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Article in *Third World Quarterly* · October 2002

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Aiding violence or building peace? The role of international aid in Afghanistan

JONATHAN GOODHAND

ABSTRACT *The political and military landscape in Afghanistan has been transformed since 11 September. Whether the fall of the Taliban and the transition to an Afghan Interim Administration signify the emergence of a new peaceful order or a dangerous disorder it is too early to tell. The underlying dynamics of the Afghan crisis have yet to be addressed and it will be argued in this article that the main challenge for the newly installed interim administration and the international community will be one of 'winning the peace'. Military and diplomatic measures, though important, are unlikely by themselves to secure a transition towards a stable peace. Over two decades of war a regional conflict complex has developed which has transformed institutions, incentives systems and livelihoods. War cannot simply be declared over. It is recognised that a substantial aid package or 'Marshall Plan' for Afghanistan will be necessary to transform the war economy into a peace economy, and already significant pledges of aid have been made by donor countries. This represents an important departure from policies of the previous decade, in which the international response was one of disengagement and containment and Afghanistan became an orphaned conflict. Whether this aid will materialise and whether it will be used to good effect in 'winning the peace' is another matter. This article will focus on the historical and contemporary role of aid in relation to the Afghan crisis. It will ask how international assistance has interacted with the dynamics of conflict and peace in the past. What lessons should be learned (and unlearned) to inform current policy and practice? What will be the likely challenges facing assistance actors aiming to build peace?*

Conflict and peace in Afghanistan

The roots and dynamics of the Afghan conflict have been analysed in this issue and elsewhere. However, the following points are highlighted in order to clarify our understanding of the terms 'conflict', 'peace building' and 'aid' in the Afghan context.

History of state building

The Afghan crisis did not start in 1979 with the Soviet invasion, but is rooted in

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historical processes of state formation and ultimately a crisis in the identity and capacity of the state. Peace building and reconstruction need to be based upon an understanding not only of the issues around which the conflict became politicised (eg ethnicity and religion) but also on the prior trend towards a failure of governance.¹ The core problem remains the nature of state–society relations and how to support the emergence of a strong state which is dependent on society. This requires aid actors both to think historically and to plan ahead over the long term.

Levels and linkages

It is misleading to talk about ‘the Afghan conflict’. There are multiple conflicts, which together form a regional conflict system of interconnected zones of instability including Kashmir, Tajikistan and the Ferghana valley. The vertical linkages within this volatile conflict system span the global, regional, national and local levels. For example, localised conflicts over water and grazing rights may become entwined with political rivalries between district level commanders and this in turn reverberates with conflicts at the national and regional levels. In a similar fashion, efforts by US and British troops to track down remnants of Al-Qaida and Taliban forces have become entangled with localised conflicts.² Rather than asking simply how aid interacts with the dynamics of peace, a more nuanced analysis leads us towards an examination of which particular types of interventions, at which particular times, affect the different levels and dimensions of the conflict system.

Conflict and transformation

The Afghan crisis has undergone several phases and has mutated over time. Conflict has not been simply about breakdown. Wars are sites of innovation, leading to the creation of new forms of legitimacy and protection.³ Conflict and struggle have historically been essential for the advancement of peoples on the margins and one could argue that minorities have advanced their position as a result of the conflict. War has transformed institutions and social structures, leading for instance to the forging of new relationships between the bazaar and the countryside. Aid strategies therefore need to be built on an appreciation of the fact that society has moved on, and it is neither possible, nor desirable, to recreate the status quo ante.

Doing well out of war⁴

Conflict clearly has had its beneficiaries. During the second decade of the war Afghanistan became a transport and marketing corridor for a flourishing illicit economy based upon opium and smuggled consumer goods. Economic agendas have become increasingly important and incentive systems have developed in which warlords and profiteers have a vested interest in the continuation of violent conflict. Conflict entrepreneurs deploy ‘top down’ violence to control markets and create a monopoly of predation. The poor and vulnerable, because of a lack

of alternatives, are forced to engage in bottom up (or subaltern) violence, to secure a livelihood. Understanding the 'market distortions' and incentive systems that have been created around organised violence is an important starting point for developing peace-building strategies—aid may have negative or positive impacts on the incentive systems fuelling top down and bottom up violence.

Legacies of conflict and the politics of peace

There is unlikely to be a smooth transition from war to peace. Old conflicts will continue (for example centre–regional tensions) and new ones emerge (for instance land conflicts related to returnees). In contemporary conflicts in which adaptive and relatively stable social systems emerge, one sees a blurring of the distinctions between war and peace.⁵ The Afghan war has been characterised by a complex, shifting geography of violence and relative peace. It is an oversimplification in any event habitually to associate violence with disorder and peace with the return of order. Violent resistance may ultimately have positive social outcomes—the growing assertiveness of historically excluded groups such as the Hazaras may be one example. Conversely 'peace' may be associated with particular political agendas, and in the interests of dominant groups—'national reconciliation', promoted by the Najibullah regime for instance, or the 'security' brought by the Taliban could not bring lasting and equitable peace.

These are some of the basic realities that must be factored into conflict resolution, peace building and reconstruction, otherwise they are unlikely to succeed. The policy objective cannot be analysed simply as 'peace' or 'ending the war'—it must involve the transformation of the institutions, networks and incentive systems—regionally, nationally and locally—which caused and perpetuate the Afghan conflict system.⁶

Aid and peace building

For the purpose of this article, peace building is defined as:

Local or structural efforts that foster or support those social, political and institutional structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful co-existence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence or continuation of violence.⁷

This can be distinguished from peace making, which is concerned with political, diplomatic and sometimes military interventions directed at bringing warring parties to agreement. This conceptualisation of peace building is based on the following assumptions. First, human security involves more than military and policing issues. Second, peace building processes can be supported in the midst of war as well as in societies emerging from conflict. Third, such processes occur simultaneously at different levels or 'tracks', ranging from the individual, to the community, to the societal levels. Fourth, peace building can be seen not only as a discrete activity but as the impact of any activity on a particular set of relations—in this case peace and conflict dynamics. It is viewed as a lens (like gender) through which aid agencies can assess the outcomes and impacts of

policies and programmes.

Reflecting wider shifts in thinking and policy, there has been a growing interest in Afghanistan on the aid–conflict–peace nexus. It has been argued that both development and humanitarian aid have been reconceptualised as tools for promoting global security—referred to by Mark Duffield as the securitisation of aid.⁸ In Afghanistan, while there is some agreement about the need for aid programmes to be conflict sensitive, ie to work effectively ‘in’ conflict, more hotly contested is the question of whether a more proactive approach of working ‘on’ conflict should be adopted. During the late 1990s aid donors, through the Strategic Framework process, increasingly saw aid as an instrument for building peace. Moreover before 11 September 2001 there was a growing realisation that reconstruction and institution building needed to precede and act as a catalyst for political agreements.⁹ These debates on aid and peace building have become even more germane with the fall of the Taliban. As Boyce notes, aid is delivered into a political environment and inevitably effects incentive systems one way or another:

Aid affects not only the size of the economic pie and how it is sliced but also the balance of power among the competing actors and the rules of the game by which they compete ... the political impacts of aid can help to decide whether the peace endures or war resumes.¹⁰

While the ‘maximalists’ argue that aid should be consciously used as an instrument of peace building, ‘humanitarian minimalists’ question the broadening of aid’s mandate.¹¹ They argue that this inevitably leads to the distortion of humanitarian mandates and principles, particularly those of neutrality and impartiality.¹² Rather than being coherent with wider political objectives, humanitarian aid should be kept separate and distinct from them—both for ethical (humanitarian mandates) and pragmatic reasons—aid does not have the leverage to get to grips with the fundamentally political dynamics of contemporary conflicts. It might be argued that donor governments, in expecting aid instruments to support peace building processes in Afghanistan are expecting a child to do the job of an adult.¹³

To sum up this section, a number of points can be made in relation to aid and peace building in Afghanistan. First, the minimalists tend to assume (and promote) a clear distinction between humanitarian and development actors and modalities. In practice, aid agencies are likely to be simultaneously providing a mixture of humanitarian-, rehabilitation- and development-orientated assistance, in partnership with a range of actors including central government, regional authorities, local commanders and community-based *shuras*. At the very least, there will be a need to ensure that aid (both humanitarian and development assistance) does not undercut peace building efforts and may complement other policy instruments attempting to build structural stability.

Second, debates on aid and peace building have largely been of a normative nature. There is surprisingly limited empirical evidence to back up the claims and counter-claims of the minimalists and maximalists. We still know very little about the interactions between aid and the dynamics of violence. The more ambitious the objectives the more difficult they are to measure and the more

ambiguous and open to challenge they are. In addition to the technical problems of attribution, time frames and levels of analysis, there is the political problem mentioned above of how one understands and defines peace. These challenges are accentuated in Afghanistan, where there has been limited research and reliable data is almost non-existent. Therefore policies and programming strategies are rarely based upon strong empirical evidence about what works or does not work.

Third, international studies of peace-building and reconstruction packages highlight the gap between the rhetoric and pledges of the international community and the reality in terms of delivery on the ground.¹⁴ This pattern is likely to be replicated in Afghanistan unless there is the institutional capacity and political will to back up the pledges with sustained action.

Finally, our focus on aid and peace building runs the risk of being too 'aid-centric' and thus exaggerating the importance of aid. Aid is unlikely to be a leading edge in a peace process and is usually the 'junior partner' in relation to other policy instruments—this is certainly likely to be the case in the post-Taliban scenario. Therefore, debates on the role of aid in building peace need to be tempered with a sense of realism and proportionality.

A history of aid, conflict and peace building in Afghanistan

In order to understand the contemporary role of aid in Afghanistan it is important to appreciate the history of aid before and during the conflict. The following section provides a summary of the different phases of aid policy and programming in Afghanistan and examines the interactions between aid, conflict and peace building.¹⁵ It is posited that, in parallel with different phases of the conflict, there were three more-or-less distinct 'generations' of aid strategy: a 'first generation' of humanitarian relief, a 'second generation' of developmental relief and rehabilitation and finally a 'third generation' of peace building and human rights.¹⁶

Pre-war aid

External funding to maintain internal political stability and influence came initially through a British subsidy but as the twentieth century evolved competitive support between Soviet and US interests came to be a key feature of Afghan state finances.¹⁷ Afghanistan became a 'rentier' state with external finance playing an increasing role in funding domestic expenditure. This meant that the ruling elite was never forced to develop domestic accountability through internally derived revenue.¹⁸ By the 1960s foreign aid accounted for more than 40% of the state budget. Aid enabled a fractious dynasty to maintain its precarious rule, but it also contributed to the creation of new elites who emerged from aid-funded schools and the bureaucracy.¹⁹

State-led modernisation programmes, funded by foreign aid, contributed to a bifurcation of the Afghan economy and society which Rubin (1995) characterises as society split between a rural, largely subsistence economy and an urban economy dependent on a state that in turn drew most of its income from links to the international state system and market.²⁰

The alms pipeline: aid in the cold war years

Virtually all Western development programmes were terminated in Afghanistan after the Soviet occupation at the end of 1979. However, the Russians continued to provide considerable resources and subsidies to the urban areas under their control, leading to an accentuated state dependence on foreign aid.²¹

The Western-backed aid programme was a response to massive humanitarian need, but also became entangled with cold war and post-cold war political agendas. The delivery of humanitarian aid mirrored to a great extent the system of brokerage that developed around the arms pipeline to resistance groups. In the 1980s refugee and cross-border programmes were seen by many as the non-lethal component of aid to the Afghan resistance.²² The refugee camps became a rear base for the Mujaheddin, and refugees had to register with one of the seven political/military parties approved by the Pakistani government.

Until 1988 both the UN and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were constrained by sovereignty issues from providing aid in Mujaheddin-held areas. Therefore NGOs became the 'vehicles of choice' for a semi-covert, cross-border relief operation. This was linked to the broader military strategy of keeping the civilian population inside Afghanistan to provide support to the Mujaheddin. There was considerable secrecy as to the involvement of bilateral donors and NGOs were seen as convenient middlemen, obscuring the original source of funding. This dilution of accountability standards probably contributed to the slow rate of professionalisation among NGOs involved in cross-border operations.²³ Eastern Afghanistan tended to be the main recipient of humanitarian assistance, because of close proximity to Peshawar and agencies' political ties to local commanders connected with the dominant Mujaheddin parties. Aid agencies were in the main based in Peshawar and Islamabad and this persisted throughout the conflict so that assistance programmes were always planned and managed at a 'step removed' from Afghanistan.

Aiding violence?

The 'first generation' of aid programming in Afghanistan consisted primarily of humanitarian relief, much of it in the form of food aid. While aid mitigated humanitarian distress it also inadvertently (and in some cases consciously²⁴) followed the political, economic and social fault lines of the conflict.

Politically motivated opposing flows of aid accentuated the bifurcation of Afghan society and strengthened unaccountable elites.²⁵ Western aid was part of a conscious strategy to undermine the communist government. By avoiding official structures and working with commanders at the local level, NGOs inevitably accentuated national-regional tensions and legitimised military strongmen. Access depended on accepting the legitimacy and control of Mujaheddin groups in rural areas. The pattern of distribution reflected political ties and proximity rather than absolute humanitarian need. Consequently urban populations controlled by the government and populations in the central highlands were largely bypassed in favour of populations in the east.

Systematic patterns of aid manipulation developed, particularly with regard to

food aid, which was easier to monetise. The relationships forged between aid agencies and commanders were prone to corruption and political favouritism. Liberal distributions of US wheat were made to resistance commanders,²⁶ and aid convoys were taxed by various armed groups at check-posts. Some donors were reported to have accepted 'wastage levels' of up to 40% on cross-border programmes.²⁷ The aid and arms pipelines provided the capital which subsequently led to the expansion of smuggling and other businesses.²⁸ Humanitarian assistance, it has been argued also led to a 'culture of dependency' in both urban and rural populations as food production in Afghanistan fell by half to two-thirds.²⁹

A solidarity position—which involved unconditional sympathy for freedom fighters—eroded the humanitarian principles of impartiality and neutrality and affected the ability of NGOs to make critical judgements—even more so as they became deeply infiltrated by resistance party agents.³⁰ Aid agencies, for example, chastised the Kabul government's abuse of human rights but remained largely silent about Mujaheddin atrocities.³¹ NGOs were similarly silent on the issue of women's rights; as Donini argues, they tended to accept without testing conventional wisdom about access to women and their basic rights. Therefore, to an extent ngos became the conscious agents of political interests.³² Peace building at this time was a taboo subject for humanitarians.³³

Aid in the Post-cold war years

Aid in a fragmenting state

By the early 1990s the political effort of the UN had lapsed and since the political and strategic stakes were unclear, humanitarianism emerged as an all-round response to state collapse and protracted conflict.³⁴ The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Assistance (UNOCA) and Operation Salam resulted in a substantial increase in the resources being provided inside Afghanistan.³⁵ It also played a critical role in 'opening up' Afghanistan to humanitarian assistance.³⁶ As a result of the UNOCA operation, aid was delivered both to Mujaheddin- and government-held areas and the principle of 'humanitarian encirclement', ie delivering aid from a variety of entry points in neighbouring countries, led to a wider geographical spread of aid programmes.

In rural areas a 'second generation' aid strategy emerged with agencies moving towards rehabilitation and developmental relief. This period might be characterised as a shift from solidarity to service delivery. NGOs sought to disengage from the privileged relationships built with particular commanders during the *jihad* years. A number of agencies experimented with local institutional development approaches, through district or village-based *shuras* .³⁷ Attempts were made to professionalise, improve aid management and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The early 1990s saw the development of several NGO co-ordination mechanisms,³⁸ a UN-induced growth of Afghan NGOs (part of the process of 'Afghanisation'³⁹) and the development of new programmes in the west and north.

Many of the principal features of the contemporary aid regime were

established during this period. The primary actors within the aid system were the official aid donors,⁴⁰ United Nations agencies,⁴¹ the International Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement and NGOs.⁴² The architecture of aid in Afghanistan was extremely complex and heterogeneous, involving a range of different actors and diverse co-ordination mechanisms that developed in an *ad hoc* and often competitive fashion. The aid community used the motif of the 'failed state' to assume and justify its role as a 'surrogate government'. Given its fractured (and sometimes fractious) nature and the lack of substantive Afghan involvement at a policy level within the aid system,⁴³ the challenges of improving co-ordination and accountability have been central to debates on aid effectiveness from the early 1990s to the present day.

Beyond relief: development on the periphery?

Attempts to discern patterns and trends in Afghanistan are fraught with dangers. Empirical data, where they exist, are of questionable reliability and, because the context is so variegated and changeable, generalisations have limited validity. However, one can detect some overall patterns in terms of aid's interactions with conflict and peace dynamics during this period.

First, progress was made in ensuring aid did 'no harm'. A combination of factors reduced the likelihood that aid would fuel conflict. An overall reduction in aid flows, the retreat from the solidarity positions of the 1980s and improvements in the management, monitoring and evaluation of aid all significantly reduced the magnitude and proportion of aid leakage.⁴⁴ More NGOs began to set up field offices inside Afghanistan. This both contributed to the improved quality of aid programming and boosted the protection role of agencies.

During this period agricultural production increased, thanks in the main to greater stability in rural areas, but also because of aid programmes, particularly in the de-mining and agriculture sectors. The Mine Action Programme for Afghanistan (MAPA) is often considered the best in the world.⁴⁵ Aid projects which provided support in a range of areas, including *karez*,⁴⁶ cleaning, road building, arable and livestock farming, small enterprise development and community forestry, helped support livelihoods, boost the local economy and perhaps reduced locally based conflicts over resource competition. Such activities did not 'bring peace' but they did play a role in supporting community coping strategies and providing alternatives to the war economy.

The experience gained during this period also exposed the limitations of a project-based, developmental approach in collapsed state conflicts. Going to scale and achieving sustainable outcomes were practically impossible in the absence of any institutions above the village level. Agencies experimented with district-level *shuras*, but most were project-created and dependent on external support and finance. The failure of drug substitution programmes and the 'alternative development' strategy were symptomatic of this problem. Project-based interventions failed to address poppy cultivation in a holistic way and therefore any individual successes were small-scale and transient.⁴⁷

While improvements were made in terms of 'conflict proofing' projects, there were still perverse side-effects.⁴⁸ High-input, highly visible relief programmes in

urban areas, such as that of the World Food Programme in Kabul, were most at risk of fuelling tensions. It has been argued, for instance, that they were prone to corruption with food aid feeding the *wakils*⁴⁹ clientalist networks. Other perverse effects included market distortions and substitution, effects with aid projects replacing local responsibility for welfare matters.

At the national level the fragmented aid strategy tended to mirror the growing fragmentation and regionalisation of the Afghan economy. Increasingly Kabul became an economic backwater with a chronically poor and aid-dependent population, while 'development', either through the illicit economy or supported by aid projects, occurred on the periphery. Regional centres gradually became more integrated into the economies of neighbouring countries. Aid was not the primary centrifugal force powering this dynamic, but it most likely reinforced the trend towards regionalisation.⁵⁰

Aid in the Taliban years

The emergence of the Taliban placed new obstacles in the way of humanitarian programmes. Taliban edicts, especially those regarding women, contradicted international principles and made it impossible for many programmes to reach their intended beneficiaries. This period was also marked by ongoing tensions over humanitarian access and principles. The emergence of the Taliban and concerns about drugs and terrorism led to the 're-internationalisation' of the crisis.⁵¹ UN-imposed sanctions introduced in 1999 and 2000 heightened tensions between the international community and the Taliban.

During a period when operating conditions were becoming increasingly difficult and funding levels were dwindling,⁵² an ambitious attempt to reform the peacekeeping and humanitarian programmes was launched in the form of the Strategic Framework (SF) process. This marked a 'third generation' of aid strategies in which human rights and peace building were increasingly emphasised alongside humanitarian concerns and the diplomatic process. New conditionalities were placed on aid in the belief that they could induce behavioural change within the Taliban on issues such as gender, human rights, peace and drugs. Therefore the late 1990s were marked by a growing 'repoliticisation' of aid reflecting the emergence of new Western concerns and interests.

Even though there was broad agreement on foreign policy objectives,⁵³ how these were translated in practice differed significantly. For instance, there was no single UN body with a unified mandate and policy towards Afghanistan.⁵⁴

Peace building: a radical new agenda for aid?

The following section, which examines the interactions between aid, conflict and peace building, is divided into two parts. The SF, which provided the overall policy framework for peace building in Afghanistan is analysed first, and this is followed by an examination of programme and project level interventions.

The Strategic Framework

In January 1997, at an aid meeting in Ashgabad, Jan Pronk, the Dutch Foreign Minister argued forcefully for an expanded role for aid, in which it would be used to promote peace.⁵⁵ Pronk envisaged a more radical role for the humanitarian operation of the UN, whose objectives had shifted during the course of the conflict from gaining access, to humanitarian encirclement and finally, as now proposed, to promoting peace. While the SF is discussed in greater detail in other articles in this issue, the focus here will be on the influence of the SF on the debates and practice relating to aid and peace building. The SF was designed to promote greater coherence between the assistance and political wings of the UN and its partner agencies, in the interests of more effectively promoting peace and stability. It aimed to promote and mutually reinforce the three pillars of peace, aid and rights.

It was based on a number of 'maximalist' assumptions about the role of aid in relation to the conflict and the wider international response. First, it was assumed that aid could provide significant incentives and disincentives that could modulate the behaviour of actors in the conflict. Second, it assumed that the framework would ensure extensive system coherence and interagency co-ordination. This would ensure that carrots and sticks could be applied consistently at different levels of the system. The SF would play a managerial role, like a surrogate government, co-ordinating and allocating different types of resources to promote the three pillars of the framework. Third, it was assumed that the political and aid strategies could complement one another. The SF would act as a buffer mechanism to prevent the 'bad' politicisation that had characterised the relationship between aid and politics in the 1980s and ensure that aid objectives were not corrupted or co-opted by particular political interests.

Each of these three assumptions can be questioned in the light of subsequent experience. First, as Van Brabant and Killock argued in an OECD/DAC study,⁵⁶ the international community failed to understand incentive systems within the Taliban. It is difficult to assess the impacts of international actions on an organisation as opaque and little understood as the Taliban. However, it has been argued that a policy of negative incentives or 'sticks without carrots', which included missile diplomacy, one-sided sanctions and aid conditionalities only served to isolate the Taliban, strengthened the hand of the hard liners and pushed them into closer relationships with radical Islamic groups. Whether there were opportunities for 'smarter' forms of engagement—for instance, over international recognition, which was one of the few forms of leverage the international community had, or responding to the poppy edict—is debatable, but it is clear that aid had only limited potential as a lever for change. In spite of this, with the political process faltering, aid became by default the primary form of international engagement. Confrontational conditionalities appeared to do little except further entrench the position of the Taliban. They were based on an unrealistic assessment of the importance of aid in relation to other resource flows driving the war economy. If one compares, for example, the value of aid to Afghanistan (roughly \$300 million per annum⁵⁷) with the \$2.5 billion generated in 1999 through cross-border trade between Afghanistan and Pakistan, it is clear why

threatening to turn off the aid tap had a limited effect.⁵⁸ In many respects, the aims of an under-resourced and fragmented aid system were well beyond its grasp.

Perversely, conditionalities, which did little to change the Taliban, undermined the effectiveness of the assistance programme. Preventing longer-term life-sustaining or capacity-building activities (something that was ill-defined and inconsistently defined by various donors) under the name of 'principled programming', meant that agencies were unable to provide vital institutional support in areas like health or education. Arbitrary quota systems imposed from headquarters on access to women only made it more difficult to run health, education or food security programmes which benefited both women and men.

The limitations of the second assumption about system coherence and effective aid co-ordination were exposed by an intrinsically competitive aid system, a feature that was made worse by the growing bilateralisation of donor policy during this period (see below). A top down managerialist framework was clearly not the appropriate model for such a diverse group of organisations operating in a complex and changeable environment. Therefore the SF was undermined from above by donors and from within as a result of inter-UN agency conflicts and from below as a result of resistance from NGOs. Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), for example, distanced itself from the process, arguing that it threatened its independence of action.

The final assumption about complementarity between politics and aid proved to be deeply problematic. The SF was politicised by donor governments, which in effect pushed the aid community into a position of *de facto* political opposition to the Taliban. Far from insulating aid from politicisation, the SF made the process easier.⁵⁹ As Duffield *et al* argue, in spite of its ambitious objectives, in practice aid and politics grew more distant and fractious under the SF.⁶⁰

Therefore, while the SF may have been an innovative and ambitious attempt to move beyond 'business as usual', its success, particularly in terms of creating a more conducive policy environment for peace building was limited. Whether international conflict resolution efforts with their consent-based models can ever get to grips with the dynamics of regional conflict systems may be questioned.⁶¹ However, for such efforts to stand a chance, a basic precondition must be strong and consistent international backing for such a process; the absence of this in Afghanistan undermined the SF from the outset.

Programme/project level peace building

In spite of (or perhaps because of) the lack of a conducive environment at the policy level, many aid agencies continued to experiment with community-based peace building. A series of workshops on peacebuilding,⁶² Mary Anderson's ongoing 'do no harm' project, the ground-breaking work of organisations like Norwegian Church Aid and Habitat, and growing donor interest⁶³ together helped break down the lingering taboo connected to peace building among the aid community. This translated into a growing number of projects and programmes which had explicit or implicit peace-building objectives.⁶⁴

Broadly, approaches could be divided into two categories: first, direct

approaches which had an explicit or sole focus on peace building and, second, indirect approaches in which peace building was mainstreamed into ongoing relief and development work. The first approach represented a minority position. Norwegian Church Aid has been the principal international agency advocating this approach. It supported a number of Afghan organisations, including Cooperation for Peace and Unity (CPAU) in activities ranging from peace advocacy and research, training in conflict resolution and peace education.⁶⁵ The second approach includes a more diverse group of actors and activities. They range from 'days of tranquility' for immunisation, eg UNICEF's national immunisation days, to community development/good governance programmes, eg UNDP PEACE initiative and Habitat community fora, to incorporating peace messages into the media, eg BBC New Home, New Life. While there is no uniform understanding of peace building, a common thread connecting these activities is the view that aid may, primarily at the individual and community level support alternatives to war—including ideas, values, livelihoods, forms of governance and leadership.

Such an approach assumes that peace building can occur from the 'bottom up', in other words a 'Somalia model' as opposed to the more top down 'Cambodia model'.⁶⁶ The arena for peace building is located at the level of the community and 'civil society'. It is assumed that aid can affect the costs and benefits of violence and may play a moderating role on domestic actors' calculus. An emphasis is placed on 'positive engagement' as opposed to negative conditionalities. Providing aid in a 'smart' and conflict sensitive way, it is surmised, can influence the incentives which drive bottom up violence. The UNDP PEACE programme, for instance, may promote a process of 'shadow development' in which supporting alternative economic opportunities and governance structures, somehow subverts or limit the power of the warlords. As well as conflict-proofing their programmes, agencies believe they can 'conflict-proof' communities by making them less vulnerable to the interests and agendas of the conflict entrepreneurs.⁶⁷

It is also assumed that the effects of such programmes go beyond the community level—micro interventions that influence 'little politics' at the intra- and inter-community levels will have cumulative effects and influence 'big politics' at the macro level. Finally, aid agencies are assumed to have a comparative advantage as they can play a vital connecting role between the top leadership (with whom the UN Special Mission for Afghanistan (UNSMA) is concerned) and the grassroots.⁶⁸ In a conflict in which mid-level actors (such as traditional leaders or the educated classes) have been steadily denuded, this role should not be underrated.

What have been the net effects of such programmes? Since there have been few systematic studies⁶⁹ and no longitudinal research to plot outcomes over time, very little is known about impacts—the same can also be said about our understanding of the impacts of aid on livelihoods.

Although one should keep a sense of proportion about the impacts of aid—on either peace or development processes—neither should one underestimate its importance. The aid community has played a critical role, both in practical and symbolic terms over the past two decades of the conflict. Aid, after agriculture, is

the second largest sector of the licit economy. Around 25 000 Afghans were employed with aid agencies before 11 September and the Swedish Committee was the largest single employer in Afghanistan. In a country decimated by the 'brain drain', aid agencies have in a sense held in 'cold storage' a potential source of leadership for the future. Particularly now, one hopes the 'social entrepreneurs' who have been nurtured by aid agencies will play a critical role in the transition from war to peace.

Studies have identified examples of 'good practice' where aid agencies have achieved positive outcomes through practical interventions, which integrate people across factional lines like markets and trading networks, common property resources such as irrigation or grazing regimes, education programmes and the media.⁷⁰ Evaluations of the PEACE and the Habitat community fora programmes highlight their positive impacts on local governance.⁷¹

It is also important not to undervalue the impact of aid on more intangible factors like ideas, relationships, social energy and individual leadership. Aid agency interventions, in addition to their economic effects, may promote cross-cutting ties (or bridging social capital) between social groups, counteracting the social compacting (or bonding social capital), which warlords create and use to mobilise groups.⁷² Ideas and the meanings that people attach to events, institutions, policies and motives are important. The *madrasas*⁷³ from which the Taliban emerged responded to a hunger for social identity. Aid agencies may also be important players in the battle for hearts and minds—sometimes in a negative sense as perhaps during the *jihad* years. Education programmes,⁷⁴ and series such as BBC New Home, New Life, are more positive examples of how aid may engage in the battle for ideas. Although it is difficult to assess the impacts of such interventions, this should not lead to them being undervalued (and consequently under-resourced).

Equally, one should not assume that bottom up peace-building approaches will automatically have a cumulative effect. Agencies have tended to avoid working with the authorities at the national level and efforts in all sectors have remained highly localised, not to say fragmented. Moreover, such community-based approaches tend to overestimate the capacity of 'civil society' to have an influence on an unaccountable leadership, which came to power with the gun rather than through consent. As economic agendas have become increasingly important, the capacity of civil actors to act as a countervailing force on warring groups has probably diminished. 'Traditional' conflict resolution mechanisms at the community level developed in response to a very different set of problems to the ones faced by communities today.

Conflict resolution approaches also tend to assume a clear division between pro-war and pro-peace constituencies, or between a criminalised war economy and a licit peace economy. As already mentioned, network war dissolves conventional distinctions between people, army and government.⁷⁵ The networks which support war cannot easily be separated out and criminalised in relation to the networks that characterise peace. For instance, the *hawalla*⁷⁶ system is part of the war economy (used by conflict entrepreneurs to fund the war machine), of the black economy (used by profiteers such as the transport mafia) and of the survival or coping economy (used to support the livelihoods of much of the

population). The criticism that aid agencies who use the *hawalla* system are inadvertently feeding the war economy ignores the complexity of the processes at work.

There are also ethical concerns in encouraging the development of alternative centres of power to warring groups. Agencies may be straddling a fine line between promoting local constituencies for peace and fomenting political opposition.⁷⁷ Programmes were tolerated by the Taliban so long as they were small and inconsequential. This problem evidently predates the Taliban. Particularly since the Communist government, there has been deep suspicion within Afghan society of any attempts at social engineering.

What lessons can be learned? Looking backwards to move forwards

Conflict, aid and peace building

This article has emphasized the need for a sense of proportion about aid's ability to influence conflict and peace dynamics; one should not overestimate either the negative or positive impacts of aid. Recent studies argue that aid providers should be more modest about the influence they can hope to exercise on a conflict through aid.⁷⁸ The aid system has not been able to deliver its welfare functions in Afghanistan, never mind bring peace. The Marshall Plan idea, which gained growing support in the months preceding 11 September was perhaps the culmination of this learning process; if aid is to have a significant impact then significant resources must be brought to the table.

A second key lesson is the crucial importance of timing. During the course of the conflict there may have been critical thresholds or windows of opportunity when the conflict may have been more amenable to external efforts at mediation. With hindsight one can identify a number of missed opportunities. 1992 was perhaps the most obvious example, when there was seemingly an 'international tailwind'⁷⁹ behind a negotiated settlement; however, it was not backed up with substantial support by the major and regional powers. There has been a tendency to support the idea of elections, interim mechanisms, while at the same time making little provision for the institutional support that such ideas require.⁸⁰

Third, the importance of an historical perspective has been emphasised. This means analysing the accumulated lessons of three generations of aid strategies, particularly with the current danger of a renewed militarisation of aid distribution in a context of declining security. A sudden and massive influx of international aid runs the risk of exacerbating rather than dampening conflicts and may become an incentive to fight rather than a stimulus for peace.⁸¹ It also means looking further back into Afghan history and examining the role that foreign aid played in creating a rentier elite and a state that failed to develop a social contract with its citizens. It is extremely important that the 'peace dividend', if it comes, does not go to a limited group of 'shareholders'.

The political framework of aid

Although the focus of this article has been on aid, one must look beyond the

policy choices of aid agencies to understand why aid does or does not 'work'. The problems are not essentially managerial ones. Questions about aid co-ordination, technical standards and principled programming, though important, are essentially second order questions. The SF consistently ran into problems, as the first order questions, which boiled down to sustained and consistent international backing, in other words 'political will', were never adequately addressed. Of all the great powers the USA has been the most inconsistent and inattentive in its policies towards the region.⁸² Overcoming US exceptionalism is likely to be the key factor in determining the success or failure of a UN-led peace-building process in Afghanistan. Ironical though it may be, given Afghanistan's history as a rentier state, the clear lesson of the recent past is that, without a strong international guarantor, the regional dynamics of the conflict cannot be addressed. In practice this means sustained US backing for the UN, otherwise the negative dynamics of the war economy and the competing interests of regional powers will reassert themselves.

The influence of donors on aid

Donor policies have been highlighted as an important constraint on aid agency practice. For the past two decades aid in Afghanistan has consisted, in the main, of humanitarian assistance. Although second and third generation strategies aimed to go 'beyond relief', the quality and quantity of funding was a serious constraint.⁸³ During the 1990s there was a growing dissonance between the ambitions of aid donors and the reality of a fractured, under-resourced aid system constrained by donor conditionalities on the one side and Taliban edicts on the other.

Afghanistan is replete with examples of 'bad donorship' and a number of studies have been critical of donor performance.⁸⁴ These failings are part political and part organisational, although evidently the two are interlinked. Donor governments have attempted to pursue particular (non aid-related) interests through their aid programmes. This manifests itself in divisions within the Afghan Support Group,⁸⁵ the growing bilateralisation of aid and increasing donor activism, which saw greater donor interest in the day-to-day affairs of the UN and funding partners.

The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) in effect became a public relations exercise with little integrated planning or prioritisation, leaving donors to cherry pick or ignore it.⁸⁶ In 1998 57% of funding came from outside the appeal. Getting funding depended primarily on the agency-donor relationship, not on whether or not a project was in the appeal. Moreover, with its one-year time horizon, the CAP was the wrong tool for aid agencies attempting to go beyond relief. A service delivery orientation and logistics, and cash flow logic, tended to work against more experimental development-orientated approaches. As one donor honestly admitted in Peshawar in 1998: 'history will judge us all fairly harshly'. However, there are also examples of 'good donorship' which might be examined more closely and replicated. The support of the Norwegians, for instance, in the area of peace building led to many examples of good practice in the field.⁸⁷

The role of aid agencies: putting their own house in order

All failings within the aid system should not, however, be placed at the door of the donors. Many of the problems highlighted in this article are rooted in aid agency behaviour and practice. Based on the lessons of the past, the following factors are likely to have a determining influence on whether aid fuels violence or builds peace in the 'new order'.⁸⁸

Conflict sensitivity. Where aid agencies have lacked conflict sensitivity they have inadvertently increased tensions or fuelled open conflict. A range of factors appear to be important in developing a greater mindfulness of conflict and peace dynamics, including: political sensitivity to equity and proportion in project benefits; greater flexibility in project design and implementation; monitoring and evaluation which includes some form of peace and conflict impact assessment (PCIA); a clear ethical framework; strong linkages with society; and an ongoing field presence.⁸⁹ A clear lesson from the past is that agencies with weak or distorted accountability and an inability to demonstrate impact or effectiveness in a reasonably rigorous manner are more vulnerable to co-option into the agendas of others.

Values and accountability. While much work has been done on principles and codes of conduct in recent years, one suspects that much of this is just 'mood music'. It does not get to the heart of the problem, which is a foreign-dominated aid system that has had limited Afghan input at a policy level and has been only loosely accountable to the wider Afghan population. As Surkhe *et al* note: 'Over the past two decades, institutional culture and vested interests have developed around an aid model that is essentially external to the recipient state'.⁹⁰ The idea of a common fund was one innovation that could have forced greater coherence and accountability on the aid community. This, however, was rejected by agencies wishing to maintain their autonomy. The accountability gap has yet to be seriously addressed.

Projects and management for complexity. While the Afghan conflict has mutated and grown more complex over time, aid agencies, in their attempts to professionalise, have become more standardised in their approach. As they grow ever more dependent on official aid, they are forced to adapt to donor requirements, including their log frames and monitoring and evaluation systems. This may not be unique to Afghanistan but the contradictions are particularly stark here—as the operating environment becomes increasingly 'messy' and conflict ridden aid agencies and donors seek security in its mirror image, by going to great lengths to codify, quantify and plan what is going to happen in the field.⁹¹

The SF was about architectural reform of the aid system but, in the end, as Duffield *et al* argue, it was the tunnel vision of the project system which won the day. Micro-level, project-focused interventions show a striking continuity over time and from area to area. The project system is resilient because it attempts to create certainty in an uncertain environment and it avoids the more difficult

challenge of change at the macro and meso levels. Clearly, the aid community will now need to change gear and move beyond projects.

Analysis and learning. As Cliffe and Luckham note, 'political analysis is not just an extra dimension of the complexity which has to be analyzed to get practical aid right, it becomes the overriding priority'.⁹² Many studies have highlighted the low standard of empirical analysis of aid actors in Afghanistan.⁹³ A range of factors has contributed to poor analysis and an inability to learn, including a lack of field presence, poor coordination and information sharing, a dearth of reliable data, the rapid turnover of staff, a concern with outputs rather than outcomes and impacts, and the use of recycled information. These factors together lead to faulty assumptions and the inaccurate framing of problems. Placing a higher premium on understanding (as well as doing) might prevent agencies from repeating some of the mistakes of the past.

Beyond relief? The limitations of a project-based, 'relief as delivery' approach have been highlighted in this article. A minimalist relief approach has been reinforced by restrictions on development activities and the CAP with its one-year funding horizon. Agencies have consequently been weaker in the area of capacity building than in service delivery. As the previously quoted donor commented in 1998: 'we are just tinkering at the limits of the governance challenge. I have a recurring nightmare of a peace agreement and a commitment of large sums of money being announced tomorrow'. Complementing project work with capacity building and advocacy interventions will be two additional challenges in the 'new order'.⁹⁴

Conclusions: towards a 'fourth generation' aid strategy?

For aid to achieve developmental or peace-building goals certain preconditions need to be in place. In the absence of a meaningful peace process, aid investments in protracted, regionalised conflicts are unlikely to have anything but transitory impacts. Whether the preconditions are now in place, it is too early to tell. Although military action has transformed the stalemate, there are still important continuities with the past. A clear lesson from the 1980s in Afghanistan is that the logic of war wins out every time over other concurrent policies, including diplomatic and humanitarian goals. Current policy appears still to be driven by particularist US interests with a focus on military objectives. The current pursuit of the war, with, for example, the USA arming militias in the south to fight remaining Al-Qaida and Taliban groups, runs the risk of endangering the peace. The international agenda for action must therefore go beyond a minimalist position of attempting to ensure the country no longer harbours terrorists.

While aid cannot be the leading edge in a peace process, it may play an important role in consolidating a fragile peace. If aid is to play such a role it cannot be a case of 'business as usual'. The evolving context will require a new 'fourth generation' aid strategy. Since the shape of the 'new order' is still unclear it is not possible to outline with any precision what this fourth generation strategy

might look like. However, it is evident that neither the 'Somali model', nor the 'Cambodia model' are by themselves appropriate. An 'Afghan model' would involve an optimal blend of top down and bottom up aid strategies. To pursue one without the other is likely to create the wrong kinds of incentives. An exclusive focus on bottom up approaches runs the risk of undermining central authority and reinforcing processes of regionalisation. On the other hand, a top down approach is likely to repeat the pattern of pre-war aid policies, leading to a 'rentier' state that is unaccountable to its citizens.

Top down strategies: the regional and national dimensions

First, aid actors will also need to develop strategy on a regional level. As Rubin *et al* have argued, the transformation of the conflict system will require responses which address problems such as state failure, growing poverty and radical Islam throughout the region.⁹⁵ Drugs are just one example of an issue that cannot be addressed exclusively at a country level.

Second, the basic precondition for lasting peace in Afghanistan is a strong, legitimate state with a monopoly of violence. What kind of state can emerge when a generation has grown up never having lived under an Afghan state? Picking up the thread of nation building where it was left off before the war is out of the question.⁹⁶ Aid policy is likely to have profound impacts on the future shape of the state and the economy, just as it has within the wider region. A neoliberal transition model in Central Asia has heightened inequalities and state–society tensions.⁹⁷ Aid policy must be geared towards relegitimising and building the capacity of the state. A macroeconomic framework for recovery will need to be developed which is conscious of conflict issues, for instance in dealing with issues such as urban bias, capital flight, inflation, and reaching the poorest and most marginalised.

Bottom up strategies; the local dimensions

The *loya jirga* process is the most potent example of a bottom up process which may help rebuild state–society relations. Aid strategies need to be conscious of how they can support such processes. In the short term humanitarian relief is likely to be critical both in terms of saving lives and also winning the peace. However, in the medium to longer term aid agencies will need to reconceptualise their programmes to make the switch towards longer-term livelihoods support and capacity building. This will mean building upon the fragile foundations already developed by those agencies which have experimented with approaches aiming to create alternatives to the war economy, rebuild social as well as physical infrastructure and help 'de-militarise' the mind.

In conclusion, the wrong kind of aid runs the danger of creating perverse incentives leading to renewed conflict. Aid donors and aid agencies must be more self critical and aware of the potentially negative effects of aid than they have been in the past. The challenge is less about discrete peace-building programmes than building in a heightened sensitivity to all aid policies and programmes. A continued priority will need to be placed on conflict prevention

and peace building. To meet the challenges of the 'new order' aid itself must change. This is likely to involve reconceptualising aid strategies and thinking beyond the local, beyond projects and beyond relief—and ultimately beyond aid, since sustainable peace and development will in the final analysis not be the result of development assistance, but of home-grown governance and Afghan entrepreneurship.

Notes

This paper is based upon the findings of three interrelated research projects conducted between 1997 and 2001: 'NGOs and peacebuilding' conducted by the University of Manchester/INTRAC, funded by DfID; 'Aid and conflict prevention' conducted with Haneef Atmar for International Alert; and 'Towards a politically informed humanitarian response to conflict' supported by ODI. I am grateful to colleagues from these three projects who contributed to many of the ideas contained in this paper. I would also like to thank Jawed Ludin, Jolyon Leslie, Andrew Wilder, Gareth Wardell and an anonymous reviewer for specific feedback on this article.

- ¹ L Cliffe & R Luckham, 'Complex political emergencies and the state: failure and the fate of the state', *Third World Quarterly*, 20 (1), 1999, pp 27–50.
- ² For example, in the six-day Operation Condor in May 2002 a somewhat bemused British marine commander commented 'There's a huge power struggle going on there at every level—there were a lot of warring tribal factions ... One village will say the village across the valley is al Qaeda but then that village will say the same thing [about the first]. The Afghans jump from one side to another; it is not clear cut'. M Turner, 'Under unusual fire during the six days of the Condor', *Financial Times Weekend*, 25–26 May 2002.
- ³ M Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: the Merging of Development and Security*, London: Zed Books, 2001.
- ⁴ A term borrowed from P Collier, 'Doing well out of war: an economic perspective', in M Berdhal & D M Malone (eds), *Greed and Grievance. Economic Agendas in Civil Wars*, London: Lynne Reinner.
- ⁵ See Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
- ⁶ See B Rubin, A Ghani, W Maley, A Rashid & O Roy, 'Afghanistan: reconstruction and peacemaking in a regional framework', Bern Centre for Peacebuilding, Swiss Peace Foundation, 2001.
- ⁷ Adapted from Bush (1996), cited in M Warner, *Discussion paper on conflict*, 1999. Unpublished Report. Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, DfID.
- ⁸ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
- ⁹ See Rubin *et al*, 'Afghanistan'.
- ¹⁰ J Boyce, 'Beyond good intentions: external assistance and peace building', in S Forman & S Patrick (eds), *Good Intentions. Pledges of Aid for Post Conflict Recovery*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2000.
- ¹¹ For a more extensive analysis of these schools of thought, see J Goodhand with P Atkinson, Conflict and aid: enhancing the peacebuilding impact of international engagement. A synthesis of findings from Afghanistan, Liberia and Sri Lanka, *International Alert*, 2001.
- ¹² For a good overview of this debate see S Jackson & P Walker, 'Depolarising the "broadened" and "back-to-basics" relief models', *Disasters*, 23 (2), 1999 pp 93–114.
- ¹³ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
- ¹⁴ See S Forman & S Patrick, *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for Post Conflict Recovery*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2000.
- ¹⁵ For more in-depth accounts see J Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies: Afghanistan study', IDPM, University of Manchester, Working Paper no 3, http://idpm.man.ac.uk/idpm/idpm_dp.htm#peace, 2000; and H Atmar & J Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan. What lessons can be learned?', *International Alert*, February, 2002.
- ¹⁶ It is recognized that in practice aid strategies were not as evolutionary or distinct as the generational theory implies. For example, during the 'third generation' most donor assistance still came out of humanitarian relief budget lines, much of it in the form of food aid. However, the model is useful in mapping out broad changes in the thinking and strategy of aid agencies during the course of the conflict. The idea of NGO generations was first developed by David Korten in D Korten, 'Third generation NGO strategies: a key to people-centred development', *World Development*, 15 (suppl), 1987, pp 145–159.
- ¹⁷ However, as noted by L Dupree, *Afghanistan*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980, p 766,

Afghanistan also received significant aid from Iran.

- ¹⁸ A Pain & J Goodhand, 'Afghanistan: current employment and socio-economic situation and prospects', International Labour Organisation, InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction, Working Paper 8, Geneva, March 2002.
- ¹⁹ B Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan. State formation and Collapse in the International System*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995, p 142.
- ²⁰ Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*. Dupree's, description, in *Afghanistan*, of the Western-sponsored Industrial Development Bank of Afghanistan (IDBA) in the 1960s might well serve as a warning to international aid officials today: 'An increase in foreign loans meant a jump in total indebtedness ... What really disturbed some critics of the IDBA was the spectre of "neocolonialism" or "economic imperialism": a rise in internal investments without a solid knowledge of finance or government protection for those small-scale industries competing with cheap imports, combined with the need for external advisers, few equipped with the knowledge and understanding of, or sympathy with, local cultural patterns' (p 757).
- ²¹ Rubin, 2000 *op cit*, p 1792, 'The political economy of war and peace in Afghanistan', *World Development*, 28 (10), pp 1789–1803.
- ²² See, for instance, M Baitenmann, 'NGOs and the Afghan war: the politicisation of humanitarian aid', *Third World Quarterly*, 12 (1), 1990, pp 62–85: 'Much of the US aid has been an extension of the war effort, and NGOs have been used as the instruments of this policy' (p 76).
- ²³ N Nicholds & J Borton, 'The changing role of NGOs in the provision of relief & rehabilitation assistance: case study 1—Afghanistan/Pakistan', ODI, London, 1994.
- ²⁴ Baitenmann, 'NGOs and the Afghan war', for instance, distinguishes between solidarity NGOs linked to US right wing political interests who had conscious 'pro-war' agendas and more professional (and politically neutral) humanitarian organizations.
- ²⁵ Rubin, 2000, 'The political economy'.
- ²⁶ A Donini, 'United Nations coordination in complex emergencies. Lessons from Afghanistan, Mozambique and Rwanda', Humanitarianism and War Project, Brown University, Occasional Paper No 22, Boston, 1995, reports that on several occasions the UN was asked by USAID or the ISI to pre-position food in areas surrounding government-held cities so that the offensives against them could be stepped up.
- ²⁷ N Nicholds & Borton, 'The changing role of NGOs'. Moreover, as Donini, 'United Nations coordination in complex emergencies', notes '...the complicated web of complicity that united resistance party leaders—the ISI, Pakistani border guards, bona fide mujahedeen and nondescript bearded bandits—resulting in the siphoning off of large quantities of commodities, especially food aid, which was easier to "monetize"' (p 47).
- ²⁸ Rubin, 2000, p 1792, 'The political economy'.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.* The aid dependency critique can, however, be challenged and many studies show that households rarely become dependent on aid. In all but the most extreme cases of destitution, aid supplements rather than supplants existing survival strategies.
- ³⁰ A Donini, 'United Nations coordination in complex emergencies', p 46.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*
- ³² Baitenmann, 'NGOs and the Afghan war', p 82.
- ³³ A manifestation of the pro-war culture of many aid agencies during this period was the printing of primary school text books which had children learning literacy and numeracy by counting AK47s.
- ³⁴ B Rubin, 'Conflict and peace in Afghanistan', *Afghanistan Outlook*, Office of the UN Co-ordinator for Afghanistan, December 1999, p 89.
- ³⁵ N Nicholds & J Borton, 'The changing role of NGOs'.
- ³⁶ A Donini, E Dudley, & R Ockwell, 'Afghanistan. Coordination in a fragmented state', a Lessons Learned report prepared for the United Nations Department of Humanitarian Affairs, December 1996.
- ³⁷ A *shura* is a consultation or a council; principle or institution of Islamic government. Source: B Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*.
- ³⁸ The primary NGO coordination body was the Agency Coordination Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), formed in 1988. Before 11 September there were five NGO coordination bodies—ACBAR, SWABEC, ANCB, ICC, NCB—offering a range of services including strategic (advocacy, representation, policy debate and formulation), programme (information sharing, standard setting, surveying, etc) and technical support (postal, printing, etc). Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan', p 37.
- ³⁹ This process achieved mixed outcomes. UN support resulted in the rapid growth of Afghan NGOs (ANGOS) and by 1994 there were over 200 registered. However, few developed into robust organizations and many died when UN funding dried up. On the other hand, one of the main Afghan success stories has been the de-mining programme, which was handed over entirely and run very effectively by ANGOS.

- ⁴⁰ These include the bilateral state donors and multilateral intergovernmental donors. Of the former category in 2000 the USA was the largest single donor and the EU was the largest of the second category.
- ⁴¹ The main UN actors in terms of size are WFP, UNOCA, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNOPS, UNHCHS and FAO.
- ⁴² Currently, the NGO community can be divided into three broad categories: International, Afghan, and Islamic NGOs. Of all these categories, over 250 NGOs are members of one of the six NGO Co-ordination Bodies. If one includes the non-member NGOs, the number probably reaches 300. The ACBAR *Directory of Humanitarian Agencies Working for Afghans* 2000 covers 160 NGOs of all categories. From 17 countries, these NGOs, have 23 413 staff members on their payroll (22 377 Afghans, 705 Pakistanis and 331 expatriates) and their total expenditure between 1997 and 1999 amounted to US\$376.4 million (US\$120.5 million in 1997, US\$117.7 million in 1998 and US\$138.2 million in 1999). NGOs' 1999 budget came from the UN (33%), EU (20%), bilateral donors (20%), overseas international NGOs (20%) and others. In 1999, 91% of their budget was spent on Afghans inside Afghanistan and 9% on the refugee programmes outside the country. The largest among the above 160 NGOs seem to be the following with 73% of the total NGO staff and 75% of the total NGO budget in 1999. Atmar & J Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan'.
- ⁴³ See, for instance, A Surkhe, A Strand & K B Harpviken, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan. Part One, Lessons from Past Experience in Afghanistan*, Chr. Michelson Institute, Commissioned Report prepared for the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 January 2002.
- ⁴⁴ See Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies', for case studies of three NGOs—Afghan Development Association (ADA), CARE and Afghanaid.
- ⁴⁵ Surkhe *et al*, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan*, p 46.
- ⁴⁶ Underground, gravity-fed irrigation canal.
- ⁴⁷ See D Mansfield 'Alternative development in Afghanistan: the failure of quid pro quo', paper prepared for the International Conference on Alternative Development in drug control and co-operation, Feldafing, 17–22 September, August 2001. Mansfield argues that it is impossible to isolate drugs from the wider issue of governance in Afghanistan.
- ⁴⁸ Surkhe *et al*, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan*, argue that many of the practices in which aid colluded with violence continued into the early 1990s: 'the pattern from the mujadideen period in the early 1990s is that the humanitarians made deals with local commanders, sometimes as a last resort, to obtain security ... commanders that were strategically well placed on major access routes got a large share of the assistance as they were prioritised by aid organisations. Taxation of aid transport (at gunpoint if needed) was common as well. The result was a skewed distribution of aid, which undermined all principles of sound assistance by demonstrating that military power ultimately determined aid priorities and channels' (p 8).
- ⁴⁹ A community level official, often acting as the gatekeeper between communities and aid agencies.
- ⁵⁰ There is a danger that aid will play a similar role in contemporary Afghanistan. Assistance strategies which bypass central government and work directly with regional administrations controlled by warlords risk heightening tensions between the centre and the provinces.
- ⁵¹ M Duffield, N Leader & P Grossman, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan', Final Draft, Islamabad, Strategic Monitoring Unit, 2001 p11.
- ⁵² Between 1992 and 1999 the UN Annual Consolidated Appeals for assistance to Afghanistan received on average only 48% of their needs. In 1999 refugees in Kosovo and Afghanistan, respectively received \$207 and \$23 per person through the UN appeal.
- ⁵³ In the late 1990s there was general agreement, at least at a rhetorical level within the donor community, about the key policy objectives: peace through a negotiated settlement, respect for human rights, maintaining the integrity of aid and the security of aid staff, counter-narcotics, counter-terrorism and refugee return and integration. Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan', p 26.
- ⁵⁴ In 2001, as Rubin *et al* note, one could distinguish at least three distinct (and contradictory) policies towards the Afghan conflict. First, there was the UNSC, which, led by the USA and Russia, had imposed one-sided sanctions against the Taliban. Second, there was the UN Special Mission for Afghanistan (UN SMA) with its mandate to mediate between the Taliban and UF. The UNSC resolution 1333 undermined the ability of UN SMA to act as a neutral and impartial mediator. Third, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) has the mission of delivering humanitarian assistance to the Afghan population. UN OCHA, in the interests of aid delivery, has been willing to engage with the Taliban (and compromise principles according to its critics) to a greater extent than the other two UN bodies. Finally, there is a fourth UN body in the form of the UN Human Rights Commission which, through the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, reports on human rights violations. Rubin *et al*, 'Afghanistan', p 25.
- ⁵⁵ Duffield *et al*, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan', p 22.
- ⁵⁶ K Van Brabant & T Killock, *The Limits and Scope for the Use of Development Assistance Incentives*

and Disincentives for Influencing Conflict Situations: Case Study, Afghanistan, Paris: OECD/DAC, 1999.

- ⁵⁷ Gaining accurate figures on the total volume of aid to Afghanistan is extremely difficult for a number of reasons. First, the figures only include OECD countries—aid flows from Moslem countries, for example, are rarely accounted for. Second, there are often discrepancies between what donors report and what they actually deliver. Third, there is no reliable means of tracking the various sources and quantities of aid from Western and Islamic NGOs. Fourth, as aid goes through the different layers of the system, from, for example, back donors to the UN to NGOs, it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain the sources and the exact amount.
- ⁵⁸ Z F Naqvi, *Afghanistan–Pakistan Trade Relations*, Islamabad: World Bank, 1999. By 2000 it was estimated that the value of Afghanistan's exports and re-exports to Pakistan had dropped to \$1227 million. World Bank, 'Study report: Afghanistan's international trade relations with neighbouring countries', International conference on analytical foundations for assistance to Afghanistan, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2001. In addition to internally generated revenue, the Taliban benefited from substantial external support, which further lessened the potential leverage of humanitarian aid. See Human Rights Watch, 'Afghanistan. Crisis of impunity. The role of Pakistan, Russia, and Iran in fueling the civil war', New York: Human Rights Watch.
- ⁵⁹ Duffield *et al*, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan'.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid*.
- ⁶¹ David Shearer argues that in 'new wars' military engagement may be the only way to break the stalemate and the US-led military action in Afghanistan in many respects appears to strengthen this argument. See D Shearer, 'Exploring the limits of consent: conflict resolution in Sierra Leone', *Millennium*, 26 (3), 1997 pp 845–860.
- ⁶² See H Atmar, S Barakat & A Strand, 'From rhetoric to reality: the role of aid in local peacebuilding in Afghanistan', University of York, 1998 for a more extensive description of these workshops and their role in raising the consciousness of aid agencies about the potential for community-based peace-building initiatives. They were particularly important in forcing agencies to question the lingering taboo from the 1980s surrounding the issues of peace building.
- ⁶³ A small number of donors, including Norway, the Netherlands and Switzerland, encouraged their partners to mainstream conflict resolution and peace-building strategies into their relief and rehabilitation activities. Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan', p 43.
- ⁶⁴ For a more extensive description of these peace-building programmes, see *ibid*; and Atmar *et al*, 'From rhetoric to reality'.
- ⁶⁵ Other agencies supported include SIEAL and CCA. See M Eshan 'An analysis of peacebuilding approaches in Afghanistan', www.asiasource.org/asip/peacebuilding.cfm 2001; and Atmar & J Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding'.
- ⁶⁶ See Van Brabant & Killock, 'The limits and scope'.
- ⁶⁷ 'All activities which contribute to a reduction in tension add to the dynamics essential for peace. Events in Hazarajat in 1997 and 1998 bear this out. In different documented instances, local community elders persuaded defending forces to disperse and avoid a fire-fight which would have resulted in loss of life.' UNSMA & the UN Coordinator's Office, 'The nexus between political and humanitarian action in Afghanistan: a field perspective', Afghanistan Support Group Meeting, Stockholm, 21–22 June 1999. Agenda Item 1.
- ⁶⁸ As Lederach notes, the mid-level actors are often the critical ones when it comes to conflict resolution processes. Aid agencies may be well positioned to play this role. J P Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.
- ⁶⁹ Studies by Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies', Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan'; and M Eshan, 'An analysis of peace-building approaches in Afghanistan', have been the only substantial pieces of work in this area.
- ⁷⁰ See Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies'; and UNOPS/UNDP, 'Afghanistan Rural Rehabilitation Programme/Community Self Help, AFG/96/003, Final Progress Report, May 1997–December 2000', December 2000. Anderson, M (1999) 'Do no harm. How aid can support Peace or War', Lynne Rienner: London.
- ⁷¹ Surkhe *et al*, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan*, p 38.
- ⁷² Mary Anderson, 1999 *op cit* refers to this as building 'connectors' or 'constituencies for peace'.
- ⁷³ School for secondary or advanced Islamic studies.
- ⁷⁴ For instance ADA's education programmes, which brought together Hazara and Pushtun school children See Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies'.
- ⁷⁵ Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars*.
- ⁷⁶ Informal money-changing system.
- ⁷⁷ M Duffield *et al*, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan', p 33.

- ⁷⁸ Van Brabant & Killock, 'The limits and scope', p 6.
- ⁷⁹ Duffield *et al*, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan'.
- ⁸⁰ Rubin cited in *ibid*, p 28.
- ⁸¹ Surkhe *et al*, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan*.
- ⁸² G Austin, 'Great power geo-strategic roles in South and Central Asia', in Conflict Prevention Network, *Talibanisation: Extremism and Regional Instability in South and Central Asia*, CPN In-Depth Study, September, 2001, p112.
- ⁸³ For instance, in the 1999 Consolidated Appeal, while refugee return and alleviation of human suffering (mine action, food aid, emergency response) received 97% and 67%, respectively of the requirements, for social services and livelihoods reconstruction only 27% and 18% of the necessary funding was received. Similarly, for the same year, although human rights was, in theory a donor priority, in practice none of the projects in the human rights thematic area was funded. Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan'.
- ⁸⁴ 'Donor performance and conduct is a serious concern, involving a lack of coordination and consistency, politicization of assistance, micro-management and failure to provide a stable funding climate together with an apparent lack of accountability', DANIDA, *Danish Humanitarian Assistance*, Vol 2; and *Afghanistan*, London: ODI, 1999, p VII. Van Brabant & Killock, 'The limits and scope', also state that 'donors put pressure on operational agencies to better coordinate but they themselves do not pursue coordinated policies and approaches', p 6.
- ⁸⁵ For example, the ASG meeting in 1999 in Japan, in which the US and UK agenda on security was forced upon other members of the ASG, or the Stockholm meeting (see Johnson & Leslie in this issue).
- ⁸⁶ N Reindorp, 'Trends and challenges in the UN humanitarian system' in J Macrae (ed), 'The new humanitarianisms: a review of trends in global humanitarian action', Humanitarian Policy Group Report 11, ODI, April 2002.
- ⁸⁷ See Atmar & Goodhand, 'Aid, conflict and peacebuilding in Afghanistan'.
- ⁸⁸ The issues selected are meant to be illustrative rather than exhaustive. It is beyond the scope of this article, for instance, to examine the crucial issue of aid co-ordination.
- ⁸⁹ Van Brabant & Killock, 'The limits and scope', p 38, highlight the effectiveness of organizations with a substantial field presence in Afghanistan such as ICRC.
- ⁹⁰ Surkhe *et al*, *Peacebuilding Strategies for Afghanistan*, p 37.
- ⁹¹ M Edwards, *Future Positive: International Co-operation in the 21st Century*, London: Earthscan, 1999, p 206.
- ⁹² Cliff & Luckham, 'Complex political emergencies and the state', p 29.
- ⁹³ See Goodhand, 'NGOs and peacebuilding in complex political emergencies'; Van Brabant & Killock, 'The limits and scope'; and Duffield *et al*, 'Review of the Strategic Framework for Afghanistan'.
- ⁹⁴ Project thinking has tended to limit the work of aid agencies in the area of advocacy. In the 1980s advocacy NGOs were extremely effective in advocating the Afghan cause. During the late 1990s, however, aid agencies have experienced less success in challenging donor policies or advocating peace in Afghanistan. More robust advocacy strategies on aid issues would appear to be a priority now that the 'rules of the game' are being decided.
- ⁹⁵ Rubin *et al*, 'Afghanistan'.
- ⁹⁶ Donini, 'United Nations coordination in complex emergencies', p 25.
- ⁹⁷ T Vaux & J Goodhand, 'Disturbing connections: aid and conflict in Kyrgyzstan', The Conflict, Security and Development Group, Centre for Defence Studies, Kings College London, Conflict Assessments 3, 2001.