas and develop CDCs in communities that are under direct control of the Taliban. In this way the NSP believes it is able to contribute to stability, reduce violence, and increase the opportunities to solidify peace in the country.

Education. Similarly, the provision of education was seen by my study’s participants to have a conflict-dampening affect on local conflict in Afghan communities. Numerous participants described how increased education for youth has the potential to address the widespread poverty, and even alter the destructive trajectory of the prevalent culture of violence. The provision of educational opportunity can nurture an ethnically tolerant climate, can ‘de-segregate’ the minds of the population (Fanon, 1968), cultivate a

more inclusive population, and even embolden the population to advocate for their rights (Thiessen, 2008, pp. 29-33).

The participants described a piecemeal ad-hoc programme of peace education activities including some curriculum materials, films, magazines, and books. However, there is a lack of a national peace programme in schools, despite the fact that initial evaluations of small-scale peace programmes in schools found transformed thinking and action in student participants (according to a senior Afghan government official).

Community empowerment. Empowering the grassroots is both central to peacebuilding success and to Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. An Afghan civil society official explained the effects of community empowerment:

It has to be a whole life struggle to promote peace in the community and non-violence. As we reduce people's economic and social vulnerabilities, if you reduce them then they will be standing on their own feet and deciding for themselves their own future. But if they are vulnerable they can be easily exploited by powerful individuals within the country and also by the different secret intelligence agencies for their vested interests.

He believed that empowered communities shouldn't only address the 'powers' in Afghanistan; they should also include the meddling interests of regional nations, which is a bold statement indeed.

Undergirding community empowerment is community building and community organisation. Numerous participants talked about the inherently decentralised nature of traditional Afghan governance and the resulting weight and authority given to traditional community leadership. While perhaps seen as a barrier to current peacebuilding efforts focused on strengthening the central powers, the inherent propensity for organisation at the local level can be leveraged towards grassroots peacebuilding progress. However, some participants believed that these traditional propensities were eroded by war and

outside influence, and should be supported and rebuilt in many cases. To this end, two foreign NGO directors gave examples of participatory development processes that empowered communities by bringing them together and supporting them in prioritisation, decision-making, and advocacy in regards to their felt needs. One of the directors shared a story from an insecure village in southern Afghanistan:

And [the community] said, “What can you do for us?”, and we said, “We are not here to do anything for you, we are here to help, provide you with the tools so that you can make your own decisions, and you will decide what is a priority for you and you will decide what issues you want to deal with. Our local staff will also work with you in that and we as foreigners don't have a bag of money to give to you for anything that we plan to do. It is your prioritisation, your decision-making processes that are important to us. When you are able to address those needs and effectively understand and prioritise your own needs, and adjust them, then we are successful. We believe that that is what we are about. And we don't want to give you anything. We want you to decide how you are going to address your own needs as a group.

In these processes traditional community leadership was a definite focus. These two directors believed, however, that outside foreign influence was necessary to ensure inclusiveness of traditionally excluded groups such as women and the very poor.

One challenging component of community empowerment is supporting community advocacy. However, some participants described a much needed grassroots movement to address the socially oppressive aspects of religious fundamentalism and the politically oppressive aspects of current power-hungry government structures. For example, one civil society leader believed that there existed a historical precedent for resisting the advance of religious fundamentalism in the writings of several ancient Afghan/Persian philosophers and writers (e.g. Hafiz, Rumi). Politically, another participant from the private sector believed that the post-2001 experience has shown that when democratic means are used to select community leadership, Warlords and other

power brokers are consistently excluded from community leadership. He concluded, “when people are given a real chance and real power they use it in the right way.”

Further, another Afghan participant described an elaborate national network of volunteers who acted as election observers and who advocated for good governance and democracy.

Communal conflict resolution and social justice. Several participants believed that deep grievances were driving recruitment efforts by the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan. One Afghan civil society leader shared his beliefs in this area:

The majority of the Taliban recruits, they are not for ideological reasons but because of the grievances that they can easily convince them, and through grievance resolution and other activities they can be absorbed and re-integrated into the society to start a peaceful life.

In addition to aiding recruitment, a leading Afghan civil society leader believed that grievances stemming from war-induced communal violence and injustice linger on in the minds of many Afghans. In many cases entire tribes, clans, villages, ethnic sub-sections of villages, or families remain in bitter conflict with competing groups.

There appears to be very few communal conflict resolution activities that are sponsored by the international community. However, some of my interviewees described some successful stories of conflict resolution and reconciliation. For example, one Afghan NGO director described two different conflicts between competing ethnic groups. In one case, bitter ethnic enemies (one Pashtun and one Tajik group) were guided through a process of workshops and reconciliatory activity that has led to peace and cooperation between both groups. This same NGO conducted a similar process with Hazara and Kuchi nomadic groups.

Another Afghan researcher believed the time was right to venture into intense reconciliation activities with Taliban insurgents at the community level. He believed that in order to “achieve security in Afghanistan, we need to work at the lowest level, at the margins of the districts” and that in his contact and interviews with the Taliban he reported that they are increasingly saying “We are sick of being refugees and being hunted” and that “our people are suffering and struggling intensely.” Further comments by the Taliban that they reported included: “We are dying here in the Afghan village but our leaders are in a safe place abroad in Pakistan. Our people are suffering, our kids are skill-less.” He believed that this opportunity couldn’t be missed by civil society and international peacebuilders. However, another civil society peacebuilding official warned that such conflict resolution activities cannot lose sight of social justice since “without social justice you cannot bring peace to a country.”

Perceived Barriers to Grassroots Peace Work

The path travelled by grassroots peacebuilders is certainly difficult in the Afghan milieu. They face many significant challenges and barriers. In addition to incessant insecurity, grassroots peace work faces a critical shortage of both resources and support from within the broader international community and from upper-level Afghan actors.

Lack of resources. Resource shortages for grassroots peace work are evident in terms of human and funding resources. An Afghan civil society organisation leader highlighted difficulties in hiring trained peacebuilding workers:

The challenges in this field is, if you were to work in construction and irrigation and agriculture, you will always find people trained in those disciplines, and you will find these in the universities of Afghanistan. But if you work in this special area where we do not have any institution for

them at the University or in schools, so you have to train them. So the human resources limitation is one of the challenges we face.

Given that training peace workers is not rapidly accomplished, the shortage of peace workers needs to be addressed quickly.

Grassroots peacebuilders also struggle to secure adequate funding, even for small-scale projects. The participants felt the gaze of international funders was focused over their heads on upper-level processes. A civil society leader had this to say about his organisation's struggles:

But [peace programming] has to be a national program to see and to maximise the impact. If it is having a fairly small coverage, here and there, with the little bit of funding that is available, this type of project is not funded easily, because it is not attracting that much attention of donors because it is not tangible and has never been a practice before ... So that is why we are small in our scope and coverage and influence.

However, a number of new multi-actor grassroots peacebuilding initiatives hit the ground during the research period. They are currently in the initial stages of development and implementation.

Lack of vision and support. The participants also commented on why funding and general support for grassroots peace work was hard to come by. First, longer-term and ambiguous peace work is sidelined in favour of more visible, tangible, and short-term project work such as infrastructure development. Many large donors such as USAID have favoured this approach, and value clear tangible outputs over harder to perceive intangible outcomes. Second, the practice and methodology of community peacebuilding remains foreign to many people. Definitions of peace work have remained attached to upper-level processes such as peace negotiations and accords between warring factions. One Afghan civil society peace worker was concerned about this focus. He stated, "They

[foreign donors] completely ignore the fact that there are numerous conflicts at the local level that affect the peace environment at the top level.” He believed that upper and lower-level peace processes feed off of each other and are interdependent. This interdependence makes them successful. And third, grassroots peace work in Afghanistan remains largely unstudied, indicating that it is unproven and strictly experimental. This is partly because peace activities are small scale, ad hoc, and lack any national coherency across the Afghan provinces.

Local Ownership of Grassroots Peace Work

A couple of foreign participants who had worked in various war-torn and underdeveloped contexts around the globe commented that the Afghan people and their civil society leaders were particularly eager and keen to achieve ownership over peacebuilding activities. Two different foreign participants working for foreign governments had this to say:

I have never worked in a country like Afghanistan before...and compared to [other war-torn contexts] there is a lot of ownership here, and a kind of proudness, and it is not at all a question of asking somebody to do things. At least I feel so, and it is promising in that sense.

What I love about this place is that the Afghans will not be told what to do, or how to do it. They will do it, when they decide they want to do it, and how they will do it. And then they will decide at that stage whether or not they want international community’s assistance or not.

They did not perceive the intense dependency and unwillingness on the part of civil society leaders to take the necessary steps towards true ownership as experienced in other contexts.

There are, however, difficult tensions that civil society peacebuilders must grapple with. In some cases there are essential social and cultural transformations that

must occur, especially in regards to the status of Afghan women. How do peacebuilders make steady advances toward positive peace in regards to the economic, cultural, social, and political oppression of women? One NGO director believed that true transformation could not be coerced and forced by outsiders. He shared the following:

We put it on the table sometimes, particularly to deal with women's issues, because we feel that that is important. But we don't push, we just ask the questions. But this whole process, the priorities are set by them as opposed to by us, and we believe that has a lot to do with how the fabric of Afghan society will be strengthened. And they have hundreds of years of experience that they can draw upon and strengthen one another. Just getting them into the same room talking to one another means that there is a forum for them to discuss the issues that are important to them.

The Afghans themselves must own these processes, even if the processes are frustratingly long and arduous.

Analysis and Discussion

This chapter has summarised the collective voice of the study's participants in terms of ownership of peacebuilding activities aimed at sustainable peace, reconciliation, and justice in Afghanistan. Two tracks of activity are evident; one track is interested in reaching an upper-level agreement with the Taliban and its fighters, and the other is aimed at addressing conflict and grievances at the community level. What emerges from the interview narratives are a set of dilemmas that revolve around the ownership of these upper-level and grassroots tracks of peace work. The salient dilemmas concerned: (1) competing conceptions of peace between the upper and lower levels of society, and between the international community and Afghans; (2) the dilemmas of elusive upper-level peace process success; (3) the dilemmas of grassroots peacebuilding and peace work; and (4) the dilemmas of carving out a sustainable peace programme that integrates the needs of both upper-level and grassroots actors and populations.

Competing Conceptions of Peace

Underlying any coherent and authentic Afghan ownership of peacebuilding are Afghan conceptions of peace. However, it has turned out that conceptions of peace within the Afghan community are varied, have eluded consensus, and are often incomplete and/or partial. And, if this is not complex enough, conceptions of peace on the part of the international community have tended to be self-interested, undeveloped, and unconcerned with sustainability. The interview narratives summarised in the preceding discussions have revealed a stark dissonance in this area. Two major areas of discord were evident: (1) the requirement of justice alongside peace; and (2) the choice of informal or formal institutions of peace.

Does peace require justice? Peacebuilding rhetoric and practice have diverged in regards to the need for justice on the path towards building sustainable peace in Afghanistan. One side of the argument favours peace at all costs. Proponents of this view believe that the provision of justice for violent perpetrators is a secondary concern, and should only be pursued if the provision of justice does not reduce the likelihood of ‘peace’. Upper-level peace processes that grant immunity to former insurgent fighters have largely adopted this approach. The primary goal is stability and an end to violent hostilities. Relating to Galtung’s (1996) ‘negative peace’, an absence of violent conflict and fighting is seen as adequate, even in the face of structural and cultural violence and injustice. Many of the interviews hinted that the Afghan people are starving for a ‘negative peace’, and understandably desire to move forward with their lives unafraid of fighting, bomb attacks, or war.

While upper-level participants chose to generally avoid this issue, civil society participants in this study were generally quite concerned with sidelining justice in order to increase the odds of achieving peace. They believed that the provision of justice was an essential activity to both peacebuilding and in ensuring Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Impunity is resisted, and any national peace is situated at the local level where the concerns of victims are considered. They believed that sustainable peace in Afghanistan would be 'positive' and just in nature, since citizens would be thoroughly unsatisfied with a peace that did not push for justice in the face of oppression and coercion. An Afghan civil society leader commented as follows:

You know peace and reconciliation is something that you cannot stand against - everybody wants peace and I love reconciliation. But on what principles and what measures can we bring peace and reconciliation? Can we reconcile with the guy who shot 53 people on the spot and he says, "I really enjoyed this"? Can we reconcile with that guy?

He was referring to the March 2011 attack inside of a Jalalabad bank in which dozens of unarmed people were executed in cold blood. The primary shooter was captured and he told the media that he had enjoyed the killing. The legitimacy of the entire peacebuilding mission rests on the willingness to bring perpetrators like this murderer to justice, not simply in granting amnesty and in reintegrating the perpetrator back into the community. The provision of justice ensures that the Afghan population can avoid resorting to violent conflict resolution strategies such as revenge and vigilantism, and encourages the entrenchment of a culture of peace and a resistance to any local insurgency. As such, transitional justice should ensure that those people who have destroyed the lives of many are held accountable. In contrast, the majority of Afghans see Warlords and other violent perpetrators becoming exceedingly wealthy and being rewarded with power.

It thus becomes obvious that this 'ownership' dissonance revolves around the upper-level-grassroots axis, with the grassroots level very much concerned with the provision of justice on the path to peace. The stakes are high for both sides. If peace is to be owned by Afghans, what sort of future would this lead too? Should ownership revolve around traditional ways that sideline the poor and women in some cases? Should the pursuit of peace be inclusive and inviting of former oppressors and violent groups such as the Taliban? As evident in the interviews it can be concluded that the grassroots are very interested in justice for perpetrators. Thus, any grassroots ownership of peacebuilding would ensure a harsher stance toward insurgents in any new political structures, and ensure that retribution is paid back in full.

Conversely, upper-level leaders are interested in maintaining their hold on power and wealth and staying out of jail. If impunity cannot be assured, they could lose everything on account of their violent past. There are very few top leaders who would be immune from prosecution for war crimes, and they would likely face the same fate as former Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak. Reduced immunity for the political elite would certainly affect the peace process in Afghanistan. Upper-level perpetrators feel they cannot allow a culture of impunity to disintegrate in their dealings with the Taliban for fear that they too will one-day face justice if the grassroots ever does achieve greater ownership over peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan.

However, the ownership story becomes even more complex with the presence of the international community. The home populations of intervening Western nations are increasingly resisting the rapidly mounting peacebuilding costs in the face of worldwide economic struggle. This resistance is forcing many intervening nations to hasten their exit

from peacebuilding responsibilities. They are, thus, desperate to define ‘Afghan peace’ according to their self-interests, which has required them to settle for a negative peace and ignore local demands for justice for offenders. A critical reading of recent Afghan history demonstrates the folly in this strategy, and predicts the quick return of widespread and perhaps massive political violence following foreign withdrawal.

Informal vs. formal paths towards justice and conflict resolution.

Peacebuilding actors, and in particular those who are interested in securing justice and involved in conflict resolution, are faced with two possible paths in Afghanistan: (1) focusing on the creation or rebuilding of formal justice and conflict resolution structures; or (2) focusing on strengthening informal justice and conflict resolution structures.

Choosing between these divergent paths is a very difficult dilemma for many peacebuilding actors, and has only recently been addressed by leading peacebuilding organisations such as the UN. And, as will become quite clear in the proceeding discussion, the informal-formal dilemma has significant implications for the ownership debate.

At the heart of the debate are dissonant cultural practices and priorities between international peacebuilders and their local grassroots counterparts. A foreign UN official summarised this conflict in the following manner:

An informal system at the local level looks at not necessarily individuality, but looks at the integrity of the community, the integrity of the relationships. I think this is one of the main things that Western developers don't really appreciate in the cultural context here - how people view themselves more collectively than individually.

As will be discussed further in the Chapter 8, Western conceptions of human rights and individual rights to justice do not necessarily mesh with communal conceptions as found in Afghanistan, especially in rural areas.¹²

The development of a formal justice system is a difficult and complex task in Afghanistan. Many observers feel the process has achieved little in the last ten years. The legal system is underdeveloped in both its inherent capacity and human resources. The Afghan people are finding it extremely difficult to gain entry into the system, they find it is unpredictable and does not instil confidence in its clients. Formal justice systems are seen as corrupt, failing to provide adequate 'justice', catering to the rich because of the prohibitive costs involved, and unable to provide timely services. In response, one Afghan human rights worker stated, "formal injustice is promoting informal justice."

And so, informal systems of justice and conflict resolution are gaining recognition, legitimacy, and support from peacebuilding actors in Afghanistan (Coburn & Dempsey, 2010). Because these systems are entrenched in Afghan culture, they can be quickly developed and allowed to supply justice and conflict resolution services across Afghanistan's various regions. These cultural systems have, however, faced severe disapproval from Western critics, who insist that they will inherently fail to ensure fundamental human rights, and will be unable to provide adequate services to women and other marginalised groups. Their points are valid and pose a distinct dilemma for peacebuilding actors who must inevitably admit that they are largely correct. However, on the other side of the coin, a foreign UN official pointed out that:

I'll quote Kofi Annan when he was Secretary General. He was giving an endorsement to alternative dispute resolution and mediation systems. In

¹² See Merry (2006) for an in depth discussion of this theme.

terms of justice in the developing world, there is no one-size-fits-all, basically giving the UN the mandate to explore and empower alternative dispute resolution mechanisms ... We know that as a development institution we cannot try to simply eradicate the traditional and impose the formal. And from an anthropological perspective it would be culturally presumptuous of us to do that. Justice derives from the consent of the people, and if they feel that the traditional systems were representing their communal values, who are we as Westerners to say otherwise. So the agenda needs to be sequenced and balanced to somehow find complementary aspects between the two systems.

Thus he is arguing that at the end of the day the choices of the local people must take precedence over Western desires, which is democratic in nature, albeit in a communal as opposed to individualistic sense.

So how is the international community dealing with this dilemma? As mentioned earlier, informal systems are increasingly validated and recognised. It appears, however, that the Afghan government is struggling to incorporate informal systems into justice structures because of inherent difficulties in meshing them with their distinctly 'formal' mandate; this is certainly a difficult area. One contentious result is the attempt by the government to regulate the informal sector. Traditional authorities have viewed this regulation as coercive, and as attempting to formalise the informal. The participants believed that formal and informal systems couldn't be "married", but they can coexist and enjoy helpful linkages, perhaps with clearly defined mandates. And it is widely understood in the international community that the long-term future of Afghan justice and conflict resolution needs to fall within the formal sector. Thus, the informal system serves a short-term purpose.

When incorporating and supporting informal systems, peacebuilding actors are finding it necessary to ensure adherence to international human rights norms, non-violent conflict resolution methodologies, and the inclusion of women and other marginalised

groups. Thus, the UN and international NGOs have prioritised the training of local *Shuras*, *Jirgas*, and other traditional or religious leaders in methodologies based on revised contextual norms that are moulded by international standards. The provision of outside funding is used as a carrot to shift traditional thinking and practice in this regard. It is yet to be determined how sustainable these changes will be.

The informal-formal dilemma has significant ownership implications, and puts government elites in direct competition with grassroots and traditional leadership. A possible solution (at least for this generation) might lie in the development of both routes, i.e. a parallel and complementary system that addresses justice and conflict resolution needs. Parallel systems are certainly challenging for Western peacebuilding actors to fathom. It is difficult for them to envision Afghanistan as effectively meshing with the world community as an active member if it does not noticeably strengthen its formal institutions. The global community has propped up formal systems at the expense of informal (and often indigenous) justice structures across the developed world. Thus, the development of informal systems poses a dilemma for Western interveners as they are, in a sense, admitting defeat in their attempts to mesh Afghanistan into the wider global system, and are allowing the reversion to traditional and tribal structures at the expense of democratic reform. Informal structures will likely defy control in areas deemed to be a threat to the overall global system such as anti-Western security threats.

The Dilemmas of Upper-Level Peace Processes

The official peace processes in Afghanistan, namely the activities of the HPC and the APRP, are wrought with dilemmas in terms of Afghan ownership. Afghans are struggling to identify what ownership means in the context of upper-level peace

processes. Of primary concern is the widespread perception that the grassroots level and civil society leaders and groups are broadly excluded from these processes. They feel disconnected, powerless, unable to provide input, and deeply concerned regarding the decisions and directions of the programmes. In this case Afghan ownership is limited to the upper levels and includes foreign organisations while excluding the very people the process is supposed to serve.

The interviews revealed that civil society leaders (never mind the broader grassroots community) do not grasp the methodology or goals of upper-level peace processes. There is little hope, significant cynicism and criticism, and a general belief that the process is a farce and doomed to failure. These beliefs have led to widespread dismissal of the process. For example, the choice of including Warlords as HPC members reveals the ultimate concern for ensuring the self-interests of Afghan elites. At the time of writing it remains to be seen whether the assassination of the top official in the HPC and the injury of the top APRP official in the same suicide attack (September 2011) will alter the course taken by the Afghan government and the international community. If the Taliban can achieve its objectives under the watch of approximately 140 000 ISAF/OEF troops, it is difficult to conceive how the situation can improve as they are withdrawn over the next couple of years. Situations like this example illustrate to the Afghan people that factors beyond the direct welfare of the Afghan people are driving peacebuilding decisions.

Another dilemma facing upper-level peace processes concerns the struggle to identify whom exactly the peace process is targeting and connecting with. The Taliban-led insurgency is a very different entity than its pre-2001 predecessor (Giustozzi, 2008a).

The current insurgency is constantly morphing, splintering, and forming regional and international alliances. The insurgency is consistently expanding across an impoverished country, spreading from village to village. It remains questionable that a peace process with such a group can be successful, as it tends to lend credence to the belief that the process is simply a political ploy.

Another major dilemma surrounds the inclusion of the Taliban in any future political structures in Afghanistan. The Taliban are currently achieving significant success in their guerrilla war against international and Afghan military forces and have, at the same time, insisted on their inclusion in both peace and political processes. As such, political inclusion is seen as a legitimate demand and political violence can be thus viewed as a means to ensure that their voice is heard. Justifying Taliban violence is certainly contentious, with many observers quite doubtful of the Taliban's political motivations. These critics tend to resonate with many civil society leaders cited in this study that are concerned with the human rights and security implications of including a violent and oppressive group like the Taliban in any future political structures. They are doubtful of the Taliban's ability to form a legitimate political force that listens to its population and is cooperative with dissenting political views. Many civil society leaders hope that such conservative voices remain in the margins, and are slowly suppressed in order to advance human rights in the country.

It is difficult to envision any scenario leading to increased Afghan ownership and Afghan control over peacebuilding that will not have to address the concerns of the Taliban. The Taliban are incredibly resilient under intense pressure and are not likely to disappear into the background as international forces exit the country. Thus, the Afghan

people and current government leadership are forced to adapt their conceptions of Afghan ownership to include the Taliban and their conservative supporters, of which there are many. Should violent offenders and groups be allowed ownership alongside other political and civil society groups? Allowing a violent and oppressive group into the ownership scheme poses significant challenges, and compromises will need to be made. The possibility of renewed Taliban political power is probably one key reason why many of the participants were in no hurry to see the exit of international groups and were willing to sacrifice increased ownership for elevated but temporary freedoms. Difficult decisions are looming. Many participants believed that the provision of ownership over peacebuilding activities to the Taliban would certainly return the country to a more violent and oppressive future.

The Dilemmas of Grassroots Peacebuilding

This chapter has described a programme of peacebuilding at the grassroots community level, conducted through development and education, and with the occasional project focused on community empowerment and community conflict resolution and justice. However, it is certainly worrisome that the study's participants did not describe, after ten years of post-2001 peacebuilding, any programmes with a national scope focused on the peaceful resolution of conflict at the grassroots community level or that address the prevalent culture of violence in Afghanistan. Instead what exists are a series of disjointed and isolated projects, which are mostly on a small scale covering a couple of villages or perhaps a couple of districts.

It appears that grassroots conflict resolution and peace work has been largely forgotten (or likely ignored), and perhaps suppressed in favour of upper-level or military-

led strategies. This void of grassroots activity is indicative of a failure of the grassroots level to achieve ownership over peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Grassroots peace work has typically remained in the domain of the informal and non-governmental sector, upper-level governmental actors and many international funders have by necessity ignored grassroots work in order to focus on strengthening formal structures, which is certainly understandable given their decimated post-war nature. Another factor is the inherent contradiction of funding both a military presence and grassroots peace work simultaneously. Internationally funded community peace work will struggle to achieve legitimacy in the face of active warring against members of the same community by the international community. This lack of legitimacy is another justification for a termination of combative roles in Afghanistan to a large extent and the examination of alternative anti-insurgency strategies in Pakistan, which has become the real locus of the anti-insurgent fight. Yet, grassroots peace work and conflict resolution work needs to be taken much more seriously. Given the failure of upper-level processes to this point, it is difficult to ignore the glaring fact that achieving security in Afghanistan requires intensive efforts at the lowest levels, and at the margins of society. As participants described the limited activities in this regard there was a noticeable anticipation and optimism about grassroots level work as compared to the biting critique and discouragement revealed when discussing upper-level processes.

The participants did describe, however, significant work carried out at the community grassroots level, and many of the civil society participants argued that this work held significant peacebuilding potential. However, a vast majority of this work is development oriented. As reported earlier in this chapter, civil society participants are

lamenting a lack of activism on the part of Afghans and Afghan civil society groups. Civil society activism is certainly needed at this juncture since a small group of elites is consolidating vast riches and power while the majority of the Afghan population remains trapped in vicious poverty and powerlessness. There is a desperate need for Afghans to stake their claim to power inside the democratic shell that was constructed with the assistance of the international community. Increased grassroots political ownership would provide the stumbling Afghan democracy with meaning and substance. To this end, corrupt leaders must be removed and tried, and leaders caring for the development of the country must replace violent and self-serving Warlords through democratic means. The insurgency should be resisted at the community level through locally mandated authority structures, and the government and international community must be vigilant and watchful in protecting those who venture down this dangerous path. Current civil society leaders feel desperately alone and inadequate in the face of the powerful and the weapons they carry. In many cases peace activism must feel like a death wish.

There seems to be little clarity about how to go about addressing the powerful and/or violent elite, especially in the presence of a powerful international intervention community that appears bent on supporting these violent elites. It is very difficult to venture far from the path laid out by the international community. In this sense, the presence of the international community is dictating who the primary enemies are, and how they should be dealt with. Thus, while purportedly essential to Afghan peacebuilding, the presence of a powerful and wealthy outside intervention community may in fact be suppressing home-grown creative peacebuilding activities, with locally inspired peacebuilding ventures never coming to fruition, attempted, or even thought

about. Sometimes desperation breeds the needed creativity and willingness to make the difficult decisions that nurtures the ground for positive peacemaking.

However, development activities should not be discounted in the peacebuilding quest in Afghanistan. Development and the support for local livelihoods appear essential in combating the insurgency. And further, as people are able to overcome their vulnerabilities and stand on their own feet they will perhaps be able to divert their energies towards addressing power and oppression issues. While development is a key to peacebuilding activity at the grassroots level, it alone is inadequate and must be complemented with community empowerment leading to a people movement where Afghans address the prevalent culture of violence and advocate for decreased inequality in power and finances.

However, do Afghan civil society leaders have any precedent to follow? Afghanistan's history seems dominated by conquest, invasion, violent resistance, and warring. One participant shared a story of Pashtun leader Badshah Khan, also known as the "frontier Gandhi." Badshah Khan was a devout Muslim who led non-violent demonstrations for social justice and reform against the British in the early 20th century. He may certainly be an appropriate model for the current leadership to emulate.

Moving Forward in Ownership

So what needs to be done to advance efforts leading to increased local ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan? As outlined above, there are legitimate concerns with ownership at both the grassroots and upper-political levels. However, despite the criticisms voiced against each level, progress, activity, and ownership at each level is fundamental for peacebuilding advances in Afghanistan. What appears necessary is

suppressing the strict division in both the rhetoric and practice between the grassroots and upper levels and, rather, promoting an integration of both levels through increased openness and trust, bolstered cooperation and coordination, and jointly run activities. Thus, at a practical level this would require widespread civil society participation in official peace processes¹³, and would also require the involvement and support of upper-level leaders in civil society and grassroots peacebuilding at the community level.

Increased cross-pollination between levels by peacebuilding leaders will certainly face significant challenges. Both sides must put their houses in order. Civil society work is still hindered by fragmentation and division, the exclusion of certain segments of society, and dependency on international funders. Low capacity, ineffective and self-interested leaders, and rampant corruption are stalling upper-level progress. There are certainly dilemmas concerning ownership of this process. Which comes first, putting one's house in order and then being granted increased ownership over peacebuilding, or vice versa? Most likely the process will evolve similar to a rolling snowball, with both components of the dilemma gaining momentum based on progress on the counter side. Key leaders within each level must emerge to lead this difficult process. The job of the international community must be to steer the rolling and progressive process away from uphill sections that may stall or terminate important progress.

There must also be a willingness to trust the other. For example, elite government leaders must trust that civil society groups are in tune with the population and will act in the best interests of the country as a whole. Civil society leaders must recognise that elite peace processes are inherently messy, and gradual and incremental improvements may

¹³ See Schirch (2011) for a thoughtful discussion on the inclusion of civil society in upper-level peace processes.

only be possible in a process that is necessarily long-term in nature. These long-term requirements raise the dilemma of doing what is *possible* as opposed to the *ideal* in many cases. Focusing on doing what is actually possible and realistic at the moment, while being more attuned to short-term concerns, can achieve essential short-term gains that might lead to longer-term and deeper reform. For example, granting amnesty is certainly not a long-term policy goal for the Afghan justice system, yet in the short term government and international advisors believe it will be expedient in achieving short-term peace onto which further reform can be constructed. The realisation of short-term, albeit tainted, peace may be the necessary factor instigating transformation of the prevalent culture of violence. These elite leaders may argue that pushing for the ideal of thorough justice for all would collapse the peace process entirely and push the country into a resurgence of civil war. Defenders of this point believe that the process towards peace may have necessary phases, with some phases requiring compromise to ideals and different focus points when compared to other phases.

Critics of this approach argue that a compromised position on peace and justice will lead to compromised ends, and that it is better to confront the difficult peacebuilding journey head-on and battle through the pains of real justice before a sustainable and authentic positive peace can be achieved. For example, granting Afghan civil society and the grassroots significant ownership and voice will require that democratic reform be initiated in which new visionary leaders are elected to positions that are now appointed (e.g. provincial governorships). The current wealthy and powerful post-holders would then be robbed of their means of creating their individual wealth, and would be subject to transitional justice measures such as war crimes trials, and investigations exploring their

involvement in the drug industry and corruption. It is hard to imagine that these elites would move forward with the necessary political reform leading to this positive scenario. So, unfortunately, it appears that the Afghan elites and their international backers will most likely forcefully maintain the status quo unless the grassroots can force transformation through persuasive and targeted advocacy.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused the investigation of Afghan ownership on one particular peacebuilding sector, namely reconciliation, conflict resolution, and the search for justice. The participants' interview narratives differentiated clearly between the upper-level top-down peace processes dealing with the Taliban, and bottom-up grassroots efforts addressing community and ethnic conflict and the predominant culture of violence that is hindering overall peacebuilding success. They voiced significant criticism of top-down peace processes and focused on the ambiguity surrounding reaching out to the Taliban, the apparent foreign control over peace processes, and the inability of the current peace process to ensure justice. The participants were more hopeful of grassroots processes, yet they also noted that grassroots peace and conflict resolution work has been largely overlooked and under-supported.

The participants, however, did not recommend abandoning either top-down or bottom-up peace processes, they believed that the two tracks must achieve mutual support and involvement, and should be carefully strengthened simultaneously. There are significant barriers to this process. Competing conceptions of peace work such as the requirement for justice in peace work and the use of informal structures must be grappled with in order for the Afghan society to achieve sustainable peace.

Chapter 8 once again broadens the discussion and explores several overarching issues shaping efforts at increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. In particular, the chapter probes the underlying intervention ethics and structure, and explores pertinent intervention practices and their peacebuilding efficacy.

Chapter 8 - The Struggle for Afghan Ownership: Issues With Foreign Intervention

Introduction

This last data analysis chapter widens the lens somewhat, and investigates five themes that were interwoven throughout the participants' interview narratives in regards to Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. These thematic issues can be viewed as underlying struggles on the journey towards Afghan ownership and, as such, must be addressed before significant progress can be made. All five themes focus intensely on the complex and challenging relationship between local groups and individuals and outside foreign interveners. The first three themes address underlying intervention ethics and structure that include: (1) the effects of liberalisation and Westernisation in Afghanistan; (2) the apparent militarisation and politicisation of peacebuilding activities; and (3) dependency and sustainability in the overall intervention. The last two themes discussed in this chapter explore pertinent peacebuilding practices in relation to Afghan ownership, namely: (4) inappropriate peacebuilding project timeframes; and (5) the challenges of peacebuilding coordination. Subsequently, the concluding discussion section examines all five themes in light of a desire for increased Afghan ownership over peacebuilding.

Transforming Afghanistan: Liberalisation and Westernisation

The heavy-handed international intervention in Afghanistan has brought with it a barrage of local reforms in virtually every sector possible. Important questions have arisen. Are the Afghan people allowed to choose what sorts of reforms are introduced into society? Are decisions driven entirely by outsiders (who may be taking advantage of the war-torn nature of the context to inject foreign systems that serve the purposes of the foreigners and the status quo of the global economy and political establishment)? To this

end, this section summarises the interview narratives that speak to the effects of liberalisation, Westernisation, and globalisation on economic, political, cultural, and human rights transformation in Afghanistan.

Economic Transformation and Liberalisation

Decades of war have ensured the maintenance of a system of extreme poverty for the majority of Afghans. Amplifying this war-induced poverty is a fierce resistance to the influence of outsiders, which has served to isolate Afghanistan from the development programmes offered up by these same outsiders. In response, post-2001 intervention actors and, in particular the U.S., have engaged Afghanistan in an aggressive programme of economic liberalisation that intends to institutionalise neo-liberal capitalist structures and bolster the private sector as the primary engine of growth for the struggling nation (Ahadi, 2007). Afghan markets are connecting with world markets while industries in Afghanistan are being rapidly privatised, and the government is reducing its role as a service provider (Johnson & Leslie, 2004).

On the whole, my participants were either unwilling or unable to comment extensively regarding ongoing economic reform in Afghanistan. A couple of participants were willing to address it directly, with several others willing to do so indirectly, or in passing. At the heart of the economic liberalisation project is the underlying fact that Afghanistan does not fit well into the world economic system and structure. Thus, the massive U.S. intervention is primarily interested in aligning Afghanistan with this system. One participant working for a foreign governmental organisation described it in the following manner:

We are involved in the process of trying to draw countries that are outside of the understood international system into a framework of rules and

procedures that we as Leviathan understand. And if you look around at the history of the world, I don't think, I might be wrong, you might find some cases, I cannot personally come up with a case where a traditional serfdom or peasant or tribal-based society ever moved to a modern society without enormous levels of violence.

This participant also believed that underlying foreign interests was a programme of economic development, which builds up local preconditions for active integration into the dominant global economic system. Primary goals of this programme of reform are in developing property rights and effectively organising Afghanistan's pre-modern political and economic structures and policies. Thus, all components of the overall intervention, both the civilian and military, are playing a key role in this over-arching goal. It is important to mention, however, that most participants did not delve into this topic, which indicates to me that they do not view their project work in this manner.

The previously quoted participant believed that the majority of intervention actors from the humanitarian community were oblivious to the overall strategy of economic liberalisation and transformation of the foundations of Afghan society. He described his ideas in the following words:

Humanitarian assistance, it is giving out wheat grain and that kind of thing right, it is not fundamentally changing the foundations of the society so it can enter the international system. So they do their thing and it is beautiful, and they are always asking for money and doing appeals and other things, and it is just words in a hurricane - somebody speaking at a conversational level as a tornado is going by. It is nice, it is being done really well ... But the big players in the room don't necessarily see it that way. In a way I'm thinking about the analogy of, it is a circle of dogs wagging their tails, they happen to be altogether and so it looks like it is well corded, but actually the heads are looking in different directions.

Hence, he felt that humanitarian aid was just a small concern, and that the overall strategy of the "big players", such as USAID, was dominating the overall effort. As mentioned

earlier, he believed that violent resistance is a natural consequence, and massive amounts of both development aid and military spending are required to quell massive revolt.

However, according to my participants the transition to capitalism has exposed some problems. The most salient critique of capitalism as experienced by Afghans thus far is the manner in which it has advantaged a few and created massive inequality, where a small cluster of individuals have amassed considerable fortunes while the vast majority of the population trudges along in grinding poverty. While often blamed on corruption, several participants noted that the burgeoning wealth of these privileged individuals was connected to advantages provided them through convenient relationships with powerful international actors, and the new economic freedoms and structures carried in by these external interveners.

One Afghan government official believed that the communal and Islamic nature of Afghan society is blocking many Afghans from connecting with the free market system. He did not give details for this claim. As such, the government continues to struggle, ten years on from the 2001 invasion, to habituate the population to paying taxes and to cooperate with the overall requirements of a capitalistic society (Afghan NGO director). As another example, another Afghan NGO director believed that local Afghan industries and businesses were struggling to compete with the onslaught of cheap imported goods now available to Afghans.

Despite this critique, the overall narrative of the body of interviews revealed that internationally assisted local development is held as a high priority in the minds of Afghan participants. Many participants were very concerned about success in the development of the private sector, increased educational opportunities, a better

infrastructure, widespread employment opportunities, and access to their wealth of natural resources.

Political Transformation and Liberalisation

Following the ousting of the Taliban the international community has carried out an externally led democratisation programme in Afghanistan complete with national elections and the typical set of formal institutions required to support modern democracies. Foreign governments and organisations intensely concerned about the growth of democracy in Afghanistan have supported these processes financially. Guiding the overall reform process is a series of prominent international conferences beginning with the Bonn 2001 Conference.

However, according to the participants of this study the process of democratisation has faced significant challenges in Afghanistan. They described two primary concerns. First, many Afghans fundamentally misunderstand democracy. The term has become misconstrued and misrepresented by international and local elites, associated with unhelpful themes, and tainted by the post-2001 ‘political’ experience in Afghanistan. The situation is extreme, with some participants wondering if the majority of Afghans have little understanding of what authentic democracy entails. One Afghan civil society official pointed out that democracy has become associated with the outcomes of the intervention, and most notably the lack of justice and the spread of chaos. He stated in his interview that:

Look, a country that is 95 percent uneducated, they don't know about democracy when they cannot read and write. For them democracy leads to what we experience now - kidnapping, raping, stealing, hijacking, just name it - this is because of this democracy. The people do not know the meaning of democracy. For them democracy is do anything to make yourself rich, this is democracy. So democracy has been introduced to the

Afghan people in a negative way. That is why people when they talk about democracy they say, "We hate democracy."

For others the term has come to be synonymous with the unwanted excretions of Western society such as materialism and consumerism; they believe that democracy equals Western culture. Another NGO director believed that as long as insecurity, Warlords, and criminals were able to undermine the efforts at strengthening governance, democracy would continue to struggle with legitimacy in the eyes of the people. People's disappointment with their mistreatment by local police and government officials is projected onto overarching political structures and points to fundamental failure for many people. Democracy is also pitted against Islamic and Sharia law, thus setting up an ideological conflict that is difficult for the majority of Afghans to process through. For others the meaning of democracy is narrowed down to seemingly random gains in freedom, such as the freedom to wear a wider range of clothing for women.

A second challenge faced by intervention actors is the struggle of democracy to mesh with communal structures and ways of thinking in Afghanistan. A significant struggle here concerns competing methodologies for choosing leaders. Communal methodologies, as seen in traditional community decision-making structures such as *Jirgas* and *Shuras*, value consensus and encourage dissenters to join the majority opinion in order to maintain communal peace. An Afghan academic explained this point as follows:

People will naturally wait on the fence to see who will be in power, and then there will be a mass mobilisation to the eventual victor's side. People sit on the fence and won't commit unless it is to their advantage. Afghanistan does not consist of autonomous individuals. The community shifts.

Saving face is central to decision-making processes. In democratic decision-making systems this becomes more difficult. According to one Afghan participant, a public election will put its losers up on display before everyone, and this public display of ‘weakness’ is completely dissonant with the Afghan culture. Moreover, the private voting methods are open to anyone, even the poor, women, and other people typically excluded from decision making. This makes it increasingly difficult to maintain the communal ‘peace’ of the status quo. In many cases democratic elections can be destabilizing and lead to conflict.

As an additional point, democratic political systems have inbuilt tolerance as a fundamental tenet, and insist that competing opinions be viewed as valid and valuable. Traditional and tribal manners of political thinking struggle with ensuring tolerance according to a leading Afghan civil society official. This is what he had to say on the issue:

In a tribal mentality, or a traditional mentality, I am the best - I'm the only one who is the best, and nobody else is the best. And the other mentality, the democratic mentality, you have tolerance - I am the best but the others are also. At least the others could be the best.

Afghan Work Culture and Westernisation

The interview questions focused on institutional roles and concerns as opposed to personal and social concerns, and thus my participants’ narratives regarding processes of Westernisation in Afghanistan focused on institutional cultures and ethics that are brought to Afghanistan through the presence of the international community. Both Afghan and foreign participants in this study commented on the differences between the common expectations inside of ‘Afghan’ work cultures, and the new expectations

brought in through foreign organisations, foreign trainers, technical assistants, and even Afghans who had been trained and/or educated abroad in Western contexts.

The injection of Western work cultures happens on two levels: (1) sometimes intentionally as part of the overall cultural transformation project in Afghanistan; and (2) sometimes indirectly as a result of the clash of cultures as local and foreign staff mingle in project environments. As an example, one participant involved in the training of Afghan security personnel described how his experiences on the field with Afghan security personnel in their own context evidenced differing work cultures than he was familiar and comfortable with. For example, when conducting a spot check of a police station he found one police commander sleeping during the day in the station, which is certainly a concern for international observers. However, upon investigation, he learned that many of the local police lived at the station out of fear for their safety, and that they previously were up all night working on a bombing incident. It was also shocking for another participant from the international security sector to witness a local commander throwing stones at children who had congregated around an entourage of foreign security personnel in order to shoo them away. This sort of aggressive behaviour was certainly dissonant with his expectations of appropriate police behaviour in the community.

International counterparts were also intentionally transforming work cultures inside of Afghan government and NGOs. A foreign donor official opined how the international community regularly viewed the common practice of hiring friends and relations as corruption, although this practice seems within the boundaries of acceptable Afghan work culture. A different donor official described how his conceptions of how staff would be fired for incompetence were forced to bend and change. In a communal

culture that values honour, and keeping in mind the devastating consequences of being without work, he worked very hard with his staff to find a more appropriate job within the organisation for the affected individual as opposed to outright firing that person. Other participants shared how communication tended to be more indirect, avoiding direct confrontation, and was not very 'frank'. Maintaining a peaceful and respectful work atmosphere often trumped institutional efficiency or concerns over the quality of a particular individual's work.

International Human Rights Conventions and Afghanistan

Human rights ventures in Afghanistan are complex, contentious, and riddled with conflict. While the post-2001 situation is viewed as a definite improvement when compared to the many rights violations suffered under Taliban rule, efforts at ensuring human rights, particularly for women and the poor, continue to struggle and often remain undone.

Several participants were quite clear regarding the reasons for this apparent dissonance between local and international human rights and the failure of Afghan authorities to implement its human rights commitments. They believed that at the heart of Afghan-Western dissonance was the intertwining of rights and Islamic religion in Afghanistan. International human rights standards and Islamic Sharia law have significant differences that are proving very difficult to reconcile. In particular, Afghan participants in this study were quite cognisant of this dissonance since religion is taken very seriously in Afghanistan, and threats to its existence have inspired massive public outrage, even if the perceived threat stems from far off countries. This sort of public outrage was evident in the deadly rioting following the burning of a Koran by a Florida

pastor in March 2011 as well as the accidental burning of Korans by the U.S. army in February 2012. Thus, human rights reforms that appear to undermine the teachings of Islam travel a very difficult road in Afghanistan, and must be carefully implemented and presented to the public. An Afghan human rights worker described how his organisation is careful to back its reporting and recommendations by citing the Koran and prominent religious leaders in the community. He believed that this practice was essential to ensuring Afghan ownership over human rights reform in Afghanistan.

According to Afghan human rights officials, what has resulted at this time, however, is the recognition that certain human rights as defined in international conventions cannot be implemented in Afghanistan. Some examples include rights surrounding the freedom of religion (e.g. the right for an Afghan individual to change her religion), sexual rights such as freedoms for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, and queer community (GLBTQ), and some gender rights. However, a participant from the UN believed that it was important not to focus too much on these outlying differences at this point. In this process it becomes necessary to push beyond fundamentalist interpretations and consider the view of “forward thinking” religious leaders. A human rights leader commented in this way:

But obviously, because Afghanistan, as I said before it is a particular situation, because of the influence that religion has, whatever we say to them, what we advocate for, we advocate for using the religion, and in a very right way. You know there is the fundamental interpretation of Islam, and there is the ‘real’ interpretation of Islam. So we go for the ‘real’ interpretation obviously, we follow all the human rights conventions.

Compromising with international human rights norms has created a difficult situation since Afghanistan is a signatory to most of the major international human rights conventions. One attempt at reconciliation between international and locally accepted

norms that was made is increasing reliance by Islamic political leaders upon the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam* document. However, this widely referenced document was criticised as also failing to ensure religious and gender rights (Kazemi, 2002).

These socio-cultural-religious concerns have impacted human rights work in Afghanistan. Dogmatism and strict interpretations of international conventions hit solid local resistance, and participants described how they are being required to actively consider local cultural and social norms, and filter their policy interventions through Afghan religious and social channels. An Afghan human rights official described it in the following quote:

Afghanistan is in a very peculiar situation - it is very special in so many cases - fortunately and unfortunately. So the human rights concepts that I'm talking about, it has to basically be about them - the Afghans. It has to be within the boundaries of the religion, and within the boundaries of the culture and context.

Other participants noted that adapting to the local context is a struggle for Western actors, who have pressured the Afghan government about human rights in ways that are not in the best interests of Afghans (according to an Afghan academic). However, foreign organisations face stiff challenges because political/home constituencies, rights activists, and foreign donors are often unable and unwilling to compromise their views of human rights to mesh with local contextual concerns. They struggle to sacrifice the universality of these rights.

Despite this apparent dissonance, Afghanistan has committed itself to extensive human rights reform in gender rights. Are these reforms affecting actual practice on the ground across Afghanistan? According to this study's participants, there is significant

rhetoric at the elite political level regarding human rights that has not resulted in actual progress on the ground. For example, with regards to gender rights, several participants described how a prevailing culture of male dominance has maintained severe social restrictions on Afghan women. Gender rights inside the family were eroded with the 2009 Shia Family Law, which places serious restrictions on a woman's sexual rights leading to what critics call 'legalised rape' inside of a marriage.

Further complicating the situation is serious inadequacy in human resources and the capacity to implement, monitor, enforce, and report on human rights reforms that are agreed upon. The grassroots population, as well as civil society human rights leaders, struggle to push forward with rights work due to an unwillingness of government decision-makers to listen to its constituents as well as the grassroots' unwillingness to engage in active advocacy.

Militarisation and Politicisation of Peacebuilding Activities

Non-military and non-governmental actors within the international intervention process in Afghanistan have accused countries such as the U.S. and Canada of directing increasing amounts of its aid away from the humanitarian community and the UN, and rather directing its aid through military channels with the purpose of achieving military and political objectives. This is a clear departure from traditional intervention practices that clearly separated humanitarian and military activity. This peacebuilding methodological shift has significant consequences for the overall intervention project in Afghanistan according to many of this study's participants. This section explores their concerns regarding military involvement in international aid and development, the

militarisation and politicisation of the UN and other non-military actors, and the privatisation of many peacebuilding activities.

The Military, PRTs, Aid, and Development

International military forces in Afghanistan have actively incorporated aid and development as a ‘non-lethal weapon’ in the war against the insurgency. Dubbed the ‘hearts and minds’ campaign, NATO and the U.S. military have undertaken massive aid and development programming in order to stabilise regions, gather intelligence, and enable local populations to resist the influence of the insurgency. This campaign requires the military to adopt the role traditionally held by civilians, something that is not possible and particularly confusing for the local population according to one senior UN official.

Many participants (all non-military) were critical of this trend, and were noticeably uneasy with the role adopted by the international military. An Afghan government official stated the following:

The [Provincial Reconstruction Team] PRT gentlemen are going with their weapons to do a project. Actually development activities with the military do not suit, do not look good, particularly in Afghanistan people do not like it if you have a weapon and you do a project for them. Even if they needed it, it is kind of imposing. They don't like you in their village with your military uniform, with your weapon, you do a project for them, and they will say, “I will not use it, I will not protect it, I do not like it.” So the next day if somebody wants to destroy it there is nobody to say, “Do not”, because nobody likes it.

Another participant, a foreign researcher, stated emphatically that:

Everyone sees that none of the Afghan problems are going to be solved by force, anyone who knows Afghanistan, and anyone who knows development knows very well that you can't do real development at the same time as you have foreign armed forces in the country...and they know that even these 10 destructive years of history, at the end of the day they don't amount to much.

Several others also argued for a stricter separation of humanitarian and military activities.

Joining aid to the presence of troops reduces the legitimacy of the overall peacebuilding mission because as troops are withdrawn, so too are the aid dollars. The military-aid relationship leads to the funding of shallow shortsighted development work according to a foreign NGO director. He predicted that many development organisations would find it increasingly difficult to access needed funding in the scramble to withdraw troops from Afghanistan. Also, he feared that the history was again playing itself out. At the end of the 1980s U.S. aid to Afghanistan was completely withdrawn as the Soviets withdrew, leaving Afghanistan extremely vulnerable to civil war. Rather, an Afghan NGO director challenged the international community to increase funding for secure areas despite foreign military withdrawals, as opposed to pouring all of its funding into insecure areas that have the greatest troop concentration. In this way aid distribution would be conducted according to need as opposed to troop presence.

The primary path through which military aid and development is channelled is the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) structure in Afghanistan. PRT units in each province in Afghanistan house military, diplomatic, and development personnel and are charged with reconstruction efforts in the province in which they are situated. This study's participants, however, were quite critical of both the structure and efforts of PRTs. The fundamental critique was that PRTs were the driving force behind much of the aid militarisation. Both military and development operations are run out of the same structure. Thus, aid and development becomes a joint political-military activity primarily aimed at achieving the objectives of the military. An NGO official charged that aid is then attached to insurgent activity as opposed to a generous response to local basic needs, which damages its legitimacy in the eyes of local populations. Several participants noted

that more secure provinces received significantly less PRT aid, and were sometimes assigned PRT personnel from countries with little to offer in terms of aid volume.

Another significant critique levelled against PRTs addressed its relationship to the broader aid and development community including the UN, local government structures, and NGOs. One foreign UN official described the relationship between PRTs and his UN organisation:

It is fair to say, and not critical, to say that it has been a very bad relationship over this last decade of existence for the PRTs. I think that in any argument, no one party is correct. Usually when people are arguing they are both a little bit wrong, and from their own point of view a bit right. But in this country it has been very acrimonious, very accusatory, very aggressive.

At the heart of this “acrimonious” relationship are dissonant aid and development methodologies and undesirable consequences, particularly for the non-military aid and development community. PRT aid and development work is often heavily armed because PRT personnel are labelled as enemy targets by insurgent groups and actively attacked. The arming of PRT aid staff has the effect of elevating the danger levels and risk for all other development actors, and in particular the government, the UN, and NGOs. Non-military development entities have experienced an increase in attacks upon workers, abductions, and severe restrictions on their operations since 2001. There are currently large swaths of Afghan territory that are not safely accessible to the un-armed humanitarian community. The work of PRTs has blurred and destroyed a sense of impartiality and neutrality in aid and development, and has led a large segment of the humanitarian community to refuse partnership with the PRTs. This is, however, a difficult task. Large donor organisations such as CIDA or USAID often base their operations from within PRT compounds and will simultaneously fund both projects

conducted by the military as well as project work conducted by non-military groups such as the UN and NGOs. Thus, a clean separation of operations is not possible in many cases, and non-military aid and development groups suffer a loss of legitimacy as local populations struggle to understand their motivations and agendas.

The participants also accused PRT aid and development practices of failing to secure Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. An Afghan NGO director argued that PRTs did not generally achieve partnerships with local villages, which was commonplace within NGO practice. For example, school-building was often done without adequate community input, nor was it concerned with the sustainability of the project outputs after completion, nor did it require local inputs such as ideas, resources, and labour. An Afghan government official agreed and noted that PRT project work was often not protected by local communities and fell prey to insurgent attacks. Further, another Afghan government official complained that PRTs had failed to consult adequately with government Ministries regarding their plans, which was certainly a consequence of international funding being channelled around government Ministries. Thus, the PRTs were sometimes accused of being a “copy of the government” in the provinces, which is clearly working against their stated goal of supporting local government. As a result, PRTs are facing mounting pressure from the Afghan government to allow their replacement by Afghan government entities as part of the transition process.

Militarisation and Politicisation of the Foreign Intervention Community

Many participants provided evidence of both the militarisation and politicisation of non-military peacebuilding actors. A particularly alarming development is the fortification of UN and NGO compounds in response to elevated security risks and the

threat of attack, and includes the widespread use of armoured vehicles. The UN and most other foreign compounds are contained within thick high cement walls topped with barbed wire, are guarded carefully from elevated armed check posts, and closely resemble an army base. Entry is allowed through multiple layers of blast doors and carefully controlled vehicle checkpoints. Entire sections of the city are closed off to local traffic, creating an atmosphere of war, and making many Afghans feel like “3rd class citizens in their own country” (Afghan NGO director). Guesthouses for foreigners have armed guards without and within, and one participant even claimed that certain UN civilian staff were trained to go on the offensive in a time of attack. He claimed that they were trained to “take over and to actually chase the attackers and kill them all, even if it is outside of the compound. So it is not just defending, but taking a counteroffensive.” This is an alarming departure from traditional UN procedures. It is also commonplace for NGO compounds to have armed guards. A participant from the international military pointed out (with noticeable sarcasm in his voice) that there had recently been growing pressure to “beautify” Kabul and remove some of the walls and fences. This pressure on the international community to step out from behind its barricades is certainly a dilemma as insurgent attacks are only increasing in scope and quantity.

Several participants also noted the politicisation of peacebuilding by non-military actors. The unapologetic political interests of many donors, as well as the funding of local military groups in only one side of the war, is directly aimed at cementing the power of one side in a conflict, and directly violates traditional notions of neutrality in the provision of aid. A donor official believed that USAID, in particular, was concerned with controlling how its money was spent and had clear political objectives behind its

activities. The same official believed that USAID's control and political objectives were hindering efforts at achieving Afghan ownership since, as a result, the Afghan government and civil society were granted a limited voice in funding decisions.

Peacebuilding actors such as the UN have by necessity dropped any notions of neutrality and have adopted a political stance because the international military and broader peacebuilding community has largely championed and backed one side in the Afghan conflict and excluded the other, namely the Taliban. This sort of politicised stance has resulted in a partitioning of the Afghan UN system into the "black UN" and the "blue UN"; "black" being the political arm (e.g. UNAMA, UNDP, etc.), and "blue" is the humanitarian arm (UNOCHA, WHO, UNICEF, etc.). Two different UN officials highlighted the considerable tensions between the two components that centred on the political activities of the "black" side, and the desire of the "blue" UN agencies "to work as fairly as possible on both sides, in a very transparent matter and stay out of the politics." He described the complexities this division has created:

It is also important to clarify with government and with all of the different multiple stakeholders that are involved here, as to what 'humanitarian' is - independent, based upon need, not based upon any political affiliation, and is biased only towards the beneficiaries, the people that need assistance. Afghanistan is a hugely politicised context where you have international military, many international governments, and states represented ... So how we engage with them and decide how we will work has to be rather understood, so that we are not seen as agents of any government whatsoever, so we are not seen as having anything but humanitarian interests. We walk a fine line in that way ... Having said that we all need to work together - and inside the house and outside the house are two different things. Our goal is to work closely with them at all times, not only to ensure separation of humanitarian activities and objectives within the larger strategic [political] plans, but complement them. That is the "one UN" approach I would say. And at the same time it is important having acknowledged that close internal working relationship, from an external point of view, ensure that humanitarian services are seen as

independent, apolitical, neutral, and act on the basis of need as opposed to political objectives.

Clarity and the separation of roles, as opposed to being externally viewed as one large UN monolith, was his desired outcome. Achieving this clarity is challenging in a context where white Toyota Land Cruisers (the vehicle of choice by the UN) mean the same thing for local populations despite the ID logo on the side door.

Another factor feeding the politicisation of peacebuilding is the utter dominance of the U.S. in funding, military activity, and the broader leadership over the overall peacebuilding intervention. While the sheer volume of aid is problematic according to a couple of foreign participants in that it encourages carelessness and thoughtlessness, the fact that the bulk of the foreign aid comes from one country, the U.S., is drowning out other voices that are more concerned with bolstering Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. For example, a foreign military participant outlined how American ‘ways of doing things’ were utterly dominating military strategy and the effort to build up the Afghan army and police forces. Smaller actors such as some European military forces were often drowned out despite the value of their potential input. One country’s military personnel would remove their shoes before searching an Afghan home, thereby abiding by local cultural practices. This culturally sensitive approach was perceived as quite dissonant with the ‘smash down the door’ tactics of U.S. Special Forces. Another participant from a European country felt that his country’s soldiers had wandered from their goals of stabilisation and were drawn into a more aggressive and offensive war of engagement.

The Privatisation of Peacebuilding

A related theme to the politicisation of peacebuilding, albeit perhaps indirectly, is the rapid privatisation and commercialisation of peacebuilding activities. Many sectors, including security, de-mining, development, governance, and education work are increasingly witnessing the involvement of private for-profit companies. The international and local NGO community has traditionally conducted many of these tasks. My study's participants were critical of this movement, and pointed out that while local private development may be essential in kick-starting the struggling Afghan economy, many of these companies are international and siphon profits out of the local context. And worse, many of these companies are not neutral actors; they have extensive political ties to foreign governments. These ties have led to perceptions of extensive corruption within the private sector. Several international companies involved in peacebuilding were accused by this study's participants as profiting from the conflict in Afghanistan, which highlights the question of whether self-interests are sabotaging their work.

Of primary concern for interviewees was the extensive use of security companies to provide security services for peacebuilding projects and programmes (Mandel, 2002).

A foreign researcher participant highlighted his concerns regarding these companies:

These are also foreign companies, who hire Special Forces from some of the worst places in terms of human rights. They commit murder, torture, and are abusive and dismissive of justice systems here.

An Afghan government official insisted that security companies were not needed with most government work, and should be pared down and removed from the scene because of their exorbitant costs and rampant corruption. He stated the following in his interview:

Remove the security companies - the government understands that there is no more need for your security companies. I don't do any single project

with security companies, so why do you do it with security companies? And you put additional costs for your security companies. And your security companies are creating a lot of corruption, it creates a lot of problems for the people that you don't know. For the purpose you have hired them, they are not only doing that thing.

Another Afghan government official viewed the extra-judicial justice enacted by these companies, as well as the inability of the Afghan government to control the actions of the security companies, as significant barriers to attempts to promote Afghan ownership.

Dependency on Aid Intervention and Project Sustainability

Afghanistan's economy has shown significant improvement following the 2001 invasion. However, it is clear that this growth is largely driven by foreign aid (primarily from the U.S.), as foreign aid made up approximately 42 percent of GDP in 2008 according to the IMF. Afghanistan has grown vitally dependent on foreign aid to prop up its precarious economy. This massive flow of aid¹⁴ has left the country's economy prone to massive failure once the aid is withdrawn. The participants believed that this dependency has hindered the development of a functional and sustainable peacebuilding programme in Afghanistan that aims for long-term sustenance from within Afghanistan itself.

Aid Dependency in Afghanistan

There are distinct reasons for aid dependency in Afghanistan. The government of Afghanistan, and virtually the entire body of Afghan peacebuilding actors, are clearly

¹⁴ To give a sense of foreign war spending and aid levels, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reports that the U.S. alone has spent over \$444 billion on its war effort in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2011 (Belasco, 2011). Additionally, CRS reports that the U.S. has spent over \$67 billion on foreign assistance to Afghanistan (including USAID) between 2001 and 2011, \$39 billion of which has been spent on training and equipping Afghan forces (Katzman, 2012) Compare this to Afghanistan's annual revenue generation of approximately \$1.8 billion.

unable to procure the financial resources needed to operate effectively. Civil society organisations and government Ministries and departments are vitally dependent on international aid, calling into question any sort of sustainability in peacebuilding and Afghan ownership over peacebuilding processes. For example, a director of an Afghan government watchdog organisation highlighted how the Afghan government has thus far refused to fulfil its funding commitments to its operation, instead expecting it to secure its own funding through the international community. Other organisations requiring key funding for peacebuilding tasks also believed that the Afghan government could not be relied upon for financial resources or other support.

The availability and dependency on outside funding sources has significant consequences. A foreign NGO director described his concerns regarding this problem:

[They] are used to getting help from the outside, and they are in big trouble when there is no more any financial help from the outside ... And this is now what we are trying to familiarise them with - this idea because the time will come, and it has already arrived, when financial aid from the outside is more and more sparse and they will have to take over not only security, they have to deal with their own security, they will also have to take care of financing. This is the most difficult part actually. It is not easy.

Donor dependency creates a sense of fragility, and a belief that the looming reductions in funding will instigate widespread struggle and cause the peacebuilding process to crumble. An Afghan government official described this dependency as follows:

But there is still that dependency on aid money in security. A big portion of funds to the security side is coming from the external budget. If you cut it all of a sudden, that goes down and will be demolished, you cannot keep [up the security structure] ... So that fragility is something for consideration. And if we are in a state of fragility and dependency to aid money, then we have to think about the ownership issue, how we define it in this context.

As the previously quoted participant mentioned, donor dependency blocks the emergence of an authentic Afghan ownership of peacebuilding because of the significant gap between the expectations of donors and the Afghan government and civil society organisations. As an Afghan government official put it, “We have not come to some sort of equilibrium of what we want and what the donor wants - that equilibrium is up and down.” Equilibrium, as such, is difficult to achieve. An Afghan NGO official explained why this is so:

The obvious reason is aid dependency of the country. Because the country is dependent it needs financial aid from the donors to run the affairs of this country. And of course the person who gives the money, he has more say in these decisions.

In other words the person holding the purse is able to dictate what occurs in the dependent nation. As such, a top-down relationship between the international community and its Afghan counterparts is propagated. Local ‘partners’ are excluded from decision-making, and are essentially “puppets of the foreigners,” according a civil society leader.

The presence of and dependence upon foreign aid has stifled creativity on the hard road to success according to a civil society leader. He believed that international aid was changing the work ethic of the emerging generation. He alleged that Afghans were beginning to ask for aid to support work that should not be supported. For example, one Afghan participant complained that he was being asked to fund the upkeep of a traditional farming irrigation infrastructure that should not require outside funding. As another example, one foreign donor official noted how many Afghan organisations were likely going to struggle with working under a restricted budget once aid monies are withdrawn. They have grown accustomed to a seemingly endless flow of foreign money to the various sectors of the peacebuilding process.

Sustainability of Peacebuilding Work

Aid dependency is a serious hindrance to ensuring project sustainability. Aid levels are astonishingly massive and, in some cases, have propped up processes, structures, and personnel that cannot be sustained once the international community reduces its current aid provisions. For example, one major and essential ANP initiative spanning the entire country (not named for confidentiality purposes) has only achieved a level of 5 percent support from the Afghan government after ten years of development. While perhaps encouraging as a first step, achieving the remainder of support from the Afghan government seems unlikely within the timeframes currently tossed around in transition rhetoric. As another example, a couple of participants believed that sustaining the current numbers of troops in the ANA is impossible, and is creating significant ambiguity regarding the future of Afghan security. Similarly, a civil society NGO director alleged that a shortage of core funding (money not attached to a particular project or initiative) required them to lay off numerous project staff following the end of particular projects, making it very difficult to recruit appropriate staff for new initiatives.

On a smaller level, one Afghan government official opined how it was difficult to upkeep the computer systems acquired with international aid with even the relatively minor costs of small repairs and the replacement of printer cartridges. Other participants talked about how development projects were sometimes abandoned or allowed to fall into disrepair because of formidable upkeep costs. As a result, a foreign donor official described how international funding organisations can be essentially held hostage to their previous generosity by repeated requests for additional funding to keep previous funded processes or hardware in play. If they deny funding they fear that previous monies will

have been wasted as projects stall, or the funded infrastructure and hardware dilapidates. In addition, they pointed out how project work given for free without any sacrificial inputs by recipients tends to result in limited local ownership and protection, which sometimes results in the insurgency targeting the project work in rural Afghan villages.

Numerous dilemmas surround the design of sustainable project work. Limited achievements in terms of Afghan ownership have made ensuring sustainability difficult in many peacebuilding initiatives. An Afghan government official talked about a dilemma faced by his colleagues during the project design phase. He described how, during the design phase for a potential peacebuilding project, it was difficult to predict the level of local Afghan government support for the initiative at the end of the project. It was understood that during the initial phases of the project the international community would be footing virtually the entire bill, yet the ideal outcome would see the Afghan government taking hold of project outputs and carrying the project forward following the termination of international funding. However, an unstable and insecure work environment such as in Afghanistan made this prediction very difficult. It is very difficult to foresee the state of affairs even a year into the future, never mind the three to five year lifespan of typical peacebuilding project work. Thus, project designers are faced with a difficult choice; should they underachieve in project goals, or should they design the project to maximise peacebuilding outcomes? Underachievement will increase the likelihood that project outputs will be sustainable for the local government or local groups. However, by settling for reduced peacebuilding expectations, the project may not succeed in ensuring greater levels of security and peace, which reduces the project's chances at being sustainable. Consequently, efforts at ensuring financial sustainability

may ironically prevent the realisation of financial sustainability. According to one foreign funding official, this funding dilemma has led some Afghan government institutions to focus on requesting funding for resources such as computers, vehicles, building repairs, and increased salaries, as opposed to requesting funding for project work focused on transformative change in Afghan society, or in institutional culture, philosophy, and work processes.

Breaking Dependency and Ensuring Sustainability

This study's interviewees also described the ways in which Afghan ownership can be bolstered through breaking the cycle of dependency and ensuring that peacebuilding project work is sustainable over the long-term. However, the road towards reduced dependency is filled with dilemmas. None of the study's participants believed that Afghan organisations or the Afghan government could operate functionally without the support of international backers at this time. They argued that Afghanistan was destined to be reliant on outside funding for the foreseeable future in order to maintain its democratic structures and processes and maintain even a modicum of security. However, one Afghan NGO participant believed that even in this disempowering milieu there were opportunities for advancing Afghan ownership that must not be ignored. He stated the following in his story:

Financial sustainability is very important but at the moment you do not have the ability - it will take decades by the time Afghanistan gains financial sustainability. But at least you can include them in key functions, at least you can include key Afghans in decisions, you can place them in the steering position to drive the processes. That is also not happening.

Increased inclusion, provision of power, partnership, and the placing of Afghans in positions of authority can create a healthy movement towards Afghan ownership, even inside of structures of dependency.

These kinds of processes may start to reverse the trends of dependency, and rebuild a sense of responsibility and independence that has long defined the Afghan culture.

A foreign NGO director talked about this problem in the following manner:

The sense of responsibility of the Afghan people, they have to be aware that help cannot constantly come from outside and they have to participate in the work themselves - that they are also responsible. They cannot keep on going on saying that we all have suffered from 30 years of war which is being inflicted on us because of political interests coming from outside, this is not possible.

Peacebuilding ventures in Afghanistan must ensure that Afghans are allowed to lead and direct, and secure a sense of authentic responsibility for any peacebuilding progress. As such, it appears that unless civil society organisations are willing to separate themselves from international money, they will need to creatively guarantee a sense of ownership over the definition of agendas in civil society. However, pushing aside international monies seems very unlikely. For example, some civil society organisations have sometimes accepted funding for the sake of securing funding only, despite the fact that the required project work is clearly outside of their expertise. International donors would need to guard against funding organisations having inadequate capacity and ensure that each funded organisation is able to effectively implement the tasks it claims it can.

Numerous participants believed that a key activity to cutting dependency and ensuring the sustainability of peacebuilding was developing local income generation for local organisations and the Afghan government. Thus, an Afghan government official

believed that local income generation is an important prerequisite to any meaningful Afghan ownership:

And the reason that [a sense of Afghan ownership] has been slow so far is that since we do not have revenue generation from our own government side there are these donors by us working. So probably until we don't have this donor money in the system we might not be able to take 100 percent ownership. There will be some donor influence over everything. I believe that is the reason for the slow process that we are on. Once we have our own revenue generation and the money is generated by the Ministry itself, probably in that case there'll be more of a sense of ownership, and much will be coming from the Afghans.

Procuring local funding seems, on the surface of things, to be an insurmountable challenge in Afghanistan for a couple of reasons. Generalised poverty makes it impossible to generate significant taxes. Unrelenting insecurity is making investors wary of committing their money to enterprises in Afghanistan. And, the powerful drug and crime industry is willing and able to infiltrate and corrupt the private sector. However, there are some possibilities for localised income generation. Afghanistan holds significant mineral wealth and, as a major shipping corridor, could procure considerable income in border customs and tariff duties. And on a smaller scale, at least one international NGO had creatively designed its projects with a sustainable local income feeding project activities.

Moving to the level of the peacebuilding project recipient, several participants believed that aid recipients should be making significant contributions to project work during the implementation cycle. While the NSP programme has institutionalised the requirement of community input, project work from the international community does not always require local input of resources and time. An Afghan NGO director described this necessity as follows:

When you have a project there should be the Afghan contribution and they understand that this is their project. It is for them, and they should work for its success. If you don't get them involved and you do everything and tell them and take it, then they will not take care of it. So for that reason it should be needs-based, so the request should come from the community.

Thus, some NGOs are requiring participants to share in the costs of the services they receive.

Unreasonable Project Timeframes

Project timeframes in Afghanistan are impacting the possibilities of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. Numerous participants perceived that a large amount of peacebuilding project work was often rushed or incorporated “quick and dirty” methodologies, and utilised careless, ill-considered project designs. These kinds of activities tended to sideline large segments of the Afghan population and, if anything, served the self-serving purposes of a small elite group of Afghan actors or government officials. Rather, several participants (both Afghan and foreign) believed that peacebuilding and development should be increasingly thoughtful, inclusive of a wide variety of actors, guarded against unreasonable expectations, and have much extended timelines. Current timelines of 6 months to 3 years are entirely inadequate for deep-seated change and transformation to occur in many sectors. Instead a ‘dose of reality’ must be injected into the prevalent peacebuilding culture within which decisions are made for the Afghan people. A foreign military participant believed that effective peacebuilding, by necessity, required a lengthy journey that was supported by consistent, massive, and sustained inputs. Expectations are certainly elevated in Afghanistan as there is no patience for lengthy development processes that have taken generations in the developed world to bear fruit. However, several Afghan participants believed that they

would not witness significant changes in their lifetime despite the massive investment in the country by the international community. “This is not a quick fix”, stated a leading civil society official. It is surprising that not one of the participants discussed the processes aimed at instituting a significantly longer term vision (e.g. 20+ years) for peacebuilding progress in Afghanistan.

The peacebuilding strategies of the international community are driving the timeframe problem. Several factors are seen as beneath the rushed nature of peacebuilding work. First, international donor requirements require project life spans to be truncated. Second, international project staff have a quick turnover rate as they are often in and out in 6 months, thus making it very difficult to absorb the local context and local needs. Third, the active presence of the foreign military has skewed the expectations placed on development and peacebuilding work. A foreign participant from the donor community stated the following:

Another dilemma is that the military, they are here for a very short period of time, and development takes a long time. And the soldiers here want to see results in about six months, which makes them do things that might not be good, or at least not sustainable.

According to a UN official, PRT staff often have inadequate experience to adapt assistance to local (and often quickly morphing) needs.

Fourth, the active transition to local Afghan military control has served to shorten project timeframes and boost local expectations across the overall peacebuilding mission. On the surface it would seem that a focus on military transition would bolster efforts aimed at increased Afghan ownership. However, it is not quite working out this way according to one Afghan government official. Throwing responsibilities onto the laps of unprepared counterparts is a struggle, and particularly if there is little, if any, local voice

in the development of those responsibilities in the first place. Rather, the international staff must patiently work with their staff and their counterparts, carefully passing on knowledge and procedures even if the process is extended and less efficient than if they conducted the tasks without local assistance. For example, one foreign diplomat participant stated that this transfer of skills might require that “in meetings you would have half as many Afghans as you have foreigners [as opposed to being a minority]. It would mean having a lot more patience, I think, and a lot more time to do things.”

Shortened project timeframes are also adversely affecting the Afghan government. Most troubling of all is the fact that government institutions and processes are often bypassed in order to achieve project deadlines without the ‘interference’ of local actors who may decrease efficiency. It is understandable that project managers pressured to accomplish a task within a stringent deadline will be wary of inviting more actors to the table. A second concern with the somewhat frantic and rushed peacebuilding milieu in Afghanistan is the increased willingness of government officials to jump at any sort of funding even if it is not sustainable, or does not really address the needs of the overall Ministry or department. A foreign UN official talked about the constant barrage of new initiatives being thrown at Afghan government officials:

Everyday some new donor, some new organisation is coming with a new concept. "We would like to do this here." So they [the government officials] have to decide whether it makes sense for them or not. So that is something that they attend to on a day-to-day basis.

She went on to describe how her efforts at instilling a long-term view of transformation were very difficult in this environment.

Moreover, the participants gave evidence that project quality also suffers as project timelines are shortened. Perhaps most disturbing is that quick project work with

an immediate visibility to ‘win hearts and minds’ is trumping project work that would address deeper and more ambiguous peacebuilding needs. With regards to infrastructure, a foreign funding official shared how large projects with extended timelines were often overlooked in favour of shorter projects having “political benefits” despite the fact that the larger projects are often essential for overall development processes in Afghanistan.

Short-term thinking and the reliance on quick-fix projects are making it difficult to sequence peacebuilding activities properly. A former government official commented as follows:

You know in Afghanistan we never experienced a long-term strategy that was committed to by the international community... This has been the biggest problem. Therefore, as a result of this short-term thinking and planning things were rushed in Afghanistan. In a country which never experienced democracy, in a country which was a failed state for almost one and a half decades or two decades, in a country which was suffering from economic and social devastation and destruction and political as well, all of a sudden hundreds of issues became a priority, so the international community did not take a realistic approach towards the democratisation of Afghanistan, they did not sequence... There was no long term financial commitment, budgets are provided on a annual basis ... Then people picked bits and pieces from one sector and bits and pieces from another sector and did not do it effectively. And the international community that I have experienced has pressed too many buttons at the same time. Because pressing too many buttons will divert resources, particularly human resources, from one project to another, from another project to another. Because the country is still suffering a huge shortage of qualified Afghans, and by initiating new projects the potential was diverted.

Afghan ownership depends to a large extent on the quality and quantity of appropriate local Afghan leaders. However, according to this participant, the massive intervention and the overwhelming barrage of activity has created a human resources dilemma. While the financial resources are often there, not nearly enough local leaders can be trained to implement newly developed peacebuilding project work. For example, an international

military participant averred that rapid training requirements to meet the expected quotas for Afghan military development required placing soldiers in leadership positions with virtually no experience. He stated, “And that takes time, you cannot just grow a good Sergeant overnight.” Military leaders with inadequate training or even basic education pose obvious problems. Another foreign participant averred that her project timeframes did not allow her adequate preparation time for training her Afghan capacity development staff. Thus, when her staff are out in the field, they were often not much ahead of the project recipients in terms of capacity for the tasks at hand. In a related case, two government officials shared with me how their capacity was consistently stifled due to constant uncertainty about whether their position would be funded by the international community due to shortened funding timeframes and commitments.

The Struggle to Coordinate Peacebuilding

The coordination of peacebuilding activities is directly linked to the possibility of Afghan ownership of those same activities. Project coordination, along with project design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation are essential tasks indicative of possible ownership of the peacebuilding activity at hand. Four ‘coordination’ themes emerged from the interview narratives: (1) the necessity of effective coordination; (2) descriptions of coordination successes enjoyed on the ground; (3) the extensive challenges in front of coordination efforts; and (4) a debate regarding who should be leading coordination efforts.

Coordination Necessities

Given the diversity of focus for peacebuilding actors, the establishment of coordination structures that allow for increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding has

distinct advantages. First, effective peacebuilding coordination increases efficiency and reduces waste and project overlap. For example, one Afghan participant believed that increased coordination of peacebuilding in his region of the country would allow the various governmental, UN, and non-governmental organisations to conduct shared training sessions, which would prevent multiple trainings on similar or identical themes. The benefits are cyclical since increased efficiency would, in turn, augment local government efforts at gaining a sense of control over local peacebuilding project work. Second, increased coordination permits a wide variety of peacebuilding actors from different sectors to complement each other's work. For example, a foreign UN participant shared with me that the nature and complexity of poverty in Afghanistan required a multi-faceted response. He described it in this way:

Any sort of environment where there is humanitarian need, one type of assistance will usually not save a life. For if you have micronutrient or food shortages you also have health problems - you certainly have water, sanitation, hygiene problems. The point about what we are trying to do globally is try to ensure complementarity life-saving assistance.

Thus, he indicated that the UN and large donors are increasingly designing programmes that incorporate several actors into the intervention.

Third, improved coordination allows for the superior sequencing of aid and development activities. The multitude of activities and the wide spectrum of peacebuilding work being committed to Afghanistan make it difficult not to overload a particular sector or activity, which serves to unreasonably raise local expectations in other areas that are now lagging. According to a foreign UN official, unmet expectations can create dissatisfaction and resistance to development progress.

Fourth, effective coordination increases the odds of a smooth transition to local Afghan control of peacebuilding. For example, two participants described how efforts at coordinating their line of work have helped ensure that the Afghan government would be handed a unified and cohesive system of procedures and an infrastructure at the termination of their projects. In each case, more than one NGO was working on similar objectives in different parts of the country, which may result in two varying structures to emerge. If the government were handed a disharmonised structure it would make post-transition government administration difficult, if not impossible. Unfortunately this type of thinking appears to be all too rare because in many cases projects are designed and implemented in isolation from similar projects occurring around the country.

Coordination Successes

Despite the apparent chaos of activities across Afghanistan, some of the study's participants did note some coordination successes, and growth in achieving the increased coordination of peacebuilding activities¹⁵. The UN appears to be increasingly cognisant of building up its coordination potential together with local Afghan government counterparts. A foreign senior UN official described his organisation's efforts at coordinating with the Afghan government:

So we're working closely with [two Ministries]. As far as government coordination in assistance there are countless countless meetings, coordination upon coordination - in the area of education, in the area of health, in the area of emergency recovery, it goes on and on and on.

¹⁵The research questions were not aimed at a full investigation of the topic of 'coordination' *per se* since this thesis is fundamentally interested in the topic of 'ownership'.

This coordination, in conjunction with the increasing tendency to coordinate and implement closely with other UN agencies, does increase the likelihood of the Afghan government eventually attaining a workable level of coordination over peacebuilding activities. However, there appears to be room for significant growth. UN agencies are still primarily coordinated from within, and often expect that other peacebuilding actors such as the Afghan government will adapt their plans to the UN's wishes.

The NGO community in Afghanistan has achieved noticeable coordination success. Coordination within the NGO sector is well developed, and there exist at least seven Afghan NGOs that have coordination work as a major component of their organisational mission. The NGO community in Afghanistan participates in extensive information sharing, and has developed a common code of conduct, particularly in regards to its stance towards working with the military. In these structures the NGO community in Afghanistan is able to stand unified before the Afghan government and the foreign military regarding NGO-specific concerns or problems.

With regards to the Afghan government, the formation of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), a high level coordinating body focused on the overall implementation of international peacebuilding in Afghanistan, has provided a forum for senior Afghan political leaders to liaise with international counterparts and provide input into the overall direction of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. There exists, however, significant criticism regarding the ability of Afghan members to influence key decisions. This foreign-local imbalance is perhaps evident in the fact that the JCMB contains three times as many international members as its Afghan members.

Moving from the central to the provincial level, Provincial Development Councils (PDCs) provide a forum for local government structures (particularly the Provincial Governor) to coordinate local development initiatives and prioritise needed project work through provincial budget plans. International aid agencies such as the UN and NGOs serve as observers to these meetings. Regarding their effectiveness, one UN official participant commented that only a small fraction of the PDC's development wishes came to fruition, which certainly calls into question the voice given to the PDC by the central government and the international community.

The Challenges of Coordination

Despite advances and successes, there are serious challenges that are road-blocking the advance of local ownership over peacebuilding initiatives. Mission complexity and a lack of coherence are preventing Afghan groups and individuals from having a greater voice at the coordination table.

Contextual complexity and coordination. Peacebuilding coordination is extremely complex. For example, each type of organisational grouping (for e.g. UN, NGO, government, and the military, etc.) has their own coordination structure(s). Also, each sector of peacebuilding (for e.g. emergency relief, health, and education, etc.) has 'cluster' coordination structures that draw all types of organisation under its watch. For example, the health cluster draws together UN agencies involved with health, international and local NGOs with health related projects, and the local government Department of Health. Further, there are numerous other coordination structures that were formed by international donors, the international political community, and the international military. Each of these structures often attempt to draw in a wide range of

actors in order to build legitimacy and ensure actual influence over other actors. The results of this situation are seemingly contradictory. On the one hand, numerous participants reported that the overall peacebuilding mission was sorely under-coordinated. On the other hand, numerous interviewees complained about a virtual glut of coordination meetings that both consume an enormous amount of time and energy and end up working at odds with each other. According to a foreign funding official, “We are tripping over each other with all the bloody coordination meetings and conferences on this and that.” An Afghan government official argued that new structures were constantly created to replace older structures resulting in the fact that the available human capacity has become spread thin:

Don't you think that they should have ... supported an already existing structure rather than developing a new one? ... This thins out the capacity furthermore, and they will not get good results there. Then someone else may come and make another coordination body that coordinates between other coordination bodies [Laughs]. We keep duplicating each other and we are restarting everything all over again.

This participant believed that Afghan ownership of peacebuilding required a reduced number of drastically simplified coordination structures in order to best use the limited levels of capacity and human resources available. He believed that Afghan ownership could potentially be amplified with “very simple mechanisms, and very simple lines of reporting.”

The government’s need to reduce complexity will require a reduction in the number of stakeholders included at the coordination table. A foreign UN official commented on this issue in the following manner:

Coordination becomes a problem when there is such a large group of stakeholders involved in any country who are advising the government, and they're coming from different backgrounds - they have different

concepts. But then for the government as well to take a lead, and to see what works best for it and what does not work well for it.

Increased Afghan control over peacebuilding activities will by necessity reduce the voice of many international groups. However, many international groups will find it difficult to relinquish control given the (sometimes) massive amounts of money and human resources they provide to their Afghan counterparts.

A lack of coherence. A second coordination challenge blocking Afghan ownership is a lack of coherence in overarching peacebuilding strategies. The study's participants believed that a unity of purpose had not been achieved in several respects. According to several interviewees greater coherence is needed to increase peacebuilding effectiveness. There are approximately forty countries directly involved in Afghanistan, each with different peacebuilding strategies. An Afghan researcher stated, "It is becoming more and more suspicious that nobody knows what is their role here, what they want to achieve." A plethora of different roles and strategies are particularly noticeable at the regional and provincial level. For example, various PRTs differ widely in the types of activities they engage in. Further complicating the effort is the ambiguity about whether the military is talking with, or fighting against, the Taliban insurgency.

Similarly, the Afghan UN system has struggled with coordination and a division of roles and responsibilities. Despite strong efforts within the worldwide system to achieve so-called "Delivery as One" objectives (United Nations, 2006), noticeable conflict was particularly evident between the "blue" (humanitarian) and "black" (political) arms of operations in Afghanistan. This conflict was discussed earlier in this chapter, and focuses on neutrality and the militarisation and politicisation of international aid.

Who Should Be Leading the Coordination?

Central to the debate regarding Afghan ownership of peacebuilding is the concern over who should be leading the coordination of peacebuilding activities. Indicative of the complexity of the issue, the debate has revolved around numerous axes such as international-local Afghan, U.S.-international community, military-civilian, government-non-government, and central structures-regional structures.

The participants' narratives revealed a common perception that the international community and, in particular the U.S., continues to dominate peacebuilding coordination in Afghanistan. An interviewee from the international military forces shared the following in this regard:

Generally speaking, we shouldn't fool ourselves; American leadership is found within all tentacles of this theatre. They have a lot to say about what should be done. So that is a reality that we should not try to dismiss in any way. Having said that, when it is your dollar that is being spent, your nation's tax dollars that are being spent, you have a duty and obligation to make sure that it is spent efficiently and directed towards the right areas of concern.

Simply put, those who pay the bills are allowed the loudest voice, and the U.S. pays the majority of the bills in Afghanistan. It is also important to note that one participant from a foreign government funding organisation perceived that the largest U.S. donor, USAID, is quite resistant to being "coordinated." Another participant who worked for a foreign government noticed who was typically absent or excluded from the 'coordination' table:

One thing that is really problematic is that there is very little coordination, at this embassy, and it is a function of [our country's] interests, etc. etc. But we do not really coordinate anything with any of the 'Muslim' countries, as I put it, really. I really don't know what the Pakistani embassy is doing, or the Egyptian embassy is doing, there are a range of embassies here from non-Western countries who are incredibly active, and very deeply ideological about this country, and very influential, that we don't, none of us do, to varying degrees. When I go to UNAMA meetings

for instance, it is all just the Western countries. So that is one deficit that is a bit of a problem. It is also because we see things completely differently, I think. But I think that we would both benefit, certainly we can benefit from their input because they have a much more immediate interest than we do in spite of all the rhetoric about terrorism and stuff, it is too close to them.

Her words are revealing and concerning. She perceived Western dominance and non-Western exclusion in the upper-level coordination of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. This lack of voice for non-Western nations is further aggravated by the dominance of English as the ‘coordination’ language in Afghanistan.

Turning to the broader international-local nexus, several participants believed that international peacebuilding actors and, in particular, foreign government donor organisations, were unwilling and unable because of internal policy to coordinate closely with the Afghan government. An Afghan government official had this to say on the issue:

USAID has its own rules as to how to operate. Unfortunately their rules do not allow USAID to be very close partners with the government. So I don't need it. You are here for me. You are here to improve the development of Afghanistan. You are here to rehabilitate Afghanistan. You are here to bring some changes to the economy of the country. So change the rules ... The same for DFID or CIDA or all of the international donor organisations that are here.

Further, several other foreign participants revealed a belief that the foreign community views itself as clearly in the driver’s seat, and responsible for the overall direction of peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan.

The civilian-military axis in the coordination debate remains alive and well even ten years after the 2001 foreign military invasion of Afghanistan. While the initial push by the U.S. military to coordinate the overall intervention has given way to civilian counterparts, there remains significant military input into coordination structures according to my study’s participants. The involvement of the international military has

caused significant dissonance, particularly with actors such as NGOs and the humanitarian arm of the UN who are wary of a close relationship with the international military. A couple of participants from these groups shared with me how their military counterparts at coordination meetings have grown increasingly unwilling to send personnel with decision-making power, to share information, or cooperate openly. One Afghan NGO director described the international military's stance:

A lot of military personnel was participating in this meeting but not giving inputs, just listening and taking notes, and going back to their offices. There was nobody to make decisions that okay if there was something regarding the military they couldn't make a decision on the spot at the meeting, so what is the use then for such things.

Further, he shared with me that many NGOs have grown wary of cooperating with the military in order to maintain their legitimacy in the eyes of the general population. Clear civilian-military guidelines were written to guide the relationship and maintain at least a modest separation of roles that have melded with the international military's programme of humanitarian aid and development. And, according to one foreign participant from a government funding organisation, the relationship is further complicated by the distinctly different institutional cultures in military and civilian organisations.

In regards to governmental-NGO tensions, a couple of participants from the Afghan government noted the continuing influence of the non-governmental sector in areas that are deemed appropriate for control only by the Afghan government. An Afghan government official complained that NGO actors rarely communicated their plans to his Ministry and, further, that their actions often "violated" his development plans in rural areas. The resistance by NGOs to communicate with government coordinating bodies,

while perhaps understandable given low government capacity and rampant corruption, is perceived by government officials as hindering their coordination potential.

A final division in the coordination debate is the central-regional divide in Afghanistan. This geographical divide is evident in both international and Afghan government organisations for different reasons. There is a constant struggle to move beyond the confines of the capital city of Kabul due to a deteriorating security situation for international organisations such as the UN and NGOs across large swaths of Afghanistan. According to a senior UN official, security concerns are seriously affecting peacebuilding and development initiatives.

Within the Afghan government a noticeable conflict has emerged between Kabul-based Ministries and line department counterparts in the provinces, which was evident in the interview narratives. While, perhaps, rooted in the historical trend of a limited role for Kabul-based central authorities in Afghanistan, it appears that provincial government structures as well as their constituents are withholding the required and necessary support for central authorities. A foreign NGO director commented as follows:

There is not a sense of responsibility - the problem in Afghanistan is that it is a clan society - you do something for your family and eventually for your clan, but you don't do anything for your country. This sense of responsibility for your country is not developed.

Further, a foreign UN official believed that ethnic and tribal tensions would keep at bay the “mentality that a collection of different communities can come together and form one government.”

Also contentious is the strategic decision to prevent local Warlordism in the provinces, districts, and villages through bypassing local government structures with development money in favour of direct intervention by central government Ministries.

While having an important goal of reducing the power and wealth of local Warlords, it has disempowered and de-legitimised many local officials who are unable to provide evidence of their involvement in the internationally and centrally funded development activities going on in Afghan communities.

Discussion and Analysis

This chapter has explored five themes that are central to the Afghan ownership debate that were raised by this study's participants. The collective voice of the participants is significant, and these issues must be considered as important items in the ownership debate and the search for solutions and a way forward. This section draws together the discussion of the five themes and surveys any implications for the achievement of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan.

Western Liberal Intervention and Afghan Ownership

The previous discussion of processes of liberalisation and westernisation have circled the nexus of Afghan ownership and internationally-inspired economic transformation, political transformation, expectations of local work culture(s), and local reforms to conceptions of human rights. Several salient themes emerge and deserve further discussion.

Intervention and Afghan ownership. Undergirding the discussion of this topic is the ongoing struggle of both participants and the wider Afghan population to come to grips with the meaning of the current international intervention and the motivations behind it. There is no question in the minds of participants that the current intervention is inherently 'Western' and propagated primarily by the U.S. with the compliance of numerous other

cooperative powers such as Canada, Germany, Britain, and Japan, and the like. However, palpable ambiguity existed in how the study's participants, particularly Afghan participants, viewed the overall intervention. Some were willing to label it as 'occupation' or 'imperialist conquest' or 'colonialism'. Most were, however, more inclined to label it as an opportunity for cooperation, an offering of international assistance, and as relief from incessant and destructive civil warring. However, even these more 'positive' respondents are questioning whether outside economic, political, and cultural structures and processes are superior to Afghan counterparts. And, further, they are unsure how the rapid injection and instillation of these structures and processes in Afghanistan will suit a decisively uneasy context and clientele.

What can be summarised from current intervention practice and structure is that Afghan ownership continues to be difficult to realise under current political conditions. If one takes a bird's-eye view of the overall peacebuilding intervention, the reach and scope is astonishing; it aims to revamp virtually the entire Afghan state and society. Western nations and, most notably the U.S., are infusing hundreds of billions of dollars to create a Western-style liberal market-democracy that can be integrated into the world's financial and political systems. The approach is all encompassing and involves a wide range of both civilian and military actors. Authentic Afghan ownership under such massive intervention structures is doubtful, at least on a large overarching scale. How can local populations adapt and transform at such a rapid pace and with such high expectations of transformation and still grasp at opportunities for ownership? The country and its population are being asked (or perhaps coerced) to travel a completely different path, and to break with the pull and appeal of traditional/indigenous methodologies. However,

traditional/indigenous methodologies are difficult to part with, and pressure to do so may lead to a situation where peacebuilding changes not only *are* but also *feel* forced.

Achieving any sort of localised meaning for injected structures and processes becomes very difficult, and results in meaninglessness and dissonance. How can local leaders realistically take the lead on processes that are inherently different than anything that they have ever experienced? International funders are unlikely to take the risk. And even if local leaders are able to somehow adopt international expectations, how likely are they to compete with the highly trained specialised decision-makers brought in from abroad?

Resistance at the local level in response to international efforts to initiate change is certainly evident. Afghan history illustrates that such massive and disruptive social change cannot escape violent resistance, which has required that a majority of international funding be redirected into a war against insurgents such as the Taliban. And moving a bulk of the intervention activities into the military sphere will further diminish opportunities for local ownership. One major reason for this is that foreign nations are understandably unwilling to place their soldiers under the control of the developing but incapacitated Afghan military.

Afghan ownership of economic reform. Narrowing in on the theme of neo-liberal economic reforms in Afghanistan, some participants are questioning the inherent fit of capitalism to the Afghan context. The respondents rarely offered up critique in this area, which leads to the possible conclusion that capitalist reforms remain largely unquestioned in Afghanistan.

However, at least three critiques can be offered. First, capitalist ventures in Afghanistan are being questioned because of the massive and impalpable inequality that has arisen

between the poor and a small group of rich elites. A small group of Afghan individuals has rapidly taken advantage of a combination of increased financial freedoms and the massive investment of the international community to amplify their wealth. However, personal riches in an impoverished country bring enormous power, and results in a dilemma for the Afghan ownership debate. It remains unclear how much ownership in the hands of the rich elites is beneficial for the overall peacebuilding programme in Afghanistan.

A second and deeper critique focuses on the inherent fit or dissonance of neo-liberal global versions of capitalism in the Afghan culture and context. While a certain number of Afghans are indeed benefiting from new-found financial opportunities, several of my study's participants bemoaned the fact that communal tendencies were being trampled on, and they noted that the vast majority of Afghans remained impoverished with many struggling with and even dying from grinding poverty. Thus, the impoverished have certainly not achieved any sort of ownership over the economic reforms affecting their lives.

Third, the ever intensified mixture of capitalism and peacebuilding through the extensive use of private for-profit companies and private contractors in various peacebuilding sectors is concerning. The power differentials evident in post-intervention settings such as in Afghanistan has allowed definite advantages to foreign companies at the expense of the local population. A fair competitive milieu in which private commercial work can thrive is not achievable in an insecure war-affected context such as Afghanistan. Instead, corruption, fraud, crime, waste, and a multitude of other power

abuses are used to make as much money as one can while the going is good, all in the name of peacebuilding!

Afghan ownership of democratisation. Tadjbakhsh and Schoiswohl (2008, p. 252) believe that Afghanistan is a massive “experiment for the international community in installing democracy from outside.” Internationally led processes of democratisation are aimed at building a set of formal structures and processes to match the expectations of the Western democratic nations who are leading the intervention. However, the participants believed that these structures and processes have remained largely void of meaning for local Afghan populations, and largely misconstrued by most citizens, especially in rural areas.

Tadjbakhsh and Schoiswohl (2008) argue that Afghans have become primarily recipients of, and not the “driving force” for, democracy. Their assertion certainly rings true with this study’s participants. This point has massive implications for Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in the area of governance. The study’s interviewees reported the skewed perceptions of democracy held by large segments of the Afghan population. Their stories could not be further from the conceptions of democracy espoused by Egyptian and Tunisian leaders of the ‘Arab spring’ movement, for example, where democratic urges boiled over to countrywide grassroots movements demanding change. Afghan conceptions of democracy are largely drowned out by local government corruption, insecurity, poverty, and other unrelenting oppressions. Thus, the population at large clearly does not own the democratisation process. Democratisation processes have not emerged from local motivations and sacrifices. Democracy is not understood, adopted, or utilised, and as a result is often left unprotected and sometimes abandoned in

favour of other 'political' options such as submission to local insurgent or Warlord leadership.

Another factor that is limiting any political meaning inside of this 'democratic' shell that has been built is the inherent dissonance between individualistic images of democracy and communal versions of decision-making prevalent in Afghanistan. Individualistic and private voting systems are a central part of democratic elections and decision-making. However, these voting systems and processes are controversial to many communally minded Afghans, and are accused of disrupting local cultural norms and processes. Disrupting the traditional status quo does have positive effects though. Private voting is empowering those oppressed in traditional processes such as women and the very poor. Thus, a certain amount of cultural disruption, positive conflict, and transformation is required to achieve positive peace in Afghan communities. Ideally, however, leaders could creatively identify new locally developed or, perhaps hybrid procedures for choosing leaders that would mesh individualistic and communal concerns, most notably the inclusion of women and other powerless groups in the process.

It is most likely difficult for peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan to envision a democratic grassroots movement emerging in the Afghan context. The international community believed that the dire pre-2001 situation required rapid and massive external assistance to save lives, protect suffering populations, and emancipate oppressed groups such as women. And it is now equally difficult to imagine any justification for standing by and withholding governance support to a suffering population in the face of rampant violence, corruption, ethnic division, and governmental incapacity. Ironically, the very act of intervening may also have suppressed what little motivation existed for the

widespread grassroots upheaval required to remove all undemocratic and violent power brokers from office. However, one can postulate that a much more amplified programme of community level empowerment, peacebuilding, and conflict resolution run in conjunction with other internationally supported peacebuilding activities, and held as a central concern, may have achieved such an effect.

Islam and peacebuilding ownership. Local beliefs and ideas about the Islamic religion must be considered as a significant variable inside of any peacebuilding decision-making. Afghanistan is an intensely Islamic society. Islamic leaders and their teaching are consulted in everything from the country's highest laws to local issues in small mountain villages. Islam provides meaning and guidance to the lived experiences of the people. Its social prominence necessitates a consideration of how Islam may mesh with newly introduced political and economic reforms. Thus, ensuring Afghan ownership has required the right to consult local religious leaders in a wide variety of peacebuilding decision-making forums. Afghan ownership in this way also has security implications. The strength of the insurgency will only be reduced as local populations are allowed to voice their religious concerns and values at the decision-making table.

However, the involvement of Islamic leaders does pose a serious dilemma for international interveners and stifles the possibility of ownership for some segments of the population. The downside of ownership within the Islamic religious sector is the drastically reduced ownership allowed for non-Muslims, women, or other oppressed groups such as GLBTQ citizens. For example, two participants shared with me how Afghans who choose to change religion, which is a fundamental right in *The Universal*

Declaration of Human Rights, sometimes face death through informal communal ‘justice’ or long imprisonment, mistreatment, and torture within the formal justice system. At this point progress must also be noted. Afghanistan is signatory to a majority of international human rights conventions, and is supportive, at least in rhetoric and increasingly in practice, of these conventions.

Militarisation and Politicisation and Afghan Ownership

Foreign humanitarian and peacebuilding leaders over the past half-century have maintained that their interventions and aid must be neutral, be strictly separated from the work of military and political groups, and abide by a clear division of roles for humanitarian and military actors. The interviewees in this study believe that the Afghan peacebuilding venture (along with the Iraq intervention) mark a crucial turning point in worldwide aid and development strategy. They believe that the Afghan mission, primarily under the influence of U.S. policy, witnessed a reversal of decades-old development methodologies. These traditional development methodologies ensured that military actors focused on security and that humanitarian actors focused on meeting a population’s basic needs. Many peacebuilding leaders, such as this study’s participants, are now wondering if the course of peacebuilding has forever been altered, or whether it can regain its more neutral stance.¹⁶ A closer examination of some of the issues may reveal a path forward.

¹⁶ It should be noted here that the positionality of my participants as professional (and mostly well-intentioned) peacebuilding and development practitioners may prevent them from considering the critique of many critical outsiders who identify the overall post-WWII global humanitarian aid programme as a tool used by the world’s wealthy and militarily powerful nations to solidify and sustain their wealth, status, influence, and global power. In this view, the Afghan (and Iraq) case studies do not reveal a departure from traditional aid strategy, but rather a more uninhibited exhibition of muscle flexing

At the heart of the ‘militarisation’ issue is the manner in which humanitarian actors have complied with or were coerced into close quarters with military actors. In Afghanistan (and in similar fashion to the Iraq mission) it was deemed necessary to join together activities that are military and humanitarian/developmental in nature. This was evidenced in two ways. The PRT structures have allowed for physical proximity. PRTs in insecure provinces house both military and civilian personnel from the international donor community. These donor organisations simultaneously fund humanitarian work through the PRT as well as fund the activities of the non-military humanitarian community. However, the difference between these two types of funding is very difficult, if not impossible, for local populations to differentiate between.

The integration of military and humanitarian objectives and activities is also evident in reformed methods of operations on both sides. Military actors have blatantly included humanitarian actors as part of its military strategies. In 2001 U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell labelled NGOs as “[our] force multipliers” and “an important part of our combat team” (Nash, 2007, p. 5). Additionally Anders Fogh Rasmussen, NATO’s Secretary General, referred to the humanitarian community as “soft power” components within the anti-insurgency strategies being employed across Afghanistan (NATO, 2010).

As a result of this partnership, humanitarian and UN actors have increasingly fallen into the crosshairs of insurgent activity, which has resulted in numerous attacks on personnel and project work. Thus, the humanitarian community has bunkered in, barricading itself away from the outside world in Afghanistan. It is barely able to extend

by wealthy nations in the global North that does not shy away from openly acknowledging the roles of the humanitarian/peacebuilding community in their schemes of global domination.

itself beyond more secure urban centres in many cases. Humanitarian effectiveness has suffered accordingly. On the ground, the lines between humanitarian activity and military activity is severely blurred and local populations are often unable to differentiate between neutral aid and aid tied to the military's 'hearts and minds' campaign or its counter-insurgency (COIN) strategies.

Given the gravity of the situation, my study's participants generally believed that there must be a renewed separation of humanitarian actors from military and political actors in order to reverse these destructive trends. The study's participants did not believe that significant advantages would be lost for international military forces. According to several participants, military aid work is often not owned by local communities, and has not seemed to affect the resurgence of Taliban activity following military 'clean-up' operations. A risky road has been travelled making all future humanitarian activity in Afghanistan, and arguably in other war-affected contexts beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, a tricky, complex, and dangerous business. An intensely insecure context such as Afghanistan requires extraordinary clarity from humanitarian NGOs for local populations. Thus, several of my study's participants believed that the PRT structures must be dismantled, and the humanitarian community must carefully reclaim itself as neutral, and as a provider of aid for both sides in the conflict.

The military-humanitarian partnership has debilitated efforts at achieving Afghan ownership over peacebuilding activities. At a basic level, it remains very difficult for local groups to own activities that are led by foreign military forces. Military methodologies and carefully formed hierarchical leadership structures disallow significant local influence over project design or implementation. Military actors are

primarily concerned with achieving their goals, and must pick the shortest means to that end to reduce the time spent in hostile territory in order to reduce casualties. Further, military actors are unable to extend ownership to their enemy, the Taliban. It is becoming evident, however, that if the Taliban had been included in ownership initiatives over the post-2001 reconstruction period starting at the Bonn conference, the Afghan situation might possibly look quite different today. One side in the conflict cannot be demonised, excluded from the conflict resolution table, and expected to quietly fade away into the background.

By reclaiming its neutral status the humanitarian community will once again become increasingly accessible as it moves out from behind the barricades, and is able to engage with local communities. Local voices can be heard from up close, and appropriate actions addressing the actual reality on the ground as described by the recipients themselves can be designed and implemented. However, it is unclear whether the humanitarian community can once again achieve a neutral status since trust is difficult to repair.

One other issue is also important to address at this juncture, namely the increasing privatisation of peacebuilding activities and the use of private contractors. The use of private contractors and the presence of for-profit commercial companies add another unneeded layer of complexity to the Afghan ownership debate. Many private international companies working within the overall peacebuilding mission are widely perceived as unaccountable to local populations or even to the Afghan government. Security companies, in particular, are a key concern. While international security forces are supposedly accountable to their governments and the populations of their respective

countries, private security companies have largely fallen into an 'accountability void'. Their activities are secretive, and carefully differentiated from 'regular' international military operations, all the while operating under a banner of impunity provided by the international militaries from which they draw contracts. Local populations and the Afghan government thus feel helpless in addressing extra-judicial justice, abuses, and even murders at the hands of these security contractors.

As noted earlier in this section, there is a growing scholarly critique that the above discussion is somewhat futile and that there exist deeper philosophical concerns with intervention processes (Duffield, 2007a; Jabri, 2010; Jacoby, 2007; Williams, 2010). These scholars propose that increased separation between military and humanitarian actors does not really change anything because at the end of the day they are still in bed together as tools of Western liberal powers. Thus, military-humanitarian missions such as in Afghanistan or Iraq has simply forced Western humanitarianism to reveal its true colours and motivations; it is simply a soft power tool of the West in achieving its foreign policy objectives for its own benefit. They are part of a grand scheme of micro-conflict management aimed at maintaining the global North's wealth and status in an increasingly connected world where resistance in small villages in far-off countries in the global South can affect the internal security of powerful nations through terrorist activity. While this accusation is, of course, contested by humanitarian leaders, an increasing number of scholars and practitioners are calling for an re-examination of Western humanitarianism and its complicity in schemes of Western domination on the world scene.

Dependency, Sustainability and Afghan Ownership

Dependency on foreign money and the inadequate sustainability of many peacebuilding activities are also debilitating on the journey towards Afghan ownership. For this discussion, dependency and sustainability are linked together because of their related nature and impact on Afghan ownership. For example, current levels of dependency call into question many of the efforts towards peacebuilding sustainability as donor money is consistently reduced.

Dependency is a massive issue in the ownership debate as it is hard to envision any sort of significant local ownership in a milieu of dependency on outside money and human resources. Just like a teenager pulling up to friends in a car borrowed from her or his parents, dependent nations struggle to demand respect and legitimacy in the eyes of both local populations and international actors.

The issue is serious since both the Afghan government and a majority of civil society activity are entirely dependent on foreign funding. For example, only a small fraction of funding for the ANP and ANA is drawn from local sources. The vast majority flows in from the international donor community, which is a definite concern given the aggressive transition timeline adopted by President Karzai and his government. Likewise, the study's participants did not identify one significant civil society peacebuilding project that was not funded entirely from foreign purses.

Two factors that are exaggerating the issue and preventing much needed independence are lingering insecurity and warring, and unrelenting poverty for large segments of the Afghan population. Dependency is closely related to insecurity in that the quest to develop local income sources through development or taxation is prevented by

the threat and reality of an insurgent attack. Unfortunately, insecurity levels seem to be consistently worsening, making the prospects of local income generation even more dismal with reduced international troop numbers. And further, current levels of insecurity play a significant role in preventing vast swaths of the population from escaping the poverty trap. And a population in poverty cannot provide the necessary tax revenues or local investment for significant development to occur. The situation is indeed discouraging.

Dependency is inhibiting efforts to facilitate Afghan ownership. Donor-client relations and the flow of money into the country have created a top-down relationship that is conducive to dependent mentalities, disempowerment, and submission to outside control against one's self-interests. Thus, the journey towards Afghan ownership requires an awareness of communal mental health as it were. Afghans are traditionally known for their fierce independence in the face of outside influence. A couple of Afghan interviewees noted that this might now be evaporating.

In regards to sustainability, Afghan ownership is clearly reduced with unsustainable project work. For example, it is unlikely that a government leader interested in maintaining his long-term legitimacy in the eyes of his constituency will accept ownership of something that will crumble in his hands during the imminent transition process. The project will stumble and fall, relegating a lot of effort and resources to the waste-bin. As discussed earlier in this chapter by two Afghan government officials, the search for sustainability poses many dilemmas for project designers. They are sometimes required to settle for much reduced peacebuilding effectiveness in order to increase the odds of producing a project that is sustainable

financially. However, in the process, the reduced peacebuilding scope may decrease the odds of the project surviving anyway in the face of conflict.

So what can be done in this discouraging and difficult situation? Any sort of solution to the ownership problematic will require immense creativity, strength, and bravery in the face of risk. The country cannot wait any longer for the security situation to better itself, which is another topic on its own that requires revamped strategies and action. Visionary leaders must be supported and protected by the international community to carry ownership efforts forward and build a sense of independence in the eyes of the Afghan people. Ironically these leaders will, by necessity, step on the toes of their protectors as they push for independence in the face of doubting and reluctant backers. Opportunities must be found for large-scale local development leading to improved employment opportunities and salaries for large amounts of Afghans. Investment profit should be contained within the country itself to a large extent. In this way local sources of income can be built up to increase local prosperity and the local tax base.

Action can also be taken at the project level. Much more can be expected of aid recipients in terms of leadership, guidance, and inputs of time or resources. Local efforts and sacrifice will increase feelings of ownership, which will ensure the sustainability of local project work. And crucially, the Afghan people should be expected to give back to the world community in any way possible. A sense of equality returns as aid recipients are empowered to the point of returning favours by providing input into other devastated war-torn contexts around the globe. They should certainly have a bulk of valuable insight to impart to other countries emerging from violence.

Inappropriate Timeframes and Afghan Ownership

Several participants also believed that inappropriate project timelines were interfering with advances in terms of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. They perceived peacebuilding work and timelines in Afghanistan to be generally short-lived and rushed, all the while retaining significant but unreasonable expectations in the eyes of project designers and recipients. There is little patience for the lengthy processes whereby the globe's industrialised nations achieved their current levels of development, which often required hundreds of years. Part of the rushed and impatient atmosphere maybe is fed by the significant military presence in Afghanistan. Military actors expect quick decisive results, expect little ambiguity, avoid excessive discussion, suppress disagreement or resistance, and are guided by a prevalent 'can-do' attitude. Unfortunately these types of institutional cultures require 'quick and dirty' approaches to peacebuilding, and an avoidance of much more ambiguous community peacebuilding, peace work, and conflict resolution work at the grassroots level that is difficult to quantify or to evaluate. An additional downfall is the consistent bypassing of local government structures and other Afghan leaders in the quest to produce instant results.

Thus, timelines must be extended, and accompanied by reformed methods of operation that recognise the lengthy and, perhaps generational, nature of effective peacebuilding, and the requirement of sustained inputs and care. The creation of reformed timelines will require the international community to take a much more patient approach that focuses significant attention at the community level to augment the current fixation with upper-level peace work and governance support. Project work that focuses on non-violent conflict resolution and grassroots empowerment that addresses localised conflict

at the community level and at the margins of society in the far reaches of rural districts must begin to be a major policy goal. Grassroots and community peacebuilding processes have thus far remained contentious among many international peacebuilding actors who are often sceptical of any efforts outside of upper-level elite processes that operate in mainly urban areas.

Lengthened project timelines also create dilemmas. There remains considerable uncertainty about the sustainability of peacebuilding efforts over the long haul in Afghanistan. These types of concerns are justified as the bulk of international funding in Afghanistan is expected to evaporate as the majority of troops are withdrawn over the next couple of years. Additionally, donors are often quick to re-direct their funding to emerging and more ‘sexy’ contexts of need. And, of course, the other obvious variable that remains decisively unclear over the medium to long-term is the ever-worsening security situation. At this point it remains entirely unclear whether upper-level peace process efforts will yield any significant results in Afghanistan.

The creation of longer timeframes will encourage increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. A more patient peacebuilding pace has several advantages in this respect. Peacebuilding leaders can enact a patient participatory strategy to allow local populations to identify and prioritise their peacebuilding requirements. In this respect peacebuilding leaders may need to drop their agendas and accept the fact that project work may suffer from increased complexities as increased numbers of people are involved in decision-making processes, which may appear to be less efficient and more prone to local obstructions. However, it should be noted that smaller actors represented in this study, such as NGOs, are finding increased project success as local populations are allowed to

own their development processes. In addition, local Afghan ownership of projects is empowering and serves to strengthen communal decision-making structures, benefiting citizens far beyond the termination of the project work. In this scenario local capacities are built up as local leaders are identified, supported, and provided the chance to develop their leadership skills and to receive training. In contrast, shortened timeframes force peacebuilding leaders to rely solely on international consultants and contractors to quickly initiate project work in a flurry of activity that must seem bewildering to local populations unaccustomed to such processes or development methodologies.

Peacebuilding Coordination and Afghan Ownership

There can be no significant Afghan ownership over peacebuilding without significant advances in local control over coordination of peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan. Peacebuilding coordination is a complex issue in Afghanistan, with numerous actors and structures vying for control over the coordination of project work. The international military, the UN, the Afghan government, and networks of international and local NGOs have all made significant bids to coordinate overall peacebuilding efforts. The study's participants brought up several factors that are blocking increased local ownership of coordination in Afghanistan.

Coordination, power, and Afghan ownership. Ensuring Afghan ownership of peacebuilding coordination efforts must come to grips with the inherent role of 'power' in coordination activities. Coordination structures will incorporate those with significant voice and decision-making power. However, coordination structures can also be a vehicle for withholding power from other groups. For example, one participant believed that international military forces used coordination meetings with civilian counterparts such

as NGOs to simply gather information and intelligence in order to unilaterally make decisions without the NGO community, rather than making actual decisions at coordination meetings together with the NGO community.

Inherent power differentials inside coordination structures are also posing a challenge for advancing Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. Coordination structures quickly lay bare the underlying motivations behind various actors holding greatly varied amounts of power. International and local organisations enter coordination arrangements on unequal terms. This substantial ‘power’ inequality calls into question the possibility of actual Afghan ownership over peacebuilding coordination efforts. Can coordination be anything more than simply a forum for the powerful to dictate to the weaker organisations what they wish to do? It appears doubtful because power is inherently difficult to relinquish or even minimise in effect. True coordination of peacebuilding activities provides a real voice to each seat at the coordination table. For this process to occur the powerful actors must take the lead in ensuring marginalised groups a voice at the table, for if they do not the status quo will simply prevail. Thus, it seems essential that Afghan groups be rapidly propped up as coordination leaders with real influence.

There are at least two major barriers to this sort of increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. First, those who provide the bulk of funding for any project are typically very wary and unwilling to be told what to do. They will understandably wish to retain coordination control over their sphere of concern. Second, military involvement in overarching peacebuilding structures seems to hinder the growth of Afghan ownership. While the international military has relinquished its quest for overall coordination authority as it attempted to do in early phases of the Afghan intervention, the close

partnership between military and civilian actors (particularly inside the U.S. camp) has resulted in the massive cooption of the humanitarian agenda by military actors for their own purposes. At one level, this strategy is probably necessary to effectively introduce a Western liberal market democracy to the Afghan context. The coercive nature of the process will require a broad approach with some 'teeth'. However, several participants believed that coercive liberalisation might be counterproductive in achieving sustainable peace and development in Afghanistan. Thus it appears that ensuring Afghan ownership will be difficult to achieve through coercive means, in the midst of violent conflict, and given the non-democratic means required to address it. A reduced role for the international military would perhaps bolster Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in a wide range of sectors.

Coordination, complexity, and Afghan ownership. The extreme complexity of the Afghan peacebuilding project is straining attempts at coordination to their breaking point. The intense involvement by a wide variety of organisations holding varied and, often, competing institutional philosophies and methodologies calls into question the possibility of tight-knit holistic coordination of peacebuilding. Is it even a remote possibility to achieve coordination over the entire peacebuilding venture in Afghanistan? Is this even desirable? Probably not. A certain degree of complexity and apparent chaos will be unavoidable in achieving peacebuilding success. Tight-knit coordination may only serve to allow the powerful the chance to control the overall mission for their own self-interests, which is something that would work against Afghan ownership of the overall peacebuilding mission. For if outside organisations retain direct control, or even indirect control through local puppets, over coordination structures, then local

conceptions of democracy, financial reform, human rights, and local voices will likely be suppressed by the outside forces.

The mission's complexity is resulting in a lack of coherence according to some participants. However, developing a tight coherent structure for peacebuilding actors may not be possible. A tightly coherent peacebuilding programme would require a strong, and potentially stifling central authority. This central authority would dictate acceptable methodologies and regulate peacebuilding practice, which calls into question the possibility of authentic multi-level Afghan ownership. Even if the Afghan government were in charge of such a structure, widespread corruption and the proven ability of outside actors such as criminals and foreign groups to co-opt Afghan political leaders all put the achievement of real Afghan ownership in doubt.

Effective coordination and Afghan ownership. The participants in this study did link increased coordination to Afghan ownership. The ability of local groups, particularly from Afghan civil society and the Afghan government, to achieve a voice at all levels of coordination is an important step in the overall ownership problem. At the current time, upper coordinating bodies remain decidedly dominated by foreigners, albeit now increasingly behind a façade of 'Afghanisation', which has become all too apparent to many of the study's participants. What could enhance increased Afghan ownership over peacebuilding remains uncertain and elusive. There are several blockages. International donors remain reluctant to relinquish control in any meaningful and truly empowering manner. The Afghan government seems untrustworthy and disconnected from its people. There is no escaping the point, however, that effective Afghan ownership

over peacebuilding requires a heavy government presence, and one that is democratically responsive to its constituents somehow.

The government's ability to own peacebuilding processes is crucial at this time of accelerated transition to Afghan control. If the government simply gains control of chaos, the government's legitimacy will be reduced in the eyes of its population as it struggles to sustain progress. However, the dilemma is that heavy handed and centralised governmental coordination tactics will certainly grate on the decentralised nature of Afghan politics once the strong backing of the international military is reduced in Kabul. It is also difficult to envision how the current complexity of the overall peacebuilding project will be conducive to an effective government takeover. Simplified, creative, and effective coordination structures are needed now, more than ever, during this time of transition.

Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed five crucial overarching themes on the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. The first three themes are more ethical and structural in nature and highlight some serious and debilitating concerns regarding the international-local relationship in Afghanistan. The discussion around these themes revealed that the wider Afghan population is struggling to adopt a decisively 'Western' set of international interventions, that there exists significant concern over the trend of cramming humanitarian and military actors together into close quarters, and that a significant dependency exists on the foreign aid community in a continuous struggle to ensure the sustainability of peacebuilding project work. The last two themes are more concerned with peacebuilding practice, and address the effects of inadequate project

timeframes and inadequate coordination structures on efforts to ensure Afghan ownership in the hurried transition activities currently underway. Cumulatively the discussion calls into question the possibility of any real sense of Afghan ownership over peacebuilding in Afghanistan. This is a serious concern, particularly with the current push to transition to Afghan control in governance and security amidst a noticeable escalation of violent attacks against foreign interveners and the local Afghan population. Many fear that any progress made over the last ten years will crumble into civil unrest and war as foreign governments and civilian interveners withdraw their troops and civilian personnel.

Perhaps the course can still be changed, and the withdrawal of foreign troops may also pose new opportunities. Chapter 9 predicts what this altered course might look like, and builds a comprehensive action plan that might serve to ensure real Afghan ownership over peacebuilding and the rebuilding of a peaceful Afghan society.

Chapter 9 - Conflict Transformation and 'Ownership' Dilemmas: A Systems

Approach

Introduction: Basic Theory and Justification

The previous four chapters have revealed the collective perceptions and experiences of a significant group of peacebuilding practitioners on the ground in Afghanistan. The interview narratives and the subsequent data analysis have identified numerous dilemmas in the face of efforts aimed at achieving Afghan ownership over peacebuilding including: (1) intervention ethics and practice; (2) ensuring security; (3) capacity building and political transformation; (4) the nexus between peacebuilding and development; (5) defining what 'local' means (government vs. civil society, traditional vs. modern democratic, religious vs. secular, etc.); (6) upper- vs. grassroots-level peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes; (7) informal vs. formal peacebuilding and conflict resolution processes; (8) foreign-backed liberalisation and Westernisation; (9) militarisation and politicisation of peacebuilding; (10) dependency on foreign support and sustainability; and (11) peacebuilding timeframes. The list appears daunting on the surface, and becomes even more complex as one ventures into the many 'sub-dilemmas' contained in each. These dilemmas have hamstrung efforts at achieving Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. They were conceptualised as unworkable barriers sidetracking the journey towards ownership.

Amplifying the dilemma-induced confusion and misdirection is the prominent military-led 'transition' narrative that is primarily focused on the withdrawal of military personnel and aid support. The transition is in full swing, but its underlying motivations are viewed by participants as largely unconcerned with the successful hand-over of

peacebuilding activities to Afghan counterparts, except in, perhaps, the area of military transition. There is a significant concern among my interviewees that the ‘transition’ is setting up the Afghan military, police, government, and civil society for outright failure and leaving them utterly unprepared to constructively process through the plethora of dilemmas listed above.

These ‘ownership’ dilemmas do not need to remain ignored or viewed as concrete barriers to ownership of peacebuilding activities. Rather they can be re-conceptualised as holding constructive potential since *all* the supposedly competing positions in each dilemma can be viewed as fundamental components to any effective and sustainable peacebuilding solution. According to one corporate decision-making specialist, the key to accessing the available constructive potential of dilemmas is high-level synthesis. Synthesis is the process of accepting multiple ideas (often contradictory ideas in the case of dilemmas) and fusing them together to create a single picture (Buytendijk, 2010b, p. xv). Buytendijk (2010b)¹⁷, an executive decision-making specialist, has created a strategy and decision-making structure for harnessing the power of dilemmas that may be useful to consider for the Afghan ownership problematic. He proposes a plan to move organisations beyond a *stuck* state (where all sides to a decision-making dilemma remain unaddressed) and beyond a *biased* state (where only one side to the dilemma is preferred in organisational decision-making). In the Afghan context, this study’s participants viewed the ‘ownership’ situation to be both *stuck* since the international community and

¹⁷ One must keep in mind that Buytendijk is not addressing the peacebuilding community or directly concerned with cross-cultural issues. Peacebuilding leaders must therefore carefully scrutinise his suggestions. However, in a void of peacebuilding literature that addresses strategies for dealing with peacebuilding dilemmas, his advice from the management sector serves as useful starting point for discussion.

the Afghan government often show themselves unwilling to move beyond rhetoric and progress towards meaningful Afghan ownership, and *biased* since foreign organisations and individuals continue to dominate decision making ten years after the initial intervention. In contrast, Buytendijk (2010a) guides organisations toward a ‘*stretched*’ state, that is a state where all sides to a dilemma feed decision-making processes through a process labelled “strategy elastic.” He states that:

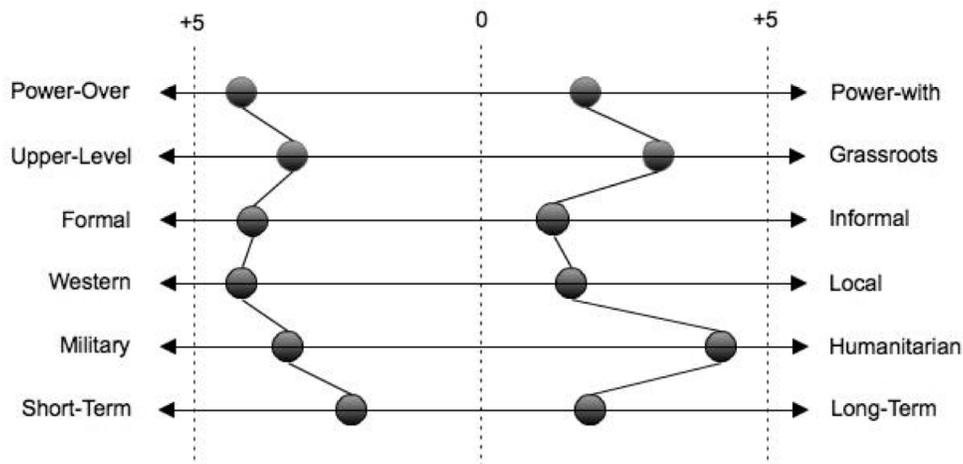
Creating strategic stretch is very much like working with an elastic band. If you only pull it from one side, the other side will move in the same direction. You can only stretch it if you pull from both sides. And the harder you pull in multiple directions at the same time, the more space you create, which is the objective of strategic management.

The metaphor of an elastic band is particularly appropriate because it implies that you can't stop pulling, otherwise it goes back to its neutral position. It's the same with strategy; you need to keep working on creating strategic stretch, otherwise the organisation will fall back to average results (Buytendijk, 2010b, p. 69).

A hypothetical state of ‘strategic stretch’ for Afghan ownership of peacebuilding is illustrated in Figure 1 where the two dots on each line delineate the amount of stretch beyond the neutral position (0) for each dilemma.

As illustrated in Figure 2, the overall peacebuilding mission strategies should be in a state of stretch, thus incorporating the constructive guidance of the various dilemmas and using their wisdom to create a healthy zone (space between the two vertical jagged lines) for the realisation of Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. Peacebuilding activity inside of this ‘ownership’ zone will increase the probability of success.

Figure 2: ‘Strategic Stretch’ for Afghan Ownership*



How does one move beyond theory and actually achieve this sort of peacebuilding ‘space’ conducive for Afghan ownership? Unlike corporate structures where the company CEO along with her management team shoulders strategic decision-making responsibilities, leaders such as the Afghan president, the UN Special Representative for the Secretary General, or the U.S. Ambassador, while playing key roles in this process, have not (or perhaps cannot) legitimately led this strategic process at this point. An elite top-down process will ignore too many actors with key interests, rights, and powers.

One possible alternative is to entrust the creation of an appropriate ‘strategy elastic’ into the hands of a more inclusive and broadly participatory process such as a strategic *Dispute Resolution System (DRS)*. Pioneered by Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1988), and revised and built upon by practitioners such as Constantino and Merchant (1996), Dukes (1996), Rowe (1997), Lynch (1998), and Slaikeu and Hasson (1998), a DRS is a set of processes and structures that constitute a largely informal methodology for resolving conflict. DRS processes are mostly out-of-court, and typically rely heavily

* Figure 2 is modelled after Buytendijk’s (2010a, p. 69) ‘Strategy Elastic’ diagram style

on facilitation, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration. A creative DRS may prove useful in creating a constructive space in which peacebuilding actors can strategise to increase current levels of Afghan ownership over the peacebuilding process. A DRS to address the ‘ownership’ problematic involves the creation of appropriate and strategic structures and processes that serve as a forum for competitors across the dilemma-filled ‘ownership’ divide to interact and hammer out the ‘strategic stretch’ space necessary for effective Afghan ownership of peacebuilding to take hold. The process will certainly be messy, difficult to control, and would involve a dizzying amount of activity in virtually all sectors. Yet, when carefully constructed, such a strategy might unleash the underlying processes required to both transform international-local relations, and to forge the necessary space in which power-laden and sustainable ‘hand-overs’ to local control can occur.

A word of caution and reflection is required before moving forward with this discussion. Making a suggestion such as the formation of a DRS for the Afghan context is a risky venture since such discussions and recommendations will likely tend to gravitate towards idealism and skirt the intense dilemmas and intractable barriers discussed in the analysis chapters of this thesis. However, I have chosen to write this chapter despite these risks in hope that the reader will view this chapter as a conversation starter, and as a primer for further exploration into how increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities can be both institutionalised in official processes and adopted at the grassroots level across Afghanistan. As such, this chapter is an outflow of the ‘critical theory’ nature of this research and its urge to empower local populations to take hold of ownership over peacebuilding in Afghanistan. However, one must keep in mind that

major locally-inspired, and culturally sensitive and appropriate revisions to the recommendations laid out here will be required to achieve the desired outcomes.

Utilising a DRS may prove advantageous to upper-level elite-directed and coordinated processes for two reasons. First, significant power differentials must be addressed in current intervention structures. Competitors across the various organisational divides as evident in previous chapters (e.g. international-local, government-civil society, religious-secular, informal-formal, and NGO-grassroots population, etc.) would each benefit from framing the 'ownership' debate as a dispute. To use the popular thesis of Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1988, p. 9), all of the above types of peacebuilding actors hold their own interests, abide by a (sometimes competing) systems of rights, and hold various forms of coercive power. In keeping with Ury et al.'s directive to contain conflicts to the realm of 'interests', each party could quickly list off essential interests that must be met in order to achieve local Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. However, the problem lies inside of current power relationships because the international community is immensely more powerful in virtually all ways when compared to local Afghan groups and individuals. By regulating conflict interactions within a DRS framework, it becomes feasible to empower the disempowered and provide a levelled playing field to push far beyond the seemingly inert status quo. A DRS framework is theoretically able to adopt local and/or traditional and/or indigenous dispute resolution processes in the local theatre, and facilitate transitional and hybrid forms of dispute resolution to emerge (Tuso, 2011). In this way, the understandable Afghan perceptions of foreign imperialism can be deescalated as local interests and foreign interests are allowed to interact and are weighted equitably.

This relinquishment of power is certainly a difficult path to travel for the international community since it has become accustomed to sitting in the chair of power. Releasing the Afghan ownership journey into the hands of a process largely beyond their control will be an exercise in trust, and is particularly nerve-wracking when (sometimes) billions of dollars are at stake. There will certainly be some project failure and waste. However, the benefits appear greater as the local population is given a voice, and groups within the 'local' learn to talk to each other and decipher what is really meant by Afghan ownership. For example, an increased local voice (including insurgent groups) would surely reduce levels of insecurity, and lead towards building a fuller and sustainable peace.

Second, a DRS approach may prove to be quite capable of ensuring the creativity required to forge a coherent plan for achieving Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in the face of immense complexity. As described in the preceding chapters, the dilemmas outlined by participants paint an incredibly complex picture, thus making a centralised, upper-level, concise, and rigid solution seem unworkable and unsustainable (and it probably does not exist anyways). Much time and resources are wasted searching for such a solution. Rather, framing the journey towards Afghan ownership as a dispute might acknowledge and embrace its inherent complexity. Trusting in the power of a DRS to illuminate a sure footing through the 'ownership' morass may not ensure that the 'best' path is necessarily achieved (if it is possible to define a 'best' path), but it should increase the odds of discovering a locally owned and appropriate path, all the while enabling significant foreign guidance to address current levels of local corruption, incapacity, and

insecurity. In this way a sense of coherence is formed despite the many and varied activities that are being conducted simultaneously (Byrne & Keashly, 2000).

As such, defining a process whereby negotiation can occur between interested parties who are confident of achieving a satisfactory result in a milieu open to ambiguity and uncertainty serves to free the peacebuilding project from having to rely on such tightly coordinated and controlled processes. Tightly controlled top-down control structures are typically less supportive of creativity and moving beyond the bounds of 'acceptable' peacebuilding policy such as ventures into community peacebuilding. Thus, the various dilemmas facing peacebuilding actors can better shape a realistic course of action that address real needs on the ground, something that this study's participants perceived as lacking. Dealing with dilemmas forces peacebuilders into the recognition that given current complexities, there are initiatives that just are simply not possible. Yet this realisation is not to be forced upon a sceptical civil society or grassroots population; it is rather worked out inside of a DRS.

However, a strong word of caution needs to be raised. Much of the dispute resolution literature proposes a form of conflict management that views conflict as inherently destructive and finds it expedient to deal with conflict at the lowest possible level and at the earliest possible time (Carpenter & Kennedy, 1988; Ury, et al., 1988). Perhaps low-level and quick resolution creates a sense of calm, however, a DRS in a context like Afghanistan must aim for a much deeper transformation and social structural change. Conflict must be viewed as a constructive force with the potential to illuminate a much-needed transformation, particularly in the relationship between the international community and Afghan groups and individuals, and between the Afghan government and

its civil society and grassroots population. These two relationships are riddled with struggle, inequality, and oppression, and any sustainable DRS must avoid the immediate desire for harmony and peace and embrace the struggle for transformed relationships at all levels, no matter how difficult and unsettling the path (Dukes, 2006, p. 156). Thus, the DRS as described in this chapter aims towards consciousness-raising and empowerment through education, probably leading to increased levels of unrest in a decidedly communal society. Facilitating unrest is certainly a contentious issue in an environment of active insurgency. Yet, as DRS structures allow people to situate their 'small' struggle within the larger struggle in Afghanistan, and recognise the damaging effects of structural inadequacies and democratic shortfalls, injustices can be confronted leading to elevated levels of sustainable and positive peace (Dukes, 1999). In this way, control over the DRS can be theoretically maintained by the '99 percent' *per se*. Thus, the 'minor' concerns of isolated mountain village populations far from the centres of power are given a voice in determining their own future.

So what might such a DRS system look like? Given the aforementioned theoretical requirements, such a system would have at least four components. Each is described in sequence in the remainder of this chapter.

Figure 3: ‘Afghan Ownership’ Dispute Resolution System



First, this ‘Afghan ownership’ DRS will have at its heart an *Afghan-owned* and broadly inclusive advisory committee to design and initiate the DRS, clarify a vision for overall efforts at Afghan ownership of peacebuilding, and provide guidance and conduct required revisions to DRS activities. Second, a system of country-wide education must be instituted that has at its central concerns community empowerment, consciousness-raising, conflict resolution training, media empowerment, and peace education. Third, the previous system of conflict resolution education will lead to a system of advocacy that adopts a positive view of conflict, and explores how resistance movements leading to structural change might be protected. Advocacy is encouraged at both the upper and grassroots levels. Fourth, a conflict resolution process and structure will be initiated that allows for the non-violent and transformative resolution of public conflict leading to increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding.

It is important to note that all four components would, by necessity, need to be steeped in Afghan ownership themselves, which poses a dilemma for me as a non-Afghan

Western scholar. My connection to what Afghans desire in the area of Afghan ownership is vitally shaped by the words of the participants (the majority of whom are Afghan practitioners). Thus, I have tried to the best of my abilities to create a structure that addresses the needs and dilemmas as described by the study's participants. Keeping my limited voice in mind, and given that virtually no literature exists on empowering Afghan ownership of peacebuilding processes in Afghanistan, I hope that the structure presented in this chapter can serve as a basis or guide for a truly Afghan owned design process. I have injected some specifics into the proposal that could very easily be dropped for more locally efficacious alternatives if they are deemed unnecessary. These specific recommendations may lean towards idealism, but await increased local contextualisation as they are grappled with by local peacebuilding leaders. Thus, this chapter is an exercise aimed in illustrating the idea that solutions are within the people's grasp, and can be constructed by creative local leaders.

Leadership, Coordination, and Structural Design

The DRS proposed in this chapter requires a carefully formed and Afghan-owned leadership and coordination advisory committee to design the DRS structure, clarify its desired outcomes, implement its activities, and conduct evaluation-based revisions to its activities and goals. This section describes such a structure by exploring the necessity of Afghan ownership even at this stage, the process of figuring out what it needs to do, and further details of its possible structure.

The 'ownership' DRS advisory committee would be largely situated at the central level, but would include significant input from the regional, and provincial levels. However, in order to reflect the decidedly regional nature of traditional Afghan politics

and the local social context, it may be advisable to also decentralise this coordination structure. A smooth-functioning DRS should not require tight central control, but should be capable of embracing complexity, all the while maintaining a level of simplicity allowing for functionality following the withdrawal of foreign human and material resources. It is, however, important to achieve a coordination structure backed up by the government, the foreign community, the UN, and local civil society. Multiple competing structures will serve to blur progress and hinder the implementation of this system. The DRS may, perhaps, be allowed to share structures and personnel with existing intervention structures in order to reduce parallel activities and ensure greater efficiency. However, the DRS should be clearly differentiated from governance structures and the UN system. Such a committee would ideally be incorporated immediately following an international intervention and, in the case of Afghanistan, would be thoughtfully injected into the current peacebuilding structure to respond to current needs as raised in the preceding chapters by the participants. The committee's timeframe should be conceived of in terms of 8-10 year increments, as opposed to the typical 6-month to 3-year project timeframes.

Afghan Ownership of Leadership and Coordination

Lederach (1995) describes the so-called 'Gandhi Dilemma', or the simple fact that "process matters more than outcome" (p. 21) and that peacebuilders should "embrace process as a way of life that takes seriously the means by which we pursue goals" (p. 22). In keeping with this, the pursuit of Afghan ownership should carefully exhibit participatory and broadly inclusive processes allowing for the democratic pursuit of sustainable ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. However, local ownership of

peacebuilding processes aimed at local ownership cannot result in inadequate and inferior outcomes, thus making it a paradox. The external foreign community and its human and material resource wealth may be essential in ensuring that the difficult path towards Afghan ownership is indeed followed to its conclusion. On the other hand, it is doubtful that any Western-foreign dominated process leading to Afghan ownership is going to result in sustainable local ownership. Rather, such a process will more likely result in massive failure and renewed social violence and war. Thus, the stakes are high. For example Wildau, Moore, and Mayer (1993) describe how strong-willed outside consultants can control conflict resolution design processes in developing countries and make their employers, in effect, their employees, quite the opposite of the democratic-type philosophy that is supposed to be a part of the DRS's goals.

Foreigners involved in this process will, by necessity, walk a difficult line, patiently facilitating local processes of decision-making and prioritisation and being wary of imposing the international community's wishes and timeframes onto locally-inspired processes, all the while utilising their inherent 'foreign' power to maintain the difficult course in the face of intense complexity, incapacity, and corruption.

Preventing the rapid and appealing wholesale embedding of Western structures into local contexts, and the suppression of locally-inspired structures, requires a careful stance on the part of the foreign community and individuals in regards to much weaker and disempowered local counterparts. Donais (2009a) insists that foreign interveners must behave humbly as they attempt to reconcile "international norms with domestic political culture and domestic political realities" (pp. 17-18). Further, honesty and openness on the part of the international community will necessitate transparency

regarding internal motivations for intervention in Afghanistan. Openness and transparency should allow local populations and local structures to understand that while some intervention processes may seem invasive, they are, in fact, leading to important desired outcomes.

Ensuring Afghan ownership over DRS design and implementation requires a set of key actions on the part of intervening powers, many of which have been addressed in preceding chapters. Key local leaders must be identified, recruited, capacitated, consulted in regards to the overall strategy, and professionalised, all in the spirit of partnership (Hansen, et al., 2007, p. 11ff). The international community, having achieved significant influence and authority through coercive intervention processes, must quickly show itself willing to relinquish control and authority to local leaders inside of this advisory committee for the overall DRS system.

Developing a Clear Vision and Plan of Action

The advisory committee for the DRS system responsible for ensuring Afghan ownership over peacebuilding will require a clear vision of what it wants to achieve, and a strategic plan about how it will realise its desired outcomes. However, the respondents in this study believe that this task is immensely complex, and there exists widespread disagreement as to what Afghan ownership means and requires. Competing perceptions of the requirements for Afghan ownership are immediately evident in the research results from this study.

Particularly salient in the interview analysis was the disagreement over what constitutes 'local' in terms of 'local ownership'. 'Local' can mean many things. For example, what are the appropriate roles for traditional and/or religious actors and

processes in the decidedly modern-secular-based international peacebuilding intervention in Afghanistan? To illustrate this point with an example, President Karzai has relied upon the Afghan *Loya Jirga* to set the ground-rules for upper-level peace processes with the Taliban and to set the terms of partnership with U.S. forces during their gradual withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, elected Afghan parliamentarians have criticised the *Loya Jirga's* activities as unconstitutional because it bypasses the Afghan legislature on major issues of concern to the Afghan people. This democratic-traditional conflict demonstrates the difficulty with merging traditional and/or indigenous communities and processes into a modern state-based bureaucracy (Tuso, 2011, p. 256). Achieving a constructive balance between the two competing sides can only be done by thoughtful Afghan leaders. However, this will prove to be exceptionally difficult, and will likely prove impossible to conduct without upsetting large groups of leaders. In a similar fashion the place of Islamic religious leaders in the 'ownership' debate is difficult to work out for peacebuilding leaders. There appears, however, to be a growing consensus that the intensely religious and conservative Afghan context requires a legitimate role for religious actors, even as they actively contradict international conceptions of human rights in select areas (e.g. the role of women in society, the right to choose one's religion). Traditional and religious leaders must play a prominent role on any advisory committee for processes leading to Afghan ownership over peacebuilding.

Goal setting and defining the terms of Afghan ownership of the peacebuilding process will require the advisory committee to be a learning organisation, continually conducting research, revising its strategy and role, and keeping abreast of new peacebuilding developments on the ground. The committee will have to build a picture of

current practices in order to develop a strategic vision for the ‘ownership’ journey. Essential to creating this vision will be transcending the current ‘non-discussion’, confusion, inaction or chaotic action, unaccountability, and avoidance of the topic of Afghan ownership. Broad and extensive consultations at all levels of society are essential. It may also be very possible that Boulding’s (1988) ‘envisioning the future’ processes could be used to guide leaders in designing appropriate processes leading to essential outcomes of Afghan ownership. Boulding (1988) believes that as populations imagine their ideal future the odds of achieving that future increase.

Structuring Afghan Ownership Leadership

I have already proposed that leadership over the overall Afghan ownership DRS could be structured as an oversight or guidance committee made up of key Afghan and international leaders. In the initial stages the role of foreigners would likely be more pronounced but would be strongly focused on partnership and equality with Afghan leaders in order to both gain legitimacy within the powerful international peacebuilding community and to begin to address the asymmetrical power relationships between the foreign and Afghan communities. Afghan leaders on the committee should rapidly assume leadership roles and slowly replace some of the international representatives to ensure a clearly Afghan structure. Yet local legitimacy to support this advisory committee will likely be hindered by its probable dependency on international aid to finance its operations. However, local financing options such as direct local government funding are certainly feasible.

Lederach (1997) proposes that it is expedient to focus on so-called mid-level leaders in building an advisory committee for the ‘ownership’ DRS. The journey towards

Afghan ownership of peacebuilding will be a difficult path, and will be hard to wrestle from the hands of upper-level powerful elites who have various vested interests in keeping the status quo. Thus, it is necessary to avoid a situation where the committee's efforts can be co-opted by upper-level leaders, diminishing its legitimacy in the eyes of the grassroots. However, upper-elites are certainly vital actors on the journey towards Afghan ownership, and require careful inclusion in these processes. Conversely, an advisory committee dominated by grassroots participants will struggle to procure the required legitimacy at the upper-elite level, and any potential progress in achieving its mandate will be quickly grounded in the absence of upper-level support. However, accessing the desires and demands of the grassroots is also central to the DRS's success. Thus, the prominence of mid-level leaders, who have access to both the upper-elites and grassroots may serve as a bridge between the two camps, connecting their opinions and translating their voices into a unified plan of action that takes into account the interests of a broad range of actors at every social level. Consideration for a wide range of voices can be achieved through mid-level-appropriate processes such as problem-solving workshops (Fisher, 2009; Kelman, 2009; Lederach, 1997; Rothman, 1997a) and conflict resolution training. These processes may serve to connect the grassroots bottom-up peace activities, activism, and movements with upper-level peace processes that remain severed from grassroots input.

So what sort of composition of this advisory committee would be important to consider in ensuring that desired outcomes are achieved? The committee's composition would ultimately be up for discussion by Afghan leaders from grassroots, mid-level, and upper levels under the guidance of foreign interveners who are dedicated to a broadly

inclusive DRS. This research project and the participants' narratives may, however, provide some valuable input. Of primary importance will be the division of roles between international and local leaders. The initial intervention leaders must quickly find the right partners such as thoughtful and respected leaders who can quickly establish a vision, imagine what success might look like, be creative in design possibilities, facilitate connections for other key leaders, and be able to recruit primary programme staff. They must also be intensely committed to the Afghan people and nation, and be gifted in the oversight of implementation activities (Wildau, et al., 1993, pp. 314-315).

A difficult strategic item, particularly immediately following a military-based intervention such as the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan, will be the role of military leaders and actors in such a DRS aimed at Afghan ownership. Military leaders will likely attempt to have significant leadership roles in order to ensure security in the face of lingering insurgency resistance, terror attacks on civilian targets, power-grabbing Warlords, and the many armed groups in Afghanistan. However, the majority of participants, while clearly affirming the central need for improved military-led security at the community level, did also voice real concern over the detrimental effects on Afghan ownership by military leadership over peacebuilding. Thus, a central focus on Afghan ownership will require improved security all the while supporting civilian leaders as overall peacebuilding leaders. Increased Afghan ownership in a variety of peacebuilding sectors should only serve to improve security across Afghanistan, particularly as it facilitates increased peacebuilding work and conflict resolution at the community level. However, what remains uncertain is the response of regional forces and nations to increased Afghan ownership of security for example. Several participants believed that Pakistan and Iran

would continue to work against Afghan ownership of peacebuilding for self-serving purposes. In addition, most of the study's participants struggled to envision a peaceful future in Afghanistan minus significant numbers of international troops.

Moving to the 'local' side of the picture, the participants provided a strong mandate for significant involvement from both the Afghan government and civil society in a wide variety of peacebuilding activities. While Afghan government participation is a given throughout the post-2001 intervention, its involvement is often viewed as subservient to the international community. The movement towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding will necessitate a real willingness to empower government leaders through resource support and the provision of authority in decision-making. Civil society, on the other hand, was systematically excluded from decision-making and, is only now, ten years on from the 2001 Bonn conference, being given a limited voice in upper-level structures. This practice must change. Civil society leaders must have their expertise and knowledge of the grassroots situation utilised and valued in policy formation and decision-making processes, as well as being supported in their watchdog and advocacy roles and capacities.

Gender is also a significant variable in the formation of oversight structures for Afghan ownership. While women leaders are certainly in the minority in Afghanistan's peacebuilding community, they must be actively supported and provided a significant number of positions of influence in decision-making roles.

Education

Under the guidance of the advisory committee, the 'ownership' DRS will consist of three sets of activities, namely education, advocacy, and conflict resolution

procedures. This section outlines a system of education that will build the consciousness of the Afghan population in terms of local Afghan ownership, and describe some processes for educating the wider Afghan population in this respect.

Education and Consciousness-Raising

As a central component to the overall DRS process, education can serve to create the environment in which Afghan individuals and groups are empowered to demand and work for increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. The status quo of foreign power-relations and grassroots exclusion will be difficult to dislodge, yet education can: (1) demystify peacebuilding practice and strategies making them accessible to the masses; (2) reveal the sources and structural roots of the conflict and struggle over ownership; (3) and enable the Afghan people to participate in the needed social change leading to increased ownership of peacebuilding (Dukes, 2006, p. 180). In essence, education can serve to challenge and alter the dominant international-local narrative leading to a time when the Afghan people are able to rise up and take control of peacebuilding and ensure the building of sustainable peace in their nation, which, in turn, will prepare the path for a deeper and extended social transformation.

A theoretical basis for this type of education can be drawn from Paulo Freire's (1970) book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In his book Freire lays the groundwork for an educational programme that holds local ownership as a central tenet to its methodology. He proposes that the process of education should result in increased ownership. For Freire, education processes rely on two fundamental practices, namely *problem-solving education*, and the process of *dialogue*. In contrast to what Freire labels banking education, problem-solving education moves beyond a hierarchical teacher-student

relationship where the teacher ‘deposits’ knowledge into the student as a sort of gift to the passively ignorant student in order to create adaptable and manageable beings (Freire, 1970, p. 73). Instead, problem-solving education “rejects communiqués and embodies communication” (Freire, 1970, p. 79), develops critical thinking, and supports the emergence of consciousness leading to “critical intervention in reality” (Freire, 1970, p. 81). Problem-solving education requires student ownership over education processes. Hierarchical teacher-student relationships are flattened as both sides co-create knowledge. In addition, the teacher and student begin to view the world as a process in transformation as opposed to existing in a static state. Central to these transformative processes is the role of dialogue. Freire believed that as grassroots participants engaged in dialogue and utilised their language, they would begin to ‘name’ their world, and begin the process of ‘re-naming’. Thus, the education of Afghan populations and their leaders should, through inherent local ownership of the process, serve to clarify needed reformist action aimed at increased Afghan ownership over the wider peacebuilding field.

A second body of theory in this regard can be drawn from Lederach’s (1995) differentiation between *prescriptive* and *elicitive* training procedures. Lederach argues that cross-cultural training is often a central component to conflict transformation in war-torn contexts. As such conflict transformation recognises the positive nature of conflict, and fosters “a pedagogical project that respects and empowers people” and allows people to develop locally owned and appropriate models for resolving local conflict (Lederach, 1995, p. 39). In this process the educator is more of a catalyst and a facilitator, who views the knowledge of the trainee as primary, and instrumental for defining the various approaches to and activities in training.

Education Delivery

Education in support of the DRS must have national and multi-level reach because it must work towards the transformation of thinking amongst the grassroots population and elite actors from both the international and local community, no small task indeed. This process will require the envisioning of local leaders who are familiar with the means required for successful transformation of the overall ‘ownership’ narrative. Clarity of vision and action must be achieved in order to shape the overall Afghan intervention in a way conducive for advances in local ownership.

‘Problem-solving’ workshops. Four central strategies will likely be educational ‘problem-solving’ workshop experiences and trainings, storytelling, capacity building support for civil society organisations leading to advocacy and social change, and strengthening the local media. Educational problem-solving workshops incorporate face-to-face encounters between leaders from ‘disputing’ communities, and under the direction and facilitation of a local conflict resolution specialist people learn how to move towards a peacebuilding system that enables increased Afghan ownership. Workshops that focus on the: (1) international community alone; (2) international community along with elite Afghan actors; (3) international community along with Afghan civil society actors; (4) upper-Afghan government/elite and Afghan civil society; and (5) civil society alone, would provide an excellent base from which to forge constructive progress. These workshops could be: (1) *skill-based* and target key leaders with seminars and methodological training in conflict resolution, mediation, facilitation, and negotiation, etc; (2) *institution focused* and target key institutions and sectors as widely as possible; (3) *university-based* and focus on local academic institutions to set up institutes for the

study of Afghan ownership or DSR processes, and produce curricula for teaching new concepts and skills; or (4) *issue-specific* and would focus on the struggle to achieve Afghan ownership (Wildau, et al., 1993, pp. 309-310). In all this, a central focus on local indigenous knowledge and peacemaking practices would be maintained.

Storytelling. Conflict resolution practitioners interested in initiating social change processes are increasingly recognizing the power of storytelling and narrative (Cox & Albert, 2003; Lederach, 1995, p. 78; Senehi, 2002, 2009a). Stories can “serve as an interesting window into how people understand and work with conflict” (Lederach, 1995, p. 78). Thus, validating storytelling can serve the education process by utilising locally developed methodologies to bridge misunderstandings and create new knowledge and relationships. And because Afghanistan is a strongly communal society, and one in which a majority of the population remains illiterate, powerful communal narratives structure the meanings that the population gives to daily occurrences. These narratives encapsulate the expression of group identity, the social construction of powerful events such as foreign interventions, and the struggle to realise local ownership in the face of foreign power. Communal stories and narratives also contain constructive potential (Senehi, 2002). If both parties to a conflict who struggle over local ownership can realise the constructed nature of their own story, work at understanding their ‘opponent’s’ story and validate it and, most importantly, craft a shared story together with their enemy, significant social transformation is possible (Senehi, 2009b, p. 227).

Capacity building support. Civil society organisations (and even government institutions) will require capacity building support leading to advocacy and social change in terms of ownership. In terms of civil society, the interview narratives and discussion in

preceding chapters made it clear that Afghan civil society has not been able to establish any sense of advocacy in the face of governmental suppression and massive insecurity. Yet sustainable and positive peace in Afghanistan cannot be realised without a civil society that is empowered and non-violently committed to advocacy, human rights, creating a deepening democracy in Afghanistan, and ensuring sustainable livelihoods. Capacity building efforts would need to be multi-level in nature, focused on the community level and ensuring the rights of even the locally excluded, and must also be focused on bringing local community concerns all the way up to the ears of Kabul-based central government structures. This increased local voice can be achieved through activities leading to citizen empowerment, actively coordinating partnerships and networking, focused civic education, and an active research programme to determine needs. In terms of government institutions, capacity building could focus on escaping the clutches of dependency, and dealing with the international community to ensure greater Afghan ownership.

Supporting local media. The local media in Afghanistan may be able to communicate with the general public regarding the possibility of increased Afghan ownership. However, by voicing critical messages of call for transformation, local media may require protection from the international community. Peacebuilding requires significant grassroots transformation, especially with regards to mindset, perception, and opinion. Negative perceptions, if not based on accurate information, can lead to destructive processes that counteract peacebuilding efforts. Thus, persuasion and working towards a communal consensus become central activities in a peacebuilding programme (Haselock, 2010, p. 2). The Afghan independent media can serve as an essential tool in

ensuring two-way communication between the grassroots and peacebuilding leaders. Two-way communication presents the opportunity for local ownership of peacebuilding as an independent media amplify attempts by grassroots groups to hold their government and other elite peacebuilding leaders (including the international community) accountable for their actions. TV and radio media can be particularly appropriate since the majority of the population remains illiterate, and has limited exposure to the foreign community. In addition, effective media allows government and elite peacebuilding actors to communicate their strategies to the broader population in order to change perceptions and garner support (Haselock, 2010). Thus, an effective media is an essential component of peacebuilding in the effort to transfer ownership from the international to the Afghan community.

Advocacy

The third component to an 'Afghan ownership' DRS is promoting a programme of advocacy. An effective system of advocacy in Afghanistan needs to be undergirded by a positive view of conflict; one that moves from a methodology focused entirely on conflict resolution and conflict management to one focused on conflict transformation. Conflict transformation embraces advocacy and elevates conflict in order to harness its inherent power to transform relationships, events, and structures (Lederach, 1995, p. 17). Actively embracing the transformative nature of conflict would seem essential on the journey towards Afghan ownership, since the international community and upper-level Afghan elites and government officials have shown themselves unwilling in many cases to do what is required to ensure Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. As such, conflict cannot be resolved at the earliest convenience and at the lowest level. Struggles at the

community level need to be translated into revised policy and practice at the upper levels inside the peacebuilding mission. As such, peace and harmony at the community level must sometimes be postponed while conflict is sustained until dealt with. For example, the necessity of conflict was clearly illustrated in the ‘Arab Spring’ movement.

The support for advocacy as a central component of a DRS is rooted in the need for an ‘engaged’ community and grassroots in the war-torn Afghan context. Building up a milieu that supports an engaged community requires “a public discourse that empowers people to articulate their needs freely”, and insists on inclusion and participation in the face of oppression and asymmetrical power relationships (Dukes, 2006, p. 172). As such, participation in an engaged community through advocacy and other communal activities transforms the private interests and basic needs of individuals into public concerns that are pushed for and demanded (Dukes, 2006, p. 157). Therefore, as Afghan individuals and organisations experience the deleterious effects of an unsustainable and un-owned peacebuilding programme, advocacy can serve to maintain the conflict necessary to achieve transformation, highlight required policy and methodological changes, and support Afghan individuals and organisations as potential local owners of such activities.

At its foundation, advocacy as part of this DRS is a means to ensure local voice in the face of the powerful (i.e. the international community, Afghan government, Warlords, criminal organisations, Afghan police and the military). This local voice will ensure that all sides to the various ‘ownership’ dilemmas are actually presented to decision-makers, and not dominated by the powerful status quo that is inherently resistant to increased local ownership in many cases. Thus, U.S. dominance in the overall peacebuilding mission will certainly be of high priority. Processes of militarisation and politicisation

will also come under scrutiny, as local groups demand the subjugation of military actors and strategy to greater civilian control, and seek a greater voice in the political objectives of overall peacebuilding processes. Another item facing public scrutiny is the upper and lower level peace processes and, in particular, the role of the Taliban in Afghanistan's future, and the absence of much-needed grassroots peace processes. Advocacy and non-violent resistance in these areas pose some inherent dilemmas in practice since what will be required, in some cases, is for local populations to advocate for increased ownership with the very international organisations that are supporting them with resources. In other words, they will need to 'bite the hand that feeds them'.

The participants closely followed the social revolutions occurring in Egypt and Tunisia during the research period. The topic of these people movements was addressed regularly during the interviews. There seemed to be a common belief that these sorts of transformative movements may hold the potential to forge a deep social transformation inside of an intensely communal society such as Afghanistan. However, as reported in preceding chapters, the participants believed that several factors prevented such movements from working towards sustainable peace. There are, indeed, very difficult dilemmas facing any local Afghan social resistance movements. It appears that the Afghan case will require sturdy and creative support from the international community, all the while not appearing to hold, or actually gaining, control over such movements. In other words any such movements must be intensely Afghan owned.

However, advocacy is not just suited for the grassroots level. As a result of foreign intervention dynamics the local Afghan government does not enjoy a power monopoly as is typical in most nation states. The government must comply with foreign

wishes, and shape its policy and actions according to international requirements. Power asymmetries and funding arrangements that bypass the majority of international money around government Ministries create parallel structures that compete for legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan population and prevent government empowerment. Current funding arrangements are leading to dependency, and are calling into question the sustainability of governmental progress in the face of aggressive 'transition' timelines. Thus, the Afghan government must carefully advocate for increased ownership over the international aid influx, and over control of the national priority programmes that are focusing on key development and peacebuilding areas for the Afghan people. Further, the Afghan government must advocate for itself through appropriate and strong foreign policies at the regional international level. Afghan leaders have identified several regional nations such as Pakistan and Iran who are meddling in Afghan affairs and aggravating an already tense security situation.

Building a Conflict Resolution System

The final component of the DRS will be a systematic process and structure for conflict resolution in terms of Afghan ownership to be resolved in a manner that is transformative and that leads to increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Active programmes of education and advocacy as described in the preceding sections will create healthy conflicts that must be resolved in a manner that meets the DRS's objectives. The 'ownership' conflicts that arise should be an appropriate fit for an informal conflict resolution process that will be described below. Further, a conflict resolution process can effectively deal with the multiple dilemmas that shape the Afghan ownership debate. The conflict-induced movement towards Afghan ownership is

by no means a clear-cut path but, rather, a path dominated by problems, ambiguities, and grey areas. Thus, appropriate resolution processes must consider all positions in a dilemma and shape any resolution in a way that considers the interests of all sides, but in a way that moves past the status quo and current rhetoric and pushes for real advances in Afghan ownership. These conflict resolution structures must be cognisant of deeper issues, and drill down beneath surface expressions of conflict and address structural issues of power and dominance. Thus, conflicts should not be necessarily dealt with at the earliest convenience and at the lowest level, but should be aimed at strategic structural transformation to prevent similar conflicts from arising in the future. In this sense the conflict resolution process is not a neutral activity, but is working towards protecting the underlying interests of Afghan ownership. Neutrality may not be possible in this case, and would simply serve the purposes of the powerful and the status quo.

Building an appropriate and Afghan owned conflict resolution process would allow the wide variety of dilemmas and struggles as identified by the participants in this study to be addressed. As various individuals, groups, or organisations experience conflict due to inherent struggles or to the dilemmas of ownership, they will have a conflict resolution process and structure from which they can receive expert guidance and advice. This process and structure will be explored further in subsequent sections, but would likely not hold legal weight, and would provide expert guidance in the journey towards Afghan ownership. A sampling of issues that can be addressed include: (1) corruption and incapacity inside of government and in other Afghan structures; (2) inherent dissonance between international and Afghan perceptions of organisational culture, economic and political development, and human rights; (3) bridging the

humanitarian-military relationship and coordination, and between the political and humanitarian arms of the peacebuilding community; (4) who should control and lead coordination over the overall peacebuilding project; (5) the massive power and resource inequalities between international and local actors; (6) the complexity of the intervener-local relationship in contexts of war; (7) the difficult international funder-local partner relationship; (8) military domination in the overall peacebuilding intervention; and (9) differences between various civil society groups with competing methodologies (e.g. NGOs, traditional or religious groups). Virtually all of the parties involved in the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan have inherent interests that can be considered inside of a healthy conflict resolution process and structure.

So what might an appropriate conflict resolution process and structure look like? At a basic level, it is worth noting once again that this conflict resolution structure must be Afghan owned in design and structure, but also it must be understandable, efficient, and usable for international actors since they are major actors and disputants in ownership conflicts. In reality it is likely possible that a hybrid structure of some sort will be created that addresses both the international and local Afghan ideas about conflict resolution. Addressing both will likely require the merging of internationally designed structures with traditional Afghan conflict resolution structures. If international partners are not willing to enter into a hybrid relationship, they should keep in mind that they are interveners, and are inherently responsible to conduct conflict resolution in a manner that is sustainable and that works towards increased Afghan ownership as opposed to maintaining colonial or imperial advantage. This following section is an intellectual guess at what such a hybrid model might look like, all the while realising that locally designed

processes will likely go in different directions. However, this section endeavours to roll out some useful theory and structure assisting in the realisation of effective processes.

Afghan Ownership Over Design

The ‘ownership’ advisory committee, as discussed earlier, would lead the design of the conflict resolution structure. As such it would be largely Afghan led, but still remain open to advice from the international community. If Afghan leaders are not ensuring Afghan ownership of the process from its inception, it will be difficult to ensure that the long-term trajectory of DRS activities will indeed lead to the desired end of a much-increased Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. This process will, of course, be difficult since the West holds a glut of well-developed and tested literature and experience in conflict resolution, while there exists very little literature or precedence for such a partnership between international and communal and traditional structures in Afghanistan such as communal decision-making bodies. And also, there will initially need to be strong international leadership as the DRS is initiated. A rapid hand-over will need to be mandated from the beginning and carefully monitored by donors and other outside observers. As soon as is possible Afghan leaders in the advisory committee must be given authority to control the design of the conflict resolution structure.

Centrality of Dialogue

At a minimum, the creation of new conflict resolution structures will allow for focused dialogue between competing parties. Numerous scholars (Burton, 1997; Fisher, 2009; Kelman, 2006; Rothman, 1997a; Saunders, 1999) have developed the conflict resolution methodology of dialogue groups and problem-solving workshops. Falling into the praxis of “interactive conflict resolution”, these dialogue-based strategies aim to build

bridges by creating a safe space for antagonists to engage with each other in a constructive and controlled manner.

Interactive conflict resolution is based on the assumption that adversarial relationships are ruled by misunderstandings, misperceptions, exaggerations, mistrust, and fear (Jeong, 2005, p. 159). Thus, as adversaries participate in controlled dialogue and guided conflict analysis, they will start to build a shared body of knowledge, and consequently begin to understand and trust each other. In order to create a safe context for these difficult interactions, trained neutral third parties are essential in many cases to control and guide the dialogue. Third parties will need to be sensitive to the flow of the dialogue, and be particularly aware of how the participant's attitudes, beliefs, and relationships are morphing as the dialogue continues (Fisher, 2009, p. 330). Further, they will need to be self-aware and self-confident in the processes of problem solving in order to exert appropriate control in order to maintain constructive dialogue during the heat of interpersonal exchanges. Third parties are responsible for "inducing positive motivation for conflict resolution" through tactics such as flattening power imbalances, maintaining optimum tension between adversaries, and encouraging the integration of ideas and problem-solving (Fisher, 2009, p. 330). Further, third parties need to control and hinder disrespectful behaviour and communication in the processes.

Similarly, Jay Rothman (1997a) has developed a framework (ARIA) for resolving conflict using dialogue. His framework allows competing parties in a conflict to engage in *adversarial*, *reflexive*, *integrative*, and *action* processes leading to the resolution of conflict. The adversarial frame in Rothman's framework embraces deep emotions and allows parties to the conflict an opportunity to express their beliefs regarding the conflict

and a chance to propose their favoured outcomes. The participants will typically incorporate blaming, polarizing, attributing, and projecting processes that unintentionally escalate the conflict during this phase. The reflexive frame allows for the initiation of bridge-building processes. In the reflexive process, “resonance with the other derives from an introspective and inward-directed exploration of questions within, about the self, rather than fixating on answers about the other” (Rothman, 1997a). As parties to the conflict talk about their core concerns, motivations, and their shared responsibility in the conflict, opportunities for the discovery of a common ground are opened up. During the integrative stage, common concerns and motivations are used as a basis for the invention of solutions and appropriate transformative processes. The action frame moves the participants towards implementing processes that will address the various parties’ concerns. The action frame is, by necessity, intensely collaborative and will typically require an impartial third party like a facilitator or mediator.

Interest-Based Resolution

Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1988) have developed an approach to resolving conflict that focuses on *interests* instead of *power*-based or *rights*-based processes. Power-based resolution processes are based on coercion, imposition, acts of aggression, or withholding benefits of a relationship (Ury, et al., 1988, pp. 7-8). Rights-based resolution processes rely on independent standards such as laws or contracts, and are often adjudicated by a third-party such as a judge who hands down a binding decision (Ury, et al., 1988, p. 7). On the other hand, interest-based processes such as mediation or negotiation focus on reconciling the interests (needs, desires, concerns, fears) that parties may hold by

addressing concerns, probing for deep-rooted worries, and building creative solutions that satisfy both parties and their concerns.

The conflict and the dilemmas on the journey towards Afghan ownership are arguably quite suitable for the application of interest-based resolution processes. In almost any conflict scenario regarding ownership there exist real and legitimate concerns on both sides. For example, local Afghan parties are concerned about a lack of control, authority, and sustainability, while international counterparts are apprehensive about releasing their resources into the hands of incapacitated, corrupt, and inefficient leaders and processes. However, both sides do have important concerns that must be addressed before any sustainable path forward can be identified. Very few, if any, peacebuilding actors encountered in this study believe the path toward Afghan ownership needs to be avoided; yet there exist very real concerns and interests that cannot be overlooked.

One very important caveat must be made clear. There were a couple of participants who were sceptical of any significant Afghan ownership in the presence of the powerful international community. These participants are backed up by a growing body of literature (Jabri, 2010; Jacoby, 2007; Lidèn, et al., 2009; Tadjbakhsh, 2009; Taylor, 2007; Thiessen, 2011; Williams, 2010) that purports that international interventions such as in Afghanistan cannot lead to authentic Afghan ownership because of underlying intervention ethics and goals, primarily the goal of world domination and careful preservation of economic and political self-interests by the West. These self-interests are deeply dissonant with local interests, will refuse to be fundamentally altered or compromised, and are forced into dominance using the political and military weight of

the Western intervention community. Creative research will need to be committed to explore this thesis in more detail.

Ury et al.'s (1988) interest-based resolution system, however, suggests that a focus on interests can in most cases avoid catastrophic and costly effects, such as massive resistance to the international intervention, and the empowerment of all sides in the ownership debate. They encourage the application of conflict resolution processes at the earliest stage and lowest level possible, something that has already been cautioned against. However, early resolution may be a constructive strategy in many cases.

The interest-based resolution system would need to contain simple structures and institutions targeted at a focused group of issues in the 'ownership' conflict. In order to strengthen the local population's motivation for widespread multi-level involvement, multiple entry points would need to be ensured for both grassroots and upper-level elite leaders (Ury, et al., 1988, p. 41). However, in a precarious security situation where raising a voice against coercive 'powers' (government, Warlords, criminals, and the international community) can be lethal, some sort of protection must be ensured for those that raise their voice. Even if their protection is ensured, it is difficult to imagine widespread involvement by anybody below the upper-elite level (government, donors, and the international community) and possibly the middle level (local NGOs, and civil society organisations) without the process being closely aligned with local and culturally appropriate conflict resolution structures. Thus, it would be difficult for the entire process to be legally binding or coercive; it would by necessity be an advisory system that raises consciousness and alters the course of the ownership journey and the transition process. However, it is certainly conceivable that at some point on the journey Afghan leaders,

most likely from within the central government, would provide significant rights and power backups to interest-based processes, possibly making resolutions legally binding.

Ensuring Structural Transformation

Other conflict resolution scholars and practitioners such as Franklin Dukes (1999, 2006) and Constantino and Merchant (1996) argue that interest-based processes of dispute resolution fall short in many cases by ignoring underlying systemic problems that must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable and deep-seated change. Instead, conflict resolution systems should provide participants with the analytical tools necessary to analyse conflict and to situate it in the larger overarching struggle for ownership. Also, conflict resolution processes in regards to Afghan ownership must not become market driven, cater to the actors with the most money and power, and ensure the maintenance of the status quo (Dukes, 1999; Rubenstein, 1999, p. 176).

In the Afghan ownership debate this would mean transformations to the international-local relationship, its philosophy, and ethical practices in order to ensure a real shift toward Afghan ownership. This transformation requires a programme of social-structural change in which changes are made to intervention design, strategies, and methodologies. In some ways this social-structural change will require the democratisation of the overall intervention, and the allowance of local owners to gain authority over peacebuilding activities, even to the extent of allowing local actors to determine when and how international actors should leave Afghanistan.

Also, an important outcome would result in transformed relationships between Afghan civil society and the Afghan government. At the heart of this transformation must be an increasingly engaged community that engages in public dialogue aimed at a more

responsive government (Dukes, 2006, p. 158). A responsive government addresses grassroots powerlessness and alienation by re-focusing political power within civil society and permits an increased and authentic participation by the grassroots (Dukes, 2006, pp. 160-161). In terms of the ownership debate, increased participation would require the active involvement of all levels of society in any conflict resolution structure that aims to move beyond the status quo and increase Afghan ownership over peacebuilding. Grassroots Afghans would thus be empowered to define their identity in the face of power structures, and to pursue their conceptions of the communal good.

Conclusion

This chapter has constructed a DRS that addresses the multitude of dilemmas faced on the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. A case has been built that proposes that the journey could be expedited by designing and implanting an Afghan owned and holistic system comprising of four elements: (1) an inclusive advisory committee that would structure the overall system; (2) a system of education to raise consciousness, train, and empower the Afghan population and its leaders; (3) a system of advocacy that pushes for transformed international-local and civil society-government relationships in particular; and (4) the creation of a conflict resolution process and structure to deal directly with conflict on the journey towards Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. To this end this chapter has provided a justification for such a process and structure, and has provided some theory that may be useful in constructing this DRS. Extensive detail has been avoided in the hope that Afghan owners of peacebuilding can adapt the system to best serve the Afghan context and its 'ownership' requirements.

Chapter 10 – Conclusions and Recommendations

Introduction

As the international community ventures into areas devastated by conflict, international and local peacebuilding leaders are faced with difficult programming decisions. A set of exceptionally difficult decisions lies within the international-domestic inter-relationship and, in particular, those related to ensuring increased local (Afghan) ownership of peacebuilding decision-making and implementation. Yet, peacebuilding leaders are asked to make these decisions with virtually no empirical evidence regarding practices leading to increased local ownership. Further, these peacebuilding leaders are expected to align their peacebuilding activities with strategic policy that has recently embraced the theme of local ownership despite the fact that the meaning of the term itself has remained ambiguous and its justifications have remained uncertain. In fact, there are scholars who propose that literal local ownership may not even be possible in the context of modern peacebuilding interventions as experienced in Afghanistan (Reich, 2006).

In response, this study adopted a qualitative grounded theory methodology to allow peacebuilding leaders in Afghanistan a voice in: (1) defining what is experienced as Afghan ownership of peacebuilding; (2) describing the dilemmas and struggles experienced on the journey towards increased Afghan ownership; and (3) exploring how efforts at ensuring increased and literal Afghan ownership might be initiated and/or bolstered. These three themes directly address the guiding research questions as laid out in Chapter 1 ('Introduction'). The research data was gathered through sixty face-to-face semi-structured interviews in early 2011 with sixty-three participants in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif.

The research was conducted, analysed, and presented against a backdrop of: (1) a survey of Afghan geography, society, and history in Chapter 2 ('Context'); and (2) a body of established and emerging peacebuilding theory as summarised in Chapter 3 ('Literature Review'). A survey of Afghan history revealed that the current post-2001 international intervention is by no means an isolated and unique event; rather it should be observant of previous international-local interactions and relationships throughout Afghan history. The underlying theory in the literature review described two increasingly competing bodies of peacebuilding theory ('(neo)liberal' vs. 'emancipatory') that are dissonant in regards to conceptions of local ownership in actual practice.

The remainder of this concluding chapter consists of two sections. First, the major research findings are summarised and recommendations for peacebuilding policy, theory, and practice are highlighted. The second section identifies several areas that require further research in order to elucidate the roles of both foreign and domestic actors in achieving significant local ownership over peacebuilding in war-torn contexts.

Summary of Research Findings and Recommendations

Chapters 5 to 8 laid out the major findings of this research project and began to discuss their implications for peacebuilding theory, policy, and practice. Chapter 5 focused on one side to the 'ownership' problematic, namely the foreign community in Afghanistan and the perceived necessity of limiting local ownership of peacebuilding to simply 'buy-in' to the Western intervention process. In general, participants could not see beyond the necessity of significant foreign ownership over the international intervention in Afghanistan. The suffering of the people is extreme due to war, invasion, and ineffective governance, and they justified foreign ownership over a wide range of

peacebuilding activities as preventing a quick resumption of civil war or preventing the ‘Talibanisation’ of reformed government structures.

However, the maintenance of significant foreign ownership over peacebuilding is riddled with dilemmas. First, the act of international intervention is perceived as prohibitive to efforts aimed at increasing local ownership over peacebuilding. As an example, the international-local power asymmetry creates a debilitating social-psychological context in which local leaders struggle to effectively and legitimately assume authority. On the other hand, foreign power can supposedly break the cycle of warring, provide protection for civil society actors, and limit the effect of destructive groups such as the Taliban and self-interested regional nations such as Iran and Pakistan from interfering in Afghanistan’s domestic affairs.

Second, the foreign military’s role in addressing insecurity has come under significant critique as local violence has steadily increased under its tenure. The participants accused the international military of being primarily concerned with its self-interests and, thus, believed the international military should terminate their combat role as soon as possible in the interests of local security and development, and the realisation of increased local control. They wondered if the intense international pressure on the Taliban had actually bolstered its local and international legitimacy and influence, indirectly creating a bigger and more destructive monster. In this regard, several participants believed that internationally supported ex-Mujahideen Warlords posed a more significant threat to sustained peace in Afghanistan. To top it off, my participants believed the widespread use of private contractors for security and warring to be inherently opposed to the transition to local control.

On the flip side however, many participants believed that a strong, thorough, and continued international presence and mandate was needed in Afghanistan. They suggested that the Taliban might once again usurp wide swaths of rural Afghanistan and conduct massive reprisals in retaliation for cooperation with international forces. There also existed a noticeable apprehension in regards to the capability of local Afghan forces to suppress the insurgency, and conduct their operations in a manner that respected the human rights of local populations. Further, some participants believed that many ANA soldiers were simply on hire to the international forces and would quickly revert to previous Warlord loyalties once the international troops exit and the transition of control into Afghan hands is complete.

Third, processes of capacity building are facing significant criticism as ineffective and failing to meet the requirements of devastated decision-making structures in Afghanistan. It appears that the international community's capacity building and technical advising procedures are struggling to move beyond training and knowledge transfer to facilitate actual learning for Afghan counterparts. Learning, as opposed to knowledge transfer, requires significant levels of Afghan ownership over the activities at hand. In addition, it must be considered whether capacity building ventures by the international community are simply carrying out the dictates of international donors and injecting external and unfitting processes and structures into the Afghan society. However, some participants worried that left to their own, Afghan leaders would simply revert to 'traditional' processes that prove to be inadequate in assuring local development and in integrating Afghanistan into the modern world.

Fourth, political reform is ringing hollow for many participants, and is seen as retaining simply an ‘outer shell’ of reform that is void of any meaningful content for the Afghan people. Further, the strong international control over peacebuilding emphasises lines of accountability between international organisations and the Afghan government as opposed to holding the Afghan government accountable to the Afghan population. Some participants suggested that international actors may need to rethink their expectations of reform, and allow processes to follow a more ‘Afghan’ path. However, Afghan owned political reform may move slowly, and may not result in democratic structures and processes that meet Western approval.

Fifth, in the realm of international aid and development, the international community must consider the effects of sustained and massive aid on the effort to achieve local ownership of peacebuilding. The massive and consuming nature of funding arrangements is exaggerating the authority held by international organisations when compared to important domestic authority structures. Further, massive funding levels are suppressing any motivations and the creativity necessary to procure local funding through taxes and other means. Yet, the obvious dilemma in this funding dilemma is that Afghanistan remains massively impoverished, and continues to be unable to provide for the basic needs of its population.

Chapter 6 mirrored Chapter 5 and considered the Afghan ownership debate from the point of view of Afghan groups and individuals. Two deep divisions in the debate emerged from the interview narratives: (1) the government-civil society competition over ownership; and (2) the dissonance between ‘traditionalism’ and ‘liberalisation’ in defining the future of Afghanistan.

Regarding the government-civil society split, this study revealed that both the government and Afghan civil society need to be active joint owners of peacebuilding activities. Ownership for both entities is clearly legitimated by the Afghan people, and both have distinct strengths and roles. What is now needed are creative and bravely led arrangements that have the local Afghan government working in unison with local civil society in a manner that builds upon the strengths of each side.

Government ownership of peacebuilding is absolutely fundamental in the modern Afghan state. The participants believed that government ownership is stifled through funding arrangements and the predominant authority structures in the overall peacebuilding mission. Competing arguments were offered on this point. On the one hand, some participants believed that massive funding levels were actually limiting political transformation by creating dependency, and that real locally owned transformation would not occur until international funding was greatly reduced. On the other hand, others argued that much greater proportions of international funding must be channelled through government coffers.

However, the dilemma of locally controlled political transformation is that local government structures are perceived as lacking adequate capacity, and as plagued with incessant corruption in many cases. Addressing capacity deficits and corruption is proving to be a massive challenge. At a basic level are issues of definition. It matters who is defining capacity and corruption. Local and Western definitions are likely to be dissonant. Yet, corruption must be dealt with in order for the government to effectively serve its constituents and regain some sort of legitimacy in the eyes of the population. In a related fashion, the presence of Warlords as political leaders must be addressed. Even

though a few ‘good’ Warlords may be providing a sense of governance in some areas, their wielding of power is discrediting both the concept of democracy and the good intentions of international interveners.

Turning to civil society, a major item of concern for many Afghan participants was the dominance of NGOs in civil society, and the role that they have willingly adopted. Local NGOs wield a significant amount of influence in Afghan society and attract many of the best Afghan leaders into their employ, yet they have settled for a role as service providers for international agencies to a large extent. However, it is difficult for civil society to own and direct social movements for social transformation in this sort of role. It is arguably feasible that intensified efforts at building the capacity of government actors may allow them to relieve NGOs of many of these service provision roles. A reallocation of efforts might allow NGOs and civil society to rather adopt roles in terms of community peacebuilding, conflict resolution, advocacy, activism, and watchdog services to provide a counterweight to government roles and work at ensuring that the Afghan government is increasingly responsive to its constituents.

Afghanistan requires a surge of civil society political activity leading to a people movement that demands a locally owned peace and development process. However, such processes were difficult for most participants to envision. Suffocating poverty, continuing suppression, massive insecurity, self-doubt, confusion over roles, and elevated salaries for Afghan NGO staff are discouraging the abandonment of the status quo of civil society activity. A revitalised civil society that adopts the above-mentioned roles must put forth visionary leaders (who are willing to die for their cause, because many likely will!) and be committed to democratic and inclusive decision-making that considers women and the

very poor on the margins of society. Further, they must push for a revamped relationship with the international community that shuns funding and resource dependency and rather accepts the ability of the international community to provide some protection and deal with destructive regional actors such as Pakistan, Iran, and transnational criminal groups.

The second area of concern raised by my interviewees was the precarious balance between traditional decision making social structures and emerging democratic expectations. In essence, Afghans are being forced to grapple with the possibility of local ownership of systems that have been brought into the country by outsiders. For example, while many of the participants were very supportive of current movements towards democracy, they noted that many rural populations were struggling to relate to and integrate into political development and democratic reforms. As a result of this rural-urban conflict, political and justice structures (especially central ones) hold little meaning for rural populations and, in fact, often are destructive and abusive at the ground level in the everyday lives of local Afghan citizens. To compare, traditional political and justice structures are locally legitimated and address locally defined needs in a locally approved manner. Yet, the dilemma lies in the glaring inadequacies of traditional structures, especially in its treatment and exclusion of women and the very poor, and also in its apparent inability to satisfy the expectations of an increasingly growing body of Afghans (particularly urban youth) that desire a modernised Afghanistan and a political voice in its future directions. There are also many dilemmas in the traditional treatment of human rights in the face of modern expectations. Democracy may appear to outsiders as a panacea; yet, if it is not actually providing a meaningful political experience at the ground level, other locally owned and supported political structures may need to be

supported. Some of my study's participants explored how parallel structures might be the key for this generation of Afghans before democratic structures can truly be adopted and owned by the Afghan population. Given the distinct central-regional dissonance it is hard to imagine the sustainability of any system that overly suppresses traditional structures and processes in favour of Western liberal ones.

This 'traditional/liberal' conflict does not just exist at the grassroots level, it is raging in the upper levels also. For example, elected Afghan parliamentarians are excluded from the design and implementation of upper-level peace processes with the Taliban insurgency. They accuse the unelected High Peace Council of being inherently unconstitutional since it sidelines the elected legislature, and places significant authority into the hands of a small group of elites, some of whom are Warlords with little interest in sustainable peace (CBC, 2011).

Chapter 7 narrowed the discussion and explored the possibility of Afghan ownership of both the top-down and bottom-up peace and reconciliation processes in Afghanistan. At the heart of the participants' narratives are competing conceptions of the necessity of justice in the search for positive peace. In other words, granting ownership to particular segments of Afghan society (e.g. grassroots vs. the government) results in different requirements in terms of justice for violent perpetrators. Grassroots community peacebuilding pushes for positive peace that includes justice for Warlords and Taliban offenders who have caused so much destruction. Yet, in response, upper-level peace processes are concerned (and justifiably so) that a focus on justice for all offenders will derail their activities by eliminating the motivations for insurgent leaders to engage with them. It was difficult to decipher which path the majority of participants desired to travel.

On the one hand, it seemed that many were willing to settle for even a negative peace (an absence of direct violence and war) after so many years of horrific violence. On the other hand, the ‘peace-with-no-justice’ approach is, in fact, the path that the international community has preferred to travel. However, this approach is now starting to reap destructive consequences because of its choices as the legitimacy of the overall intervention wears thin due to perceptions of impunity for violent offenders. The dilemma for the international community is how to exit in a timely manner from a very deadly mission that is quickly losing support from their home constituencies.

A second underlying theme explored in this chapter concerns the struggle of the Afghan population to connect with formal structures and processes such as formal justice institutions. However, international peacebuilders have, for the most part, remained faithful to the formal path. However, recent policy revisions and consequent adaptations of practice have shown an awakening to the power and efficacy of informal structures and processes. It appears that a complementary relationship must be built, which will require exceptionally creative leadership amidst the ambiguity and uncertainty that will result. Even though it appears that the majority of the population prefers informal structures, the interview narratives reveal significant support for the development of formal democratic structures. Peacebuilding for the current generation will likely require parallel and compromising structures and processes. Perhaps roles can be clarified, and areas of glaring deficiencies in each path can be supplemented by strengths in counterpart structures and processes.

Chapter 7 also explored perceptions of ownership in terms of the upper- and lower-level peace processes. This study’s participants perceived the grassroots as

significantly disconnected from upper-level processes. Many participants viewed the process sceptically and as a farce. This is certainly alarming, especially since this fact has apparently evaded the view of the international community and the Afghan elites to a large extent. In the meantime the Taliban is morphing, splintering, and growing in influence, which is complicating efforts by the international community and the Afghan government to reach out to them.

The participants were quite divided regarding whether the Taliban should be approached in the context of a peace negotiation. Some insisted that the Taliban's extremist ideologies and violence should bar them from future peace negotiations and political involvement. Others recognised that the Taliban had now formed a significant political presence in Afghan society and must be engaged if any sort of sustainable peace is to be achieved. In some ways this debate is related to the debate over the role of conservatism and religion in the future of Afghanistan. The majority of participants (keeping in mind the urban bias) envisioned a conservative yet democratically transformed Afghanistan, which was not hindered by overly conservative ideologies or the backward teaching of excessively traditional religious teachers.

The situation is no more encouraging with grassroots peacebuilding processes. According to participants it appears that grassroots conflict resolution and peace work is largely forgotten, or more likely ignored and perhaps suppressed, in favour of upper-level or military-led strategies. Further, it should not be surprising that it is next to impossible for the international community to legitimately support grassroots peace work while actively fighting a war in rural areas. Before grassroots empowerment work, reconciliation activities, and community peacebuilding can occur, the international and

Afghan community should find a way to terminate the war. Rather, the insurgency might be resisted at local levels by local peoples using locally mandated (ideally non-violent) methodologies. The presence of a powerful international community is perhaps suppressing the creative solutions that might otherwise emerge from the desperate struggle at the grassroots level when forced to own the achievement of security at the village level. It should be noted, however, that I put forward these recommendations very humbly, tentatively, and with trepidation since this route will likely be very bloody and difficult. Yet, one must keep in mind that the route taken by the international community so far has also been very bloody in terms of Afghan civilian casualties.

However, there is sporadic and disconnected community peacebuilding, justice, and reconciliation work occurring in some parts of the country. The participants were very positive and optimistic regarding these efforts, and believed that it must be quickly bolstered and supported at the national level through nation-wide programming. Both grassroots and upper-level processes must be built up conjointly to provide a wider range of voices in order ensure success, legitimacy, and sustainability (Schirch, 2011). And there must be significant cross-pollination between the two; as long as both sides can keep their houses in order, build up more than a modicum of trust for each other, and recognise that the short term will certainly require compromises.

Chapter 8 explored five key 'ownership' themes that centre on the complex relationship between international and domestic actors and individuals. First, the very nature and structure of a liberal international intervention makes the achievement of local ownership very difficult, and arguably impossible. The power asymmetry between local and foreign actors is ensuring that neoliberal economic reforms and liberal democratic

transformations are implemented, and also serves to prevent Afghan ownership of the direction of reforms. These economic reforms are perceived as benefiting only a small elite population, with the majority of the population seeing little improvement to their situation. Likewise, liberal democratic transformation is ringing hollow, and is being ignored by many Afghans.

Still, the goal of a functioning market-democracy seemed to be appealing for most of my study's participants. Most of the participants perceived liberal structures and processes as superior to local versions. There is also a deep desire for a democratic voice in decision-making. However, they recognised that politics remains a deeply communal activity in Afghanistan and, as such, there must be an active willingness on the part of international reformers to release political reform into the hands of the people. Yet, it will be exceedingly difficult for the international community to work closely together with traditional and/or religious leaders. Local ownership of economic and political reform will thus require an active balance between externally coerced (neo)liberal reforms, and locally inspired and owned reform. Peacebuilding success will remain elusive as long as a critical mass of local support and leadership is not achieved.

Second, peacebuilding, humanitarian, and development activities in Afghanistan are becoming noticeably militarised and politicised. For example, having international governmental donors housed inside military PRT compounds and funding both military and civilian development is certainly confusing to the Afghan public. Also, military rhetoric regarding the Afghan mission has sometimes referenced humanitarian actors as part of their 'combat' team. Further, many peacebuilding activities are conducted with defined political objectives that support only one side of the conflict in Afghanistan.

The militarisation and politicisation of peacebuilding and development activities is proving to be a major barrier to local Afghan ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Local ownership of peacebuilding will require, as much as is possible, the careful separation of military and other peacebuilding activities. The military's structures, goals, and its necessitated tactical requirements will inherently resist local ownership. For example, it is not possible for the military to extend ownership to their 'enemy', the Taliban. Yet, it has become evident to many observers that if the Taliban had been granted some ownership at the 2001 Bonn conference, the Afghan situation might possibly look quite different today. One side to a conflict cannot be demonised, excluded from the conflict resolution table, and be expected to quietly fade into the background. The findings do support the idea of dismantling the PRT structure, and the careful reclamation of a more neutral stance by international and local organisations as providers of services to both sides in the conflict. Only then can international organisations move out into the local community to provide the necessary supports to local groups and populations to define for themselves the appropriate peacebuilding path to travel.

Third, Afghanistan's massive dependency on international aid has hamstrung efforts at local ownership. Dependency is deeply psychologically and socially debilitating. Thus, it is exceedingly difficult to insist on decision-making authority with someone else controlling the purse strings. Dependency has also propagated unhealthy top-down international-domestic power relations, which, in turn, makes local control unlikely.

Rather, local sustainability must be achieved in order to increase the odds of actual Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. It is dangerous for local leaders to assume

ownership over an activity that is not sustainable. They will be setting themselves up for a failure of legitimacy in the eyes of local populations as peacebuilding initiatives crumble beneath their feet or are shown to be ineffective. Instead, local incomes must be creatively generated, and taxation systems that actually work for a largely impoverished population must be explored. For example, effective development can build up the local tax base. Or perhaps, in a similar fashion to the North American context, many NGOs could be funded through foundations endowed by the local rich elites¹⁸. Local income can also be bolstered through an active campaign against corruption, effectively procuring border trade incomes, and insuring that transnational corporations do not unreasonably siphon incomes and resources from local resource development out of the country.

Fourth, short timelines and rushed peacebuilding implementation have become the norm in Afghanistan. Further, the prominence of international military activity and its ability to dictate peacebuilding priorities is making ‘quick and dirty’ project work commonplace. This situation is preventing potential local owners from achieving actual control over activities. Effective Afghan ownership will require the acceptance of long-term and, occasionally, multi-generational thinking. The international community must have patience for the difficult but empowering participatory processes that lead to increased local ownership. Otherwise, the Afghan population may simply wait out short timeframes before returning to the status quo of massive violence and war-making. Also, there must be a willingness to fund more ambiguous activities such as community peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and reconciliation initiatives that may take years or decades to bear fruit. These sorts of activities will require the extension of donor

¹⁸ Idea suggested by Dr. John Wiens, University of Manitoba, January 2012.

timelines, requiring a cultural transformation within the overall international intervention community.

Fifth, coordination structures and processes are laying bare the motivations behind the involvement of international organisations in Afghanistan. What this means is that coordination structures are now used to wield power and control the intervention as opposed to being forums where the journey towards increased Afghan ownership can be charted out. For example, participants shared how military actors have preferred to dominate efforts at coordination, making it impossible to grant local bodies complete control over select activities. However, coordination that supports Afghan ownership must be structured to provide a voice to a wide range of actors, particularly Afghan organisations and leaders.

A fundamental dilemma in the design of coordination structures that support Afghan ownership is the necessary ‘tightness’ or ‘looseness’ of coordination structures. Some observers of the overall mission have proposed that tighter coordination is required in Afghanistan. Yet, the overall mission is incredibly complex, and strong centralised coordination may be quite stifling, and prevent much needed work from being initiated. For example, strong centralised government control over coordination is crucial in this time of accelerated transition and international withdrawal. However, strong centralised control also raises several difficult issues. First, in the context of Afghanistan, civil society would likely suffer a reduced voice and role in peacebuilding. That is quite concerning since many of the most creative peacebuilding initiatives are emerging from within civil society. Second, Afghan history reveals that heavy-handed centralised coordination expectations will likely be dissonant with the decentralised nature of Afghan

politics. Once the strong backing of the international community is withheld in Kabul, a revolt by regional political leaders is likely. Third, it is also difficult to envision how a government plagued by corruption and incapacity can effectively takeover the immensely complex peacebuilding mission being attempted in Afghanistan.

Thus, creative and simplified coordination structures that eschew overly rigid control but, rather, embrace complexity and ambiguity on the difficult peacebuilding journey are urgently needed. Embracing this complexity may require international interveners to reflect on how much their Western cultural view elevates rational and linear processes and blinds them to effective and locally owned coordination processes.

Chapter 9 moved beyond data analysis and addressed the numerous and, potentially debilitating, dilemmas raised in the previous four chapters. This chapter raised the possibility that these dilemmas can be viewed not strictly as barriers, rather they might hold constructive potential in creating a peacebuilding ‘space’ where the international-domestic relationship can yield ever increasing local ownership over peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. Accessing this constructive potential will require determined action. This chapter suggested the creation of a locally designed and implemented conflict transformation structure and process that integrates four components into an overall transformation system, namely: (1) an inclusive Afghan-led advisory committee to guide efforts aimed at local ownership; (2) a focus on education reform and improvement to empower the Afghan population; (3) a system of advocacy that insists on reformed international-domestic relations; and (4) an intentional and thoughtfully designed conflict resolution process and structure to resolve conflict over the transfer of ownership.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research on local (Afghan) ownership of peacebuilding must continue, particularly as the peacebuilding community enters into a period of so-called ‘transition’ in which troops and aid are withdrawn and scaled down. Based on the findings of this study there are several avenues down which future research in the area of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding might travel.

First, future research in the area of Afghan ownership needs to break out of the confines of major urban centres such as Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif. There are several reasons for this point of view. A significant majority of Afghanistan’s population lives in rural areas and has remained attached, to a greater extent, to traditional culture and manners of living. While there has been a limited number of studies conducted in rural areas investigating local people’s: (1) perceptions of international assistance (Donini, 2007, 2010); (2) perceptions of rural security threats and reconciliation efforts (Asia Foundation, 2011); and (3) perceptions of the Afghan peace process (Winterbotham, 2012), no study has directly addressed local people’s perceptions of ownership in rural areas. Moving beyond the confines of urban centres will also serve to reduce the urban and/or elite bias.

However, research in rural areas will require a much more hands off approach for international researchers due to the continuing security threat. It remains ill advised for international researchers to travel to most rural areas of the country. And even so, there may still be significant areas of Afghanistan unfit for even Afghan researchers to safely travel around.

Second, it is vital for a fuller understanding of local ownership in contexts of post-war peacebuilding to narrow in on specific peacebuilding programming areas and the journey towards local ownership in each of these areas. For example, what is the necessary role for international military forces in times of transition to local control? Is authentic local ownership actually possible in the presence of these forces? From my experience researching in Afghanistan, the military and other major players such as foreign governments and international donors can be difficult to access. However, their viewpoints are essential in developing future policy. As a second example, crucial research is required concerning current conceptions and practices of capacity building and training. Despite the fact that effective capacity building would seem to be central to effective local ownership schemes, very little thought is given to exploring improved methodologies leading to actual learning.

Third, while there has been a glut of political commentary and opinion sharing on Afghan peacebuilding, there remains inadequate rigorous research and data gathering aimed at accessing local perceptions regarding peacebuilding in Afghanistan. Data on several important themes might supplement and build upon this study's findings. For example, (1) Does there exist locally-inspired solutions to the massive problem of corruption in the Afghan government and society?; (2) Is there grassroots motivation for a massive social movement that rejects violence and endorses sustainable non-violent mechanisms for conflict resolution across Afghanistan?; (3) Is it possible to support parallel formal-democratic and informal-traditional processes and structures in the governance or justice sectors?; (4) What exactly are Afghans expecting in terms of modernisation, development, and economic reform?; (5) Does there exist hybrid models

of traditional/Islamist and democratic forms of government that might fit will in the context of Afghanistan?

Fourth, the peace process in Afghanistan requires much deeper scrutiny, both at the upper and grassroots levels. Crucial items to consider include the possibilities of increasing the legitimacy and inclusion of upper-level processes, and the feasibility of widespread grassroots peace processes aimed at addressing violence and conflict at the local level. What are the key constituent parts to a comprehensive peace process in Afghanistan and how can the international community support it?

Fifth, future research must investigate the accusations of a growing number of (mostly outside) observers that insist that current international peacebuilding interventions such as in Afghanistan cannot lead to authentic Afghan ownership because of underlying intervention ethics and goals, namely the goal of world domination as well as the careful preservation of the economic and political self-interests of the West. Creative research will need to be carried out that explores this hypothesis in more detail. This line of thinking and research will certainly require a careful study of the causes and effects of increased militarisation of peacebuilding in locales such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. Can a new path be established for future peacebuilding work, or is it possible to regain a more neutral stance when intervening in protracted ethnopolitical conflicts? Perhaps the neutrality of external interveners never was and never will be possible within current global power structures. The increased militarisation of peacebuilding activities may simply be a more honest and open approach, where peacebuilding, development, and humanitarian actors do not conceal their deep motivations, namely to support the world's rich nations in securing their wealth and security interests.

Finally, this study has revealed that an investigation into international peacebuilding themes such as Afghan ownership reveal numerous and deep dilemmas. And while the dilemmas may be viewed as barriers to and as stalling the peacebuilding progress, what is needed is some theoretical development that assists peacebuilding leaders in embracing these dilemmas when making difficult decisions. Can effective strategies and frameworks be developed that can guide policy building while addressing important dilemmas and competing viewpoints? Policy building is often conceptualised by necessity as clear-cut, yet the presence of important dilemmas might require policy that is able to acclimatise to uncertain futures, and is sensitive to and adaptable to change.

Conclusion

The ten-year mark since the 2001 international intervention in Afghanistan seems a natural point in which to engage in deep reflection on its failures and successes. The necessity of this reflection is amplified by the currently escalating ‘transition’ rhetoric and activities that hint at an imminent foreign withdrawal from Afghanistan. Motivating this research study is the fact that a survey of research and writing on the overall Afghanistan intervention reveals that the precarious international-domestic relationship is unable to ensure widespread and authentic Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities. This inability to ensure Afghan ownership is concerning since any peacebuilding process that is not adopted and owned by local populations faces a long uphill battle and will likely fail.

Thus, the theme of local (Afghan) ownership must be an underlying consideration for any peacebuilding strategy and policy in Afghanistan. This qualitative grounded theory research study empowered the voices of peacebuilders on the ground in

Afghanistan to define what they experience as Afghan ownership and the dilemmas and struggles faced in their efforts to build up levels of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding. These peacebuilders highlighted a series of themes and concerns that should prove important for future theory, policy, and practice in terms of local ownership of peacebuilding in Afghanistan as well as in other parts of the globe.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 - Letter of Invitation



UNIVERSITY
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Shouldering Responsibility for Sustainable Peace: Exploring Afghan Ownership of Peacebuilding Activities in Afghanistan

Researcher: Chuck Thiessen, *University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Canada*

Brief Summary: *This two year research project will explore the possibility of meaningful Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. While there has been significant support for the idea of Afghan ownership as a valuable principle within the peacebuilding policy debate, it has proven challenging to practically define and effectively implement. Research data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with both local and international peacebuilding leaders and officials in three Afghan cities. The findings should inform peacebuilding decision-making processes and policy in Afghanistan.*

Context: The world community has responded to violence and war in Afghanistan with a complex multi-faceted peacebuilding project aimed at re-establishing security, political transformation, renewed economic and social development, and facilitating reconciliation and justice. However, the people of Afghanistan continue to face serious challenges as evidenced by an ongoing armed insurgency, a resilient drug industry, inadequate governmental legitimacy, and widespread poverty. Further, researchers are noting a deepening discontent amongst Afghans in regards to the foreign-led peacebuilding activities. Coincidentally, it is argued that a locally-experienced and sustainable peace remains elusive for a majority of the population. This has led some peacebuilding theoreticians and practitioners to begin exploring potential revisions to current peacebuilding strategy and practice.

Objective: These scholars and practitioners are increasingly suggesting that increased Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities needs to be central to any revised peacebuilding strategy. It is rarely argued that Afghan ownership should be avoided and, in fact, ensuring ‘Afghan ownership’ is often a stated goal for peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. But what is the nature of this ‘ownership’? Does it have any substance or is it simply rhetoric? Granting power, authority, and responsibility to local individuals and groups will certainly have deep implications for peacebuilding practice and coordination.

To this end, this research project aims to explore: (1) perceptions of Afghan ownership in theory and practice; (2) inherent dilemmas to achieving Afghan ownership and; (3) what

revisions to coordination arrangements are necessitated in order to advance the possibility of Afghan ownership of peacebuilding.

Methodology: This Ph.D. dissertation research will involve approximately sixty semi-structured face-to-face interviews with both local and foreign peacebuilding leaders in three Afghan cities. Afghan participants will include persons from local NGOs, all levels government, religious groups, the media, schools and universities, foreign agencies, the justice sector, the Afghan military, community organisations, etc. Foreign participants will be primarily drawn from international NGOs, the UN, donors, governmental organisations, foreign diplomats, the foreign military, etc. Inclusion of both 'local' and 'foreign' responses from across the overall peacebuilding project should increase this study's descriptive power and significance. It is anticipated that the theory emerging from the data analysis should inform concrete policy recommendations to help anchor agendas for future peacebuilding practice.

Confidentiality Statement: Strict confidentiality will be maintained for both the interview participants and their organisations. The real names of both the participant and their organisation will be carefully avoided in and/or deleted from interview notes, interview transcripts, or in any reporting and publishing of the research findings. The Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba has reviewed and approved this research project (Protocol #J2010:144).

Biography

Chuck Thiessen is a scholar and practitioner whose academic research has focused on international peacebuilding processes. As a Ph.D. candidate in Peace and Conflict Studies at the Arthur V. Mauro Centre For Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba, he has authored a chapter in the book *Critical Issues in Peace and Conflict Studies (2011)*, and numerous articles in academic journals (*Peace Research, Civil Wars, Peace and Conflict Studies, Humanity and Society, International Politics*, amongst others). In addition, his book *Exploring NGO Educational Project Work (2008)* investigates the constructive as well as potentially destructive role NGO project work can play in Afghanistan. For the past three years he has worked as a research assistant in a Social Sciences Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) funded research project investigating the role of international economic aid in supporting peacebuilding and community development processes in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Thiessen is the recipient of the SSHRC Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship as well as the Duff Roblin Graduate Fellowship.

He has travelled extensively and has worked for two years as a community development worker in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. In Afghanistan he was employed by an international NGO as a project administrator for capacity building projects working together with the local Ministry of Education and Ministry of Agriculture in teacher training, school reconstruction, and informal education of local farmers regarding improved wheat seed. He was also involved extensively in preliminary project research and funding proposal writing.

Contact Information

Address: ...

Email: ...

Appendix 2 - Informed Consent Form



Fort Garry Campus Research Ethics Boards
CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road,
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
Phone: (204) 474-7122

Informed Consent Form

Research Project Title: Shouldering Responsibility for Sustainable Peace: Exploring ‘Afghan Ownership’ of Peacebuilding Activities in Afghanistan

Researcher: Chuck Thiessen

Dear Participant,

I am writing to request your participation in a PhD dissertation research project conducted in conjunction with the Faculty of Peace and Conflict Studies at the Mauro Centre for Peace and Justice at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. This research project responds to the urgent need to address the continuing struggle of local populations in Afghanistan to realize and experience sustainable peace. The following is a summary of my research:

This two-year research project will explore the possibility of meaningful Afghan ownership of peacebuilding activities in Afghanistan. While there has been significant support for the idea of Afghan ownership as a valuable principle within the peacebuilding policy debate, it has proven challenging to practically define and effectively implement. Research data will be gathered through semi-structured interviews with both local and international peacebuilding leaders and officials in three Afghan cities. The findings should inform peacebuilding decision-making processes and policy in Afghanistan.

You have been selected as a participant for this study based on your organisation’s activities and your position within the organisation. If you agree to participate you will be asked to take part in a semi-structured, 60-minute interview, at both a time and location of convenience to you. It is beneficial to me to audio record the interview, however, I will not audio record the interview if you so desire. In this case I will type interview notes on my laptop as we talk.

Strict confidentiality will be maintained for both you and your organisation. I will not use your real name or your organisation’s name in the interview notes, interview transcripts, or in any reporting of the findings. Further, all identifying characteristics for both you and your organisation will be carefully deleted from the interview transcripts.

Due to requirements of my course of study, the interview transcripts and or notes may be read by my research supervisor, Dr. Sean Byrne. Interview data, including direct quotes, may be subsequently used in my PhD dissertation. Upon completion of the study (on-or-before May 1, 2013) I will destroy all interview notes and transcripts and erase any interview audio recordings.

It is conceivable that participation in this study may pose a risk to you given the social and political milieu within which you live and work. However, I have attempted to design the study to

minimise these risks. I ask that you weigh any perceived risks before agreeing to be involved as an interview participant in this study.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask.

Signing this letter indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in this research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.

This research has been approved by the Joint Faculty Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the persons listed below or Margaret Bowman from the Human Ethics Secretariat (Margaret (Maggie) Bowman, Human Ethics Coordinator, Office of the Vice-President (Research), Crop Technology Centre, University of Manitoba, 208 – 194 Dafoe Rd., Winnipeg, MB, Canada, R3T 2N2; ph. 1 204 474 7122; e-mail: margaret_bowman@umanitoba.ca.)

Principal researcher: Chuck Thiessen; ph. ... (Canada);
Email: ...

Research supervisor: Dr. Sean Byrne; ph. ... (Canada);
email: ...

Participant's Name (Printed)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Please check if you would like to receive a written summary of the research upon its conclusion. If yes, please provide your mailing or email address below:

Appendix 3 - Interview Questions



UNIVERSITY
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Interview Questions

Organisational Description and Role

1. Explain what role [your organisation/project/department] plays and what type of work it does in the rebuilding of Afghanistan. Please provide details.

Theme 1: Exploring ‘Afghan Ownership’

2. Describe the relationship, as you see it, between [your organisation] and local groups and individuals in Afghanistan.
3. In your opinion, does ‘Afghan ownership’ exist in [your organisation]’s area of work? Please explain.
4. What would increased ‘Afghan ownership’ look like in your area of work?
5. Who do you think needs to be ‘owning’ activities in your area of work in Afghanistan? How? Why?

Theme 2: Challenges to ‘Afghan Ownership’

6. From your experience, what are some of the barriers to increasing ‘Afghan ownership’ of activities in [your area of work]?
7. How could these barriers be dealt with?
8. In your opinion, what are some of the dilemmas experienced by both foreign and Afghan groups when trying to ensure ‘Afghan ownership’ of activities in [your area of work]?
9. How could these dilemmas be dealt with?

Theme 3: Coordination and Support for ‘Afghan Ownership’

10. What forms of coordination, if any, are in place within your area of work in Afghanistan?
11. Do you think that these coordination structures have hindered or supported the possibility of ‘Afghan ownership’? Please explain.
12. In your opinion, what sorts of changes to coordination structures would allow for increased ‘Afghan ownership’ of activities in your area of work? Please explain.

Theme 4: Future Directions for Afghanistan

13. What are your hopes and fears for the future of the country of Afghanistan?
14. In your opinion, what role do foreign-led groups play in Afghanistan’s future?