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THE CENTER FOR MACRO PROJECTS AND DIPLOMACY
ROGER WILLIAMS UNIVERSITY

WORKING PAPER SERIES
VOLUME EIGHT : SPRING 2005
POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION: RE-CONNECTING SITES, NATIONS,CULTURES

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS STUDY TEAM BRIEFING PAPERS

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Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Re-Connecting Sites, Nations, Cultures

The Second Annual Conference of the Center for Macro Projects and Diplomacy
at Roger Williams University, Bristol, Rhode Island.

VOLUME EIGHT:

International Relations Study Team Briefing Papers

Mark M. Sawoski, Editor

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The Afghan Government: Meeting the Challenge, But Still Dependent on International Support

Mahbooba Babrakzai, Roger Williams University

Afghanistan's strategic location in the heart of Asia, which aligns it on the historic Silk Road, has made it a center of power struggles and civil wars at different times throughout its history. The past two decades of war and then the Taliban's radical regime destroyed social, economic and political stability within the country. In the wake of September 11, 2001, Afghan factional leaders gathered in Germany, at a conference sponsored by the United Nations, to sign the historic Bonn agreement, which established the Afghan interim government. This agreement marked the beginning of new hope within Afghanistan for a democratic and caring government—and for peace.

Since 2001, on one hand, major steps have been taken toward democracy and a start has been made toward the rebuilding of the country—so that Afghanistan can stand alone; however, on the other hand, there have been short comings. For example, at the Bonn conference, major promises were made to Afghanistan by different countries, but not all countries have lived up to them. To rebuild, the country needs commitment, not promises. Security is another major problem in the country. There is a direct relationship between security and the drug production in the country. Additionally, remnants of the Taliban are still looking for an opportunity to knock the government off balance. Since most of NATO's International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) are based in Kabul city, the security of Kabul city is relatively good. However, outside Kabul city, in the provinces, warlord militias are still armed and continue to disrupt peace in those provinces, especially in the South and East.

In addition, the country remains extremely poor, despite the more than \$2 billion in international assistance which has been donated since 2001. Much more needs to be done. According to a recent National Human Development Report, which was conducted by the United Nations Development Program, Afghanistan's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking is very low in comparison to 178 other countries. According to this report, Afghanistan's HDI is only higher than those of Burundi, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger and Sierra Leone.¹ Ninety-three percent of the government's budget comes from international donors.² Thirty-nine percent of the official GDP is tied to the production of heroin.³

On the positive side, since 2001, are the democratic election of a head of the state, the adoption of a new constitution, the inauguration of a new currency, the return of millions of Afghans from abroad, the reinstitution of education for women, and the completion of some major reconstruction projects, such as the Kabul-Kandahar segment of Afghanistan's vitally important Ring Road.

The presidential election in October 2004 was a major victory for the government and the people. There were some problems, but generally the voting and recording of votes went better than expected. Despite the presence of eighteen candidates, including one female candidate, President Karzai won the election by 55.4 percent of the more than 8 million votes cast. Younus Qanoni, with 16.3 percent, received the second highest number of votes. The turnout was also better than expected. One of the major lessons learned from the election is that the people of Afghanistan want to have a say in the government. Despite physical threats to workers at the voting centers and to the voters themselves, both men and women voted in high numbers. Some of the workers were killed, but these inhumane acts of violence did not break the Afghan people's commitment to peace and a stable political system. The number of female voters was also higher than expected, accounting for 40 percent of the total vote.

However, one of the most controversial issues on election day was the election staff's failure to use the indelible ink correctly. When the Afghan administration was informed of this, it did not act promptly and that further complicated the issue. Additionally, multiple registrations of voters, irregularities in counting processes, underage voting and fraud allegations led other candidates to threaten to boycott the election. The boycott threat was dismissed after personal meetings between the U.S Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad and the boycotters. Later, all major candidates submitted to the decision of an independent panel consisting of international election experts nominated by the UN. The panel decided that the "'misuse or misapplication of ink" was "not politically motivated," and that "multiple voting was not a significant problem.'" With respect to the under age and proxy voting, the panel concluded that although it did happen, it did not occur frequently enough to undermine the credibility of the election.⁴

Significantly, President Karzai followed up on his victory by changing the basic character of the previous government. On one hand, most of the new cabinet is composed of technocrats, who have relevant work experience for their assigned jobs. This is different from the interim

government in which most of the cabinet members were wartime commanders. It marks a significant change, meeting a key criticism of the interim government both inside and outside the country. (Note: According to the new constitution, cabinet members need to have at least a university education. Moreover, in the future, cabinet members will have to be approved by the Afghan National Assembly, which is to be chosen in elections now scheduled for September 2005.) On the other hand, appointment of some so-called “warlords” to this cabinet has again raised the question of human rights and justice. For example, in the new cabinet, Ismail Khan, a wartime commander from Herat province, is appointed as the Water and Energy minister. Rashid Dostum, another warlord from the north, is appointed as President Karzai’s chief military advisor. Neither Khan nor Dostum is known for their support of democratic principles.

In this way, the government is partially meeting the challenge of the warlords whose armed militias threaten the authority of central government and stability in the provinces. That is, the Karzai government prefers to co-opt the warlords rather than forcibly confront them. Up to now, this has characterized the government’s efforts to eradicate poppy production as well. For money, many of the warlords rely on drugs and opium production, which further challenges the central government’s ability to control them and obviously hinders the global fight against opium production. Unless the government can cut off this source of revenue for the warlords, it will not be able to extend its powers at regional levels, and the threat from the militias will continue to undermine peace and stability. In an effort to undermine the warlords—and cut back on poppy production—the government for a while famously put the militias on its foreign-backed payroll. It now offers the militias opportunities “including teacher training, agriculture, vocational training, de-mining, small business, or joining the Afghan National Army or the Afghan National Police if they qualify;” this, in an effort to “reintegrate” the militias into the Afghan national polity.⁵ As of December 22, 2004, according to the UN, 27,100 men were participating.⁶ By such measures—by appointing influential commanders to posts in Kabul and providing new opportunities for militia members—the government seeks to make the warlords subordinate to the government.

There are indications that it is working. For example, in March 2005, Mr. Khan was quoted as saying: “Jihad is not only war: it is not only fighting. Jihad means making life better for the country. There is no need to fight right now in Afghanistan.”⁷

The government is following up on such “successes” by using its power to appoint governors to the different provinces. Since the governors are appointed, their policies should largely reflect the goals of the central government.

Meanwhile, the government is getting ready for the parliamentary elections. After some delays, the parliamentary elections are scheduled for September 18, 2005. They will enable the Afghan people to select their own government representatives on a region by region basis. The National Assembly, Afghanistan’s highest legislative body will consist of the House of People (Wolesi Jirga or the “lower house”) and the House of Elders (Mishrano Jirga or the “upper house”). To enable political participation at regional and local levels, the constitution provides for provincial and district councils in every province. Provincial and district council’s power will reside in their ability to elect two-thirds members of the upper house of the parliament. Significantly, the other one-third of the members will be appointed by the president, providing that 50 percent of them are women. The constitution does not give more guidance on selection of members of the lower house than stating that the members will be elected “through free, general, secret, and direct balloting.”⁸

Although security will likely continue to be a major concern during the parliamentary elections, there seems to be a greater chance of a peaceful election than was forecast for the presidential election last Fall. Some people fear a threat from the Taliban and other insurgents to disrupt the parliamentary elections. The Taliban tried to threaten the presidential election, but the attacks were not effective. However, even though small disruptions are expected, the Taliban will not be able to fully disturb the parliamentary elections. There are at least three reasons for that. First, it is very likely that, like the presidential election, the United States will put pressure on the Pakistan government to crack down on the Taliban before the election. Second, President Karzai has offered amnesty to Taliban members in the past few months. This gives moderate Taliban members a chance to come in from the cold. Third, the US-led Coalition, the NATO-led ISAF forces, and, in particular, the proliferating Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan under both coalition and NATO leadership seeming to be succeeding in weakening the Taliban and other potential spoilers. General Jean-Louis Py, the ISAF commander, for example, said that Taliban attacks had declined by some 40 per cent last year, and he is optimistic about a similar trend in the future.⁹

After the Parliamentary elections, the future of Afghanistan depends in large part on the continuing commitment of the international community toward a fully representative government, stable peace and security, economic stability, and drug prevention – up to the time when the government is self-sufficient. However, if the international community loses its attention to Afghanistan, the consequences will be very costly not only for the Afghan nation but also for global peace and stability. Without the active engagement of the international community, the government could still, easily fall apart. Current efforts to eradicate the production of heroin would cease. Terrorist groups would likely be emboldened to once again make their nests in Afghanistan. Clearly, the Taliban are already waiting for such a golden opportunity. What a shame this would be for the world, let alone the people of Afghanistan.

Government in Afghanistan is currently meeting the challenge. However, whether or not it continues to move forward in the coming years is still dependent on the continued interest on the international community.

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“Open for Business”: Assessing the Prospects for Foreign Investment in Afghanistan

Timothy S. Heckscher, Roger Williams University

Having declared Afghanistan “open for business,” President Hamid Karzai and his new government have prioritized the development of the private sector of the Afghan economy in order to attain long-term, sustainable growth. Unfortunately, the realities of the country’s economic and security concerns have proven difficult to overcome. Although trends are in the right direction—the general situation is markedly better in April 2005 than it was just a year ago—Afghanistan’s underlying problems continue to present major obstacles to the country’s long term development.

Indeed, Afghanistan’s economic prospects remain highly dependant on the continued engagement of the international community. Should the world turn its back on Afghanistan, as it did following the Soviet withdrawal in 1989, the risk to those seeking to invest in Afghanistan would become, in most cases, impossibly high. However, as exemplified in the April 4-6, 2005 meeting of the Afghanistan Development Forum, the international community, led by the US with significant help from Europe and Japan, gives every indication of being in until the country is on its own feet.

The World Bank, for instance, has provided reconstruction efforts with over US \$780 million in aid directed at health, road construction and community development as of April 2005.¹ The Asian Development Bank’s private-sector investments in telecommunications expansion, cement production, and petroleum storage are expected to catalyze investments of \$450 million in 2005.² Both banks are heavily into roads, including the reconstruction or improvement of trade routes with Afghanistan’s neighbors. Also providing significant funding for roads and border crossing points are the US, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Italy and Iran. According to the government’s “Donor Assistance Database,”³ the level of disbursed funds from both multilateral development banks, together with the Aga Khan Foundation, and the thirty-two donor countries have yet to reach the level of committed funds, but they are nonetheless significant.

In addition to funding infrastructure and other programs designed to further development, the international community is also largely funding the country’s security. The Afghan National

Army and the police force are, at this time, unable to function without relying on foreign assistance. Clearly, without a secure environment, there will be little chance of attracting the degree of private investment which the country needs.

By global standards, the Afghan private sector today falls short of a fully functioning entity. Despite the considerable revenue generated by the drug trade, estimated to be in the range of US \$2.8 billion⁴, the market as such remains small but with considerable opportunity. In hopes of a gradual transition from this economy regulated by informal institutions to one regulated by the government, initiatives aim to bring a legitimate Afghan market into the global economy. Lending institutions, investment support agencies, and regulations are all being implemented in order to create a conducive economic environment to private investment. The challenges are significant. Among them: Current domination of the market by a small power base which hinders entrepreneurialism and competition; the scarcity of lending institutions, especially outside of Kabul; and a limited amount of non-drug related capital

Nevertheless, there is considerable opportunity for investment. Short-term opportunities include construction related materials and equipment, telecommunications, and computer hardware and software. Longer-term opportunities include the energy sector -- electricity remains scarce -- agriculture, irrigation, and the transportation sector, notably its physical infrastructure. The country's main commercial source of revenue in the past, the raisin and carpet industries, also present opportunities. The rebuilding of the agricultural and agro-processing sector is already starting. It will obviously be key to the return of Afghanistan's vital agriculture sector; as will be greater success in reducing the country's production of heroin. Formerly a major player on the international dried fruits and nuts market, today's growth potential may be substantial. Opportunities in this market largely lie in rebuilding the infrastructure and in trading activities, notably providing access to foreign markets for the Afghan producers. Also, the carpet industry has long been an important export sector for the Afghan economy. Handicapped by the country's conflict over the years, the potential for growth and investment looks brighter as progress in national development continues.

Afghanistan lies at the heart of Asia. Its invaluable role in trade activities along the former Silk Road provides Afghanistan with its greatest opportunity of renewing that role by affording and facilitating trade routes for the greater region. The reconstruction of the "Ring Road," linking Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Maza-e-Sharif by modern highway will provide the physical

infrastructure needed to assist the proliferation of trade. Reconstruction of feeder roads linking the Ring Road with Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan will facilitate the flow of regional trade. Secondary roads will bring the many rural areas of Afghanistan into the mix. Such infrastructure brings forth considerable opportunities for trade related industries. For the private sector, the transit and transport infrastructure presents considerable opportunity. Trucking, hotels and corresponding support activities and services offer investors considerable incentives for entering the market. In addition, the communications infrastructure is weak and in much need of private sector development. Upgraded communications links will be made possible by the reconstruction and building of such roads.

As noted, much foreign assistance is currently directed at the reconstruction of roads, bridges and tunnels which connect trade routes and border crossings, while market mechanisms, the same forces responsible for the successes of the Silk Road, will provide the supporting infrastructure for expanding trade. In serving as a trade hub for Central Asia and beyond, Afghanistan's private sector will have ample opportunity to prosper.

In ensuring and facilitating trade and private sector growth, several trade negotiations have been and continue to be negotiated. Afghanistan was extended Generalized System of Preference-type trade privileges by the US, EU, Japan and India. Bilateral transit and trade agreements were reached with Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, India, and Pakistan. Trilateral transit and trade agreements include Iran-India and Iran-Tajikistan. A Trade, Transit, Investment, and Technical Support Agreement was reached with Turkey, a Preferential Trade Agreement has been entered into with India, and observer status has been granted by the World Trade Organization. Afghanistan's largest trading partner, Pakistan, with whom it also has its longest shared border, has proposed establishing a preferential trade agreement in the interest of creating industrial zones. In addition, Iran and Pakistan have access to sea ports. Iran has the Chabahar (now being upgraded) and Bandar Abbas ports while Pakistan has Karachi-Port Qasim, and the new, deep-water port at Gwadar. Access to these ports is important both for Afghanistan's trade potential and that of the region as a whole.

Problems remain. However, Afghanistan is relatively quickly making the transition from an aid-dependent state to a country developing its industries and infrastructure. The government, under the leadership of President Karzai, has prioritized its efforts by focusing on developing the

private sector. Instituting the right kinds of investment laws, building the necessary infrastructures, and establishing greater regional economic access and cooperation provides foreign and domestic investors an environment capable of high investment returns. In conjunction with an abundance of relatively cheap labor -- the per capita income estimated at around \$200⁵ -- the government's priorities and initiatives are well geared towards attracting foreign investment, developing the private sector, and achieving long-term economic sustainability.

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The April 2005 Meeting of the Afghanistan Development Forum

Timothy S. Heckscher, Roger Williams University

The third Afghanistan Development Forum, April 4-6, 2005, was held in order for the Afghan government authorities and international donors to talk directly about the progress of reconstruction. With ninety-three percent of the national budget coming from donors, it is important for the relationship between the government and the donors to be strong so as to ensure proficiency in fund disbursements. The forum's overarching premise was the need to accelerate Afghanistan's development in order to "graduate from the comfort of international compassion to the cold hard reality of private sector competition."¹

This forum, the first held since the presidential election and Karzai's subsequent installation of a new, more professionally oriented cabinet, presented the government's new budget, urged a renewed commitment from the international community for the long term, and sought to build up ties between the new cabinet officials and donors--while discussion revolved around accelerating development and reconstruction of the country. As predicted, "This focus on self-sustainability immediately brings the critical political economy issues around revenue-raising and the structural issues around a private-sector friendly environment into stark relief."² Eight themes structured this three day event in support of the government's fundamental policy of developing and strengthening the Afghan private sector in order to achieve long-term, sustainable growth. These themes are:

- 1- Accelerating Infrastructure Development
- 2- A Pro-Poor Approach to Economic Development and Social Protection
- 3- Creating an Enabling Environment for Private Sector Development
- 4- Fiscal Sustainability and Public Administration Reform
- 5- Review of the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) and other trust funds
- 6- Strengthening Regional Cooperation
- 7- Fighting Drugs and Creating Alternative Livelihoods
- 8- Security, Justice, and Equitable Political Participation

The forum's conclusion offered two key outcomes.

First, the Karzai government wants a greater role in channeling foreign aid into the country. As of late, most donor assistance bypasses the government and goes directly to recipients. Though it is unclear that the government could efficiently cope with such large sums given its current state

of affairs, the government understandably wants a greater voice in the allocation of donor funds and development resources.

Second, and perhaps most important from an investment point of view, the forum emphasized the importance of rebuilding the country's physical and human infrastructure as a prerequisite to private sector development and economic expansion. Karzai succinctly stated the government's priorities as follows: "First, rebuilding the infrastructure, and second, developing human and institutional capacity."³ This strategy is highlighted by the budget augmentations for physical infrastructure, the second pillar of three which together comprise the National Development Framework.

Pillar II of the National Development Framework, which covers physical infrastructure reconstruction, has had its budget essentially doubled to US\$1.4 billion under the current budget (the "1383" budget) from the \$718 million allocated in last year's budget ("1382"), thereby highlighting the relative importance of physical infrastructure within the national budget. In focusing efforts on the expansion of the private sector, the government has deemed transportation programs under the physical infrastructure initiative as highly consequential to their success. Pillar II disbursements under 1382 amounted to 16.52% of all planned expenditures, while, according to the Mid Year Review, 1383 Pillar II disbursements increased to 34% of expenditures. The road sector alone under 1383 is thought to be accountable for such an increase.⁴

According to Adib Farhadi, Director of Afghanistan Development and Reconstruction Services, "It has been evident that over the last three years the infrastructure pillar has received less attention, but that is for very good reasons because we had to address the humanitarian and security needs of the Afghan people. Now that the country has moved from an emergency humanitarian assistance to more of a development normalization, the infrastructure will also pick up to keep up with development."⁵

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The Kabul-Kandahar Highway: First Step in the Reconstruction of Afghanistan's Ring Road

Megan E. Young, Roger Williams University

The reconstructed 482-kilometer (300-mile) Kabul-Kandahar Highway was officially opened in December 2003¹. The project was overseen by the US-based Louis Berger Group (LBG). The project, made a personal priority by President Bush, was funded by USAID and Japan.² The US built 389 kilometers of the highway; Japan, 50 kilometers. Forty-three kilometers did not need resurfacing. The US stretch cost \$250 million.

The Kabul-Kandahar highway is the first piece of a much more ambitious plan of reconstructing Afghanistan's entire "Ring Road" linking the country's major cities, Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, and Mazar-e Sharif. Its completion is a major priority of the Karzai Government. It features prominently in various iterations of the National Development Framework (NDF), a comprehensive guide to national development designed in part "to attract funds away from the traditional humanitarian programming styles of foreign agencies toward an 'integrated' developmental approach."³ That is to say, the central government sees both Afghanistan's future prospects, and its own, as being tied to the Ring Road.

Some sixty-six percent of Afghans live near the Ring Road⁴-- of those, some thirty-five percent live within 50 kilometers of the completed stretch from Kabul-Kandahar.⁵ Completion of the road would link some 18 of 32 Afghan provinces

The completed stretch of road already has begun to breathe life into a struggling country. The trip to Kabul used to take an arduous two days, along paths that at points were not recognizable as roads. Now it takes all of about six hours. Not only does the road make day-to-day life that much easier, it is also making a significant boost to the economy of the region, especially for farmers who now have new opportunities to sell their products. An example would be farmers in the north who are now, as a result of completion of the Kabul-Kandahar segment, able to transport wheat crops to the south where wheat growth is scarce.⁶ The province of Ghazni, for example, which is about a third of the way down the road from Kabul is reported to be "booming" as a result of the road: "Heavily loaded trucks rumble along the plateau toward the capital, while farmsteads are springing up in the valley."⁷ In addition, the completed stretch

makes possible other opportunities, such as the option of working or attending schools in the cities. Better access to healthcare is also made possible with the completion of this project. This is especially significant for Afghan women—their prospects for healthcare are amongst the lowest in the world.

The big questions are: First, will reestablishing a sufficient and working system of transportation help to bridge the many gaps created by twenty-five years of war and political turmoil? And second, will these new roads help to boost the trade and economy enough so that Afghanistan will be able to attain a sustainable level of prosperity and general well-being?

With respect to national unity, many Afghans view the Ring Road project as being synonymous and symbolic when speaking about national unity.⁸ Those involved in Afghan government hope that citizens will also see this reconstruction as an offshoot of the democratic government they are building and striving for.⁹ For Afghanistan, the past twenty-five years of conflict poses numerous obstacles today.

“The wars did more than tear the countryside apart, it polarized Afghan, not just along the ethno-linguistic divisions but also those of economic interest, religious practice, and philosophy, class and locality, and other complex factors.”¹⁰

Can Afghanistan be put back together—at least to the extent that it once was a unified state? Simply put, the hope is that this road will help break down cultural divisions by providing access to different parts of the country, linking people from different tribes and ethnic groups in common economic ventures. In addition, it is hoped that reconstruction of the road will help people start thinking of themselves as part of a national entity again, rather than just a localized ethnic group. Going beyond the practical, the road has great symbolic importance.

With respect to trade and potential economic benefits, many see the Ring Road as part of a modern day Silk Road – and that this will lead to realization of their hopes, a stepping-stone towards their dream of an Afghanistan that is prosperous as well as united. Frank Polman, Program Director for Afghanistan at the Asian Development Bank, believes that Afghans are not the only ones who see important economic benefits from reconstruction of the Ring Road. “The Central Asian Republics would like to see an access route through Afghanistan, Pakistan to some port in the Indian Ocean, as well as they would like to see goods traded into Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and India from the Central Asian Republics.”¹¹ These proposals -

- and current steps towards their realization -- bring to mind not only the Silk Road, but also the historic role of landlocked Afghanistan at the center of trade and other transportation links in the region.

The revitalization of the Silk Road would not only greatly facilitate trade links in the region, it would also help to alleviate some tensions between countries in the region by encouraging increased cooperation and promotion of new levels of positive interactions. Frederick Starr writes, "The opening of long-sealed transport corridors will unleash a tremendous infusion of trade and investment that will immediately benefit the whole of Central Asia as well as Pakistan and eastern Iran."¹² In particular, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan, seriously strained the past twenty-five years – with significant consequences world-wide – now seem headed for improvement on this basis. Among other things, such an improvement in relations could lead to greater security in Afghanistan's southern provinces, another key goal of the Karzai government.

In short, this reconstruction project has opened the door to many positive possibilities for the region.

Notes and References:

1. The first layer of asphalt was completed in December of 2003, with two more layers of asphalt to be laid down by October, 2004.
2. Most of the labor was done by Afghan, Turkish and Indian construction teams. See: USAID Fact Sheet: Phase I: Kabul-Kandahar Highway.
<http://www.usaid.gov/press/factsheets/2003/fs031214.html>
3. Alexander Costy, "The Dilemma of Humanitarianism in the Post-Taliban Transition," Antonio Donini et al, Nation-Building Unraveled? Aid, Peace and Justice in Afghanistan (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian 2004), 150.
4. The Ring Road is an existing road, though most of it was made virtually impassable by trucks and cars due to extensive conflict and neglect.
5. "Afghanistan: Key Road Rehabilitated-but Insecurity Remains" (December 16, 2003):
www.irinnews.org.

6. Many others are feeling the effects of the new road. Shop owners have reported a twenty percent decrease in the costs of many goods simply because the shipment time is a third of the time.
7. Constance Stelzenmueller, "Obstetricians in Uniform – Afghanistan Set to Elect President on 9 October; Western Troops Due to Strengthen Karzai's Authority, While Views in US, UK, Germany Differ on How To Do It," Hamburg Die Zeit (September 16, 2004): FBIS-EUP20041028000366.
8. David C. Isby, Foreign and Defense Policy Analyst, Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearings on Afghanistan (May 12, 2004).
9. U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalizad as cited in "Afghans Celebrate Phase I Completion of Kabul to Kandahar Highway," States News Service.
10. Ibid.
11. Antonia Blua, "Reconstruction of Ring Roads May Revitalize Regional Trade," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (November 25, 2002).
12. Frederick Starr, "Afghanistan: Free Trade and Regional Transformation."

Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Improving an Important Innovation in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

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In Afghanistan, the necessities of post conflict reconstruction¹ have led to the creation of a new kind of reconstruction organization, the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). It is an invention that could change the face of post conflict reconstruction worldwide, especially as NATO has now joined with the United States in mounting PRTs all over Afghanistan. Although widely hailed as a success by both NATO and Coalition governments, an external review of the PRTs is badly needed. High level US government representatives and other reconstruction specialists complain that firsthand data and “integrated lessons learned” about the PRTs are lacking²—and there are indications that the design and management of construction projects being built by the PRTs, in particular, could be improved.

A Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) is a special type of civil-military affairs unit normally composed of 40-100 men and women with various specialties.³ The ranks of a single PRT will normally contain civil affairs officers, monitoring teams, infantry, and engineers along with civilian and military specialists in reconstruction. Note: The typical job skills sought do not include architectural design.⁴ The teams are uniformed and lightly armed insuring that they “can work in more insecure areas and have a higher risk threshold.” Although direct combat with anti-coalition forces is not a PRT’s mission, a PRT, if needed, can call on the immense potential air and artillery power of coalition forces. The powerful ability to bring massive amounts of accurate firepower against hostile forces gives any PRT serious clout in even the most remote and insecure regions of Afghanistan.

The PRT concept dates to Fall 2002 when fears were rising that reconstruction was going too slowly in the countryside while at the same time anti-Coalition sentiments were increasing, especially in the South and Southeast. The PRT concept was a US idea which the Transitional Government of Afghanistan fully endorsed.⁵ The first PRT was deployed to Gardez in Paktia Province in February 2003, followed by additional teams in Bamiyan and Kunduz in March and April, respectively. Reportedly, the decision where to put these first PRTs was taken by the Afghan government.⁶ The PRT concept was then internationalized with Britain establishing a PRT in Mazar-e-sharif in July 2003; New Zealand taking over from US forces in Bamiyan in

September—with the US leaving behind its equipment; and the Germans taking over the PRT in Kunduz in December. NATO endorsed the PRT concept as it took command of the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in August 2003. The German PRT in Kunduz was the first NATO PRT.⁷ NATO subsequently established PRTs in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Balkh, and Faryab in the North. Other Coalition PRTs now operate in Herat and Farah in the West, Helmund, Oruzgan and Zabul in the South and Parwan, Ghazni, Kunar, Nagahar, Paktia, and Paktika in the East. Over time, the plan seems to be for NATO to take command of all nineteen PRTs currently deployed in Afghanistan. More are in the works.

The PRTs, while under the operational command of either NATO or the US-led Coalition forces, are overseen by the PRT Executive Steering Committee consisting of the leaders of the Afghan Ministries of Interior, Finance and Rural Rehabilitation, the ambassadors of PRT contributing states, the UN, and the commanders of ISAF and Coalition forces. The committee meets monthly. It is charged with providing guidance to the PRTs as well as oversight over them.

So what does a PRT do?

The first objective of a PRT is to provide security in the area to which it is deployed. PRTs conduct regular patrols, both on foot and in vehicles; in some cases, depending on the PRT's area of responsibility, requiring the coverage of significant distances. In the Kandahar PRT, for example, the team was initially responsible for five separate provinces in early 2004-- Kandahar, Oruzgun, Zabol, Helmand, and Nimroz—although this pressure should now be eased as a result of the establishment of two new PRT bases within this area; these at Tarin Kowt, the provincial capital of Oruzgan and at Qalat, the provincial capital of Zabul.⁸ Security is vitally important both because the local populations crave it—the absence of security in provinces such as Kandahar was the main reason the Taliban was able to take power in 1994-1996⁹--and to provide a safe environment for NGOs and other development specialists in which to work.

The second objective is to provide or facilitate emergency humanitarian relief, especially to the extent that an area is too insecure for relief specialists to work on their own.

The third objective is to engage in construction projects, reconstructing valuable infrastructure at the local and regional level. This is where the PRTs could use the most help, especially in the design and planning of their projects. Accounts suggest that PRT-constructed buildings, in

particular, could be much better done, especially as Afghanistan shifts away from the need for emergency humanitarian assistance to more normal development concerns, such as infrastructure.¹⁰ The PRTs have a golden opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the development of Afghanistan as a country that makes sense structurally—especially in the countryside, where the future of such troubled places is usually decided. But it is not clear that either the US or NATO is thinking along these lines.

Note that all three objectives are specifically intended to promote important short-term benefits: Specifically, to extend the authority of the central government in Kabul and also help win the hearts and minds of the people both for the Karzai government and for coalition governments, including the US. US PRT's, in addition, are intended to provide information to Coalition commanders on the activities of Taliban remnants and other forces hostile to the central government.

Examples of PRT Projects:

- Security -- The PRTs, with augmentation in some cases by US Special Forces, helped establish conditions conducive to local participation in the 2004 Afghan Presidential election;
- Security -- The PRT in Mazar-e-sharif is credited with a key role in helping the UN bring about a negotiated ceasefire between warring factions in the area;
- Security -- The PRTs in many areas are actively engaged in deterring attacks on civilian contractors at various road-building sites;
- Security -- The PRT in Bamiyan is credited with providing the conditions necessary for the local market to double in size, thereby improving the region's trading prospects and economic health;
- Emergency Assistance -- PRTs throughout the country participated in the distribution of 355,270 metric tons of wheat and other emergency food assistance provided by the US in 2002-2003 (valued at \$206.4 million) helping to avert famine;¹¹
- Emergency Assistance -- US PRTs in 2002-2003 spent \$25 million for 451 "quick impact projects"¹² such as bringing in 14 mobile diesel-fuel generators to keep electricity flowing into Kandahar while also fixing the malfunctioning 9-megawatt turbine upon which the city normally depended;¹³
- Construction -- The PRT in Bamiyan, now led by New Zealand, is continuing work started by the US on rebuilding the local University. (The University was used as an ammunition dump by the Taliban in 2001—and was destroyed by the US air campaign during Operation Enduring Freedom.) The reconstruction includes new dormitories for students and staff;

- Construction – The PRT in Kandahar, now supplemented by the new PRTs in Oruzgun and Zabul, is working on construction of seven secondary roads linking the Ring Road, now that the Kabul to Kandahar section is complete, to each of the provincial capitals within its former area of responsibility.

Improving the PRTs

While the PRTs are making an extremely important, positive contribution, there is room for improvement.¹⁴ In particular:

Projects are not always in tune with what local Afghans want or need. There appears to be a tendency to meet the desires of a single, selected local leader rather than making a more comprehensive assessment of community needs; this by checking with a variety of locals, including females. According to Paul Barker, the American head of CARE's office in Kabul, US PRTs, in particular, practice

“‘poor development politics’ because the military fails to examine local needs accurately.”¹⁵

Better so-called “cross-checking” of community needs will help ensure the avoidance of potentially misallocating funds to less than necessary projects requested by local leaders. In addition, it will increase the appearance of PRT objectivity in development projects. It is obviously impossible to provide everything that each community needs but cross-checking will help ensure that those projects that are completed are those that will have the longest lasting effect. Note: The US Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) has found a similar problem with respect to US civil-military teams in Iraq; specifically, that “projects [are] frequently not in concert with what local Iraqis want or need.”¹⁶ Such problems obviously also indicate the absence of a serious planning effort.

PRTs often, it appears, lack the personnel or the methods to oversee construction projects and to follow up over time. According to one critic of then US-led PRT in Kunduz, team members there are responsible for several “botched construction projects. The teams have hired Afghan construction companies to rebuild schools and hospitals . . . but don’t have engineers on staff capable of overseeing the work. ‘The schools being built are already falling down,’” in his words.¹⁷ “The lack of tracking systems for projects; and the lack of appropriate measures of effectiveness” for projects are also noted by CALL with respect to US operations in Iraq.¹⁸

Finally, there is little indication that the construction of buildings which are both culturally sensitive and well-suited to promoting sustainable rural communities is prioritized. If this is correct, the international community is missing out on a golden opportunity to make a real difference with respect to post-conflict reconstruction.

The PRTs are making a positive contribution in Afghanistan. But we can do better.

Notes and References:

1. For example: the necessity for emergency humanitarian relief, the necessity of dealing with warlords, the necessity of rebuilding massive amounts of destroyed and neglected infrastructure.
2. See: Panel III – Joint Military, “Stability Operations: Where We Are and the Road Ahead,” Symposium Report Sponsored by the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, the US Department of State, and US Institute of Peace (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: 13-14 December 2004).
3. The German PRT in Kunduz is unusual in having some 350 people deployed.
4. Architectural services are not among the job skills officially sought by the reserve units which typically help staff PRTs and Army Civil Affairs teams. See: Robert Borders, “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: A Model for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development,” Journal of Development and Social Transformation (n.d.), 8.
5. Initially, the US intended to call them “Joint Reconstruction Teams.” The Afghans recommended they be renamed “Provincial Reconstruction Teams.” “Summary Report and Findings,” Civil Military-Cooperation Conference, Center for Humanitarian Cooperation, Hosted by the US Institute of Peace (January 16, 2003):
www.cooperationcenter.org/docs/CHCCivilianMilitaryConfSummary.doc
6. Ibid.
7. NATO also took over the UK PRT in Mazar. Note: The Germans and British continue to lead these PRTs within the ISAF command structure. Other NATO members, including Canada, Italy, Latvia, and, most recently, Spain, are also leading PRTs.
8. See: Ron Synovitz, “Afghanistan: PRTs Fight Taliban With Bridges, Roads, And Schools,” Radio Free Europe-Radio Liberty (March 8, 2004).
9. See: Ahmed Rashid, Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia (New Haven: Yale, 2000).

10. See: Adib Farhadi, Q & As with reporters on the up-coming Afghanistan Development Forum, "Afghanistan: UNAMA Press Briefing" (March 31, 2005): FBIS, 5.
11. General Accounting Office, "Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvements in US Strategy Needed," Report to Congressional Committees – GAO-04-403 (Washington: GAO, June 2004), 16
12. Ibid., 20.
13. Synovitz, "Afghanistan: PRTs Fight Taliban With Bridges, Roads, And Schools."
14. It should be noted that a principal, very strong objection by the NGO community, that the PRTs blur the distinction between combat forces and unarmed aid workers, is already being met. PRT members now are supposed to go about in uniform.
15. Constance Ztelzenmueller, "Obstetricians in Uniform," Hamburg Die Zeit (September 16, 2004): FBIS EUP20041028000366.
16. Panel III – Joint Military, "Stability Operations: Where We Are and the Road Ahead," Symposium Report Sponsored by the US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, the US Department of State, and US Institute of Peace (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania: 13-14 December 2004).
17. Cited in: Shawn Zeller, "Activist attacks U.S. military relief effort in Afghanistan": www.govexec.com/dailyfed/0503/051303szl.htm.
18. Op cit.

Political Power in Bamiyan: A Glance at Post-Taliban Provincial Leadership, and What's Next for Bamiyan

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There is little doubt that Bamiyan was among the areas hit hardest in the Afghan civil strife of the 1990s. In 1997, the Taliban launched an offensive on the province; however, in this rural valley, the Taliban's tactics differed from what could be considered typical acts of war. In attempts to force the surrender of the local Hazara population, the Taliban closed off all the roads leading into the valley and blocked entering food convoys.¹ Finally, in 1998, the Taliban invaded Bamiyan from three directions. Hazara leader Karim Khalili, other Hezb-I-Wahadat leaders, and the majority of the population fled for the hills.² Despite claims that Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, ordered his forces to restrain from killing civilians, fifty of the town's elderly men who were left behind were murdered. The town fell on September 13, 1998, after Hazara commanders surrendered to the Taliban. The Taliban maintained control of the region until they were ousted by US-led forces in November 2001.

Upon the fall of the Taliban, Karim Khalili claimed the governorship of Bamiyan. Although he participated in the Bonn conference, he considered the province to be a separate entity from the federal government. "We have a different flag because I am not officially working in the government. But if God is willing there will be another state flag flying in the future."³ Although Khalili was able to maintain peace in his city, Bamiyan's connections to Kabul remained limited. Instances such as these made it extremely difficult for the Afghan interim government to create a united nation. However, in 2001 Khalili accepted an appointment as the second vice president in the Karzai government; the only provincial warlord to accept a position in this cabinet. The people of Bamiyan anticipated that the decisions their former leader would make would channel increased funding and resources to their deprived city. Khalili warned locals to not have high expectations of rapid improvement, as there are so many areas in Afghanistan just as destitute.⁴ Unfortunately, during this period the city's situation remained static; children continued to die of malnutrition, harvests continued to fail, and the province's narcotic trade resumed.

The most recent major political development in Bamiyan is the appointment of a new governor. On March 2, Karzai named Hariba Surabi as Afghanistan's first female provincial governor. This decision was made to break the dangerous pattern of local rule by warlords and military

commanders. The appointment of Surabi also sends an important message to Afghanistan, and the rest of the world, that under this government women are equal to men.⁵ She plans to combat the lack of power and asphalt roads in the province, revive tourism in the region, and begin to tackle the narcotics trade that has gripped Bamiyan off and on for decades.⁶

There are several current issues that require immediate attention by the new government. The most pertinent need is the establishment of local land policy, which would include imminent domain statutes that will allow the government to claim land, with compensation, for public operations. This ability, within reason, will grant Governor Surabi and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Bamiyan increased control over reconstruction efforts in Bamiyan. This policy would be most helpful in the province's agricultural development. The only crop that the region has been able to produce successfully has been the poppy; greenhouses and irrigation systems should be constructed in order to grow fruit and vegetables that will provide sustenance to the town. This would not only appease the area's persistent poverty issues, but would also offer opportunities of permanent employment for Bamiyan's residents. The land policies should also distinguish between public and private lands. For example, the area around the vicinity of the remains of the Buddhas should be considered public land, and preserved as a national park. Therefore, whether or not the Buddhas are restored, those areas will be protected from private development projects- and the beauty of the sites preserved.

With respect to drug-trafficking, poppy production reached a record high in Afghanistan in 2004, and the State Department has warned that it now poses a major threat to global stability.⁷ As Bamiyan serves as a major illegal trade route between Northern Afghanistan and Pakistan, it will require a focused, long-term operation to abolish it. Military forces will need to be placed at the major transit routes into and out of the province. Alternatives to poppy production must be given to farmers and crops growing in the valley will have to be monitored. It is critical that other potential sources of income be created. As reconstruction efforts in the region continue and alternative employment opportunities begin to grow, these objectives will become significantly easier to complete.

Once Surabi's government in Bamiyan is stable, the creation of an expanded local assembly -- a body comparable to a typical town council found in the United States -- would be an ideal development. This group would be managed, or at least supervised by Surabi, and would report directly to Kabul. It would be an effective way to strengthen ties between Kabul and Bamiyan,

and would be a helpful indicator on what the people believe needs improvement in the province. The ability for citizens to have a partial say in the development of their home area will encourage feelings of ownership and pride.

Surabi has myriad challenges ahead of her. In order for these preceding issues to be addressed, the basic infrastructure of the region needs to be completely restored. In particular, in order to strengthen communication between Kabul and Bamiyan, the roads connecting them need to be rebuilt and protected from rebel forces. Before irrigation systems can be installed in the province, or the area can become an ideal tourist location, mines must be removed and the power situation needs to be addressed. Presently, there are very few areas in Bamiyan that have power; consequently, the use of newer, renewable energy sources need to be considered. However, with the help of the local PRT, the international donor community, U.S. forces, and the Karzai government, Habiba Surabi has the drive, and the resources available to her, that could gradually make Bamiyan a thriving, successful province.

But first things first. In Surabi's words: "The dream of the people of Bamiyan is to have a light bulb and that is my dream too."⁸

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8. Ibid, 3.

The Buddhas of Bamiyan: Should They Be Rebuilt?

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Bamiyan, although it is now predominantly occupied by the Shiite Muslim Hazara population, has a significant Buddhist history. At one time, it was one of the oldest epicenters of Indian Buddhism; beginning in the fourth century, caves in the province were hollowed out and filled with wall-paintings and relics of Buddhist deities. The most prominent of these symbols were two great Buddhas. Stone constructions carved into the cliffs, they were covered with gold paint and adorned with jewels, standing 58 and 38 meters respectively.¹ These wonders have a high cultural significance; draped in Greek robes, they represented the collision of Classical Indian art with Hellenism, which was introduced to the area during the imperialistic ventures of Alexander the Great.² Even recently, locals admired the magnificent constructions. They fondly called the large Buddha Solsol, meaning “year after year.” The town imagines that the smaller of the two statues was a woman, as they referred to her as Shahmama, “the king mother.”³

Since the construction of the Buddhas, they, and Bamiyan itself, have endured significant abuse through the centuries. The statues were first deliberately attacked during the reign of Mahmud in the Ninth Century; as “he conquered, he plundered, collecting temple treasures to adorn his own mosques and palaces and gardens.”⁴ Later, in 1222, Genghis Khan destroyed Bamiyan and massacred the entire population after his grandson was killed by the city’s defenders.⁵ The city has also endured numerous earthquakes; which the Buddhas, knees upwards, also survived.

Centuries of this history were destroyed when the Taliban obliterated the towering statues in a 26-day effort in February and March of 2001, which marked the defeat of a long-running conflict with the Hazara occupants of Bamiyan.⁶ Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, ordered the destruction of the idols in response to the offer of a group of European envoys to grant aid to provide for the preservation of the monuments. Aghast that foreigners would care more about a couple of statues than the widespread starvation which the Afghans were enduring, Omar ordered the immediate destruction of the statues.⁷ In addition, the Taliban saw the Buddhas as religious idols, which are forbidden by their radical interpretation of Islam. In order to carry out their objective, they forced Hazara prisoners to dangle on ropes off of the cliffs to chip out holes for explosives; foreign explosives experts were even brought in to assist. “According to witnesses and participants, the Taliban struggled with ropes and pulleys, rockets, iron rods, jackhammers,

artillery and tanks, before a series of massive explosions finally toppled the statues.”⁸ For the final explosions, the Taliban forced Hazaras from their homes to witness the demolition, and those who resisted were imprisoned or killed. Even Bin Laden allegedly showed up for the event.⁹ Upon completion, they slaughtered fifty cows near the ruins, to atone for the extended period required to destroy the statues. Soon after, the Taliban brought a press junket into the city and began to sell photo-calendars of the destruction in bazaars in the nearby cities of Kabul and Kandahar. All the Talibs left was a spray-painted inscription beside the larger Buddha, reading: “The just replaces the unjust.”¹⁰

Since this atrocity, active deliberations have commenced in regards to whether the Buddhas should be rebuilt. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) decided in May 2001 that they would not contribute to the reconstruction of the statues.¹¹ A Japanese funded project would set up a small museum and set up new excavation sites, an expense estimated at \$70,000.¹² UNESCO decided that a final decision would be made later by the Afghan people. As this issue will be readdressed, there will likely be a strong opposition for the project, primarily based on financial concerns. Many believe that spending the exorbitant funds that would be required would detract from monies designated for humanitarian aid. There are also more aesthetic arguments for not rebuilding the Buddhas. Afghan-French archaeologist Zemayalai Tarzi, for example, believes that the ruins are more powerful than a reconstructed by-product.

[We] have to leave the two niches empty like two sinister pages of Afghan history. To underline the folly of human beings, and for the future generations to see what happened here. You could reconstruct them in Las Vegas -- you have more tourists.”¹³

This supports the argument that should the Buddhas be rebuilt, they would not have the presence and majesty the originals projected.

Estimated expenses for building solely the larger statue total approximately \$50 million. Considerations that may arise will include the many issues that need to be addressed in the province. Early reconstruction efforts built temporary housing for Bamiyan’s citizens. This housing did not provide adequate shelter, and consequently thousands went into the caves in search of alternative lodging. Another major project that will require focus and funding are large-scale irrigation projects. The inability of the province to produce flourishing harvests has caused

the opium trade to spike over the last couple of years, as poppies have been the only crop they have grown successfully. To sustain these projects alone will cost millions over the coming years. The question is whether reconstruction of the Buddhas would take away from projects designed to address these problems.

Despite the cost argument, reconstruction of the Buddhas would be of utmost importance over the long term to Bamiyan financially, spiritually, and historically. Prior to their destruction, the Buddhas brought tourists, archaeologists, historians -- and their money -- to Bamiyan.

Considering the heavy media interest in this story, their reconstruction would once again draw heavy tourist traffic. Several ideas have arisen about how the Buddhas should be restored. An Italian sculptor wants to build completely new statues further along in the cliffs. A Japanese billionaire has said he wishes to commission "an installation artist to project the sculptures as holograms into the empty niches"¹⁴ -- a proposal eerily similar to one proposed for the World Trade Center memorial. Any such form of reconstruction would open up myriad opportunities for employment for permanent residents in such amenities as hotels and restaurants. These are economic opportunities that would allow Bamiyan eventually to be able to sustain itself with minimal outside assistance; a claim that cannot be made by Afghan provinces in similar circumstances. It would also help provide capital for other continuing projects.

In regards to where the money for this undertaking would be coming from, there does not seem to be a lack of donors who would be willing to offer aid for the Buddhas' reconstruction. Nations with large Buddhist populations, including Japan and China, have offered assistance.¹⁵ In addition, if the plans are approved, fund-raising ideas that have been brought to the fore include designing and selling twenty-inch replicas of the Buddhas; all of this money would go into an independent fund specifically created for this cause.

Although the Hazara population of Bamiyan is primarily Shiite Muslim, they recognize the importance of Buddhist history in their culture. It was in Bamiyan that Buddhism was transferred to China, Korea, and Japan along the Silk Route, and the place where the image of Buddha became a worldwide symbol of worship. According to the archaeologist Fidaullah Sehrai, "[Buddhism] is significant, because it is on the crossroads of culture. This is the history of the people of Afghanistan, and it should be maintained as a colorful example of pre-Islamic Afghan culture."¹⁶

Looking at the arguments, an interesting proposal would be to reconstruct the large Buddha statue, while preserving the remains of the other. The restored structure would serve as a sign of the rebirth of Bamiyan and all of Afghanistan, and the remains of the other would be a reminder of the struggles that these people have had to endure over the decades. This would truly be the beginning of a new era for Afghanistan.

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The End of Warlordism in Afghanistan? A Study on Ismail Khan and Herat

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A major problem that President Karzai and those supporting a genuine national government for Afghanistan have had to address since 2001 is warlordism. With the absence of a strong central government, the defeat of the Taliban created power vacuums, leaving room for ethnic and tribal leaders to move in and take control in provinces out and away from Kabul. A prime example of such a region is Herat, which since the end of the Taliban's reign has been governed by Ismail Khan. Governing the city as if it were an independent state, Khan -- as well as other warlords in their respective areas -- have impaired Karzai's efforts to form an effective national government. The case of Herat, however, is quite unique; while Ismail Khan distanced himself from Kabul, he managed to maintain a secure and prosperous city for his people. It is virtually impossible to discern whether he was a nuisance or necessity for Afghanistan. However, despite his ability to maintain the power and secure the city -- as well as a stubborn front that was assumed could never be broken -- Ismail Khan eventually "came in from the cold."¹ President Karzai's flexible strategy for reconstructing Afghanistan has succeeded in bringing in warlords and giving them high level positions in the national government. Every time a warlord gives up power in their respective regions, the new national government moves closer to creating a united, sovereign nation.

Ismail Khan, a "small, cheerful looking Persian speaking Tajik," is a member of the Durrani tribe. His first position of stature was captain of a local garrison in Herat, where his initial claim to fame occurred in March 1979, when he disobeyed orders from Kabul and fired into an anti-government demonstration. He and his soldiers took over Herat, after killing 350 Soviet citizens and members of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. He was forced to flee to Iran after the government returned and forcefully recaptured the city.²

Eventually the Soviets decided to withdraw from Afghanistan, and consequently they forced PDPA leadership to propose national reconciliation. At this time, several Shia groups in Iran had aligned and announced their right to participate in these political discussions. By the time these talks were underway, Khan had a division of five regiments, each with six to nine battalions of about 200 men made up of combat units of twenty-five men. He rejected Kabul's reconciliation

proposal, and announced himself to be the “Emir of Southwest Afghanistan.”³ Although Khan resisted, he also received increasing pressure from Iran to take over Afghanistan completely.

From March 1995, Ismail Khan along with the Northern Alliance forces, were engaged with the Taliban as they began to make advances on Herat. The city was lost later that year, and Khan was forced to flee to Iran, only to return shortly after with rearmed fighters.⁴ In 1997 he was captured by the Taliban. He remained imprisoned for three years, until he escaped and fled to Iran. The bold escape only added to his growing legend as the man who had fought valiantly against the Soviets and the Taliban.⁵

When the United States began their campaign against Afghanistan, Ismail Khan was already waiting outside Herat. As soon as the Taliban abandoned Kabul on November 13, he led 4,000 troops into Herat and retook the city. At a news conference soon after, he gave no credit to the United States, with his only comment being: “American bombing was useful in some places.”⁶

Ismail Khan afterwards was able to bring prosperity and security to Herat. There was virtually no fighting in the region, roads began to be built, and the city has electricity and running water. Iran played a strong role in Herat’s redevelopment. The Iranians have a consulate in the city. The Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) also can be found throughout the city. The Iranians are constructing a road from Herat to the Iranian city of Mashhad. Approximately 100-400 trucks already move from one city to the other everyday; customs and poll taxes accrue approximately \$60-80 million annually.⁷ Khan was able to use this money to pay Herat’s civil servants, which is something with which the central government in Kabul has had trouble.

While Ismail Khan has done great things for Herat, his leadership was detrimental to the central government, and oppressive to the citizens of his own city as well. Economically, Khan continuously avoided handing over the city’s tax revenue to Kabul. This pattern represents the kind of autonomous rule that many warlords in Afghanistan practice in their respective regions. These power pockets made it extremely difficult for the Karzai government to assert authority nationwide.

In addition to his problems with the central government, there are many human rights concerns in his region. Simply put, Khan ran Herat like a tyrant. According to John Sifton of Human Rights Watch, “he’s torturing and beating his opponents, as well as just ordinary criminal detainees. And additionally: He is implementing many Taliban-era restrictions on social life,

especially with respect to women.”⁸ He openly admits to oppressing the Pashtun population; according to Khan, the Pashtun-dominated Taliban committed many atrocities against the Tajiks; is not vengeance only expected?⁹ In the last couple of years, he also enforced strict limits on female education. In January 2004, he established a law that would prohibit men from teaching women or girls in private educational courses, and uphold gender segregation in all schools.¹⁰ As there is a shortage of female teachers in the region, these laws put a severe damper on the ability for women to receive quality education. In December 2002, in the Human Rights Watch’s report, “We Want to Live as Humans: Repression of Women and Girls in Western Afghanistan,” other women’s rights violations were documented. One report described how if a woman is seen alone with an unrelated man, walking on the street or riding in a tax, she can be taken to a hospital for a gynecological examination to determine whether she recently had sexual intercourse.¹¹ Despite financial security and safety from outside harm, a region certainly cannot and should not be considered prosperous if its citizens are still being treated in this manner.

Ismail Khan’s image to the outside world changes with every topic of discussion that arises. When it comes to the security of the region, the United States seems indebted to him. Khan has been able to use his own resources to ensure the city’s safety. In 2000, he was even said to represent what author Michael Griffin called a “vanished golden age” in Afghanistan.¹² The United States, though anxious to deal with warlordism in Afghanistan, has been cautious in its actions. Some warlords -- Ismail Khan in particular -- provided a significant number of ground troops to the United States in its 2001 military campaign. In addition, the US evidently felt still more indebted to Khan, as he was able to use his own resources to keep Herat secure. It was not until last September that the United States military took direct action to push him out. Khan was sufficiently swayed when a rival warlord moved his troops directly outside Herat. The U.S. demanded that the two forces separate, and that Khan step aside and demobilize his troops.¹³ To the surprise of many, Khan complied. As a reward, he was given a cabinet position as Karzai’s minister of energy. Since this transition, a US trained, multi-ethnic military force has taken over security in the region.

Khan’s journey from warlord to bureaucrat is a transition one other high profile has made since Karzai won the Presidential election last October.¹⁴ General Rashid Dostum, the infamous Uzbek warlord from Mazar-i-Sharif also demobilized last year, and was subsequently named Karzai’s chief military advisor.¹⁵

No matter what kind of power Ismail Khan was able to exercise in Herat, there apparently is always a threshold when a man can decide that enough is enough. Currently he spends his days “puzzling over how to increase electricity production in a country where only an estimated six percent of the population has regular power.” Khan’s new philosophy? “Jihad is not only war; it is not only fighting. Jihad means making life better for the country. There is no need to fight right now in Afghanistan,” he says.¹⁶

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Land and Property Ownership in Afghanistan

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Land area in Afghanistan can be classified into five categories: Government land, public land, private land, communal land, and religious land. The definition of government land, somewhat confused because of recent upheavals, includes “properties already registered and/or held as belonging to the state. Public land, also currently defined loosely, is land controlled but not owned by the state. Private land, defined as individual ownership, is in reality often joint ownership by a family or clan. Communal land is “conventionally understood as owned by community members jointly.” Finally, religious land, which cannot be bought or sold, was once owned by religious institutions, although much of it is now controlled by the government.¹

Unfortunately, the exact meaning of these definitions is, in practice, distorted. As a result, there are many property-related conflicts in Afghanistan today. Moreover, there are many people in Afghanistan today who own property but who find their ownership denied. For the most part, this is the result of the past two decades of war and associated loss of data. For example, during the civil war in the early 1990s, government registered lands were occupied by warlords and powerful commanders. Warlords also took over private properties either by coercion or will. Many people fled Afghanistan to escape the conflict, including many who owned property. Since 2001 hundreds of thousands of Afghans returned home from neighboring and other countries finding out that their homes were taken over or sold. Today, as a result of past and present misconduct, two-thirds of the cases before Afghan courts are related to land ownership.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the courts typically are not yet independent enough to resolve such disputes justly or effectively. In the first place, if the disputed land case is reported to the court, the judge for the sake of his own safety might decide in favor of the powerful warlord or gunman. In the second place, if the court sides with the real owner, a warlord might consider the decision illegitimate, making the ruling unenforceable. For example, in Bamiyan province’s Yakawlang District, where like other places, many wrongful takeovers took place, one dispute resulted in the court favoring the wrongful warlord, not the innocent party. Later the villagers commented that “recourse to the court was not fruitful, as the judges had colluded with these commanders to issue fake title deeds.”²

As is well known, the production of drugs is a major source of income for the warlords. In addition to this crime, their militias engage in drug-related robbery and other illegal misconduct in provinces and to a lesser extent in Kabul city. In the early 1990s, and now again, the warlords

have engaged in land invasions. In most cases they invade government land, destroy private property and redistribute the land to their own family, kin, and faithful followers. In some cases, the warlords either sell the invaded piece of land or build on it and earn an income. Today some of the new buildings in Kabul belong to some of these warlords. Buying big pieces of land will increase their influence in Kabul in the future and that presents a potential security threat to Kabul. These warlords increase their power by the day and are putting extra burden on the government and the people.

The Karzai administration has taken fundamental steps to address land-issue disputes. In addition to other courts, a Special Property Disputes Resolution Court was established by Presidential decree. Since not all the claims are recent, this court can hear disputes dating back to 1978. This newly established court can hear cases from Kabul city and the Provinces. The court is authorized to grant compensation for illegally occupied land. However, the court is not well funded. Its coverage of provincial cases remains limited -- and it does not get involved in disputes when one side is the government.

Land insecurity is one of the obstacles hindering reconstruction and peace in Afghanistan. If the current disputes involving land and property are not resolved, it is unlikely that the country will end up with a successful reconstruction strategy or a stable peace. Private property rights must be protected in order to give the Afghan people the incentive to participate in reconstruction. Peace and stability are also hard to achieve when the people have to keep a gun to protect their property. For example, in Khost province, to date, hundreds of lives have been lost in disputes over land and water. No effective system exists to resolve land issues. In Bamiyan province, Hazara ethnic groups are not allowing Pashtoon ethnic nomads to return to their pastures. Land disputes are extending ethnic tensions. Similar problems exist in the other provinces.

Because of the recent upheavals, a great amount of uncertainty covers the five classes of land: Government land, public land, private land, communal land and religious land. As a result of the current injustice, the warlords are gaining. Most recently, in Kabul city, the warlords have engaged in transaction of lands possessed under questionable circumstances. The government is addressing this problem, but the system is slow and not very effective. If this continues, it will be unlikely that the government can reconstruct the country or stabilize peace.

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The American University of Afghanistan

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The newly established American University of Afghanistan (AUA) will open in 2006 in Kabul city. The AUA students will be studying in English subject areas including liberal arts, communication and management. On March 21, 2005, president Karzai inaugurated construction of the AUA, stating that, "Our country cannot make progress unless we have our own engineers, doctors, diplomats and accountants."¹

Two decades of war, neglect and poverty ruined the physical infrastructure and intellectual foundation of education system in Afghanistan. In the early 1990s, due to the civil war, many schools were closed. The access to education was denied because of physical threat to students and teachers. In the Taliban period, girls could not go to schools. In both eras the educational institutions were turned into centers of ideological extremism. This resulted in a devastated primary and higher education system. Statistics from the year 1999 show that thirty-six percent of the population over age of 15 can read.²

The AUA is a valued investment in the future of the country. In efforts to rebuild the country and to rehabilitate the education system, the American University of Afghanistan will provide an updated curriculum, a digital library and wireless capabilities to enable distance learning. This will give a better chance to the students to connect and communicate to the rest of the world, and acquire tools necessary to reinvest in the country's future. Like other American universities around the world, the AUA will welcome students from a diverse group of nationalities, thereby promoting the reemergence of Afghanistan as a united country.

The AUA was first proposed by Dr. Sharif Fayez, President Pro Tempore, American University of Afghanistan, to the Coordinating Council for International Universities (CCIU) in July 2002. A year later, a feasibility study was initiated by the US Agency for International Development and the CCIU. The feasibility study was completed at the end of 2004. It concluded that a significant number of Afghans with English speaking skills would be able and willing to pay \$5,000 annually to attend the proposed university. Currently, two hundred such students are enrolled as incoming Freshmen. This number is expected to grow. The United States government is supporting the AUA with a multiyear commitment of more than \$15 million.³

Afghanistan's devastated education system is undergoing reform. Although much needs to be done, the new American University of Afghanistan will give a first chance to its students to experience modern education in both in-class and distance learning settings. The AUA will also bring together different ethnic groups to learn and work. In these ways, the AUA will make an important contribution to the post-war reconstruction of Afghanistan.

The AUA will "compete" with Kabul University, attracting students who are the most Western in their orientation. However, AUA will to no degree replace Kabul University, which, for most Afghan young people will remain their best chance of leading interesting and economically-secure lives. Any effort which increases educational opportunities in Afghanistan, especially at this level, is a very good thing.

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Prospects for a Virtual Silk Road

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As of early 2004 there were a reported 200,000 Persian weblogs circulating the net.¹ A weblog (also known as a blog) is a website which contains periodic, reverse chronologically ordered posts on a common webpage. Individual posts (which taken together) either share a definitive thematic direction, or a single or small group of authors. The totality of weblogs forms what is called in common usage a “blogosphere.”² Interactive participatory media allows for an exchange of information that is far different than the conventional distribution of information via the conventional mass media (in form of print, magazine, journal, television, etc). Rebecca Mackinnen, a former CNN international correspondent turned blogger fanatic is currently teaching at the Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard. She believes that the Interactive participatory model will usher in a myriad of changes in its capacity to:

- Quickly link, aggregate, and share information from a vast number of sources;
- Derive meaning from this jumble of information through editorials and commentary;
- Spontaneously generate online discussion communities around any given piece of information;
- Enable discussion communities concerned with a particular subject to multiply and mutate in a rapid, self replicating viral manner across the internet.³

It is no wonder that blogs are becoming more popular and more credible as sources of information.

Hossein Derakshan is the most famous of the Iranian bloggers. Hossein is a gregarious Iranian who since starting his own weblog in December 2000 has helped many Iranians form their own blogs and has also assisted in forming a greater Iranian blogosphere. He likens Persian weblogs to “bridges...linking men and women, young and old, politicians and people, Iranians and the world.” He also believes that blogs are the only forum where genuine public debate can be conducted in Iran.⁴ These blogs have become a viable alternative to the often scrutinized state-run Iranian news.

In an interview with the BBC even President Khatami acknowledged the increasing influence of blogs: "Our youth and adolescents during high school, and university, are using weblogs very extensively. Access for youth to the internet is very satisfactory." He added that after English and French, more weblogs were written in Persian than any other language.⁵

Reformist politicians are now using blogs as a campaign tool because of their ubiquity. The latest figures (2003) published by the CIA estimates that there are 4.3 million internet users in Iran compared to 4.61 million televisions sets.⁶ Internet accessibility is assumed by most experts to have grown substantially since 2003. The reformist Presidential candidate from the Iran Participation Front, Mostafa Moeen, not only reads weblogs, he is also the first Presidential candidate in Iran's history to host a weblog.⁷ *The New York Times* reported on 16 January 2005 that the former Vice President of Iran, a mid-ranking cleric, but a close ally and confidant of President Khatami, Mohammad Ali Abtahi, has kept a weblog to share his perspectives and reach out to the youth of Iran who are using weblogs as forums for public discourse. His blog, www.webneveshteha.com has become one of the most popular blogs in Iran. Roozbeh Mirebrahimi, a blogger who was recently imprisoned for two months says that: "His web site is politically very important" because it has "given legitimacy to weblogs and has proven that weblogs are not tools for the opposition to overthrow the regime." Abtahi believes that weblogs are a vital form of political dialogue and provide the means by which disassociated peoples such as himself, a mid-ranking cleric, and the many disaffected youth in Iran can communicate and understand one another. "As a government official, we receive a lot of confidential reports about what goes on in society. But I have felt that I learned a lot more about people and the younger generation by reading their weblogs and receiving 40 to 50 e-mails every day."⁸ Derakshan believes that weblogs are persuasive enough to dramatically alter the status quo in Iran which is wrought with nepotism and Islamic orthodoxy. Rebecca Mackinnon recently opined at the Bloggercon III conference that there is a need for a "Blogger Corps." She believes that for the activist and non-profit community "blogging has to be the means to a concrete end." To facilitate such a network this "Blogger Corps" consisting of blogging community members would donate time to assist poorly funded non-profits in developing blogs and figuring out the necessary blog tools on a case by case basis.⁹

The Afghan blogosphere is in the process of being developed. "Afghanpundit," a weblog written by an American of Afghan origin reports that there are blogs in Afghanistan such as www.Oxblog.com where Afghans with internet access can read the latest news or link to

information sources such as Instantpundit.com (probably the most popular and well circulated blog in the world), the Nathan Hale Foreign Policy Society, the Truman National Security Project, the BBC, etc., etc. These “blogs” often take the form of a news story reported followed by a series of responses in the form of editorials. These editorials are then responded to and a multi-faceted dialogue is underway. The Afghan blogosphere is still in a stage of infancy as the infrastructure needed to support such a network is not actualized.

For many in the developing world these networks, mostly at modern universities, allow people in developing countries the only affordable means to access foreign sources of information.

With this thought in mind, Brewster Kahle, Digital Librarian, Director and co-founder of the Internet Archive, has been working towards providing universal access to all human knowledge. Although a daunting task, Kahle has been working towards this end for more than 15 years.¹⁰ He believes that we can cost-effectively store every book, sound recording, movie, software package, and public web page ever created, and provide access to these collections via the internet to adults and students across the world. He is currently working on a project with the Library of Congress in providing internet access to all of their contents. He also worked on an affordable book distribution project throughout the developing world which has received much praise. The BBC has reported that a “trove of 50,000 manuscripts, paintings, and artifacts from the ancient caves and temples along the Silk road are going on show on the web.”¹¹ In actuality, this collection is dispersed throughout the world. Having multinational ownership, it is virtually impossible to consolidate all of these “manuscripts, paintings, and artifacts” in a singular concrete space; not only that, but there is the cost of transportation to and from the museum in addition to the fee for maintenance. The costs to access this information via the internet is insignificant in comparison to the monumental cost of going to the museums where each of these works is located. Many archives are now on blogs.

Blogs are not only a political tool, they are an invaluable educational tool. They bring us to the marble steps of the forum in Rome without stepping foot in Italy. They put us in contact with a consortium of likeminded professionals without the expense and inconvenience of travel. They allow political chatter over coffee with friends from hundreds, if not thousands, of miles away.

Afghanistan is a country in which 50% of the population speaks Dari, a Persian Dialect. Sixty-five percent of Tajikistan’s population is Tajik (of Persian descent). These links are undeniable.

There is also in the works a series of universities throughout Central Asia, some funded by the Aga Khan foundation, that have the resources to facilitate the education on internet usage to nearby, frequently geographically isolated, communities.

The supported infrastructure must be there to allow such a network to come to fruition. NATO, the UN, and others are working at funding internet connectivity through several programs, one of which is the Virtual Silk Highway. This project, funded and run by NATO and other NGO's, such as the SOROS foundation, is seeking to "facilitate the exchange of information between academic and educational institutions in the Caucasus and Central Asia with peers in the rest of the world; this, by providing basic and reliable internet connectivity."¹² The SILK network configuration currently consists of satellite dishes and network equipment in each of nine participating countries. A common satellite beam will connect the academic and educational institutions of the participating countries to the internet. In the SILK projects most recent newsletter (May 2004) it was reported that Walter Kaffenberger of NATO visited Kabul in preparation for the ninth silk hub, linking Afghanistan to the eight other member countries, he has consulted with the academic community on networking.

Also discussed in this newsletter is the alternative of terrestrial connectivity which is a much more efficient means of internet connectivity than satellite. The prospect of fiber optic connectivity is coming within the financial feasibility for these member countries.¹³ This will bring internet connectivity to Central Asia that allows for the high speed transmission of information. Such connectivity will be an invaluable resource for the public and educational institutions as they will have access to scholarly journals, electronic books, music, film, etc.

It may surpass the historical Silk Road in the extent to which it brings together diverse cultures.

Considering the context of the Iranian-US relationship in April 2005, it would behoove the youth of both countries to test this thesis by making contact with their virtual counterparts in this way.

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Promoting National Healing in Bosnia

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Reconstruction is painful for any country especially after a civil war. But after decades of communist rule, followed by an intense ethnic conflict, the main challenge becomes national healing.

Since 1995, when the Dayton Peace Accords were signed, Bosnia-Herzegovina has been trying to rebuild. The complex ethnic make up of Bosnian citizens and the ethnic cleansing of the 1990's make it all the more important to create a community. The 1991 census asserted that 43.7 percent of the country were Muslim (Bosniak), 31 percent were Orthodox (Serb), 17.3 percent were Catholic (Croat) and an estimated 7.6 percent were from other ethnic groups. Much of Bosnia was destroyed during the war. Since there has not been a census since the war, there can only be estimates of how many people left or were killed. The most common number is about a million. There are still refugees living in neighboring counties; some, but not all of them, have been trickling back.

Many people in Bosnia have been working hard to reconstruct and even construct their country. Significant changes in their economy, political system and even physical structure have accrued since Dayton. Reconstruction projects run by the international community which began in 2000 are now coming to a close.¹ However, the economy is still struggling. Privatization projects have not been successful because there have been few foreign investors.² Emotional and national healing has been left on the back burner. It is time to move them to the front so that Bosnia can truly heal.

Truth is a key component of healing. The truth of the situation must be told even though the details are excruciating. The stories must be unrestrained. All sides of the conflict must be told in order for the conflict to be put behind. Some of the stories may contradict each other. It is vital that facts are released that are sensitive to both sides. This is a delicate situation but in order for people to move on there must be full and complete disclosure.

Justice is also a key part to healing. War criminals are being charged and brought to justice at the Hague tribunal. Currently there are thirteen war criminals wanted in former Yugoslavia. When the people of Bosnia believe that their torturer or the leaders of the war are now brought to justice

then their nerves will start to settle down because the victims will be relieved that they are in jail. This will also help to foster security in Bosnia.

There are two ways to bring these criminals to justice. The first is to allow an individual country to hold a trial. The second is to allow the Hague tribunal or the International Criminal Court (ICC) to charge the war criminals.

Although, the tribunals have their benefits, there are some problems. First, the individual country may believe it is being denied opportunity to “take case of its own business”. Another difficulty is that one side might feel more targeted than another even though they are not. Despite these problems, it is best to use the tribunals when prosecuting war criminals because the tribunals give legitimacy to the process. The international community would look differently at a country that judges their own criminals versus allowing the Hague tribunal or the ICC to try the cases. This also allows a country to have a hands off approach while trying to rebuild. Hostility can be directed at judges in the Hague rather than at local courts. At home people can get on with the business of national healing.

If the people believe that they are safe to live as they wish with out backlash then they will start to feel secure. So it is of utmost importance for the government to ensure the safety of its citizens. Without security very little can be done. Indeed, this seems to be a universal principle of post-conflict reconstruction. By creating community gardens and other safe places where people can come together as a neighborhood, national healing is promoted. Projects that encourage the people of Bosnia to feel more secure are imperative to healing.

Forgiveness is a difficult aspect of healing because it is hard to give. Forgiveness needs to be given for people to move on in their daily life. It is almost impossible to track if the citizens of Bosnia are forgiving those who victimized them. But encouraging truth, having a secure place to live, and bringing criminals to justice, all will help Bosnia- Herzegovina to heal. Forgiveness may come last but it is also necessary.

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International Aid Development: Changing the Concept of Aid to Vietnam

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Vietnam is a country that is at an interesting point in its development. The nation has enjoyed impressive continual GDP growth since it enacted economic reforms in 1986 known as the *Doi Moi*. The poverty and widespread destruction of infrastructure that accrued during the Vietnam-American conflict have begun to be addressed and cured. This is due to Vietnam's growing economy—but also to the work of international development agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). The 2007 UNDP official development report on Vietnam states that the bulk of development funds are being directed towards major infrastructure, including transport and energy development. Vietnam also suffers from an increasing poverty gap between rural and urban populations. The recent economic gains of the nation have been felt more in the urban areas while the rural areas continue to have large poverty ratios. To combat this, international development assistance is increasing the share of aid given to rural development. Despite these problems, the main point is that Vietnam is well on its way to becoming a prosperous free market economy. Much of the War related destruction is being dealt with, and the growth in the economy is also allowing Vietnam to fix many of its own problems internally. Now the key question is how can international aid be used to reconnect Vietnam to the greater global community.

Possible Directions for International Development Aid:

- Increase the aid allocated for the development of Internet access across Vietnam.
- Work to develop interregional trade routes and trading communities that will ultimately reduce the level of distrust between Vietnam and its neighboring nations.
- Enable greater communications between American universities and Vietnamese higher education facilities.
- Create education programs in Vietnam to help the population with the adaptation from rural to urban environment.
- Consider the institutionalization of counseling programs to help with long suppressed depression from losses due to the war and also to help with many of the social ills that are increasing due to unfettered urbanization.

However, as lofty and good intentioned as many of these proposals are they must be presented to Vietnam in a way that is not perceived as subversive to their communist revolution. The Vietnamese people tend to be very nationalistic and the government is successfully linked in the public mind with the defense of the nation. It is also important that the aid be used to help the

people of Vietnam and introduce them to the world community in a healthy structured manner. There remains strong distrust within the communist party, that unilaterally controls the government, towards western notions of freedom of information. The government is always wary of what they have termed the possibility of a *peaceful evolution*. The government views organizations such as Radio Free Asia as subversive due to their strong push for democracy. Aid to Vietnam should in no way be used to force democracy on the Vietnamese people. Instead it should be strictly focused on bringing them into the world community; in particular, on providing access to the information revolution. The exact nature of the internet access may not at first be completely free in the western sense of the term. The internet could take the form of the system that is in place in China currently. In China electronic filters and scrubbers deny access to “sensitive” sites on the web.

A study of changing the aid allocations in Vietnam to adapt to its improving economy could offer a blueprint for development for other nations later on in time. For example, currently Afghanistan is a major focus of international development assistance. At the moment much of the development aid is structured to help develop heavy infrastructure such as main transportation routes and energy production. Housing, healthcare and security are also part of the greater Afghan design. If the development aid is successful there then it is presumed that the economy will begin to prosper and grow. As the economy grows and becomes healthy it begins to develop the basic development issues on its own. Ten to twenty years from now it may be possible to study the development aid transition that could happen in Vietnam and apply it to current war torn areas such as Afghanistan when they reach that stage.

Increase Internet Access

The World Wide Web offers a wealth of information, provides a medium for business to make international transactions, and greatly increases the amount of national and international communication. The World Economic forum has developed a pilot program to reduce the digital divide that is present in Vietnam. Their initiative is, with the donations from the private sector, to supply Vietnamese schools and secondary schools with computers and internet access. It will ultimately become the responsibility of the faculty and students to maintain the networks and help the local populations to learn how to use them. The Vietnamese government has also shown some interest in accelerating their drive to the digital age. They have recently set aside a large budget to transfer many government functions over to the digital medium, also known as E-

government. This is a significant indicator of Vietnam's interest in developing internet access as the government is central to many aspects of daily life.

Increased internet access could also greatly benefit the remote regions of Vietnam. A large amount of Vietnam's minorities live in the mountainous regions to the west that make up two thirds of Vietnam's land area. The population is more widely dispersed here and less subject to the control of the government. However the Communist government has asserted control over the area and tensions can at times become very unsettling. If community centers in the mountain region could be linked to a Vietnam national web then it could help increase understanding between the ethnic groups of the country. Also the government could use the Internet to supply local education facilities with education information, medical information, citizen records, and conduct much of the day to day government functions as well.

Work to Reduce the Level of Distrust.

Vietnam has fought wars with many of the nations in the Southeast Asian region. This has caused distrust between Vietnam and many of its neighbors, especially Laos and China. The strengthening of existing trade agreements and the establishment of new trade routes would increase the amount of interaction between nations. There is already considerable interest in the Mekong River region to establish a viable trading route. The Mekong proposal is being pushed by China and Thailand to increase inter-regional trade. However, there are serious issues that have arisen that challenge such plans. The environmental situation is very grave around the Mekong due to extensive dredging and damming of the river, especially by China. Also human and industrial waste are pumped into the river and its tributaries by the surrounding nations. The river's natural flow has now been unnaturally altered and the wild life is suffering greatly. The Mekong Delta region is affected by many of the activities of countries that are up-river and Vietnam has no evident means to challenge their actions. The strengthening of current trade organizations and the establishment of better inter-region trade oversight bodies and environmental regulations would create a more open and friendly region. International aid and resources could be used to develop these institutions and help with the construction of transportation infrastructure between interested countries in the region.

American and Vietnamese Higher Level Education Exchange

Roger Williams University has recently established a satellite school in Ho Chi Minh City. This could be the beginning of a greater effort to establish western style universities in Vietnam and

allow American students to experience a nation they have heard so much about but understand so little. Likewise, the best Vietnamese students should be allowed to travel to American universities and spend some time studying abroad. This student exchange program could develop a greater understanding between two countries that only a decade ago were locked in a bitter conflict that claimed many lives. It also could help to change much of the seclusionist attitudes that are present in Vietnamese culture.

An interesting possibility for student exchange would be centered around the Roger Williams Architecture School and its satellite school in Vietnam. If a program was developed where Vietnamese students study traditional Vietnamese architecture they could then work with RWU architecture students to develop urban buildings that still have a Vietnamese style to them. This could reduce some of the serious misgivings that the Vietnamese have about urbanization due to their disdain for Soviet style industrial architecture. The people of Vietnam have already made an effort to mix Vietnamese culture with modern architecture. When the mausoleum for Ho Chi Minh was finished it was decided that it was too industrial and too cold. The Vietnamese people used Southeast Asian style bamboo gardens to soften the buildings harsh appearance.

Urban Education Programs

As the nation continues to urbanize -- which is a must considering the amount of arable land available to the large population -- many Vietnamese will find themselves uprooted from their traditional surroundings and in a new unfamiliar urban environment. There should be programs established to help ease the transition from rural farm worker or tradesman to Urban industrial worker or service provider. This could be termed as lateral education in that it is not designed to increase the amount of education but rather re-educate the population to the changing environment. Challenges also arise due to the Vietnamese place great cultural importance on the community center of a village. They look to the known social and cultural trends to find guidance in their daily lives. Urban education programs could help the population adjust to the new style of urban support structure. There is a private civil sector that is developing in Vietnam to pick up where the government cannot or does not care to become involved. This sector could cooperate with the international community to develop new support structures within the urban environment to replace the rural support structures that were given up during the relocation.

Psychological Counseling

A greater effort needs to be made in Vietnam to address the emotional toll that both the years of war and the quickly changing nature of daily life is having on the general population. Many survivors of Vietnam's wars are silently dealing with the loss of loved ones, the emotional trauma from the war, and a sense of fear resulting from the quickly modernizing Vietnamese culture. The urban environments also can cause extreme emotional distress to those who find it difficult to adapt to it. Counseling could help dull the shock of all these negative factors that haunt many Vietnamese.

Conclusion

Ultimately many of these recommendations are building on existing programs or proposes. The general idea that should be conveyed by this paper is two part:

One, is that Vietnam is a unique land with a rich cultural heritage and a proud and independent people. Nationalism is fiercely important there and is a tool used to keep the country unified. No international development assistance should be allocated in any way that could jeopardize Vietnamese culture or nationality. Previous development programs have fallen short because they attempted to stamp a pre-existing development model on the country. If the aid is done in a way that the Vietnamese can put a cultural accent on it then it will be more widely accepted and more likely to truly integrate Vietnam into the global community.

Two is that Vietnam has had continual GDP growth and has handled many development issues very well. As a result, Vietnam is ready to enter into a new phase of development aid that concentrates on the less tangible aspects of development. This aid should be directed at the health and well being of the average Vietnamese citizen. Emphasis on improving the quality of the citizen at home and on the world stage. Programs should be funded that allow these citizens to interact with their neighbors near and far. Some of this will be done through investment in telecommunication infrastructure, but also, much will be related to establishing international cooperation programs to bridge the divide that Vietnam faces with the digital world. If this refocusing of development assistance to the technology and global sectors is successful, then it could be applied to other countries in the future when they reach the point that Vietnam is at now.

Post Reconstruction Vietnam: National Curriculum and International Opportunities since *Doi Moi*

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“In light of globalization and the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, a new approach to teaching and learning as well as management is critical for the country’s further social-economic development.”¹

Phan Gia Khiem, Deputy Prime Minister and Vice President of National Council on Education- March, 2005

In 1986, the Sixth Party Congress adopted General Secretary Nguyen Van Linh’s program to move from a centrally-planned economy to market socialism. Seeking to take its place in a geopolitical sphere, Vietnam has loosened its economic controls in order to facilitate greater cooperation with the West. This strategic adoption of market principles has impacted Vietnam’s education system by providing them with previously untapped economic resources. During the 1990s, both China and the United States lifted their economic boycott after Vietnam abandoned its controversial occupation from Cambodia and Laos in 1989. As another consequence of this new era of openness, Vietnam became an active member of the ASEAN Free Trade Area and fostered economic ties with Singapore, Malaysia, and other member countries.² Despite new opportunities, however, the government under *Doi Moi* has continued to face significant challenges, including its drive to link economic restructuring to educational planning.

Background: Central Planning, the Vietnamese Communist Party, and Mass Education

After reunification in 1975, the country’s collectivist economy failed to return in peace what it had so ably achieved in wartime. By the close of the decade, rigid political and economic control coupled with a debilitating occupation in Cambodia begun in 1978, prevented the party from achieving its lofty goal of mass education, which had been replicated from the Northern structure of a single rather than a multidisciplinary curriculum.³ Instead, the government’s focus on the needs of the urban elite ultimately compromised the core values of the communist regime which promised an equitable distribution of resources to all Vietnamese.⁴

Despite the warning signals, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) approached the next decade with optimism and maintained that universal education would be achieved under their able direction. After central planning failed to combat a rising deficit and prohibitive inflation,

however, Communist leaders finally realized that in order to compete in a global economy, requisite, comprehensive reform would have to replace collectivism.⁵

Doi Moi and University Education

Restructuring was vital for the future of higher education in Vietnam, and necessitated inevitable streamlining and expansion of the university curriculum. Last year's figures indicate that approximately \$1.6 billion (U.S. dollars) or 17.1% of the total budget is allocated for education expenses. The Institute of International Education in Hanoi estimates that this figure will rise to 18% in 2005 and 20% in 2010.⁶

Since 1990, the newly established Ministry of Education and Training, (MOET), maintains considerable authority over all levels of educational management and development. Despite its influence, however, MOET shares jurisdiction with various bureaus and ministries. More recently, Decree 85 authorizes further decentralization by granting local agencies greater influence over the day-to-day operation of colleges and universities. Professionals are hopeful that this newfound independence will improve the quality of education overall.⁷

Initially, national and international representatives, formed with the task of critically appraising the educational system, revealed some glaring inequities. In 1991, a study conducted in cooperation with MOET, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNESCO, and various other UN agencies concluded that Vietnam's educational system lagged significantly behind its economic development. Subsequently, the party has earmarked government funds for educational reform, and accepted financial assistance from foreign resources, such as the IMF, the Japanese Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, to further educational growth and restructuring in Vietnam. Although these developments have impacted primary grades most significantly, the range among rich and poor widens considerably at the secondary and higher educational levels.⁸

Conversion

The present educational infrastructure has changed substantially since the single-disciplinary Soviet model was implemented in the pre-and post- reunification period. Overall, the Vietnamese educational initiative has successfully converted "specialized" institutions into "multi-disciplinary" programs of advanced study. Developed on the national level, the *Vietnam National University Hanoi* and the *Vietnam National University* (Ho Chi Minh City) confer baccalaureate,

masters, and doctoral degrees. Students who attend any of the regional institutions: *Da Nang University*, *Hue University*, and *Thai Nguyen University*, can only receive a bachelor and/or masters degree.⁹

Since 1988, the “two-tiered” system of education was introduced, which allowed for two years of general core study in the humanities, arts, and sciences. (Seven core curriculum areas: social sciences, humanities, foreign languages, business and management, economics, mathematics and physics, biology, and chemistry). Students who successfully complete this phase are awarded a *Certificate of University Studies*, which qualify them to sit for an examination in their chosen field.¹⁰

By 1993, seven years after *Doi Moi* commenced, the government issued Decree 90, which authorized the establishment of the following categories of institutions of higher learning:

- 1.) state or “public” – entirely operated and funded by the government.
- 2.) “non state” (*ban cong*) – state-owned and operated, but funded by student fees.
- 3.) Private (*tu lap*) - privately owned and funded.
- 4.) “people- founded” (*dan lap*) - established by “non-government” associations and funded by students.¹¹

At present, there are over 200 colleges and universities, including “junior” and four year institutions serving over one million students per year. Although the CPV is unwilling to relinquish total control over these institutions, their reliance upon market principles is inevitable given the current economic trend.¹²

Critique and Possible Solutions

Although bold and innovative, educational restructuring in Vietnam suffers from “growing pains”. Before the fall of Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and other Eastern bloc countries funded the educational system in Vietnam and even provided its schools with faculty. The day-to-day governance of the educational institutions however was still under the jurisdiction of the state.¹³ By 1991, all Vietnamese students in Eastern Europe returned and financial assistance ceased. Subsequently, new financial sources were needed to ensure the maintenance of the educational infrastructure.

As a direct result of *Doi Moi*, college administrators in the post reconstruction era are now permitted to impose fees on matriculating students. Although this change grants the university a measure of independence, the burden of cost (nearly 50%) to the family has prevented some deserving youth, especially in the mountainous and rural regions of the Mekong Delta, from ever attaining a degree.¹⁴

The government is aware of the problem, and has proven to be a capable watchdog of its own inequities. Nguyen Minh Hien, Minister of Education and Training, has also recently expressed concern that the government has not provided the disadvantaged ethnic populations in the Mekong with equitable educational training.

In late 2004, Hien admitted before the National Assembly that teacher training has failed to keep pace of modern educational developments worldwide, especially in the sciences. The findings revealed that the curriculum is much too inflexible. Accordingly, even the best universities in Ho Chi Minh City, Hanoi, and Da Nang still offer a limited curriculum.

The government has taken steps to rectify the situation, and the future looks bright. Financial assistance to impoverished students including exemption from school fees, has markedly increased their access to higher education. In 2003-2004, the acceptance ratio in the mountainous regions reached 70%, and more call for school facilities in hamlets, villages, and communes have encouraged students from this sector of the population.¹⁵

Global Opportunities and Exchange

Finally, the impetus for cultural exchange has presented the party with a viable alternative to some of the imbalance in the educational system. Relatively speaking, Vietnamese colleges and universities are “inexperienced”, with most in the cities incorporated in 1993 or after. Therefore, an opportunity to engage in reciprocal study offers the CPV with models of established curricula.

Beginning in 1951, Vietnam engaged in exchange with the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries. After the Soviet collapse, all students were evacuated, and, until the past decade, this alternative was virtually closed to prospective Vietnamese students.

After *Doi Moi* was instituted, CPV sanctioned privately-funded study in the West, but the Soviet breakup caused unrest among conservatives in the party, and MOET, responding to the changing climate issued a highly critical statement of the educational infrastructure overseas:

*In light of new requirements for the current renovation, the training and fostering of scientific cadres and technical workers abroad have experienced numerous shortcomings and weaknesses.*¹⁶

As a result, the available figures indicate that the numbers of students who studied abroad dropped from 4188 in 1987-1988 to 1945 in the following year. In 1991-1992, however, reformers shifted their focus and encouraged, rather than discouraged foreign study.¹⁷

Hanoi has looked to the United States as an important component in this initiative. The latest figures indicate that the U.S. grants 25 Fulbright Scholarships for undergraduates and 50 U.S. Government Vietnam Education Foundation Fellowships for those engaging in advanced study. While other programs in Australia and China, offer either additional funding or greater ethnic and cultural ties, the American university is fast becoming a popular alternative for Vietnamese students.¹⁸ With the most recent initiatives in this area, including Vietnam's transition from a "subject-based" program to one that bears credit, the outlook is encouraging for expansion of cultural exchange between the United States and Vietnam.¹⁹ With greater openness in the post reconstruction era, the Vietnamese and Americans may forge meaningful bonds that have already begun in the classroom.

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18. Abuza, "The Politics of Educational Diplomacy," 629; IIE, *Higher Education in Vietnam*, 17.
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Does Family Size Really Effect Education In Vietnam?

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Beginning in 1988, a one-or-two child family program was initiated in Vietnam to reduce population growth and to promote better education within the country. The Central Committee of the Communist Party believed that population decreases in conjunction with the addition of more schools throughout the country will promote both economic development as well as social well being. According to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, these two programs will work together to support each other (Anh, Knodel, Lam, and Friedman, 1998). The Committee contends that education will lead to lower fertility rates and that lower fertility rates will lead to better education. The initiation of this policy was coupled with an extensive advertising campaign which featured billboards promoting the reduced family size (Goodkind, 1995).

The 1994 Vietnam Inter-Censal Demographic Survey (VNICDS) has been used by demographers to determine whether family size actually does play role in education in Vietnam. At the time the VNICDS conducted the poll, there were fifty-three provinces in the country. The survey was distributed to each province. A total of 13,093 households including 64, 380 individuals were studied (Anh, Knodel, Lam, and Friedman, 1998).

The demographers question whether family size actually does make a difference in educational enrollment. They believe that socioeconomic factors such as parental educational level attained and household wealth have more of an effect on enrollment in school than family size does.

The demographers did conclude through their study of the VNICDS that some correlations do exist between family size and enrollment, but that they are small when adjustment for parental education and household wealth are made. The study did not reveal any significant parallel between gender and enrollment, or enrollment among those from urban as opposed to rural areas.

According to the demographers' analysis of the survey, those from families of one or two children are more likely to be enrolled in school, but only when compared to families with six or more children. They conducted three separate surveys from three separate age groupings: one

from the 10-12, one from the 13-18, and the last from 19-24. Among the 10-12 age groups, which are at the primary school level, the difference between enrollment among small and large families is moderate. They discovered that good attendance was almost universal among this age group. In contrast, among the 19-24 age groups, the tertiary level, they did find a correspondence between higher enrollment levels and families of three or fewer children. At the secondary level, the 13-18 age groups, they found with each reduction in the number of children in the family there was a higher correspondence of enrollment (Anh, Knodel, Lam, and Friedman, 1998).

Despite these findings, the demographers argued that family size is not the determining factor associated with enrollment in school. The educational level attained by the parents is significant on enrollment levels. Children who come from a household where one of the parents had some secondary schooling are more likely to be enrolled in secondary school than children whose parents did not receive secondary education. Children from a household where both parents received secondary education are even more likely than those of one parent to be enrolled in secondary school. The same situation is true of tertiary levels. Primary school enrollment is virtually universal, and therefore is not affected by the educational level attained by parents.

Household wealth also plays a role in enrollment levels. Prior to 1989 the total cost of an education (primary through secondary), including textbooks, was covered by the state. But the introduction of economic renovation (Doi Moi) has resulted in tuition which must be paid by the family at the secondary level and above. Textbooks are also no longer provided by the state, but must be purchased by the students.

In conclusion, the government's promotion of the one-or-two-child policy has little affect on individual families; nonetheless, this does not mean that the policy will not have an affect on education overall. The reduction of the average family size from the current three or four children to one or two children (Anh, Knodel, Lam, and Friedman, 1998) will have a dramatic impact on the population of Vietnam. The reduced number of students in school at any given time will result in a lower cost to the state. The state can take the excess money and put it towards reforming the educational system and quality of education. This may help the education of all children regardless of family size. (Hollander, 1998).

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