Afghan militiamen hand over weapons during a disarmament ceremony in Herat, July 2004. © Marcelo Salinas/WPN

DDR in Afghanistan
WHEN STATE-BUILDING AND INSECURITY COLLIDE

9

INTRODUCTION

By December 2001, after less than three months' fighting, Coalition and allied Afghan forces had driven the five-year-old Taliban government from power, taken the capital Kabul, and overpowered further armed resistance in the strategic cities of Mazar-e-Sharif, Kunduz, Kandahar, and elsewhere.[1] In the wake of these successes, Western donors moved quickly to establish a transitional government and begin planning security promotion efforts. These would eventually include disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), an illegal armed group disbandment programme, and a host of associated weapons control and security measures. Donor governments mobilized to support these programmes with contributions of more than USD 180 million (Sedra, 2008a, pp. 124, 138).

By 2006, however, the security situation had deteriorated significantly. Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other insurgent forces had grown in strength along Afghanistan's mountainous southern border.[2] Supported by the Pakistani intelligence service and poppy cultivation proceeds, these fighters developed into an intensive and effective insurgency, modifying their tactics and launching increasingly deadly attacks on Afghan security forces, civilians, aid workers, and foreign troops. In response, the US-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) force, together with the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), stepped up counter-insurgency operations. Whereas violence was previously confined to the provinces, from 2007 onwards the Taliban increasingly carried out attacks on government targets in the heart of Kabul.[3] The spreading insecurity has led some Afghans to voice nostalgia for the stability and relative safety of the Taliban era.

Insecurity has other faces in post-2001 Afghanistan. The loyalty ties, power structures, and influence of armed groups of former anti-Taliban forces, as well as criminal groups, have persisted inside and outside the new government. Warlords influence swathes of territory in some regions; if they have not been absorbed into the national or regional security apparatus, they may continue operations under the banner of private security firms for hire by domestic and foreign actors. Criminality, the drug trade, and inter-group conflict—in a society where small arms are virtually ubiquitous—are defining features of the landscape. For all of these reasons, security remains a major concern for many Afghans.[4]

As the other case studies in the *Small Arms Survey 2009* demonstrate, no two post-conflict contexts are identical (ACEH, LEBANON). But the complexity and ongoing violence in Afghanistan challenge the label 'post-conflict'. Armed violence and insecurity have shadowed the experience of state-building in Afghanistan since 2002 and have led at least one analyst to conclude that 'the post-9/11 era in Afghanistan . . . should still be viewed as a renewed period of conflict and mobilization' (Bhatia, 2008a, p. 14). In this context, Afghanistan, perhaps to a larger extent than other societies plagued by armed violence, has also demonstrated the intrinsically political nature of DDR and the inextricable linkages between DDR and security sector reform (SSR).

This chapter reviews the development and implementation of the primary DDR and demilitarization measures in Afghanistan. Among its findings:

- The Afghanistan DDR programme disarmed and demobilized some 63,000 members of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF) from October 2003 to July 2005. Much of the country reaped security benefits—whose impact remains difficult to quantify—after the removal of AMF commanders from the government payroll and the release of AMF soldiers from service.

- Through December 2008, DDR interventions and the follow-on Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme removed about 100,000 small arms, light weapons, and other weapons, about half of which were destroyed. Based on previous estimates, however, arms possession remains widespread among militia, state, and insurgent forces and the civilian population.

- Tasked with simultaneously breaking apart and reintegrating AMF militias, recruiting and training a new national police and army, and establishing a representative government practically from scratch, DDR planners were forced to make difficult decisions about the pacing, terms, and extent of disarmament and demobilization efforts.

Map 9.1 **Afghanistan**
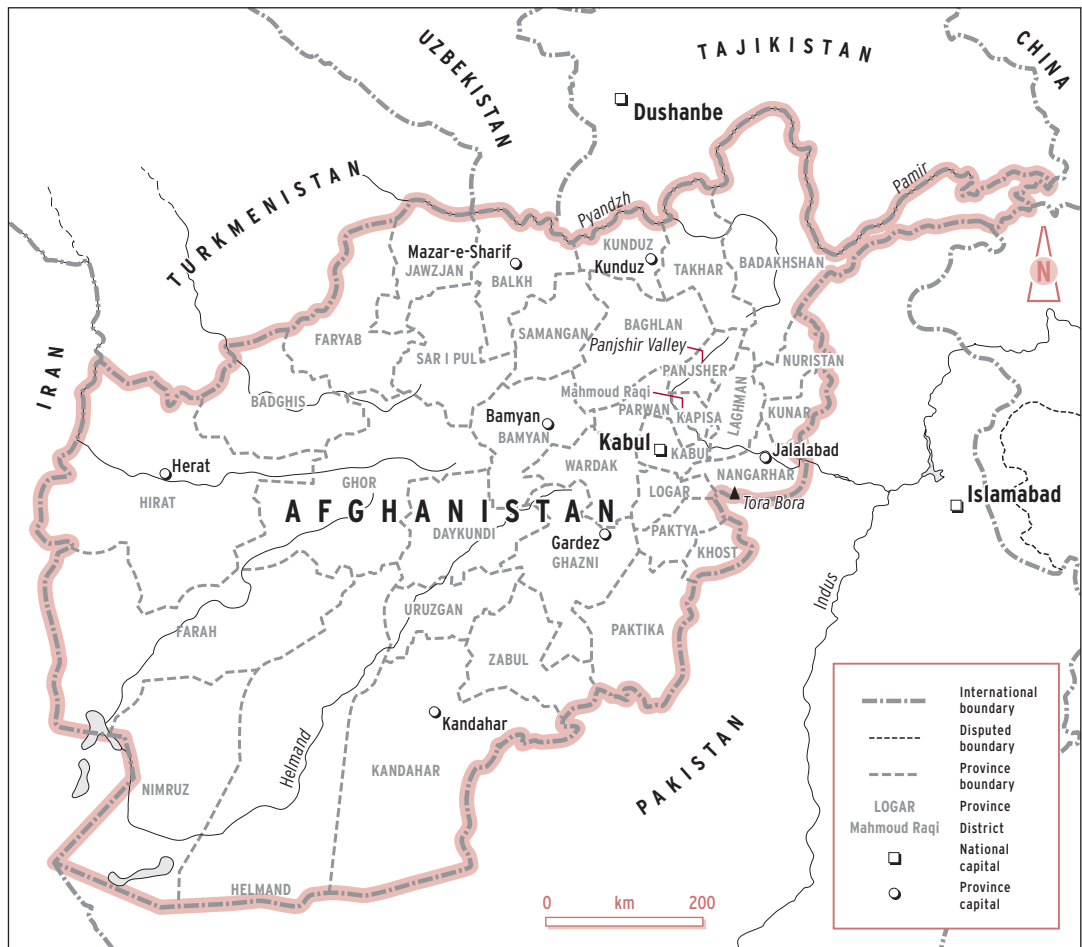
The inability of the state to provide security during DDR and DIAG, in particular, circumscribed the possibilities for successful armed group disarmament and demobilization in the country.

- DDR suffered early on from a highly factionalized government that saw AMF commanders, warlords, and drug lords manipulating the programme to their benefit, targeting their enemies, and maintaining their power bases. However, the DIAG programme has reduced the influence of these figures to some degree in national and provincial governments.

- Generations of armed violence and the dynamics of mobilization, legitimacy, and patronage in Afghanistan have combined to create commander–militiamen links that are difficult to break, and DDR and DIAG have proven unable to do so. In recent years, under pressure from the rising insurgency and inadequate state security forces, the government has increasingly turned back to militia and other auxiliary forces for support.

This chapter sketches out the complex history of armed conflict in Afghanistan since the Soviet period through to Taliban rule, including relevant social, historical, and geopolitical perspectives. It then describes the main events of the 'war on terrorism' as it played out in Afghanistan, and the international community's subsequent development of programming designed to stabilize and bring security to the country.

While a range of security programmes has been instituted in Afghanistan since 2002, this chapter focuses specifically on the DDR and illegal armed group disbandment projects of the Afghan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP). After examining how these programmes were designed and executed, the chapter offers reflections on their outcomes, both in terms of their stated goals and objectives, and measured against other qualitative and quantitative security indicators.

CONTEXT: ARMED GROUPS AND CONFLICT IN AFGHANISTAN

In 2001 Barakat and Wardell distilled and categorized the phases of 23 years of Afghan conflict as follows (Barakat and Wardell, 2001[5]):

1979–88	jihad in a cold-war context, various Mujaheddin factions fight against the Soviet military forces
1989–1992	armed conflict between the Soviet-backed government in Kabul and Mujaheddin factions
1992–96	factional war among Mujaheddin groups
1996–2001	regional proxy war between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance
late 2001	US-led international 'war on terrorism'

Some further detail on these phases is important. In 1978, community and military rebellions evolved into a decade-long sustained insurgency against the Soviet-backed Karmal and Najibullah governments. The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 was accompanied by an acceleration of armed conflict between the state and competing political–military parties. When the Najibullah regime collapsed in 1992, inter-factional conflict erupted, dividing the country into fiefdoms of varying sizes. One of the many groups to emerge was the Taliban, formed in 1994 largely of youths from Pakistani refugee camps with little connection to local community structures (*Talib* means 'student' or 'cadet' in Arabic, and many members of the Taliban emerged from radicalized *madrasas* in the border areas). While the Taliban enjoyed some local legitimacy in Kandahar, where they were welcomed because of the security they pro-

vided, the faction grew into a more powerful player primarily due to financial and military support from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. The Taliban's popularity among Afghans would wane as they applied their conservative brand of Islam.

Through negotiation and open fighting, the Taliban were able to conquer and administer up to 90 per cent of the country by 1996. Remaining armed groups, many of which competed with one another in a bewildering array of alliances, joined to oppose the Taliban under the banner of the Northern Alliance (known within the country as the United Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan). Many of the groups within the alliance remained dormant or suffered significant losses until the United States offered military and financial backing in 2000–01 (Bhatia, 2008a, p. 14).

Following the terrorist attacks on the United States and the subsequent identification of al-Qaeda and Osama bin Laden as the primary perpetrators, the United States government issued an ultimatum to the Taliban government demanding the extradition of all al-Qaeda leaders in the country. When this demand was not met, the United States planned, sponsored, and led an invasion to uproot the Taliban and al-Qaeda from the country and capture bin Laden. In partnership with the United Kingdom, the United States initiated OEF-Afghanistan on 7 October 2001 with an aerial bombardment campaign in and around the cities of Kabul, Jalalabad, and Kandahar.

The subsequent ground war was fought by the Northern Alliance, assisted primarily by soldiers from the United States, Britain, and Canada. In fact, financial assistance was offered to almost anyone willing to pick up arms against the Taliban forces. This had the effect of not only remobilizing previously active fighters but also drawing in new (violence) entrepreneurs.

Former warlord Gul Agha Sherzai, centre, became governor of Kandahar in 2001 and of Nangarhar Province in 2004, despite accusations of ongoing criminal activity. © John Moore/AP Photo

At the outset, OEF's primary objective was to overthrow the Taliban and clear the country of al-Qaeda. Kabul was recaptured on 13 November 2001 and the rest of the Taliban strongholds around the country fell shortly thereafter. After another month of fighting with al-Qaeda loyalists in the cave complex of Tora Bora near the Pakistan border, it was widely believed that remaining combatant forces were limited and contained in a fixed area. Following these actions, OEF deployed mainly to the south and east of the country and engaged in offensive combat operations under the direct command of a US-led coalition. Until 2006, a separate NATO-led ISAF force was involved mostly in central, northern, and western areas and engaged in stability and support operations. Since 2006, both have mandates to operate over the entire country, and both are engaged in offensive military operations, but they remain separate.

At the local and regional levels, in the months following the collapse of the Taliban regime, militias that had collaborated with the Coalition or taken advantage of a security vacuum assumed power. Most were led by commanders who had exercised power in the pre-Taliban era. The landscape had become a patchwork of militia fiefdoms with varying levels of internal organization (ICG, 2003, p. 2). These groupings were eventually the basis of the transitional Afghan Military Forces. Crucially, as particular militia found favour or successfully exerted themselves with Kabul, the composition of key government agencies soon reflected this influence, contributing to the factionalization and even ethnicization of the main security institutions (Bhatia, 2008a, p. 18).

Box 9.1 Estimating armed violence-related mortality in Afghanistan, 2004–08

Estimating the number of deaths in Afghanistan's 'post-conflict' phase is challenging. In the absence of victimization surveys—such as have been conducted in Iraq—analysts must rely on incident reporting, which compiles conflict-related events from news reports, state and NGO data, and whatever can be obtained from hospitals and morgue reporting. While this technique has improved in recent years due to the advent of Internet search engines and parsing programmes that automatically identify appropriate data, the method suffers from the intrinsic limitations of its information sources. Whereas direct conflict deaths may be estimated using incident reporting, indirect deaths remain largely out of reach of this method.

The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* report analyses direct conflict deaths from a range of cross-country and individual country datasets. It finds that 12,417 direct conflict deaths occurred in Afghanistan from 2004 through 2007 (see Table 9.1). These include both civilian and combatant deaths caused by war-related attacks and injuries (as caused by bullets, bombs, mines, and other war weapons).

Complete data is not yet available for 2008. However, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reported in September 2008 that 1,445 civilians had been killed from January to August, a 39 per cent increase over the previous year (UNOHCHR, 2008). These included deaths from insurgent attacks, deaths caused by government and allied military operations, suicide bombings, and summary executions.

To these figures must be added indirect conflict deaths (also known as excess mortality). These arise from the worsening of social, economic, and health conditions and include deaths from reduced access to health services, destruction of health infrastructure, malnutrition and disease due to displacement and agricultural destruction, and food insecurity. Public health research indicates that indirect deaths can be three to 15 times greater than the number of direct deaths, depending on the nature of the conflict, the parties involved, and other factors. Applying a conservative average multiplier of four indirect deaths for every direct death yields 50,000 excess deaths in Afghanistan since 2004. Even if the ratio were reduced to three to one, as studies have suggested was the ratio in Iraq, the combined direct and indirect deaths for Afghanistan for these four years alone would exceed 50,000.

Source: Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2008, pp. 18, 27, 32, 40)

Table 9.1 Direct conflict deaths in Afghanistan, 2004–07

Year	Number of direct deaths	Mortality rate per 100,000
2004	917	3.21
2005	1,000	3.35
2006	4,000	12.87
2007	6,500	20.15
	Total: 12,417	Average: 9.89

Box 9.2 The dynamics of mobilization in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan there is no generic armed group 'type' or one fixed or static motive guiding combatant behaviour; presumptions of homogeneity can thus be counterproductive for DDR and demilitarization initiatives. A narrow focus on presumed 'greed'—whereby combatants are treated as undifferentiated rational utility-maximizers—neglects crucial issues such as the role of the state and local legitimacy, the malleable *perception* of legitimacy, and community reliance on commanders for protection.[7]

Not all Afghan armed groups are ideologically driven Islamists, warlords, or tribal militias. Michael Bhatia identifies three 'ideal types' of Afghan armed groups: *political-military parties* (also known as *tanzims*), *warlords and strongmen,* and *community militia,* each with distinctive dynamics of authority, activities, and weapons acquisition and distribution patterns (see Table 9.2).

Importantly for DDR and demilitarization, armed groups are linked to and guided by different sources of authority depending on their type. For example, a community militia is tied to the *qawm-e-mesharan* (local elders), is based on community consent, and is generally limited to local protection. Local strongmen can acquire enough power either to rise autonomously or to dominate the *qawm-e-mesharan* and hold a direct relationship with combatants. In contrast, contemporary militarized *tanzims* are primarily administrative organizations propagating a specific ideology.

Most armed groups in Afghanistan are fluid and dynamic, combining features of each type. Moreover, an armed group can evolve from one type to another over time. Thus, various types of armed groups dominate in different regions, with distinct constellations of community militias, strongmen, government-armed groups (official and informal militias), foreign forces, and political-military parties operating in each region.

Just as there is no generic armed group, there is no prototypical combatant in Afghanistan. Interviews reveal a diverse array of life narratives and histories of involvement in the conflict, whether as temporary combatants, community militia members, local strongmen, or in service with political-military parties. There is no one dominating motive for mobilization, though interviewed demobilizing combatants point to the significance of family, tribal, and customary institutions; the protection of families; coercive mobilization (in the north-east of the country especially); and multiple and often interlocking forms of authority. These motives are not necessarily equally distributed by region or tribal grouping. Thus, viewing mobilization through the narrow lenses of economic livelihoods, ideology, or grievance alone would be a great mistake.

Source: Bhatia and Muggah (2008, pp. 140–43)

Information on the number of combatants, violent victimization patterns, and presence of small arms and light weapons is difficult to obtain. A 2003 Small Arms Survey estimate places the number of small arms and light weapons in Afghanistan somewhere between 500,000 to 1.5 million (Small Arms Survey, 2003, p. 74). The International Institute for Strategic Studies reports that at most 533,000 individuals were mobilized after the Soviet withdrawal in 1989; it counts at least 102,400 fatalities from 1992 to 2008, of which 26,440 occurred from 2001 onwards (IISS, 2008). The Human Security Report Project suggests that the country experienced 480,000 direct conflict deaths in 1978–2005 (HSRP, 2008, p. 31). The *Global Burden of Armed Violence* report estimates that 12,417 violent deaths took place from 2004 to 2007 (see Box 9.1). These figures should be treated with caution since they are based on media reports and government sources that are almost impossible to verify.[6]

For Afghanistan, the post-9/11 period is but one phase of a 30-year cycle of violent conflict under the influence of foreign nations, proxy forces, tribalism, and criminality. The country may be considered 'post-war' in the sense that the war to overthrow the Taliban regime led to the establishment of a new government, but that war spawned an insurgency and counter-insurgency that increasingly threaten the viability of the state.

Central to the dynamics of conflict in Afghanistan is the role of local commanders and armed groups. These individuals and groups were empowered by literally billions of dollars in financial, material, and military assistance. Pakistan, the Soviet Union, the United States, and Saudi Arabia have all at one time or another provided infusions of start-up or venture capital in armed groups, allowing them to enhance their influence over the economy, village,

Table 9.2 'Ideal types' of Afghan armed groups						
Type of armed group	**Source of authority**	**Composition**	**Activities**	**Weapons ownership**	**Internal weapons distribution**	**Examples**
Political-military party	Organization and indoctrination, charisma	Detribalized, delocalized, and ideologically oriented	Contest for national power or regional autonomy	Party stock-piles with central distribution	Tactical units oriented towards external enemy, mix of heavy weapons, infantry, specialized units	Hezb-e-Islam Gulbuddin Hekmatyar
Warlords and strongmen	Charisma, force, and patronage	Both community members and other delocalized elites	Contest for regional, provincial, or local power and autonomy	Individually owned weapons and commander stockpiles	Relatives, close affiliates, and *nazm-e-khas* (special force) given special weapons for predation and internal enforcement	Regional: Ismail Khan; local: Abdul Salaam Reza (Ghor)
Community militia	Tradition and charisma	Local community members	Local protection and predation; autonomy	Individually owned weapons	All combatants possess similar weapons	Paktya *arbakian* (tribal police)

Source: Bhatia (2008b, p. 77)

and provincial politics and *shuras* (local consultative bodies). Once armed and funded, commanders became largely self-sufficient, gaining control of customs posts, opium trafficking routes, and other economic activities (Rubin, 2003). Standard DDR and demilitarization theory would call for the disbandment and disarmament of these various groups. In the Afghan context, however, this approach has not been straightforward, as discussed below.

Afghan groups display an extraordinary level of heterogeneity and include multiple Mujaheddin parties, tribal militias, warlords, paramilitary organizations, a trained state officer corps, armed intelligence services, and both mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic armed groups and alliances (Bhatia and Muggah, 2008, p. 129). As the Coalition, its allies, and the transitional government authorities recognized early on, commanders, warlords, and armed groups would continue to play a decisive role in post-Taliban Afghanistan. The complexities of armed group mobilization are key to understanding the shifting power dynamics and their relationship to efforts to disarm and demobilize Afghan fighters (see Box 9.2).

THE PROGRESSION OF DDR PROGRAMMING IN AFGHANISTAN

The Afghanistan demilitarization effort has four 'pillars': the DDR of the formal militias associated with the government, which proceeded from October 2003 to June 2006; the disbandment of illegal armed groups (DIAG) programme,

which began in September 2005 and is ongoing; the cantonment of heavy weapons; and the collection and destruction of anti-personnel mines and ammunition stocks. This chapter focuses primarily on DDR and DIAG.[8]

These efforts proceeded in parallel with not only security sector reform but also security sector *creation,* in particular the formation of a national army and a national police force. Thus, while the government was engaged in disarmament, it was simultaneously working to extend and enforce its monopoly over the legitimate use of force. These parallel moves were fraught with difficult choices and compromises that affected the design, implementation, and outcomes of the DDR and DIAG programmes.

A false start: the National Disarmament Commission

By the end of the Coalition-led military intervention, peace-building and state-building efforts were intimately connected. The first steps were taken even before fighting in the southern border areas was declared over. On 5 December 2001, under the auspices of the United Nations, prominent Afghanis signed the Bonn Agreement, establishing an Afghan Interim Authority (AIA) with a six-month mandate; the AIA was superseded by a Transitional Authority following a nationwide emergency *loya jirga,* a traditional convocation of Afghan leaders to address pressing challenges (see Figure 9.1). The Bonn Agreement also established a commission charged with developing a new constitution and a judicial commission to guide the rehabilitation of the justice system in accord with Islamic law and international standards.

The AIA was not a unitary actor but a patchwork of victorious commanders. The agreement was not a peace agreement in the classic sense, as the Taliban and allied groups were completely ignored; rather, it was a power-sharing arrangement. Many of the top posts in the AIA were distributed primarily among four Afghan factions. It was especially relevant for future disarmament and demobilization programmes that the Northern Alliance held the key ministries of defence, foreign affairs, and the interior. Thus the AIA was not a unitary actor but a patchwork of victorious commanders, regardless of their earlier orientation to the state (Özerdem, 2002, p. 965).

Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the Bonn Agreement treaded softly on the question of the disarmament of the armed groups that contributed to the Coalition victory. The one limited stipulation was that 'upon the official transfer of power, all Mujaheddin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the new Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces' (Bonn Agreement, para. V, art. 1). In the view of the government, requiring the Northern Alliance to disarm was potentially risky, not to mention against the personal interests of some new leaders. Disarmament of armed groups would thus have been likely to 'remain unresolved in the near future' (Özerdem, 2002, p. 973).

In January 2003 President Karzai appointed four Defence Commissions: (1) the National Disarmament Commission (NDC), established to oversee the collection and destruction of weapons; (2) the Demobilization and Reintegration (D&R) Commission; (3) the Officer Recruiting and Training Commission; and (4) the Soldier Recruiting and Training Commission. These commissions were created for the dual purpose of asserting Afghan ownership over the DDR process and coordinating the multiplicity of actors involved in its implementation.

The primary purpose of the NDC was to approve the final version of the disarmament plan developed through discussions with the Afghan Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the ANBP and to provide some oversight of its implementation. From its inception, however, the commission sought to expand its mandate, positioning itself as the main implementing actor for the process and launching its own disarmament initiative before the ANBP could assert itself as

Figure 9.1 Timeline of key events in Afghanistan, 2001-06

October 2001
Military campaign against Taliban begins

November 2001
Taliban regime overthrown

December 2001
Bonn Agreement establishes Afghan Interim Authority (AIA)

March 2002
UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) established

June 2002
Loya jirga elects Hamid Karzai interim head of state

December 2002
Afghanistan Transitional Authority (ATA) establishes Afghan National Army

January 2003
ATA establishes National Disarmament Commission, Demobilization and Reintegration Commission

March 2003
Afghan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) established

August 2003
NATO takes command of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

January 2004
Loya jirga adopts new constitution

August 2004
EUROCORPS takes command of ISAF

October 2004
Presidential elections held, Hamid Karzai elected

June 2005
Afghan Military Forces (AMF) declared disbanded

July 2005
Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) project initiated

September 2005
Lower house of parliament and provincial council elections

December 2005
New parliament inaugurated

May–June 2006
Rapid escalation in insurgent violence

the focal point of the process. In this manner, it attempted to pre-empt the nascent ANBP and impose an 'Afghan solution' to the security crisis (Sedra, 2008a, p. 120).

The stated goal of the programme was to collect one million weapons and pieces of military equipment (Wali, 2002). Collection efforts took place in five northern provinces, targeting Afghan Military Forces personnel—the various militias, most under the umbrella of the Northern Alliance, that came to power in the wake of the Taliban's collapse. Weapons collected were to be stored in local facilities until they could be moved to the national MoD depot in Kabul (Wali, 2002).

The NDC programme suffered from a lack of clarity of process and reported outcomes. It appears that fighters were promised compensation for their weapons, but that funds were sometimes not delivered. There were also allegations that weapons collected were transferred to other militias instead of being stockpiled—a problem that would soon recur. By mid-2002, however, the government claimed that 50,000 pieces of military equipment had been collected, including both small arms and light weapons, and heavy military equipment such as tanks and armoured vehicles. This news of success was used to justify the extension of the programme throughout the rest of the country, but final figures for weapons collected in the expanded programme have yet to be made available. In the end, questions about the programme's impact, transparency, and neutrality remained. According to some analysts, the NDC programme was less an effort by an accountable and neutral government body to bring security than an attempt by factional actors within the MoD, aligned primarily with the Northern Alliance's Shura-e-Nezar (supervisory council) militia,[9] to consolidate their control over the country's military assets (Sedra, 2008a, p. 121).

The Afghan New Beginnings Programme[10]

Widespread recognition of the NDC's shortcomings fed eagerness to move to a formal and internationally driven DDR effort. In February 2003, President Karzai outlined the Afghan New Beginnings Programme at a donor conference in Tokyo (see Box 9.3). The ANBP was designed for implementation by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of the government. The Transitional Authority and UNDP signed the agreement on 6 April, and the final approval to proceed was given on 8 October. With the

establishment of the ANBP, the NDC was dissolved and its mandates integrated into the MoD. Of the four original commissions, only the D&R Commission remained active after 2005; disarmament was added to its duties, though it did not develop the capacity to assume this role.

The DDR programme was to be voluntary in nature and focus solely on militias associated with the AMF. The stated objectives were 'to decommission formations and units up to a total of 100,000 officers and solders and in the process collect, store and deactivate weapons currently in their possession in order to be able to reconstruct the Afghan National Army and return those not required to civilian life' (Sedra, 2004, p. 3).

In fact, though disarmament appears to occupy a central function here, the real goal was 'to break the historic patriarchal chain of command existing between the former combatants and their men; and to provide

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Box 9.3   Time and money

Eight donor governments contributed to the ANBP for a total of USD 142.2 million. These were: Japan (USD 91 million); the United Kingdom (USD 19 million); Canada (USD 16 million); the United States (USD 9 million); the Netherlands (USD 4 million); the European Commission (USD 1.9 million); Norway (USD 0.8 million); and Switzerland (USD 0.5 million).

Donor conditions and deadlines shaped the programming from the start. The Japanese government, responsible for almost two-thirds of the ANBP budget, called for reforms to the MoD prior to the commencement of DDR operations, which resulted in a delay of four months. In fact, the MoD never did meet all of the requirements for personnel changes; donors decided to forgo the outstanding reforms as they would have caused additional, serious delays.

Time limits also controlled what could be offered. According to donor guidelines, the programme had to be completed in three years. By one analyst's estimate, it took 18 months to establish the ANBP, recruit staff, purchase vehicles, visit AMF units, and plan and negotiate the DDR process, leaving only 18 months to implement a highly complex and logistically challenging programme.

Partly for these reasons, some potential options were not proposed, including literacy training, despite the fact that more than 80 per cent of all demobilized ex-combatants were unable to read or write as of September 2004 (SRSG, 2004).

Sources: Sedra (2008a, p. 124); Poulton (2008, p. 14)

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the demobilized personnel with the ability to become economically independent' (ANBP, 2006, p. 3). Unlike DDR programmes in many other contexts, this programme 'was never mandated to disarm the population per se or provide direct employment but to assist AMF military personnel to transition from military into civilian life' (ANBP, 2006, p. 3). The disarmament aspect of the ANBP was designed to be largely symbolic, indicating individual soldiers' commitment to peace (Sedra, 2008a, p. 124). Neither commanders nor soldiers were obliged to submit all of their weapons.

At the outset of the programme there was no clear picture of the number of AMF personnel who would qualify: estimates ranged from 50,000 to 250,000. A compromise figure of 100,000 participants was soon agreed, though it was a not based on a needs assessment. While the AMF had an interest in inflating its ranks to increase benefits, some of the uncertainty grew out of the part-time nature of militia activities and the spontaneous demobilization of many militia members—partly due to low or irregular pay—after the defeat of the Taliban (ICG, 2003, p. i). After 13 months of operations the ANBP quietly dropped its target to 60,000. The number and quality of weapons in militia hands was virtually unknown, relying on 'crude and outdated' estimates (Sedra, 2008a, p. 124).

At this point in the process, DDR best practices would typically call for skills and needs assessments and other preparatory measures such as militia mapping, surveying of groups' composition and structure, and soldier and commander profiling to inform programme design. None of these steps were taken prior to the launch of the ANBP. Nor did the programme seek to engage commanders in the process, whether with carrots or sticks, despite the focus on breaking militia chains of command.

Table 9.3 The AMF disarmament process

	List of candidates	Verifications of MoD list	Disarmament	Weapons collection
Actors	Ministry of Defence	ANBP's regional verification committee	Soldiers and officers, international observers	ANBP's mobile disarmament units
Tasks	Provides comprehensive list of AMF personnel	Verifies MoD list and modifies as appropriate; flags special cases (e.g. drug users, child soldiers); ensures special conditions are in place	Combatants hand in weapons to commanding officers; ceremony at garrison: medals, certificates of honour, honour parade	Collect and register weapons

Source: Sedra (2008a, p. 125)

The ANBP would grow to a staff of 700—mostly Afghans—with up to 70 international actors. The central office was located in Kabul and eight regional offices in Kunduz, Kabul/Parwan, Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Bamyan, Jalalabad, and Herat. The programme proceeded as follows: AMF units would submit a list of their personnel to the regional office. After verification by the MoD, these lists would be vetted by prominent and trusted leaders from the region (see Table 9.3). Entry into the programme was limited to those who had at least eight months of military service and who could turn in a serviceable weapon to a mobile disarmament unit. No attempt was made to collect or even identify all the weapons held by the militia.[11]

Nevertheless, the trigger that guided an individual's movement through the programme was the surrendering of a weapon. Collected firearms were engraved with an alphanumeric code and registered into a database in the central ANBP office along with information on the owner. Eventually they were moved to the national arms depot and were held under a dual key system, with one key held by the MoD and the other by the International Observer Group, a body of international monitors. Upon completion of the programme the weapons were to be turned over to the Afghan National Army (ANA).

Once this step was taken, each individual was directed to a case worker for demobilization at an ANBP regional office. This consisted of an interview to determine the skills, experiences, education levels, and desires of ex-combatants. After taking an oath not to engage in further fighting, the former militiamen were given a medal for distinguished service and a certificate for honourable discharge. A cash payment of USD 200 was discontinued after a pilot project revealed that commanders were forcing ex-soldiers to turn over part or all of this money (Sedra, 2004, pp. 3–7).

The ex-combatant then passed into reintegration, which consisted of a choice of several packages or entry into the ANA following qualification. While the latter option may have been attractive to many militia members, stringent age requirements (18–28) excluded the vast majority: only 2.42 per cent of ex-combatants receiving reintegration assistance joined the ANA (Sedra, 2008a, p. 127). Ex-combatants often ended up with a reintegration package based on considerations of programme availability and administrative expediency rather than needs, skills, and market gaps (Dennys, 2005, p. 4).

Complications arose almost immediately. First, AMF commanders wilfully and systematically manipulated the process. They submitted the least loyal soldiers and least functional weapons, retaining control of the vast majority

Afghan militiamen show their DDR cards after handing in their weapons during a disarmament ceremony in Herat, July 2004. © Marcelo Salinas/WPN
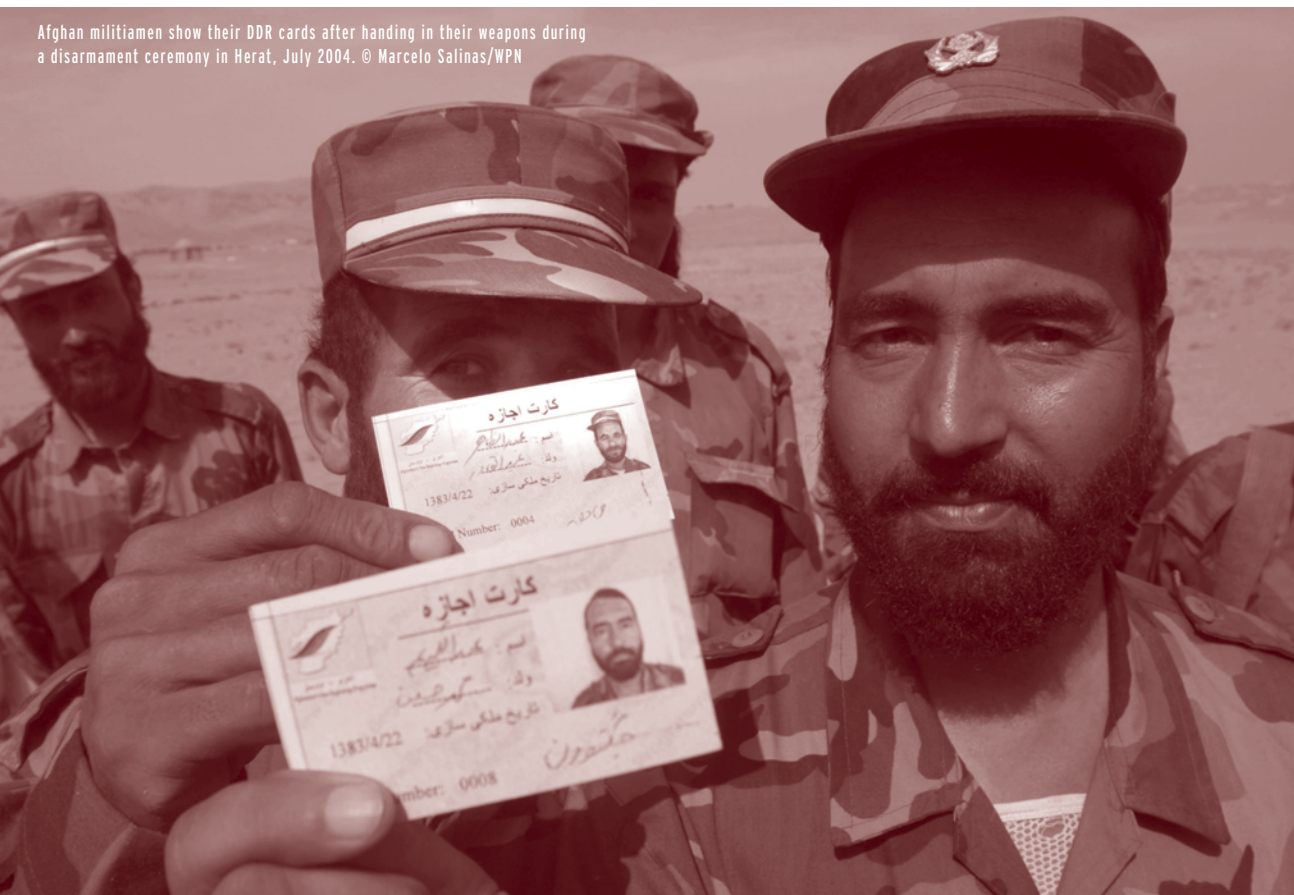
of their working armaments (Sedra, 2008a, p. 128). As noted, they pilfered reintegration assistance until it was discontinued. Commanders who had been appointed to official civilian roles were also able to use their positions to shuffle militia members into police units under their authority. In short, the programme was not successful in dismantling many commander–soldier linkages or in breaking the integrity of patronage networks. This behaviour was perhaps to be expected, since commanders were not the intended beneficiaries of DDR and naturally looked for ways to secure material gains when few other options presented themselves.

Secondly, the programme was beset by fraud. Many ex-combatants who did not qualify for the programme were admitted with falsified identification. The regional distribution of the benefits of DDR was also suspicious: the two regions under direct control of the Shura-e-Nezar faction accounted for at least 56 per cent of all militiamen who entered the process nationwide (Rossi and Giustozzi, 2006, p. 5).

In late 2004, the ANBP responded to these problems by launching the Commander Incentive Programme, which provided a monthly stipend, the offer of training abroad (in Japan), and possibly a government post in exchange for compliance with the DDR effort. This two-year, USD 5 million programme, funded by Japan, ended in September 2007. Of the 550 commanders who were identified, 460 had participated in the programme by June 2006 (Sedra, 2008a, p. 129). For a number of warlords, however, the training component could not be carried out because they were denied travel visas.[12]

A former Afghan militia soldier undergoes carpentry training as part of his reintegration after disarmament and demobilization, November 2004. © Gurinder Osan/AP Photo

Two other steps were taken that helped limit the obstruction of commanders. First, a law promulgated in October 2003 prohibits political parties from having a militia wing or even associating with armed groups, thereby restricting the activities of militia commanders with political ambitions and promoting their compliance with DDR. Many commanders rapidly entered their men into the programme in anticipation of the October 2004 presidential elections. Second, the United States changed its policy of ambivalence to the DDR of AMF groups, which it relied on to support Coalition forces against the Taliban in many areas, and instead applied pressure on those forces to comply with the programme. This may have been linked to the strategic shift by the United States towards the reduction of opium farming, which sustained some commanders.

The disarmament and demobilization process ended in July 2005. By that time, 63,380 ex-combatants had been demobilized through the ANBP (see Table 9.4), 259 AMF units formally decommissioned, some 57,629 light and medium weapons collected, and 100,000 soldiers 'de-financed' (i.e. formally removed from payrolls), freeing up some USD 120 million annually from state budgets. By the end of the reintegration phase in June 2006, benefits were delivered to some 55,804 ex-combatants, or 88 per cent of all who had demobilized. Agricultural training, vocational training, and small business operations together accounted for 93.3 per cent of the skills transferred (see Figure 9.2). An ANBP Client Evaluation Survey of 5,000 beneficiaries who had received six to nine months of reintegration assistance found that 93 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the assistance and 90 per cent were still employed.

Table 9.4	**DDR phases in Afghanistan and selected outcomes**			
Phase	**Start date**	**End date**	**Total disarmed**	**Total demobilized**
Pilot phase	1 October 2003	31 May 2004	6,271	7,550
Main phase 1	1 June 2004	30 August 2004	8,551	7,257
Main phase 2	1 September 2004	30 October 2004	7,169	3,733
Main phase 3	1 November 2004	31 March 2005	22,440	20,375
Main phase 4	1 April 2005	31 July 2005	18,949	23,461
Totals			**63,380**	**62,376**

Source: UNDDR (2008)

Disbanding the AMF units had undeniably positive outcomes of the daily lives of community members and the security sector. Security checkpoints and AMF units belonging to rival ethnic or militia groups stationed in communities were closed, removing a security threat. Many AMF soldiers, bonded to their commanders but receiving little or no pay, were freed from service and no longer had to report to their commanders. AMF commanders lost the privilege of driving around in official vehicles with numerous bodyguards, which they also lost. The government was able to stop paying the force, freeing millions of dollars desperately needed elsewhere.[13]

In view of the severely inhospitable conditions on the ground, these achievements are significant. The number of AMF militiamen targeted for demobilization was met and valued training and assistance provided to ex-combatants. Complete disarmament was not a goal of the programme, but a significant number of weapons were removed from militias and transferred to the army.

Figure 9.2   **Reintegration training benefits, 2003–06**

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS
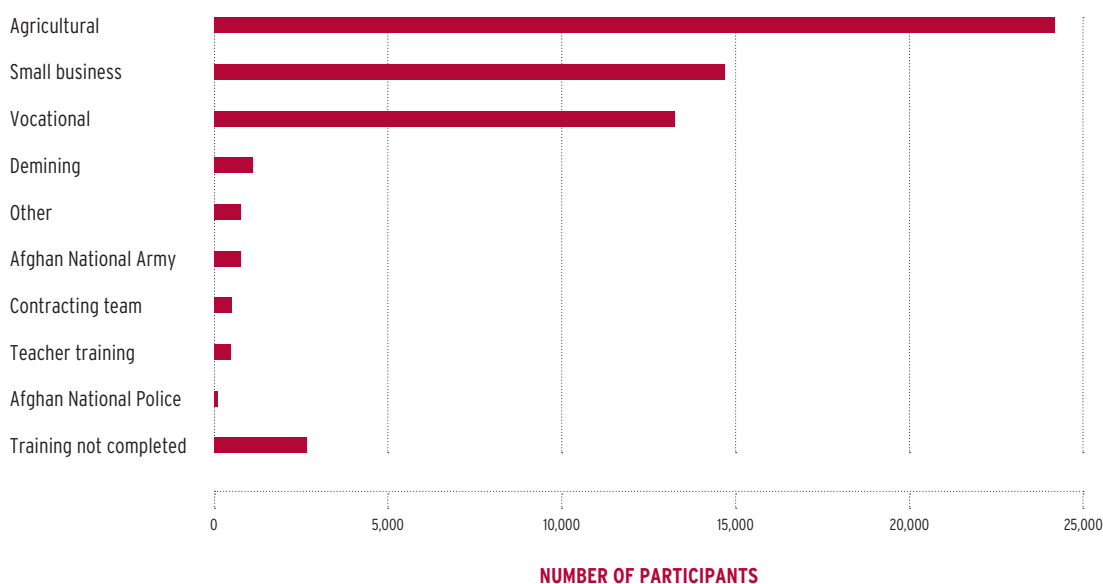
Source: UNDDR (2008)

In terms of its primary objective, however, it is unclear to what extent DDR interrupted commander–militiamen lines of influence. The reality is most likely that even the AMF units that were formally decommissioned could be reconstituted by commanders with access to guns, money, and unemployed militiamen. Most of these conditions remain in place today.

Disbanding illegal armed groups

The ANBP DDR programme targeted AMF militia only, but a large variety of armed groups, strongmen, warlords, and others with the power to mobilize followers remain outside the AMF (Sedra, 2008a, p. 134). These groups, which present further threats to the legitimacy of the government and act as potential spoilers, also seriously threaten security and functional governance. They collect illegal taxes, obstructing government revenue collection; they are involved in the illegal exploitation of natural resources; and, in some cases, they have assumed control over state-owned industries. As such, they subvert reform processes, intimidate local government officials and security forces, and drive the illegal economy, most notably the narcotics trade (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2006, annexe A, p. 4). The power that these groups wield stems from their monopolization of the means of violence in their regional strongholds. Their access to guns has enabled them to insulate their interests, carve out mini-fiefdoms, and curtail the expansion of government authority into the periphery.

In July 2004, Presidential Decree 50 defined all groups falling outside the AMF as illegal (President of the Islamic Government of Afghanistan, 2004). In February 2005, as formal DDR of AMF groups was about to enter its final phase, the Canadian government provided a grant to develop and implement a programme to address illegal groups, to be called Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups. Early feasibility studies identified some 1,870 illegal militias, including roughly 129,000 men. The government estimated that these groups possessed about 336,000 small arms and light weapons, 56,000 of which were concealed by AMF groups during DDR. But the actual number is probably much higher given arms flows into the country and the size of some caches uncovered by Coalition forces (Sedra, 2008a, p.135).

> In July 2004, non-AMF armed groups were declared illegal.

In 2006, the government defined illegal armed groups as: 'a group of five or more armed individuals operating outside the law, drawing its cohesion from (a) loyalty to a commander, (b) material benefits, (c) impunity enjoyed by members, [and] (d) shared ethnic or social background' (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2006, p. 2). AMF remnant groups were subsequently declared illegal, including units that had gone through DDR merely to receive the benefits, without any intention of disbanding.

DIAG has two stated objectives: '(1) to improve security through the disarmament and disbandment of illegal armed groups; and (2) to provide basic development support to communities freed from threats posed by illegal armed groups' (GoA, UNAMA, and UNDP, 2006, p. 2). The latter objective was deemed important in promoting the 'full integration' of groups back into their communities, providing an incentive for communities to remain arms-free, and preventing the resurgence of criminal and predatory groups. It was therefore considered an 'essential and integral part of the security sector reform process' (GoA, UNAMA, and UNDP, 2006, p. 1).

The government presented DIAG as a way of curtailing actors involved in 'drug smuggling, human trafficking, and human rights violations' and threatening communities in the absence of a robust rule of law; indeed, the government recognized that these groups undermined the peace process, hindered democratic development, and forced the withdrawal of international aid organizations. DIAG offered illegal armed group members the opportunity to 'honourably' conform to state authority requiring them to disarm and disband. The government also promulgated

national gun laws criminalizing arms carrying and establishing an owner licensing and registration system (President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2005). The project was pushed forward on an emergency basis to address armed groups in the period leading up to the Afghan National Assembly elections of September 2005.

DIAG aims to disrupt the relationship between commanders and their militiamen through disarmament. But whereas DDR was designed on the basis of a monetized incentive system, DIAG approaches illegal armed groups from a law enforcement perspective (Sedra, 2008a, p. 136). Moreover, incentives are provided collectively to communities, and not on an individual basis to militiamen. Likewise, coercive tactics are authorized for groups that fail to cooperate.

Another important distinction between the two programmes is that DDR was internationally driven while DIAG is overseen by the D&R Commission, reporting to a national coordinating body chaired by the president, the Security Coordination Forum (Sedra, 2008a, p. 136). DIAG is centrally planned, implemented by local actors in the provinces, and flexible, allowing for individual regional strategies and responses to specific local circumstances.

DIAG has applied a three-stage process. The first stage sought to force the demilitarization of illegal armed groups associated with commanders who wished to pursue legislative careers. Officially designated the National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections (NAPCE) phase, the programme employed a strategy similar to the one previously used in the DDR campaign to sever ties by AMF commanders who wanted to enter politics. In advance of the September 2005 legislative elections, 1,108 of around 6,000 lower parliament and provincial council candidates were identified as having possible links to armed groups. From this list, the Electoral Complaints Commission provisionally disqualified 207 candidates, pending their compliance with the terms of disarmament (ANBP, 2006, p. 12). While 124 candidates did turn in 4,857 weapons, the rest on the list chose not to comply, to say nothing of commanders who were never listed in the first place.[14] Pressure from the government and the international community led to the exclusion of only 34 candidates from the ballot. As a result, it was estimated that more than 80 per cent of the winning candidates in the provinces and 60 per cent in Kabul maintained ties to armed groups. Candidates' ties to armed groups were also a factor in the relatively low voter turnout (6.8 million votes cast out of 12.4 million registered voters), according to human rights groups (IRIN, 2005).[15]

The second stage focused on elected government officials who maintained ties to illegal armed groups—the so-called Government Officials with Links to Illegal Armed Groups phase. As of September 2005, it was suspected that at least 450 officials were thus connected (UNDP, 2008b). But a consensus could only be reached with 13 of them. A second round forced another eight groups to comply, and they submitted more than 1,000 weapons (Islamic Government of Afghanistan, 2006, p. 10). But those who have not complied—mostly employed by the Ministry of the Interior, a key stakeholder in the DIAG process—have yet to be forced out. The Ministry has shifted, rather than fired, many of the others, demonstrating how deeply entrenched patronage networks are in the government and society. The linkages between commanders and militiamen and their government sponsors remained largely intact after this stage (Sedra, 2008a, p.140).

The third—and main—stage of DIAG began in May 2006 after a pilot had been used to develop a three-phase strategy of voluntary, negotiated, and enforced compliance (see Table 9.5). Compliance is considered obtained if 70 per cent of all weapons in possession of the armed group are turned in within 30 days. Like the DDR exercise, DIAG initially required only that turned-in weapons were functional; later the threshold of acceptability was raised to weapons that could be utilized by security institutions.[16] Since under this scheme development incentives are provided to the community, religious and local leaders are encouraged to pressure groups to comply with the law.

Table 9.5 **Three phases of the DIAG (main stage)**			
	Phase 1: **voluntary compliance**	**Phase 2:** **negotiated compliance**	**Phase 3:** **enforced compliance**
Political levers	Public information campaign; presidential decree; law on weapons	Public information reinforcement; negotiation at national level; use of political parties; negotiation at provincial or local level; legal deadline	Public information residual; law enforcement; shame list; forcible compliance or removal
Cultural levers	Influence via *shuras* or elders	Negotiation by *shuras* or elders; influence through *jirga*	–
Religious levers	Influence via *fatwa* or mosque	Negotiation by *fatwa*; influence through mosques	–
Economic levers	Influence via access to incentive programmes	Influence via access to incentive programmes; programme deadline	Denied access to all development programmes

Source: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2005)[17]

If an armed group refuses to comply within the voluntary compliance period, a negotiation phase commences, using national and local actors, including village *mullahs* and *shuras,* as needed. If this, too, should fail, the process can assume a more coercive tenor: the Ministry of Interior and Afghan National Police are invested with enforcement powers and, in theory, the ANA could be used to assist. However, it appears that forcible disarmament has rarely, if ever, been conducted.[18] At this stage, community development assistance is (temporarily) suspended.

As of December 2008, the programme had reportedly disbanded 382 illegally armed groups and collected 42,369 weapons. A further 14,805 weapons have been registered and 14,000 destroyed or retained by ISAF (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2008). But, as in the DDR exercise, militias are reportedly surrendering their least serviceable weapons (ammunition was not a focus but fell under another programme; see Box 9.4). DIAG also lacked a plan to engage commanders directly (Sedra, 2008a, p.144). Whereas the Commander Incentive Programme was eventually created to generate incentives for AMF commanders, incentives were deemed inappropriate in the case of outright illegal groups.

Theoretically, DIAG was supposed to target illegal armed groups that were not covered by DDR. In reality, the majority of the listed groups were ex-AMF commanders who were retargeted. Three-quarters of the weapons recovered through DIAG came from Northern Alliance areas, leaving other heavily armed areas as yet unaddressed. It is also worth mentioning that most of the 1,870 listed militias were inactive—meaning that they did not seem to be involved in any illegal activities, particularly in those regions where the security situation was reasonably good.[19]

It is possible that intelligence problems played a role in this regional imbalance. In many cases it was extremely difficult to obtain reliable information about illegal armed groups to inform targeting. The illegal armed group (IAG) lists, normally emanating from the National Security Department, were often out of date and sometimes targeted the wrong people. There are several cases of former commanders appearing on IAG lists with an unrealistically low number of weapons next to their names.[20]

In this way, some militia leaders have persisted in their roles, protected by someone inside the government. They, in turn, have protected affiliated groups from government pressure to disarm. This applies not only to ethnic and

Box 9.4 Mine and ammunition stockpile destruction

With more than 30 years of proxy arming and a robust regional arms and ammunition trade, Afghanistan reportedly has one of the largest ammunition stockpiles in the world. Neither the NDC disarmament exercise nor the DIAG project focused on ammunition collection and destruction. In November 2004 the government of Canada funded an assessment that estimated the national ammunition stockpile at 100,000 metric tons, much of which was abandoned or unguarded (Sedra, 2008a, p. 146; ANBP, 2006, p. 7). A significant proportion had been exposed to the elements and had become volatile. In May 2005 at least 28 people were killed and 70 wounded when an illegal ammunition cache—including artillery, tank shells, and rocket-propelled grenades—accidentally exploded in Baghlan Province (Sedra, 2008a, p. 146).

To address the vast scale of ammunition proliferation in the country, the Ministry of Defence and UNDP established the Anti-Personnel Mines and Ammunition Stockpile Destruction project in December 2004, which got under way in July 2005. The project was funded by Canada, the United Kingdom, the European Union, UNDP, and other donors at USD 16 million for two years. It is primarily a detect-and-destroy programme, carried out by ammunition survey teams (ASTs).

Using all available intelligence resources to locate caches, ASTs move ammunition to a safe location and separate usable from unusable materiel. The usable ammunition is packaged and shipped to one of 12 MoD consolidation points and the rest is destroyed. To date, about one-third of the initial estimated ammunition stockpile has been surveyed (see Table 9.6). An interim Coalition-supported security force, the Afghan Guard Force, is charged with protecting new, official ammunition depots. There has also been a contemporaneous refurbishment of two national ammunition depots around Kabul, the rearrangement of 54 existing ammunition bunkers around the country, the creation of 22 new bunkers, and a comprehensive inventory process (Sedra, 2008a, p. 149).

Sources: ANBP (2008)

Table 9.6 Ammunition and landmines surveyed and destroyed as of 27 November 2008

AMF ammunition surveyed	33,878 tons
DIAG ammunition surveyed	2,961 tons
Total ammunition surveyed	**36,839 tons**
Ammunition consolidated	9,699 tons
Ammunition destroyed	20,943 tons
Anti-personnel mines destroyed	503,174 pieces
Anti-tank mines destroyed	22,503 pieces
Total mines destroyed	**525,677 pieces**

An explosive ordnance disposal team stacks weapons in Zabul Province, August 2004. © Teun Voeten/Panos Pictures

tribal militia but also to entities involved in the drug trade, whose spoils represent significant incentives to corrupt government officials. The upper house of parliament voted in May 2006 to halt DIAG due to the alleged need for Afghans to keep their guns for self-defence—possibly more a reflection of illegal armed group influence in the parliament than evidence of sound security planning (Sedra, 2008a, p. 144).

Yet in terms of key positions in the national government, at least, IAG influence has waned from its peak four to six years ago. While they continue to pose a threat to security and the rule of law, IAG commander capabilities were reduced in recent years, both militarily and politically. In 2002 and 2003, the majority of cabinet ministers had links to ex-AMF, illegal armed groups, or jihadi groups or were backed by them. Today no more than three cabinet members have such ties. Reductions have also been recognized in the lower government, though they still hold a significant number of positions there. Ex-armed group figures now represent a political opposition force rather than part of the government.[21]

DISCUSSION: PRESSURES AND REALITIES

More than three years have passed since DDR ended in Afghanistan, though the attempt to disband armed groups continues. But in the sometimes precarious security environment local commanders are increasingly resistant to turning over weapons and in some cases are reportedly rearming (Semple, Robbins, and Harris, 2007). It is tempting to focus on missed opportunities based on ideal conditions, but doing so underestimates the incredible complexity of the Afghan context and the immense domestic, regional, and international pressures bearing down on the government.

The following section discusses some of the dilemmas affecting the design, implementation, and outcomes of DDR and illegal armed group disbandment in the country. In particular, it focuses on the disarmament–security dilemma; the efficacy of using disarmament to break commander–militiamen links; the development challenges facing reintegrating soldiers; the role of the opium economy; and the revitalized insurgency. There are no easy answers to these questions, even in retrospect.

The disarmament–security dilemma

The government presented DIAG as a 'crucial element' of SSR.

Since 2002, the new government has fallen prey to a classic security dilemma. In order to secure its monopoly on the use of force, large numbers of armed groups need to be neutralized through DDR or through direct co-option. But disarmament is difficult to achieve without a robust and accountable security sector to back up disarmament actions with the threat of coercive force. The government presented DIAG as a 'crucial element' of SSR (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2005). Yet the main organs of the security sector—the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police—were in the process of being created from scratch almost simultaneously with DDR.[22] In many areas, neither was operational; the police, in particular, remain qualitatively weak and subject to corruption. Coalition forces were unwilling to serve as the enforcement mechanism. In a security vacuum such as this, demand for arms naturally tends to increase, and commanders acquire added legitimacy as arbiters of local disputes and as security providers (Bhatia, 2008a, p. 11). Indeed, the open operation of criminals, warlords, and insurgents leads private citizens to arm themselves for protection, thus perpetuating the militarization cycle (Sedra and Muggah, 2007).

Two other interrelated factors increase the complexity of this dilemma. The first is the factional nature of the government. The dominance of Shura-e-Nezar militia members in the Ministry of Defence and other ministries casts

Afghan National Army soldiers march in a graduation ceremony, Kabul, September 2003. © Richard Vogel/AP Photo

suspicion on the DDR programme, which came to be seen as a means by which certain warlords and commanders sought to consolidate power and suppress competitors. While strides have been made in this regard, efforts to dis-empower high-profile warlords continue. Success will require the full support of the international community, which has itself supported leaders with ties to illegal armed groups.

The historically decentralized nature of Afghan society makes this project all the more difficult. Afghanistan has never been a Western-style, centralized democratic state with national political leaders who respond to citizens' needs and provide services. Instead, it is predominantly a land of local autonomy, where tribal authority has provided identity, community, and patronage. While there is hope for improvement of central government services and a reduction in corruption, loyalties to local structures and organizations persist. Despite these realities, the international community is making development assistance contingent on the government's capacity to create provincial institutions and administration (London Conference on Afghanistan, 2006, p. 3). For these reasons some analysts have come to believe that achieving legitimacy requires accepting and working within local power structures, including armed strongmen and other opportunistic commanders, whether formerly affiliated with the AMF or fundamentally 'illegal' (Poulton, 2008).

DDR without disarmament

DDR is typically conceived of as a continuum, sometimes occurring in parallel or in overlapping phases, but usually with disarmament taking place early and reintegration falling last. This logic may not have been applicable or even

possible in Afghanistan. In fact, the assumption that universal disarmament should be the first step in post-war securitization was quickly rejected in view of the realities on the ground, which suggested an emphasis on demobilization of both legal and illegal armed groups—with disarmament a concern for a much later phase (Özerdem, 2002, p. 965). Was this the right approach?

Some analysts have seen crucial missed opportunities to institutionalize and implement widespread disarmament in the early stages of the post-Taliban period, and to tie the main power brokers to demilitarization. The first failure, according to this analysis, was the vague language of the Bonn Agreement, which did not call for 'universal' DDR. This omission allowed the Mujaheddin to continue to enforce a populist narrative of participation in jihad and against the Taliban; they then used this position to justify their presence in parliament and government ministries—as well as to legitimize their use of armed violence (Sedra, 2008b, p. 113). Was the international community's failure to address the so-called ownership gap in the NDC disarmament initiative another missed entry point for robust and comprehensive disarmament?

While the classic post-war reconstruction model would call for local commanders to be disarmed, in the absence of a functioning security sector, and given the dynamics of traditional mobilization, the strategy of adopting and absorbing local commanders in state and provincial government appears to have been one of the few realistic strategies available. It must be recalled that in the early post-Taliban phase, strongmen and commanders' militias had benefited from new infusions of assistance from the United States. Many members of the fledgling government felt that earnest disarmament would risk turning those allies into enemies. The government possibly reasoned that strongmen were a potential asset to be retained for the future because they were sources of local authority who could direct men in combat.

In fact, in early 2009 Afghan authorities were seeking to once again deputize villagers in Wardak Province, south of Kabul, in an effort to increase local counter-insurgency capacities.[23] The US-backed Afghan Public Protection Force is intended to fill the shortage of police capacity, especially in distant areas (Moncrieff, 2009). According to the vice-chair of the D&R Commission, villagers would be asked to supply their own weapons, but conflicting reports suggest the United States will provide additional weapons (Boone, 2008; Faiez, 2009).[24] The forces would supposedly be subject to clear command and control mechanisms and tied directly to village *shuras*.[25]

DDR and DIAG were never intended to entirely disarm the country's militias.

Collecting weapons was always a side product of DDR and DIAG, which were never intended to entirely disarm the country's militias. This misperception that universal disarmament had been planned remains widespread among Afghans, however, contributing to their low opinion of the programmes. In general, weapons possession, particularly in the rural areas, continues to be viewed as a means of defence; this opinion is not likely to change until confidence in the newly established security institutions rises to an acceptable level, among both former armed group members as well as many civilians.[26]

For these reasons, the strategy of using disarmament to break the relationship between commanders and their soldiers is probably not sufficient. Though they have been significantly weakened by DDR and DIAG, these bonds remain and will continue to exist until effective, non-factionalized security institutions fill this security gap.[27] The UN Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative to Afghanistan probably spoke for many analysts when he suggested in June 2008 that illegal armed groups would never completely disappear from the Afghan landscape. The challenge, he said, was reducing them from a national security threat to a problem that can be managed by law enforcement (UNAMA, 2008).

Reintegration without development

Afghanistan is found near the bottom of UNDP's Human Development Index in life expectancy (42.9 years), literacy (28 per cent), primary, secondary, and tertiary education enrolment (42.8 per cent), and mortality for under-five-year-olds (257 per 1,000), ranking 174 out of 178 countries measured. Recent years have seen some 'tremendous' improvements: per capita GDP has increased from USD 683 in 2002 to USD 964 in 2005; the number of telephone users rose to 2.5 million, or 10 per cent of the population; school enrolment has grown from 900,000 to nearly 5.4 million; and the rate of malaria and tuberculosis has dropped dramatically (UNDP, 2007, p. 3). But it is unquestionable that citizens remain in dire need of large-scale development assistance.

Box 9.5 **Current challenges to suppressing the drug economy**

Besides subsistence and small-scale farming, poppy cultivation remains among the most lucrative occupations in Afghanistan. The international community has taken a zero-tolerance approach, primarily focused on crop eradication, as reflected in the Afghanistan Compact:

> Meeting the threat that the narcotics industry poses to national, regional and international security as well as the development and governance of the country and the well-being of Afghans will be a priority for the Government and the international community. The aim will be to achieve a sustained and significant reduction in the production and trafficking of narcotics with a view to complete elimination. (London Conference on Afghanistan, 2006, p. 4)

Crop destruction can be effective in curtailing production, but without micro-credit programmes or incentives to switch to other crops (such as wheat), farmers become destitute and turn to insurgents for assistance. In exchange for security and start-up capital, poppy farmers turn over a portion of the proceeds to the insurgents, thus supporting their operations, funding their weapons purchases, and contributing to further instability. Insurgents, together with warlords and drug lords, are thought to have extracted almost half a billion dollars of tax revenue from drug farming, production, and trafficking in 2008 (UNODC, 2008, p. 2).

In fact, the distinction between opium GDP and non-opium GDP is somewhat artificial, since the multiplier effect from growth in the illicit economy has a direct impact on the growth of legal economy (Sedra and Middlebrook, 2005). Thus crop eradication alone tends to bring down the regional economy as a whole. In Nangarhar Province, for example, a 70 per cent reduction in opium production in 2004–05 triggered a general decline in household incomes, slowing down local economic growth overall, as well as employment. Invariably, then, poppy eradication will precipitate a decline in total per capita income (Sedra and Middlebrook, 2005).

In 2006 the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics released its five-year strategy to reduce the 'opium economy', which President Karzai called 'the single greatest challenge to the long-term security, development, and effective governance of Afghanistan' and to the stability of the region (MoCN, 2006, p. 4). The strategy has eight pillars, of which Alternative Livelihoods is the most costly, calling for crop substitution and other rural development initiatives to wean farmers and others off poppy production and sales (MoCN, 2006, p. 29). To date, however, alternative livelihood assistance has not been provided effectively.

Some recent news is encouraging. Opium production reportedly declined by almost 19 per cent in 2008, to pre-2006 levels, though the greatest declines occurred outside the southern region, where the vast majority of cultivation occurs (UNODC, 2008, pp. 7, 11). The export value of opium-based drugs decreased from about USD 4 billion in 2007 to about USD 3.4 billion in 2008 (UNODC, 2008, p. 29). This drop is due not to eradication, but to a combination of factors including decreased planting after pressure from governors, *shuras,* and village elders; decreased demand for opium due to market saturation; and increasing demand for wheat, primarily due to drought (UNODC, 2008, p. 2). For the moment, the dynamics in opium and wheat markets have made wheat a more attractive option than it used to be.[28] The trend is also having some development impacts. Nangarhar received USD 10 million from the Good Performers Initiative, a programme funded by the United States and Britain that provides development assistance to communities leading the fight against the poppy in Afghanistan (VOA, 2009).

DDR provided demobilizing AMF members with skills training, and satisfaction with the training was high. Yet many militiamen expected not just training but long-term employment. In the period under review, however, the international community, recognizing the lack of rule of law and the ongoing problems associated with illegal armed groups, did not invest in large-scale development projects.

Conversely, one of DIAG's primary goals was to support the economic development of communities once they complied with the programme. The development rewards were slow in coming, however. Mahmoud Raqi district in Kapisa Province was the first community to be declared in compliance with DIAG, earning a canal rehabilitation and cleaning project launched in April 2007—almost two years after DIAG began. The project expects to rehabilitate 95 km of waterways in the district serving 240,000 inhabitants (ANBP, 2007). To date, only five DIAG development projects have been completed (UNDP, 2008a).

A larger development strategy for Afghanistan, which aims to rehabilitate dormant industrial facilities and agricultural projects, has been even slower to materialize. In 2006 the Government of Afghanistan and the international community agreed to a set of conditions on which development assistance would be provided. Improvements would need to be made in three broad categories: security; governance, rule of law, and human rights; and economic and social development (London Conference on Afghanistan, 2006, p. 2). The Afghanistan National Development Strategy was the follow-up to these steps.

While efforts to control the opium trade have not met projected goals (see Box 9.5), the reconstruction of roads, bridges, buildings, schools, and other investments in the 'peace economy' also lags behind. Reconstruction assistance accounts for a fraction of military spending, per capita aid to the country is far below that received in places such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Timor-Leste, and leading donors are failing to meet their aid commitments. The result is an aid shortfall of USD 10 billion. Furthermore, a significant portion of development assistance coming into the country ends up leaving it quickly: up to 40 per cent finds its way into corporate profits and consultant fees (Waldman, 2008, p.1).

To date, only five DIAG development projects have been completed.

Reconciliation and insurgency

Despite its claims to recognize 'the right of the people of Afghanistan to freely determine their own political future in accordance with the principles of Islam, democracy, pluralism and social justice' (Bonn Agreement, 2001, preamb.), the Taliban have generally been marginalized from the political process since October 2001. The military victory was not followed by a peace agreement; the power-sharing arrangement did not include Taliban leaders. What reconciliation was on offer was ad hoc, top-down, and predicated on the willingness of former Taliban commanders to work within a new government system that they had no hand in helping create.

The central government made piecemeal attempts to reach out to insurgents old and new. As early as 2003 President Karzai gave almost all insurgents operating under the name of the Taliban the opportunity to become full citizens by denouncing violence, disarming, and recognizing the authority of the government. This offer was generally not taken up. In 2007, two years after some ex-Taliban commanders were elected to the lower parliament (Gall, 2005), a more emphatic invitation to ongoing insurgents to lay down arms and enter talks was issued. Karzai suggested that he would even consider giving Taliban leaders deputy minister positions or entire departments in key ministries (Chu, 2007).

Now that the insurgency has grown to include a range of domestic and foreign-sourced groups with differing goals and capacities, the question of reconciliation is even more complex. The United States, the most important con-

tributor of military and financial assistance to the government, has given mixed signals about the possibility of talks with the Taliban (VOA, 2008; CNN, 2008). As the counter-insurgency has become increasingly bogged down, however, NATO and US forces commander General David McKiernan appeared to acknowledge that reconciliation at the local levels, through *shuras,* should include commanders aligned with the insurgency (Radio Free Europe, 2008).

Among the many impacts of the insurgency is a counter-productive effect on DIAG programming. As the southern insurgency gains momentum, commanders in the other areas of the country fear that the Taliban and associated groups are growing in influence and that they may soon reach well beyond the southern territories. These commanders are increasingly reluctant to turn in weapons. Indeed, the director of DIAG in the northern state of Mazar-e-Sharif indicated that northern commanders who had complied with weapons turn-in were rearming and stashing weapons in late 2007; such arming is probably occurring elsewhere as well (Semple, Robbins, and Harris, 2007). The government's focus on supplying the predominantly Pashtun southern provinces with development assistance and weapons has also made the northern, largely Tajik and Uzbek commanders put pressure on Kabul for increased power and resources.

CONCLUSION

The Afghan experience of DDR was more atypical than most, starting with the fact that it did not arise from a peace agreement between two parties but from an internationally driven military victory (that was presumed complete). It was of necessity launched in conjunction with the wholesale creation of a new national government and security apparatus in one of the most underdeveloped regions of the world, in a country of multiple armed groups and widespread arms availability, and amidst the lucrative and corrupting influence of the world's largest opium-producing centre.

With the close involvement of the international community, DDR itself was designed and executed by a government that was initially non-representative and factionalized. Cleansing the Ministry of Defence of partisan actors has already taken years and is not yet complete. Power alliances and government–commander relations did not only affect the design of these programmes (who was targeted, when, and how), but also the terms (qualifications for entry, arms surrender) and the actors (implementation agencies).

It is difficult to imagine a more challenging environment for DDR programming, and under these circumstances its achievements should not be undervalued. In additional to some 63,000 AMF disarmed and demobilized and the removal of some 100,000 weapons and 30,000 tons of ammunition from the population, the programme led to palpable security gains in many areas. As the DIAG programme progressed, many warlords, drug lords, and other IAG commanders were removed from the government. Corruption and factionalization have clearly obstructed progress on disarming groups, but much has been accomplished.

Afghanistan has not returned to full-scale warfare, but it is difficult to label the country 'post-conflict' so long as an armed insurgency rages and spreads. The experience of the ANBP and DIAG emphasize the limits of what can be achieved in a context where state-building, peace-building, counter-insurgency, and counter-narcotics operations converge. Preventing future mobilization depends in part on the state's ability to define, regulate, and contain legitimate and illegitimate force—by establishing and enforcing the rule of law and providing security for the population. In many cases the government has chosen to try to work with local command structures—and this move is probably unavoidable under the current circumstances. Nevertheless, it underlines the Afghan state's inability to establish a monopoly on the legitimate use of force throughout the country. Despite the many important accomplishments of the past few years, state-building and security promotion in Afghanistan remain, for the moment, works in progress.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIA	Afghan Interim Authority	DIAG	Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups
AMF	Afghan Military Forces		
ANA	Afghan National Army	D&R Commission	Demobilization and Reintegration Commission
ANBP	Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme		
		IAG	Illegal armed group
AST	Ammunition survey team	ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ATA	Afghanistan Transitional Authority	MoD	Ministry of Defence
DDR	Disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration	NAPCE	National Assembly and Provincial Council Elections

NDC	National Disarmament Commission	UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom	UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
SSR	Security sector reform		

ENDNOTES

1   The initial phase (October–December 2001) of Operation Enduring Freedom was led by the United States and the United Kingdom with contributions and pledges of military or intelligence support from 75 states and bilateral and multilateral organizations (CRS, 2001).

2   The Coalition collectively labels these insurgents Anti-Government Forces or Anti-Coalition Forces. The insurgency is highly heterogeneous and includes separate Pakistani and home-grown Taliban groups, Glubuddin Hekmatyer's Hezb-i-Islami, the Haqqani network, al-Qaeda, and other smaller forces. For a discussion of the various factions that made up the insurgency in Afghanistan in 2008, see Gopal (2008).

3   Most dramatic among these strikes was the coordinated attack by eight Taliban militants on three separate government buildings on the morning of 11 February 2009, in which 20 people were killed (AP, 2009).

4   In 2007, the percentage of Afghans polled who cited security as their main concern rose from 22 to 32 per cent, with regional variations. In regions where citizens felt the country was headed in the right direction, this response was partly attributed to good security (Asia Foundation, 2007, p. 5).

5   See also Özerdem (2002, p. 963).

6   For a discussion of incidence monitoring and its limitations, see Small Arms Survey (2005, pp. 240–41) and Geneva Declaration Secretariat (2008, pp. 10–11).

7   There is an established literature on greed and grievance as motivations in mobilization. See, for example, Berdal and Malone (2000) and Collier and Hoeffler (2004).

8   Much of the material that follows relies on Bhatia and Muggah (2008) and Sedra (2008a).

9   The militia is a regional military and political structure founded by Ahmed Shah Massoud and hailing largely from the Panjshir Valley.

10 This and the following section draw primarily on Sedra (2008a).

11 Sedra reports that the Japanese government considered dropping the disarmament requirement altogether on the premise that, under the security conditions existing at the time, militiamen would be more willing to take part in demobilization and reintegration if they were allowed to retain their weapons for self-defence (Sedra, 2008a, p. 131).

12 Communication with Mark Sedra, 22 January 2009.

13 Communication with Hameed Quraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

14 Sedra reports that even the commanders who did engage with the NAPCE process may not have fully complied and probably only submitted samples of their weapons stocks (Sedra, 2008a, p. 139).

15 The enshrining of warlord power notwithstanding, the fact that in less than four years the country was able to promulgate a progressive constitution and peacefully elect a president and a parliament—the first parliament in more than three decades—is a remarkable feat.

16 Communication with Hameed Quraishi, former ANBP official, 28 December 2008.

17 Reproduced from Bhatia and Sedra (2008, p. 141).

18 Communication with Mark Sedra, 3 January 2009.

19 Communication with Hameed Quaraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

20 Communication with Hameed Quaraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

21 Communication with Hameed Quaraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

22 Rather than re-establishing a police force upon taking control of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban created a 'Vice and Virtue Police' in support of the Department for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. Consequently, no civilian police force existed after the fall of the Taliban (UNDP, 2007, p. 82).

23 This strategy is under way on the other side of the Pakistan border, where *lashkar* (militia) fighters are being armed with Chinese AK-47s and other small arms to combat Taliban and al-Qaeda in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. At least three *lashkars*, totaling 14,000 men, have reportedly been established in Bajaur (DeYoung, 2008).

24   The plans to arm and train a new civilian militia were announced shortly before evidence emerged that the United States had failed to follow basic record-keeping measures in its arming of the Afghan security forces in December 2004–June 2008. Some 87,000 rifles, pistols, mortars, and other weapons supplied by the United States could not be properly tracked (Schmidt, 2009).

25   The memory of a failed Canadian-financed 2006 effort to recruit auxiliary police lingers over this new US-backed effort. The previous campaign, hastily conceived and executed, drew only poorly trained men, many of whom were drug addicts. It was quietly ended in mid-2008 (Brewster, 2008).

26   Communication with Hameed Quaraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

27   Communication with Hameed Quaraishi, former ANBP official, 29 December 2008.

28   One dark cloud sits on the horizon of this scenario. Given that Afghan opium production has exceeded global demand for many years, analysts suggest that prices should be far lower than they are. One explanation is that insurgents are hoarding opium and even supporting further decreases in production, which will revalue their stocks and increase their war finances. Worse still, such market manipulation combined with fluctuations in wheat prices could prove damaging to the provinces that have voluntarily given up poppy production (UNODC, 2008, p. 3).

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IN MEMORIAM

Michael Vinay Bhatia
23 August 1976–7 May 2008

The Small Arms Survey staff is deeply saddened by the premature death of Michael Bhatia. Michael was widely recognized for his compassion and ability to lend people a voice in war-torn parts of the world. In addition to the research he undertook for the Small Arms Survey, he carried out studies in Afghanistan for the Overseas Development Institute, the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, the UK Department for International Development, and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. At Oxford University's St. Antony's College, he was completing research for his doctoral dissertation, *The Mujahideen: A Study of Combatant Motives in Afghanistan,* 1978–2004.

During the last seven months of his life, Michael served as a social scientist embedded with the US Army in Afghanistan. He was a highly regarded member of the Human Terrain programme. 'There's a big academic controversy involved,' he wrote of his work there, 'but in my mind we're actually serving to better attune the military to Afghan concerns and views.' In the course of his efforts to enhance understanding between Afghans and fighting forces, Michael was killed in Khost Province.

Michael will be remembered fondly by his academic peers—as a talented and committed researcher and an enthusiastic colleague. His confidence and exuberance were infectious. His insight will be sorely missed but his intellectual legacy will inspire young scholars for years to come.

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