Governance, Development and Security: Three sides of the same ‘COIN’?

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Introduction
Afghanistan is not a post-conflict country. It is currently mired in an insurgency pursued by a network of entities associated with the previous Taliban regime, plus a number of other anti-government elements (AGE). Afghanistan is, however, a fragile state. It is widely agreed that the security situation in the country has been deteriorating for the past two years and will continue to worsen for the foreseeable future. In general, the progress of reform since 2001 has fallen far short of the Afghan public’s expectations, with both the government and the international community held to blame. Today in Afghanistan, everything is a challenge: good governance for all, daily sustenance for many, survival for some. But one can find many articles written in 2005/2006 about the success of the Afghan experience, forcing us to acknowledge the complex and non-linear nature of administrative reform in fragile states.

In order to contribute to reform in Afghanistan, it is necessary to appreciate the sources of conflict and instability in the country and their historical antecedents. Three main factors play a role in the continuing conflict: the long history of tribal and family disputes; the lack of good governance for nearly half a century; and the presence of anti-government insurgents operating from bases within and outside the country, who have ample opportunity to advance their agenda through the first two factors.1

Insurgents historically choose to operate from within a population and for this reason it is the government/citizen relationship that has the greatest impact on the achievement of their objectives and the objectives of those who attempt to counter them. Each insurgent threat is unique to a time and place, there are few general lessons to be replicated from country to country, making it difficult to apply solutions developed in other locations. For this reason, successful counter-insurgency (COIN) approaches historically are complex and constantly adapting to a changing environment.2 The nature of the civilian-military coordination (CIMIC) in Afghanistan has an added level of complexity because nearly every province has a unique set of military forces assigned to it. International military troops rotate frequently, staying less than one year, and are fundamentally beholden to their national military chains of command and their civilian political leaderships. The relationship among the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), the central government, the Provincial Governors and the international development community has never been adequately clarified.

The Afghanistan Compact3 and the subsequent Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS)4 recognized the importance of governance, establishing it as one of

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1 Development and diplomacy: implementing a cautious and fully balanced approach against the odds in Uruzgan Marten de Boer, Netherlands Embassy, Kabul, 2008
3 The Afghanistan Compact was an outcome of the London Conference in January 2006.
4 The ANDS was approved at the Paris Conference in May 2008.
the three key pillars of activity for the five years of activity following adoption of the ANDS.\textsuperscript{5} The ANDS contends that without concurrent progress on Governance, Development and Security, the vision of the ANDS will not be fulfilled. Following a vicious downward spiral, a lack of progress in one undermines the Government’s capacity to advance in others, effectively abetting the continued growth of the narcotics economy, limiting the expansion of regional trade and transit opportunities, and facilitating increased levels of petty corruption.

\textbf{Status of Local Governance in Afghanistan}

Afghanistan faces a number of challenges in the pursuit of a successful and sustainable reform of its democratic governance institutions. In many parts of the country the major constraint is that the state building efforts, particularly in the south, are confronted by a virulent and expanding insurgency. The success of the current counter-insurgency efforts will, in part, be influenced by the quality of governance at the subnational level because this is the level where people have their most direct interaction with government.

However, since the initiation of the stabilization and reconstruction period in 2002, following the American invasion and collapse of the Taliban regime, the international community has focused its attention on the creation of a strong central state. Although many aspects of a modern state had been established in Kabul by 2006, the administrative and service delivery apparatus at the subnational level remained virtually unchanged.

The concept of local governance doesn’t exist in Afghanistan as it is known in many other countries. What you find is a complex, polycentric governance framework with many nodes of power competing with one another, but not all of them resorting to lethal force to gain an advantage. Governors are appointed by the President under a law that grants them significant responsibility, but their de facto authority is limited by national programme modalities, separation of the police from the local administration, public service delivery controlled by central line ministries through large donor-funded projects and the presence of international military PRTs, along with the insurgents, minor warlords and other AGE. The Provincial and District Governors have wide ranging responsibilities covering governance, security and development. However, there is considerable disagreement within government, and among the international community, regarding the specific authority of the Governors in each of these fields. Many matters concerning the implementation of (particularly non-lethal) counter-insurgency measures are discussed with them, and their staff is responsible for maintaining sound political relations throughout their respective territories. Unfortunately, many Governors are less enthusiastic about introducing counter-insurgency measures than are the international forces.

The only formally elected representative body at the subnational level is the Provincial Council. Provincial Councils were elected three years ago. Essentially, they were elected because of a constitutional requirement that members of the upper house of Parliament must be selected by members of the local councils. As a result, little has been done to build their capacity to carry out their legal, but limited, functions. An amendment to their founding legislation has granted them additional authority to

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{5} The London Conference on Afghanistan, \textit{The Afghanistan Compact, January 31 – February 1, 2006}, page 2.}
monitor the work of the government, but they are poorly equipped to carry this out and few in government are interested in acting on their recommendations.

At the center, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG)⁶ was created one year ago by Presidential Decree. IDLG amalgamated elements of the Ministry of Interior and several other agencies into a single entity with overall responsibility for regulating subnational governance. With assistance from UNDP and other international agencies, IDLG launched its Strategic Workplan in April 2008. The Workplan divided IDLG’s functions into policy, organizational development and governance support functions.

**UNDP’s approach to subnational governance capacity development in Afghanistan**

The Afghanistan Subnational Governance Programme (ASGP)⁷ was designed by UNDP and launched in June 2006 to address the following challenges: i) the need for central policy-making capacity; ii) the fundamental lack of administrative capacity at the sub-national level; iii) the limited citizen participation in sub-national governance. ASGP focuses on facilitating Afghan ownership in all reform activities, encouraging the development of multi-stakeholder processes, and testing and developing innovative solutions.

The capacity development methodology pursued by ASGP follows a three-tiered approach first outlined by UNDP⁸ in 1998. This approach involves addressing capacity issues at institutional, organizational and individual levels. At the institutional level, ASGP supports the IDLG to design a comprehensive policy framework for subnational governance. At the organizational level, ASGP supports IARCSC⁹ and IDLG in restructuring of provincial and municipal administrative bodies and the establishment of modern means of operation. At the individual level, ASGP supports the IARCSC to operate a network of 17 provincial training centers, linked to the central Civil Service Institute.

**Institutional Capacity Development: Policy Design and Implementation**

The IDLG was tasked in its first year with leading a national process for the development of a new subnational governance policy. In order to accomplish this within the timeframe given by the President, IDLG requested ASGP to assist in organizing a series of 24 working groups involving nearly all the ministries of the government. The draft policy was discussed by the Policy Drafting Committee at the Deputy Minister level prior to submission to Cabinet. The World Bank and UNAMA¹⁰ arranged a discussion series among the international community and submitted a set of comments to IDLG. At the same time, The Asia Foundation has been tasked with organizing a series of regional public consultations to gather public comment on the draft. The draft policy calls for enhanced participation of women, youth and civil society and the development of a planning process that allows a significant percentage of the provincial budget to be

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⁶ The IDLG was created in September 2007 as a part of the Office of the President.
⁷ ASGP is managed by UNDP and supported by Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Netherlands, and Canada.
⁹ Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission
¹⁰ United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
programmed through a bottom up, participatory process. Eventually, the final policy could lead to the election of perhaps as many as 300,000 local people to different positions within the subnational bodies at provincial, municipal, district and village levels.

Drafting the policy document is only the first step of major sub-national governance reform. It will be implemented through amendments and new laws, regulations and procedures and revised institutional arrangements that will be enacted during 2009. The policy will be fully implemented during the period 2010-2013. The government will undertake a comprehensive review of the implementation of the policy in the year 2013. In this review, the government will examine whether the policy has achieved its intended objectives and to amend it as needed.

In order to meet the need for reliable implementation feedback, ASGP has supported the IDLG to pilot a provincial governance performance measurement and management tool. This tool has been piloted in two provinces and will be introduced in a total of 10 by early 2009. The PMS tool is also being linked to a new initiative called the “Governor’s Performance-based Operational Fund”, in which Governors will have access to an annual budget allocation for addressing a very broad range of operational needs. The level of the fund will be adjusted each year on the basis of the degree to which the use of the fund complies with the principles of good governance.

**Organizational Capacity Development: Focus on Provincial and Municipal administration**

**Provincial and District Governors’ Offices**

Most of the stakeholders, foreign and domestic, engaged in development and service delivery to the people of Afghanistan have recognized poor governance as a major challenge to achievement of ANDS goals. Provincial and district governors’ offices (PGO/DGO) are mandated to ensure good governance at their respective levels, but lack an understanding of how to realize the overall vision of good governance at their respective levels. This, coupled with a lack of modern office management in PGO/DGOs, prevents these entities from providing effective and efficient support to the realization of the ANDS goals at the local level. One aspect of the ASGP approach to improving service delivery, including security, conflict resolution and a public grievance system, is through widespread introduction and application of newly sanctioned provincial and district operating procedures.

Current provincial planning is overly focused on infrastructure. IDLG has requested ASGP to support provincial strategic planning that comprehensively addresses three areas: security, governance and development. Provincial strategic plans will cover a period of five years and will define specific benchmarks and targets to be achieved at the provincial and district level in relation to the IDLG Strategic Framework. Provincial planning can improve the performance of subnational service delivery and, if funded and properly implemented, can strengthen the position of the government, particularly in high-risk areas. ASGP has recently begun supporting restructured Governors’ offices to conduct a mid-year review of implementation achievements. Unfortunately, most provincial line departments have little idea about their budget or their implementation targets.
The organizational capacity of local administration is woefully inadequate for the demands placed upon them by the public. Modernization of governor’s offices involves the speedy rollout of new functional organizational structures in all provinces and districts of Afghanistan. Likewise, provision of necessary equipment, including information and communication technologies, has increased the ability of local administrations to carry out their functions. About one half of the Governors’ offices in Afghanistan are in varying stages of reorganization, to be followed by a merit-based recruitment process. USAID and UNDP are closely collaborating in these areas.

ASGP has pioneered the implementation of a public communication and information management strategy at the provincial level to ensure effective information outreach throughout the province and bridge the existing gap between government and the people. This comprehensive strategy involves delivery of trainings to a variety of local actors and employment of innovative public communication methods and techniques. In the face of aggressive insurgent propaganda, which is likely to intensify over time, this intervention supports subnational institutions to clearly deliver government messages and to counter hostile propaganda.

Improving Municipal Services and Functions

Basic public services required by citizens for a normal life are often absent in the municipalities of Afghanistan. Until recently, municipal service reform had not been addressed in a systematic manner. In addition, the staff of municipalities had been left out of the reform process because municipal staff are paid from own source revenues rather than directly by the central government. The ASGP approach to municipal renewal has the following action areas: municipal functional analysis, revenue generation and solid waste management.

ASGP designed a method for undertaking a functional analysis of significant municipalities prior to application for restructuring and recruitment approval. In September 2008, IARCSC requested ASGP to support the municipality of Mazar-i-Sharif to undertake a full restructuring exercise and merit-based recruitment for all staff. The IARCSC has obtained sufficient funds from the central government to cover the salary increases in this municipality for one year, after which the municipality will have to increase its revenue to cover the full costs.

In order to afford increased staff salaries and improved municipal services, municipal administrations must make a significant effort to upgrade the capacity of these units to collect the revenue that is legally due. ASGP assisted each municipality in the Northern Region to prepare a Revenue Improvement Action Plan (RIAP). This RIAP has been designed not only to improve the total revenue collection, but to ensure revenue is collected and used in an accountable and equitable manner. The success of this pilot intervention has been significant with most municipalities experiencing a 50-80% increase in the first year.

Two basic services that have been identified for improvement by municipalities are solid waste and market management. Each of these services is supported by a standardized revenue structure, but both have languished for many years due to neglect of both the revenue collection and delivery of the related service. As with revenue enhancement, simple organizational management tools have resulted in visible improvements and public satisfaction.
Provincial Councils
Work on building the capacity of the local representative bodies, the Provincial Councils, has been slow and incomplete. Neither the national nor provincial executives wish to see a strong Council that is capable of holding local administrators accountable to the people. An amendment to the original PC law in 2007 provided the institution with a clearer sense of purpose by adding the function of government project monitoring. However, Councils have neither the understanding, information nor logistics needed to accomplish this task in an objective manner. As a result, Governors invariably disregard both their complaints and their solutions. ASGP worked in concert with IDLG to produce a set of implementing regulations for the amended Provincial Council Law, but other administrative review bodies in government seriously watered down the provisions, making them nearly useless for improving the Councils’ functionality.

IDLG Headquarters
Finally, the organizational capacity of IDLG itself is a major concern. There are 450 staff at the central office that should support the 10,000 based in the 34 provinces, 365 districts and 152 municipalities around the country. The approach to organizational reform at the subnational level is well underway, but the reform of the IDLG headquarters has been deflected because of intervening priorities. The leadership of IDLG is made up of recently returned expatriate Afghans. They have brought with them a management approach that is completely different from that of the traditional Afghan bureaucracy. As a result, they have created a parallel structure inside IDLG, funded by donors, that is task oriented, but staffed by highly paid individuals who will never remain in government after the donors’ salaries are removed.

Individual Capacity Development: Civil Service Training
Civil servants’ individual capacity development is an integral part of a public administrative reform program. Training for individuals is being provided through different packages as general management, IT, English language, and specialized job related courses, which are supplemented with coaching and process workshops in the centre and provinces.

Many training packages are delivered to the civil servants in the centre and provinces by joint efforts of line ministries, donor agencies projects and IARCSC (with support from ASGP) at the national and sub national level. ASGP has assisted the IARCSC to operate provincial training centres (in half of all the provinces) and to build the capacity of its regional offices to oversee both the training and the PAR operations at the local level. ASGP collaborates with World Bank, European Commission and USAID in ensuring that trainings are conducted according to the training standards set by Afghanistan Civil Service Institute (ACSI). ASGP has also assisted in the establishment of two critical databases, one to track the recruitment process in all sectors operating at the provincial level and the second to track all capacity development interventions in each province.

A collaborative approach involving the use of a ‘Letter of Agreement’ between UNDP and IARCSC has resulted in improvement of direct training delivery and coordination of all training efforts at sub national level. This approach has also resulted in the transfer of management of the training centres to regional offices of IARCSC.
ASGP has made a number of attempts at engaging IDLG in a collaborative capacity assessment, but, with one exception, the leadership has been impervious to the notion that their staff can learn and improve. The exception involves financial management because the Ministry of Finance has mandated that a new program budgeting approach and FMIS software must be implemented by all agencies. ASGP, in collaboration with USAID, has built a basic level of understanding in the Finance and Admin section of IDLG.

Concluding Comments
The restructuring, reform and modernization of local administrative units are important for the delivery of a number of critical public goods and services. However, the most important reason that ASGP engages in this effort is to foster a more conducive environment for local economic development (LED). IDLG has been mandated by a Presidential Decree to improve governance in order to achieve security and development. The Governor, who chairs the Provincial Development Committee (PDC) that designs and implements the provincial development plans, reports to IDLG. Integration of LED into the provincial planning mechanism will lead to development of provincial plans that address strategically important development needs of the province. However, these plans will be undermined if the local administration uses its power to improperly impede entrepreneurial efforts. At this time, IDLG and ASGP are laying the groundwork for this field. A conceptual framework has been established and a small team of national and international economists and business development advisors is being formed. The next step will be the creation of a Working Group composed of relevant government agencies and international development projects to advise IDLG on aspects of local economic development. LED is seen as the future driver for administrative reform, particularly in municipalities.

The present Afghan situation is the result of complex, institutionalized patterns of human behavior that can neither be controlled nor designed away. The use of a systems approach to capacity development, addressing institutional, organizational and individual issues in a holistic manner, enables a programme to remain dynamic and adaptable, while operating as a catalyst in an ever evolving environment.

Relationships built between UNDP and its key government partners, IDLG and IARCSC, are strong and improving. The decision to use a ‘Letter of Agreement’ to modify the standard UNDP Direct Implementation Modality has been instrumental in giving government a greater say in what should be done and more responsibility for accomplishing the agreed objectives. However, the level of capacity existing in local administrative units today is far below what is necessary to deliver a level of service that can appreciably impact on the public’s perception of their government. Public administrative reform at the subnational level is important, but it is clearly not sufficient in successfully countering anti-government insurgents and building legitimacy and trust in the state.

Unfortunately, current military counter-insurgency strategies, geared to 4-6 month tactical operations, have little in common with a long-term governance capacity building program. At present, both sides essentially view the other as necessary, but incompatible.