



# DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER 2014: FROM THE MILITARY EXIT STRATEGY TO A CIVILIAN ENTRY STRATEGY

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## I. Introduction

With the closure of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the withdrawal of most North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces scheduled for the end of 2014, international assistance for Afghanistan is entering a new era. Many donors have become accustomed to the presence of ISAF's military infrastructure and provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) and to providing assistance in a highly militarized environment. Those donors now face a number of strategic questions and dilemmas regarding the provision of development assistance after 2014. Even though a residual international military presence will remain, donors are considering how they can continue to provide development assistance and perhaps use it to increase assistance to the Afghan Government in the provision of security and rule of law while operating in the absence of the current military infrastructures, in a potentially deteriorating security environment, and with a government that still has insufficient capacity and faces rampant corruption.

This paper considers the following three questions.

1. After the departure of ISAF, and in a potentially more insecure environment, how can donors continue to provide development assistance?
2. Through which channels is the post-2014 development assistance best distributed?
3. In absence of the security and military tools previously used to provide assistance to security and rule of law in Afghanistan, how can such assistance continue through development assistance instruments?

These questions are addressed in turn in sections II–IV. Section V presents conclusions and a number of recommendations on how donors can formulate—and promote—elements of a civilian entry strategy to parallel and replace the military exit strategy. The paper is intended to contribute to the discussion on the way forward for aid donors.

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## SUMMARY

● After the departure of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), delivering development assistance in Afghanistan can return to common practices and procedures used in other insecure areas such as Somalia and Sudan (and already in areas of Afghanistan). This means that the international community must develop a civilian entry strategy and communicate to the Afghan population that civilian entry, not military exit, is its strategy for the future.

Donors should ignore the current commitment to channel 50 per cent of assistance through the central government budget. Instead, in each sector (e.g. health care, education, security) an effective division of labour must be established between the central and provincial governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. Involving NGOs, the private sector and the local population in the delivery of basic services does not have to be at the expense of government control or legitimacy.

International aid donors need to pay further attention to security and rule of law. But alternatives to the current strategy, which is often perceived as being militarized and short-term, have to be found. It is often more effective to integrate these issues into broader development programmes.



The findings of this paper result primarily from field research undertaken, in collaboration with Cordaid, in May 2013 in Afghanistan that focused on the provinces of Balkh and Kandahar and on Kabul. Balkh and Kandahar were chosen since they can be considered representative of, respectively, the north and south of Afghanistan. The findings are based on interviews and focus group meetings with Afghan Government officials, analysts and researchers, representatives of domestic non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society, farmers' and women's groups, as well as representatives of international organizations, NGOs and donors.<sup>1</sup>

## II. Provision of development assistance after 2014

In both Balkh and Kandahar provinces there was some optimism among Afghan interviewees about the security situation after ISAF withdraws in 2014. They noted that many PRTs have already left, that most assistance channelled through PRTs has ended and that much of the development assistance avoided cooperation with the PRTs in the first place. Nonetheless, in Balkh, according to Afghan interviewees, continuous references to '2014' have provoked anxiety of what may be coming. This response was even described by some of them as a 'psychosocial trauma'. In Kandahar there appeared to be two views on post-2014 Afghanistan: with ISAF leaving and international troops primarily confined to their bases, either (a) violence will decrease as there is no longer a reason to fight the foreign troops; or (b) violence will increase since the capacity of the Afghan national security forces (ANSF) will be insufficient to deal with armed groups. In Kabul pessimism appeared to dominate as interviewees predicted that security will decrease, particularly in certain provinces.

### *There is some optimism about the security situation after ISAF withdraws*

In all three regions there was a fear that criminal violence will increase. The development workers interviewed regarded the effects of criminal violence to be more detrimental for the provision of assistance than military or political violence, as criminal violence is more indiscriminate. It was also generally argued by interviewees that some people will have to find alternative—illegal—sources of income as a result of economic decline, increased unemployment and, particularly in southern Afghanistan, the decrease in services required by the international military presence.

<sup>1</sup> The research involved 38 interviews and 4 focus group meetings. Interviews took place in both Mazar i Sharif (capital of Balkh) and Kabul. For security reasons, interviewees from Kandahar were contacted by telephone and 4 flew to Kabul for a focus group meeting. Cordaid and its partners selected the interviewees and focus group participants in close cooperation with the author, giving particular attention to diversity. The author also selected a number of additional interviewees.

The Afghan interviewees were of mixed ethnic origin. Those from the south were predominantly Pashtun, while a majority of those from the north were non-Pashtun. To balance the otherwise urban selection of interviewees, 2 of the focus groups in Mazar i Sharif were held with representatives of farmer cooperatives.

Although the gender balance was poor, particular attention was given to ensure input from women. This was done in Mazar i Sharif through a women's focus group and in Mazar i Sharif and Kabul through interviews with women. No women from the south were interviewed.

The initial findings were discussed at a meeting with representatives of different donors in Kabul.



## Security after 2014

As the future of Afghan security is unpredictable and as the United Nations reports a sharp increase in attacks on civilians and aid workers, donors should be prepared for the possibility that the security situation will deteriorate.<sup>2</sup> Thus, many donor governments are looking for practical solutions to continue providing development assistance without a PRT or other NATO military presence in most provinces. Donor governments have been able to rely on the ISAF military infrastructure for travel, for housing, for medical evacuation, for security (including evacuation) and for monitoring of projects. In addition, a limited number of larger development organizations have depended on this military infrastructure for their security protocols for emergency situations.

*PRT infrastructure has not been needed for delivering development assistance in other conflict-affected countries*

In interviews some donors therefore viewed the continuing presence of foreign military bases in Mazar i Sharif (capital of Balkh), Kabul and Kandahar (capital of Kandahar province) as essential to their operations. After 2014, these bases would form part of a 'hub and spoke' model, with Kabul as the hub and a limited number of foreign military bases around the country being the spokes. A number of other donor officials regarded lower-profile solutions as having the potential to offer more security, such as a network of civilian-run safe houses that could be shared with NGOs. Moreover, there would also be civilian alternatives for medical evacuation and emergency security protocols.

By far the majority of NGO interviewees did not see the end of the PRT infrastructure as problematic for the provision of development assistance. They cited their presence in Afghanistan for up to 30 years (including during the period of Taliban rule) as evidence that they do not need the Afghan Government or PRTs to do their work. Furthermore, the NGO interviewees argued that the NGOs have barely used the PRTs, and even ensured strict separation of their activities from those of the PRTs. However, these interviewees often neglected the fact that current development assistance is different from much of the humanitarian assistance given in the past: it is much easier to hand out humanitarian assistance than to build a school which then has to be integrated in a national programme, needs long-term funding, depends on local staff and so on.

NGO representatives underlined that PRT infrastructure has not been needed for delivering development assistance in other conflict-affected countries, such as Somalia or Sudan. Moreover, the aid recipients interviewed from both Balkh and Kandahar either thought that they have not benefited greatly from PRT projects or perceived them as being ineffective and short-term. Indeed, only a small portion of donor funds have been spent through the PRTs. Estimates on the exact percentage of official development

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Humanitarian Bulletin: Afghanistan*, no. 19 (1–30 Aug. 2013); and United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), *Afghanistan Mid-year Report 2013: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict* (UNAMA: Kabul, July 2013).

**Box 1.** Examples of alternative ways of monitoring aid projects*Third-party monitoring*

Hire local researchers or non-governmental organizations, the government and international organizations.

*Community-based monitoring*

Use local communities, village elders or the aid recipients.

*Complaint boxes*

Use, for example, a local representative or phone number as a way for recipients of assistance to file complaints about projects.

*Cameras*

Collect video and photographic evidence.

*Aerial photography*

Use satellite imagery or airplanes.

*Social media*

Use social media.

*Sources:* Author interviews. See also Stoddard, A., Harmer, A. and Renouf, J. S., *Once Removed: Lessons and Challenges in Remote Management of Humanitarian Operations for Insecure Areas* (Humanitarian Outcomes: London, 25 Feb. 2010).

assistance (ODA) channelled through the PRTs vary widely, but generally range between 5 and 10 per cent.<sup>3</sup>

According to the interviewees, NGOs and to a lesser extent international organizations and the Afghan Government can still provide assistance in less secure areas. Insecurity would not be constantly high, as there are many lulls in the fighting. NGO representatives argued that they may sometimes need to interrupt, but not cease, assistance. While delivery of aid would be virtually impossible only in areas controlled by what they called the 'Pakistani Taliban' (i.e. elements of the Taliban believed to originate in Pakistan), in contested areas and areas controlled by what they called the 'Afghan Taliban', delivery of assistance would remain possible with the help of local communities. NGOs and aid recipients in Balkh and Kandahar tend to overlook the fact that a secure airstrip is essential for service delivery: if security deteriorates after 2014, airstrips may no longer be secure. Thus, they may need to temper their expectations of being able to manage the difficulties of a new, potentially less secure environment.

Whatever the future scenario, much depends on the kinds of development project undertaken. According to the development workers interviewed, projects for establishing girls' schools or building roads (which open regions up to government or international forces) generally meet with more resistance than projects such as water-provision projects that are usually wanted by local populations. Contentious projects, which are primarily located in southern Afghanistan, may, according to NGO interviewees, have to rely exclusively on local staff and would require trust and, ideally, a long-standing established relationship with the local communities.

<sup>3</sup> See e.g. Poole, L., *Afghanistan: Tracking Major Resource Flows 2002–2010* (Development Initiatives: Wells, Jan. 2011), p. 11.



## Monitoring and evaluating aid projects

Although operational monitoring of ongoing projects and evaluation of closed projects may face obstacles if, for example, non-Afghan staff are no longer able to visit projects or if field offices are closed, neither donor nor NGO representatives saw these problems as insurmountable. They pointed at the option of ‘remote control’ project implementation—that is, project implementation by local staff, with non-local NGO staff remaining outside the implementation area—which is a common practice in insecure areas.

*Although compromises may have to be made, a ‘good-enough’ level of evaluation is possible*

However, while experience from countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Sudan shows that—due to the need for greater adaptability and risk management—projects in conflict-affected areas actually require more, not less, attention, many donors have relaxed reporting and oversight in monitoring and evaluation of such projects.<sup>4</sup> Despite the obstacles to monitoring and evaluation, however, one of the best strategies in fragile and conflict-affected states is to ensure that the data on project implementation is robust enough by combining complementary monitoring processes to enable triangulation.<sup>5</sup>

When looking at different methods of operational monitoring, interviewees generally thought that, for example, the Kabul embassies of donor states would still be able to undertake missions to the regions of Afghanistan, but that they will have less access to information and will become more dependent on other sources, such as NGOs. According to interviewees, alternative methods of operational monitoring that have been developed in Afghanistan and other conflict-affected areas where traditional means of monitoring and evaluation are not possible may also be needed (see box 1). Moreover, they argued, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the state, the role of the Afghan Government in monitoring projects should also increase. In addition, they advised increased use of social media for aid monitoring.

Although compromises may have to be made, a ‘good-enough’ (i.e. adequate, albeit not high) level of evaluation is possible. For this purpose, trust in and a long-standing relationship with established implementing partner organizations will be important. Nonetheless, the more difficult the area, the more likely donors will have to accept a certain level of corruption as an ‘operational’ cost.

## Business as usual after 2014

In short, interviewees generally felt that, with the departure of the bulk of the international forces, the extraordinary situation that has existed since 2001 will come to an end and development assistance in Afghanistan will go back to ‘business as usual’: returning to the common practices and procedures typically used in insecure areas, just as in other conflict-affected countries. However, they stressed that in the new situation donors, NGOs, the private sector (ranging from business to farming) and the Afghan Government will

<sup>4</sup> Cox, M. and Thornton, N., ‘Managing results in conflict-affected and fragile states: a stock-take of lessons, experience and practice’, Agulhas, May 2010, <[http://www.agulhas.co.uk/Publications\\_Fragile\\_States.html](http://www.agulhas.co.uk/Publications_Fragile_States.html)>.

<sup>5</sup> Cox and Thornton (note 4).

**Table 1.** International aid disbursements to Afghanistan, 2009–11 and 2015

Figures are US\$ m.

| Rank | Donor          | Disbursed |       |        |      | Pledged<br>2015 <sup>a</sup> | Details of 2011 disbursements <sup>b</sup> |                              |            | Share on<br>budget (%) |
|------|----------------|-----------|-------|--------|------|------------------------------|--|------------------------------|------------|------------------------|
|      |                | 2009      | 2010  | 2011   | 2011 |                              | Directly on<br>budget                      | Via on-budget<br>trust funds | Off budget |                        |
| 1    | United States  | 3 382     | 8 126 | 10 406 | ..   | 674                          | 468  | 9 264                        | 11         |                        |
| 2    | Japan          | 615       | 752   | 670    | 600  | 70                           | 240  | 360                          | 46         |                        |
| 3    | United Kingdom | 310       | 383   | 357    | 265  | 6                            | 158  | 194                          | 46         |                        |
| 4    | European Union | 322       | 264   | 221    | ..   | –                            | 60   | 161                          | 27         |                        |
| 5    | Germany        | 140       | 205   | 216    | 552  | –                            | 77   | 139                          | 36         |                        |
| 6    | ADB            | 108       | 290   | 123    | 240  | 123                          | –  | –                            | 100        |                        |
| 7    | World Bank     | 174       | 192   | 152    | ..   | 152                          | –  | –                            | 100        |                        |
| 8    | Canada         | 201       | 78    | 116    | 54   | –                            | 32   | 84                           | 28         |                        |
| 9    | Netherlands    | 184       | 91    | 95     | ..   | –                            | 55   | 40                           | 58         |                        |
| 10   | Australia      | 130       | 36    | 150    | 227  | 90                           | –  | 60                           | 60         |                        |
| 11   | Sweden         | 94        | 100   | 101    | 120  | –                            | 29   | 72                           | 29         |                        |
| 12   | Denmark        | 70        | 70    | 65     | 91   | 20                           | 14   | 30                           | 53         |                        |
| 13   | Norway         | 125       | –     | 77     | 125  | –                            | 21   | 56                           | 27         |                        |
| 14   | India          | 93        | 77    | 0      | 125  | –                            | –  | –                            | –          |                        |
| 15   | Italy          | 65        | 37    | 50     | ..   | 12                           | 10   | 28                           | 44         |                        |
| 16   | France         | 33        | 38    | 25     | 38   | 2                            | –  | 23                           | 8          |                        |
| 17   | UAE            | 4         | 56    | 35     | ..   | –                            | –  | 35                           | –          |                        |
| 18   | Finland        | 25        | 27    | 17     | 39   | 1                            | 11   | 6                            | 67         |                        |

ADB = Asian Development Bank; UAE = United Arab Emirates.

<sup>a</sup> These figures are based on pledges made at the July 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan. In the case of multi-year pledges, the annual average has been taken. Exchange rates of July 2013 have been used where necessary.

<sup>b</sup> On-budget disbursement refers to aid that is given directly to the central Afghan Government and which is reported in the national budget. Aid disbursed via trust funds but which appear on the government budget is also considered as being on budget. Off-budget disbursement refers to aid that does not pass through the central government budget.

Source: Afghan Ministry of Finance (MOF), *Development Cooperation Report 2012* (MOF: Kabul, 2012), pp. 50, 53, 61–62.

become increasingly dependent on each other for, among other things, the exchange of information and lessons learned and should therefore increase their cooperation.

### III. Distribution channels for development assistance

At the July 2012 Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, many donors pledged assistance to Afghanistan for the post-2014 period. While some donors kept their levels of assistance comparable to previous years, a number decreased their assistance or have not yet made a decision (see table 1). Moreover, most donors that pledged assistance did so only until 2016 or 2017. This is in line with World Bank estimates that assistance to Afghanistan will decline, causing financial pressure during the transition.<sup>6</sup>

In Tokyo the international community also made a commitment to align 80 per cent of development assistance with the Afghan Government's

<sup>6</sup> World Bank, *Afghanistan in Transition: Looking beyond 2014* (World Bank: Washington, DC, May 2012).



National Priority Programmes and to channel at least 50 per cent of development assistance through the national budget of the Afghan Government.<sup>7</sup> Although donors hope in this way to increase the capacity and, consequently, the legitimacy of the Afghan Government as part of their state-building strategy, they are simultaneously looking for alternative channels for their assistance in order to avoid three main problems: (a) the limited capacity of the government to manage and monitor assistance; (b) the corruption in the government; and (c) the limited capacity of the government to implement projects in contested areas.<sup>8</sup> As a consequence, few donors have met the commitment to provide 50 per cent of their assistance on-budget (see table 1).

### The role of the central government

This dilemma between state-building and aid effectiveness was also recognized among Afghan interviewees. It is remarkable that in a divided country like Afghanistan, all interviewees from Balkh, Kabul and Kandahar saw having a strong government with a large role for the central government as a goal. However, they saw major government-related obstacles for progress to development, including the government's high corruption rates, its low capacity to channel funds to projects, its paper-heavy bureaucratic procedures, its low implementation capacity in many sectors, especially at the provincial level, and its being a target in insecure areas. However, many NGO representatives admit that neither NGOs nor international organizations are perfect: they would also have high rates of leakage of funds to consultants and overheads, and there would also be corruption among NGOs.

*All interviewees saw having a strong government with a large role for the central government as a goal*

As noted above, all interviewees stressed the importance of central government. Interviewees suggested that the central government should make policy and regulations. Moreover, it should be an important link in the financial chain, as interviewees generally believed that funding should largely be channelled through the centre. They clearly preferred a system of decentralized implementation of national policy, but did not consider any form of federalization acceptable. For example, they generally rejected funnelling funds directly to provincial governments in order to reduce corruption and bureaucracy and to ensure a direct relationship between donors and their recipients; as it was believed that directly financing provinces would create chaos. Indeed, levels of corruption in the provinces were argued to be just as high as in the central government, only on a smaller scale, and interviewees argued that ministers can be held accountable to parliament while provincial governors are only accountable to the president.

<sup>7</sup> Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, 'The Tokyo Declaration: partnership for self-reliance in Afghanistan, from transition to transformation', Tokyo, 8 July 2012.

<sup>8</sup> World Bank, *Afghanistan in Transition: Looking beyond 2014* (World Bank: Washington, DC, May 2012); Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (SIGAR: Arlington, VA, 30 Jan. 2013); and Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (SIGAR: Arlington, VA, 30 Apr. 2013).

**Table 2.** Examples of division of tasks by sector

The following examples should be seen as illustrative rather than prescriptive.

| Sector      | Policymaking/<br>regulation | Planning              | Implementation        | Monitoring and<br>evaluation |
|-------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| Agriculture | Central government          | Private sector        | Private sector        | Private sector               |
| Education   | Central government          | Provincial government | Provincial government | Central government           |
| Health care | Central government          | Provincial government | NGOs                  | Provincial government        |
| Security    | Central government          | Central government    | Central government    | Central government           |

NGO = Non-governmental organization.

Sources: Author interviews.

Although the execution of planned spending by line ministries of the central government is sometimes low, their spending capacity would, according to interviewees, still be much larger than that of the provinces. Moreover, provincial spending would be just as constrained as central spending since many of the capacity constraints result from the many different and complicated donor procurement regulations.

There appeared to be a common understanding among the interviewees from government, NGOs and the private sector that they need to better cooperate and work together. Many argued that the government and NGOs depend on each other: the government would be unable to deliver many services without NGOs, and NGOs that deliver services need the government in order to operate. Moreover, NGOs also aim to strengthen and support the state, and often believe that the government should have more control over the financing and the provision of basic services.

### **Balancing the roles of government and NGOs**

Interviewees argued that the government and NGOs often find themselves in a competitive state of mind, partly because they sometimes appear to compete for the same funds. While the government wants to increase its control over spending on basic service delivery, NGOs want to retain funding for the implementation of their activities. While both sides appear to see the relationship as a zero-sum game, their aims are not necessarily contradictory. Yet the discussion at the international level on the shares of aid that should be on- and off-budget reinforces the perspective of competition, because in that discussion funding and implementation are often equated: the view is that services delivered by the government would stimulate state-building, while those delivered by other organizations would not.

According to most interviewees in Afghanistan, it would be more productive to ignore the specific percentage figures for on- and off-budget aid (although on-budget aid should increase when possible) and look instead at what is practically needed on the ground. Interviewees often gave health care and education as examples of sectors where a division of tasks between different types of actor—the central government, provincial governments, NGOs and the private sector—on the basis of what is needed to provide basic services has worked reasonably well, although certainly not perfectly. In basic health care, for example, the government is in control of contracts and regulation, but almost all implementation is done by NGOs. In this



win-win situation, the government is in control but NGOs are still able to work.

The Afghan interviewees from both the government and civil society argued that, for each sector and region, the Afghan Government (after suitable consultation) should decide which tasks are best done by the government and which task would better be undertaken by others. Interviewees generally believed that in some sectors, such as security, the government should undertake the complete range of tasks, from regulation (i.e. promulgation of law and setting policy) and planning to implementation, and then to monitoring and evaluation (with NGOs limited to advocacy and a role in monitoring and evaluation). In other cases, parts of the chain (e.g. implementation in the case of health care) would be better handled by NGOs and the private sector, while central and provincial governments should play a strong role in, for example, monitoring. In all cases, service delivery should be in close cooperation and consultation with local communities.

Interviewees often argued that a division of labour, similar to that used in Western countries, is already more or less formalized in the Afghan basic health care sector (although not yet perfected due to provincial authorities' lack of monitoring capacity). Similarly, they argued that focusing only on increasing funding to the government would not be effective because in some regions the government would not yet be able to undertake some of the tasks that, ideally, it should do. For example, the government may not have the capacity for such tasks or it might be too dangerous for the government to go into certain regions, while NGOs would not be targeted. Thus, for the moment, therefore, these tasks still have to be done by others. According to interviewees, in such regions the long-term aim should be to move tasks from NGOs to the state, but this should be done slowly in order for government capacity to grow.

*NGOs also aim to strengthen and support the state*

In short, interviewees generally felt that more creativity is needed in finding practical solutions. According to them, there are many ways in which tasks can be allocated for different sectors (see table 2 for one example). In fact, in some sectors or regions several actors would be expected to be jointly responsible for the same task.

### **Earmarking and conditionality: from percentages to practical solutions**

In conclusion, most interviewees, from Balkh, Kabul and Kandahar, advised donors to distribute most funds centrally but to stimulate creativity in implementation by earmarking funds and by attaching conditions. Thus, funds can be earmarked for certain provinces to ensure that the central government does not take an undue share and that corruption is minimized; and conditionality can ensure that certain tasks—be it regulating, planning, implementing, monitoring or evaluating—involve civil society and other organizations.

According to interviewees, such an approach would place the Afghan state at the heart of the process; it would make the discussion on shares of aid provided on or off budget irrelevant, while allowing more creative and effective solutions concerning who implements which task in which sector. If the



Afghan state's security and capacity improve, then its role would increase and NGOs would move from implementation to monitoring and advocacy. If security deteriorates, then the role of NGOs in implementation might have to increase, according to interviewees, preferably in close cooperation with the government.

#### IV. Continuing support to security and rule of law through development assistance

Many of the Afghan interviewees assessed much of the international assistance so far as unsuccessful. They offered two main arguments. First, most funds have been spent on the international forces, not on development. Second, too much development assistance has been spent on short-term projects and not on infrastructure—such as factories, dams and irrigation works—which interviewees termed the 'fundamentals' of development.

##### **Priorities for international funding**

When asked for their priorities for international funding, interviewees from Balkh, Kabul and Kandahar consistently identified agriculture, education and health care as their top three (although with some variety in their order). They chose agriculture as it is by far the largest sector. About 60 per cent of the working population is involved in this sector, and during the period 2003/04–2010/11 it accounted for between a quarter and a third of Afghanistan's gross domestic product.<sup>9</sup> Education was seen by interviewees as essential for long-term development, while health care was regarded as an important need. Moreover, these two sectors would give public presence and legitimacy to the government.

##### *Afghan interviewees saw economic development as the best and most sustainable path to security*

In general, Afghan interviewees saw economic development as the best and most sustainable path to security. They often argued that the absence of jobs leads to insecurity. However, there appears to be no such correlation: the most insecure provinces are not the poorest, while some of the poorest provinces are remarkably secure.<sup>10</sup>

Surveys by the Asia Foundation have found that Afghans perceive insecurity as the biggest problem for their country.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, they perceive unemployment to be the biggest problem at the local level.<sup>12</sup> When asked about the importance of projects and programmes related to security and rule of law, interviewees referred to these issues as 'also very important', but less important than addressing the top three sectors. There are two possible explanations for the lower importance attached to addressing security and rule of law: either their absence has become 'background noise' and interviewees no longer recognize it, or they do not realize the

<sup>9</sup> World Bank (note 8), p. 25.

<sup>10</sup> Afghan Ministry of Economy, *Poverty Status in Afghanistan: A Profile Based on National Risk and Vulnerability Assessment (NRVA) 2007/08* (World Bank: Washington, DC, July 2010), pp. 26–29.

<sup>11</sup> Hopkins, N. (ed.), *Afghanistan in 2012: A Survey of the Afghan People* (Asia Foundation: Kabul, 2012), p. 29.

<sup>12</sup> Hopkins (note 11), p. 31.



importance of both issues because they have never lived in a country where they could experience them. It is also possible that most interviewees think that insecurity is best addressed through development, or that they regard current approaches to law and security as less relevant than development. Whatever the explanation, it is important to note these Afghan priorities.

### **Policy instruments to address insecurity**

Interviewees described the policy instruments required to address insecurity in military terms. In Balkh, interviewees focused on external security, as they want financial and materiel support to the Afghan National Army to resist Pakistan in the south and to a lesser extent Iran in the west. Interviewees from Kandahar focused on internal security. They saw financial support to the ANSF as important to facilitate the payment of salaries to ANSF personnel and, after their integration into the ANSF, the personnel of other armed groups, ranging from reconciled opposition forces to militias that have supported the international forces. In addition, interviewees from Kandahar believed that training by international forces would still be required after 2014, although these international forces should be confined to their bases. They also believed that the ANSF could still require backup from international forces. In Kabul, interviewees' focus combined both external and internal security needs.

*Security and rule of law should be integrated into broader development assistance programmes*

Interviewees regarded assistance to the security sector as important, but the current international strategy was generally criticized. They argued that it is too focused on fighting insurgents, rather than creating and maintaining an effective infrastructure for the rule of law. Short-term training would be suboptimal and much more attention should be given to establishing long-term capacity building. This would mean, among other things, much more support for the Afghan National Police Academy, the Afghan National Security University and the faculties of law of Afghan universities to educate future generations of police and military officers, judges, lawyers and prosecutors, among others. In addition, according to interviewees, preventing violations of law requires more attention. Finally, since corruption is currently perceived as one of the biggest problems in the legal and judicial system, increasing salaries was regarded as an important tool to decrease the pressure to be corrupt.

Separate programmes in the field of rule of law were generally perceived by interviewees as not being effective and often being implemented by organizations—typically NGOs—that are primarily acting for their own benefit. Moreover, according to interviewees the issue of rule of law is perceived by the population to be part of a Western agenda; to counter this, rule of law education for the local population should be adapted to the local context, for example, by using phrases and concepts from the Quran and Hadiths.

Interviewees generally argued that both security and rule of law should be integrated into broader development assistance programmes. Rule of law, for example, could be part of educational projects, while members of farmer cooperatives in Balkh argued that their cooperatives have helped to create more harmony between the different ethnic groups (Uzbeks, Tajik and Pash-tun) in their villages.



Particularly in Balkh province, NGOs interviewees imagined that in the future they would move away from service delivery in the field of rule of law and security to an advocacy role. According to NGO and government representatives, civil society could also play a role in building the capacity of the government, awareness building and monitoring.

## V. Conclusions and recommendations: a civilian entry strategy

The drawdown of ISAF may be a blessing in disguise. It appears that many of the problems in Afghanistan are common to other insecure areas, such as Somalia and Sudan. This means that after 2014 development assistance in Afghanistan will in many ways have to return to common practice typical in such insecure areas, with international donor governments delivering their services without the protection of foreign troops. With the withdrawal of these foreign troops, this may be the right moment to replace the present military exit strategy with a civilian entry strategy (including in the field of security and rule of law).

It is widely argued that the current focus on the military exit in 2014 will strengthen the insurgency as the exit decreases faith in the Afghan Government's capacity, increases uncertainty and gives hope to insurgents. Rather than a pessimistic military exit strategy, a positive civilian entry strategy could be communicated to the Afghan population. Such a civilian entry strategy would work towards more sustainable development, in which the current gains are maintained and built upon. In other words, communicating that Afghanistan will not face the end of an era, but stands at the beginning of a new civilian transformation era, could counter current anxiety about 2014.

*Rather than a pessimistic military exit strategy, a positive civilian entry strategy could be communicated to the Afghan population*

As part of a civilian entry strategy, keeping aid levels at levels of previous years would be helpful, instead of the expected decrease in assistance. For such a civilian entry strategy to succeed, aid donors would have to rely heavily on local partners to implement projects and would have to avoid funds being diverted to insurgents. Moreover, the approach would have to depend on the Afghan absorption capacity

Based on the above findings, international aid donors may consider the following elements of such a civilian entry strategy.

1. Donors should recognize that development assistance can be provided in more insecure areas without military infrastructure such as the PRTs. Examples on how to organize this, for example in monitoring and evaluation, may be taken from countries such as Somalia and Sudan, and existing NGO practice already in place in areas of Afghanistan.

2. Together with the Afghan Government, NGOs, the private sector and beneficiary communities, donors could establish more regular exchanges of information and lessons learned. All these groups might want to improve their cooperation, since they increasingly depend on each other for their individual and common success.



3. Donors should channel funding through the central government, but could earmark funds for certain provinces and impose conditions to ensure the involvement of civil society and the private sector.

4. Donors could coordinate among themselves their regulations and procedures for the Afghan Government to make them more homogeneous and less complicated and to make the associated procedures less paper heavy.

5. Together with the Afghan Government and population, donors should assess which organization is best equipped for each task in each sector—including regulating, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating—rather than following the rigid formula of providing at least 50 per cent of aid on the central government budget. Practical solutions could be sought in the division of these tasks.

6. Donors should assist in increasing common understanding between NGOs and the Afghan Government, for example, by seconding Afghan civil servants to NGOs and through common training courses.

7. Rather than organizing separate programmes for rule of law and security, donors should integrate these issues into broader development programmes and make them more acceptable by, for example, using phrases and concepts from the Quran and Hadiths.

8. Donors should focus on improving long-term infrastructure for rule of law and security, not on short-term training.

9. Donors should communicate and put into practice a civilian entry in Afghanistan, rather than a military exit.

In order to make this credible, many donors need to further increase their aid pledges to match previous levels of assistance and they need to show a longer commitment to Afghanistan than 2016 or 2017.



## Abbreviations

|      |   |
|------|---|
| ANSF | Afghan national security forces         |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization      |
| NGO  | Non-governmental organization           |
| PRT  | Provincial reconstruction team          |



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# DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER 2014: FROM THE MILITARY EXIT STRATEGY TO A CIVILIAN ENTRY STRATEGY

JAÏR VAN DER LIJN

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