

Afghanistan:

Japan's Experiences Revisited

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Short CV: Members of Afghanistan Study Group Japan	

Supported by the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIJA), 'Afghanistan Study Group Japan', whose membership has experience in assisting various sectors in Afghanistan, was formed and conducted a series of discussions on the international intervention in Afghanistan since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Under the auspices of the JIJA, the ASGJ presents summary recommendations, which was made based on the group's discussions. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily represent those of the organizations with which the respective ASGJ members are affiliated.

Summary Recommendations

The state of Afghanistan remains fragile despite seven years of international assistance. Since 11 September 2001, the international community has focused on state-building and reconstruction in Afghanistan in the hopes of winning the “war on terror”. However, in reality, anti-government forces have gained influence over the southern and eastern parts of the country, empowering the terrorist elements. The people’s lives remain difficult, with weak government and rampant corruption. The initial confidence and hopes that people had toward the government and the international community have drastically diminished, leading them instead to rely reluctantly on anti-government forces for security and livelihood.

As a recent response, the international community signed the Afghanistan Compact at the London Conference in January 2006, promising assistance as the government progresses in the areas of governance, security and reconstruction. The international community also reaffirmed its continued commitment to assisting the country at the NATO Conference in April 2008, recognizing that the improvement of security in Afghanistan is the highest priority. However, despite the refocus on security sector reform and talks about NATO force expansion, the security situation has yet to improve.

The ASGJ contends that the international intervention efforts need to be refocused on improving and securing the actual lives of the people. Much of the aid has focused on a “top-down approach”, from the perspectives of donors and the Afghan government, perhaps in haste to build the state. However, this has resulted in lesser attention given to the actual needs and insecurity of the Afghan people in their

communities, and at times has created a vacuum exploited by destructive elements.

ASGJ thus calls to attention the following points:

1. Importance of addressing the “human security” needs of the Afghan people in communities as a matter of priority.

i) The majority, if not all, Afghans live by distinctive rules and codes of conduct established historically by communities with strong ties to their ethnicity and tribes. The international intervention should focus on strengthening and building up these communities, not destroying them. Improving human security – protection, capacity building, and development -- in these communities to make them resistant to terrorism is the most effective way to counter terrorism.

ii) The international community should readjust its assistance to ensure “Afghan ownership” with a view to improving relations between the government and the people in communities. The government should be empowered to directly provide protection for the livelihood and dignity of the people to enhance national solidarity.

2. “Human security” can only be ensured through promoting reconciliation amongst the population and establishing social order and sustainable livelihood in individual communities.

i) ***Restoring social order***

While security sector reform remains one of the key requirements in stabilizing the country, it has yet to produce satisfactory results. Many of the current challenges should be readdressed from a “human security” perspective centered on communities.

The immediate objective of the Afghan National Army (ANA) supported by the international forces is to fight terrorism. An army is not a tool to directly provide security to people in communities. What is happening in reality is that communities themselves are being destroyed as military operations combat terrorists mixed amongst communities, resulting in further alienation of the people. This paradox should seriously be addressed and the rules of engagement, along with the role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), should be clarified and aligned.

Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Disarmament of

Illegally Armed Groups (DIAG) have been intended to promote human security in communities. However, in reality, the continued lack of security and alternative livelihoods is hindering progress. The DIAG process in particular is stifled in the north, for example, as people in the south are rearmed to form an “auxiliary police” to fight terrorism alongside the ANA.

The establishment of the Afghan National Police (ANP) was thought to be crucial in restoring law and order. However, the formation of the police has been painfully slow and its mission remains ambiguous, especially in relation to the auxiliary police.

These ambiguities in the functions of various security establishments -- ANA, ISAF, PRT, ANP and the auxiliary police – and the slow establishment of the rule of law in communities feeds the distrust of the people toward the government.

For these establishments to take roots, it is absolutely important to promote cooperation and coordination with leaders and representatives of local communities.

ii) ***Restoring relations and trust between people***

Although a legitimate government has been established through the Bonn process, the government still lacks the capacity to protect its citizens from threats to their survival and enable them to maintain their livelihoods and dignity. While the government capacity must continue to be built with a “top-down” approach, efforts must also be made to strengthen self-sufficiency and sustainability of communities with a “bottom-up” approach. These efforts must be built on the existing system and the rules of Afghan society. In this sense, proposals and plans on security and order developed by local communities should be respected and followed by the government.

“Ownership” requires giving choices to the Afghan government and its people to rebuild their society in manners that are compatible with their ways of life. Values forced from the outside cannot take root. In order to encourage Afghan “ownership”, it is important that donors improve their own ability to identify Afghan capacity and to encourage and draw upon it. Current modes of assistance need to be reviewed, and changes in “behavior” and “mentality” made, by donors.

It is also important not to forget the coming generation of Afghans. There are many youths who are understandably concerned about their

country's future. Empowering the next generation is a must for the long-term stability of the nation.

Afghan state-building requires establishment of a social order based on existing community-level rules and structures. It is therefore important to empower rural communities to enhance security and economic development. The Community Development Council (CDC) established under the National Solidarity Program (NSP) has been hailed as a success story in promoting rural development. The program encourages community initiatives and ownership, but also at times destroys the existing community order. If reviewed and redesigned to respect communities' ways of life, the program has the potential not only to form a base for development activities but also to enhance security in rural communities.

iii) ***Providing alternative livelihoods***

For counter-narcotics efforts, DIAG, reintegration of refugees and other activities to succeed, it is necessary to secure alternative livelihoods. Counter-narcotics measures cannot be sustained by eradication alone and disarmed men will need alternative sources of income and security. The international community and the government should establish a strategy not only to create immediate jobs, but also to build an economic structural base to facilitate the flow of goods in markets.

iv) ***Promoting reconciliation***

Having experienced 23 years of open violence between various domestic factions, the Afghan people will eventually require ways to resolve past injustices if they are to regain trust and form a solid nation. Amongst the diverse sources of animosity, the most crucial one to address is the Taliban issue. The problems of security and disorder in the rural areas will never be solved if the Taliban remain excluded.

With the above observations, ASGJ recommends the following:

1. **Restore social order**

The on-going international assistance in the security sector and other areas should be reviewed with a focus on promoting human security. Practical suggestions

include:

- i) ANA and NATO/ISAF need to clarify and strictly adhere to their rules of engagement. Various PRTs should also align their Terms of Reference and clarify their roles.
- ii) The roles of the national police as well as the auxiliary police should be clarified and promoted among the general public. While central authorities should continue to be trained in law enforcement, rural communities should be empowered to maintain the nationally-established rule of law in their villages.
- iii) The existing rules and codes of conduct in rural communities should be respected and strengthened. People in smaller communities should also be made responsible not only for local development activities but also for local governance and security.
- iv) A security plan developed by local leaders and some volunteers utilizing local community networks that has recently been identified by the ASGJ should be examined by the government and the international community, and be made a base for cooperation and coordination between local people and the government and international community.
- v) International advisors should not functionally replace Afghan government authorities, but instead should focus on training and capacity-building the government. Donors should revisit Item 21 of the Co-chair's Summary of Conclusions adopted at the Tokyo International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan dated 22 January 2002, and work to harmonize their operational practices regarding the distortionary wage and rent inflation they have caused that is undermining the government's state-building efforts.

2. **Promote sustainable livelihood**

To promote the human security of people in communities, economic structural bases must be built to sustain alternative livelihoods. While working to establish a "top-down" economic infrastructure, local communities should also be empowered to promote "bottom-up" efforts to meet half-way in building a sustainable economy. Examples of this are as follows:

- i) The international community should support the Afghan government in establishing regional strategies for infrastructure, industrial and

market development. The donors should then support the implementation of the strategies, starting with those regions having the most potential to succeed.

- ii) Review and redesign NSP initiatives to better promote human security in communities. With the continued support of donors, the community-led initiatives should be eventually linked to other national programs and sectors to expand their impact and ensure sustainability.
- iv) Multi-year training programs should be developed for both public and private sector personnel, as well as for youth.

3. **Promote reconciliation**

A procedure should be established to incorporate the moderate Taliban and others who were excluded from the Bonn process. The list of terrorists established by the international community should be revised, with agreement by the Afghan government, to drop those who have proven their genuine willingness to participate in state-building.

4. **Minimize external interference**

While encouraging domestic solidarity and development, the international community should also focus assistance on minimizing the impact of external interference. Practical areas include:

- i) Promoting dialogue with Pakistan, Iran and other neighboring countries
- ii) Improving border control not only to stop the flow of drugs but also to facilitate the flow of legal trade
- iii) Enforcing strict laws against drug-lords and traffickers, and not punishing rural farmers who have no alternative source of livelihood and security

Chapter 1
Afghanistan Nation-Building, Six Years On
(*This paper was written in April 2008)

Maki Shinohara

On 11 September 2001, the world realized that peace and security in the 21st century required not only defending state borders, but also fighting against elusive enemies mixed amongst peoples, even far from home.¹ That fateful day thus changed the course of history of Afghanistan, which had for too long been ignored by the world. International aid was mobilized for Afghanistan at an unprecedented speed -- in part out of shocking revelation that a forgotten country with people left in desperate violence and poverty had become a launch pad for terrorists to strike at the heart of world power, and in part, of course, to show solidarity with the United States, which had suffered the horrible event. For whatever other reasons, the international intervention in Afghanistan gained wide legitimacy in the context of the “War Against Terror” declared by US President George W. Bush, however ambiguous the concept remained.

Yet, after six years of international intervention, Afghanistan’s future seems more uncertain than ever. In fact, the initial euphoria of hope and optimism expressed by millions of Afghans returning throughout the country to reconstruct their lives is rapidly turning into anxieties and doubts as violence increases in many parts of the country. Despite the international promises of a better life, many Afghans are losing confidence, frustrated by corrupt authorities and the continued lack of stable employment. As a result, the democratically elected government is rapidly losing popularity. Why is the situation unraveling and turning away from peace and stability, despite the years of international efforts designed to improve the people’s lives? Why do destructive forces continue to thrive unabated, even with the presence of international troops? In an attempt to address similar questions, there have been many studies published in recent months calling for a renewed strategy for Afghanistan,² but few analyses go beyond military and security strategies.

¹ See “The Utility of Force – the Art of War in the Modern World,” by Gen. Rupert Smith on the changing nature of conflict.

² See for example, “Revitalizing our efforts, Rethinking our Strategies,” Afghanistan Study Group report, 30 January 2008, Center for the Study of the Presidency; “Saving Afghanistan: An Appeal and Plan for Urgent Action,” Issue Brief, January 2008, Atlantic Council of the United States; “Afghanistan: The Need for International Resolve,” Asia Report No.145, 6 February 2008, International Crisis Group.

This paper provides an introductory overview of achievements made in Afghanistan since 2001, and outlines key issues as clues toward overcoming the current concerns. It emphasizes the perspectives of the people, in the hopes of bringing the assistance debate to the community level so that the nature and progress of the international intervention as a whole may be reviewed with a refocus on human security.

International intervention since 9/11

The swiftness with which governments have acted on Afghanistan following the 9/11 attacks is rather spectacular, if ambitious. The so-called Bonn process, established in December 2001, has guided the country through the adoption of a constitution as well as presidential and parliamentary elections. Unlike previous post-conflict interventions where international bodies took over administration in countries such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Cambodia and East Timor, the international intervention in Afghanistan is characterized as “small footprint”, emphasizing the importance of Afghan ownership and mindfully placing the UN peace-keeping mission (UNAMA) in the back seat to assist the government in caring for its people. The international efforts have focused on three main sectors -- security, governance and reconstruction – and responsibilities for supporting government programs have been divided between donors and aid agencies. In terms of aid policies, conscious efforts have been made to support a “seamless transition” from emergency humanitarian aid to development assistance, with a view to facilitating the early recovery of a self-sufficient state. The reconstruction of Afghanistan has thus begun, designed to create a “modern” state from what was left in the remains of war.

Chronology³

On 12 September 2001, UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1368 authorizes international intervention in Afghanistan to combat “threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.” On 7 October the US and the UK launch air strikes against Afghanistan as the Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden, held responsible for the 9/11 attacks. By mid-November, the coalition forces, aided by the Afghan Northern Alliance, oust the Taliban regime in Kabul and humanitarian aid workers resume emergency assistance. On 5 December, Afghan leaders agree on the Bonn peace process and Hamid Karzai heads the power-sharing arrangement. On 20 December, UNSCR 1386 authorizes the deployment of the International Security

³ Compiled from BBC, Reuters and UN documents.

Assistance Force (ISAF) to aid the interim authority. As the coalition forces drive the Taliban from Kandahar, millions of refugees and internally displaced Afghans begin to return.

Some sixty donor governments gather in Tokyo in January 2002, and pledge a total of US\$4.5 billion in reconstruction aid. ISAF begins to deploy, but only in Kabul. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) continues hunting for Al Qaeda and Taliban remnants in the southeast. In June, the Grand Council (Loya Jirga) confirms Hamid Karzai as head of the Afghan Transitional Authority. By August 2003, NATO takes over ISAF command. Outside the capital, however, terrorists attack aid workers as they are seen to be on the side of the Western-backed interim administration.

In January 2004, the Loya Jirga adopts a new constitution and, in April, donors pledge US\$8 billion in Berlin. Presidential elections are held in October, with a turnout of nearly three-quarters of some 10 million registered voters. Hamid Karzai wins 55% of the vote, well over the 16% gained by the runner-up, and is officially inaugurated in December. By September 2005, the first parliamentary and provincial elections in more than 30 years are held.

In February 2006, the Afghan Compact is launched in London outlining a renewed framework of cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community. Donors pledge over US\$10 billion in reconstruction assistance for a five-year period. In May, violent anti-US protests erupt in Kabul, following an incident in which a US military vehicle crushed several Afghans. The number of civilian casualties continues to rise as OEF battles rage in the south. By July 2006, NATO takes over military operations from the US-led coalition forces in the south and eventually the east. Heavy fighting ensues in the southern provinces as the NATO and Afghan forces combat the anti-government forces.

In May 2007, Afghan and Pakistani troops clash over border disputes. By August, the UN reports a record yield in poppy cultivation, making the country the world's top producer of opium. In November, a suicide attack on a parliamentary delegation kills 41 people in the north. On 15 January 2008, militants strike the Serena Hotel in Kabul, killing 8 Afghans and foreigners.

Achievements to date

By 2007, Afghanistan as a whole has achieved much progress, not the least on the surface. Kabul has become a bustling city, with mobile phones and some spectacular constructions fit for a modern world. The city boasts glitzy department stores with customers window-shopping in burkas. On the outskirts, what was once a dried-up dam left in ruins by battle now contains plenty of water and floating gazebos, offering a peaceful weekend get-away for local families. In the vast plain of Shomali, north of the capital, the long deserted and mine-infested landscape has become busy with villagers and markets, steadily recovering as the region's bread-basket.

On the human development scale, more than 5 million refugees and displaced people have returned after years in exile and 6 million children are back to school, including 2 million girls. The health sector has improved, with 82% of the population covered by basic health-care services.⁴ The abysmal infant mortality rate has steadily declined by 18% since 2001⁵, and more mothers are being taught general hygiene to better protect their children. More than 132 million square meters of land have been cleared of mines and much of the ring-road highway has been restored, leaving a portion under construction in the insecure south.⁶

In terms of governance, the Bonn process has successfully led the state to assume a democratic structure, defying earlier doubts over the feasibility of the established timeline. Persistent fighting between warlords have been quelled with some legally incorporated into the political structure, and over 60,000 former soldiers have disarmed and demobilized. Disputed revenue from border customs has been incorporated into the national budget and the rate of economic growth has steadily risen by 8 to 14% in the past two years. The daily lives of the majority of Afghans have undoubtedly become more stable, save for occasional drought and other natural disasters.

Challenges

Despite the progress, however, insurgent activities and terrorist violence are on the rise. The UN reports a 20% increase in violent incidents between 2006 and 2007.

⁴ "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security," Report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly Sixty-second session, 21 September 2007.

⁵ "Afghanistan Health Sector Balanced Scorecard", Round Three, Afghan Ministry of Public Health with Johns Hopkins University & Indian Institute of Health, 2006.

⁶ Ibid.

Over 100 suicide attacks are recorded annually and are now reaching Kabul and the north. Rural communities remain desperately poor but some are too dangerous for aid to reach. Areas accessible to aid workers have fallen to 55% of the country, according to the UN, and the fatal attack on the Serena Hotel in January 2008 is forcing international aid workers to restrain their efforts further. Meanwhile, open “war against terror” continues to rage in the south and the country seems to be moving farther away from a “post-conflict” state.

The security situation naturally impacts also on the economy. The Afghan Investment Support Agency reported a 50% decrease in business investment in 2007, citing as factors the spread of insecurity and kidnapping, in addition to slow progress in private business reform and heavy bureaucracy.⁷ Conversely, the illegal economy is booming. In the absence of an agreement on effective counter-narcotics measures, poppy cultivation and production continue to expand. According to a recent World Bank survey, Afghanistan supplies more than 90% of the world’s opium, revenue from which accounts for 30% of its GDP.⁸ Uncontrolled drug production further stifles the restoration of law and order, feeding corruption, extremists and organized crime abroad. While the Taliban regime seemed to have managed the issue, the inability to effectively control narcotics wins no points for the current government.

Lessons Learned

In the immediate aftermath of 9/11, the international community promptly agreed on the need to intervene in Afghanistan with near unanimous approval. Six years down the road, however, the initial enthusiasm has sadly declined as the country disappears from the world headlines. By the end of 2007, the dissonance among the international community had become a public issue. The lack of coordination between troop mandates and civilian assistance have come to the fore and disagreements between the US and NATO countries over troop deployments have become an open dispute. The relations between the Afghan government and major donors have soured with the former’s rejection of a strong coordinator to oversee the international efforts. On the ground, both civilian and military personnel engaged in assisting Afghanistan have come to realize just how difficult it is in reality to build a “modern” state across a vast and porous land that barely scores on the human development index. Some

⁷ Figures and comments released by Afghan Investment Support Agency reported in the *Financial Times*, 29 January 2008.

⁸ “Afghanistan: Economic Incentives and Development Initiatives to Reduce Opium Production,” The World Bank and DFID, February 2008.

assistance programs have been effective but others have produced more problems, however well-intentioned at the start. Looking back, the international intervention in Afghanistan has suffered a series of teetering, if not confused, emphasis between military objectives and civilian assistance goals. To begin breaking the current stalemate, it is perhaps useful to examine some of the developments from the perspective of Afghan communities.

Security

When the Taliban was driven out of Kabul, people were enthusiastic about the future prospects for rebuilding their lives and country in peace. The organized brutality of the Taliban rule was over, yet violence did not disappear from the country as a whole. Kabul alone enjoyed relative security, with the arrival of ISAF to guard the capital, but the south remained a war-zone as the coalition forces fought Al Qaeda and remnants of the belligerent Taliban. Warlords were still fighting in the north, west and southeast and, as demobilization went underway, commanders of smaller groups roamed freely harassing villagers in remote communities. Most of the warlords and commanders had since disbanded, but the crime rate remained high in rural areas where there was a vacuum of law and order and a prevailing culture of impunity. In the early years, many of these sources of insecurity, affecting mainly rural communities, were left unaddressed so as not to destabilize the newly established interim authority and perhaps dampen the international commitment. Even the Afghan authorities themselves did not take security seriously at first, as they were more focused on absorbing the reconstruction and development aid. It was not until 2003 that security issues surfaced openly in the international debate, after the killing of foreign aid workers in the southern provinces.⁹

Meanwhile, as the “war against terror” gained an international consensus, Operation Enduring Freedom was never in question. Its strategy and tactics were military matters led by the US. The US above all was not interested initially in rebuilding Afghanistan, but only in capturing Osama bin Laden. Nor was the US eager to deploy ISAF outside of Kabul, despite several requests made by President Karzai and Mr. Brahimi, Special Representative of the UN Secretary General for Afghanistan, for additional troops to patrol the provinces.¹⁰ By 2003, insecurity in the deeper south was spreading and the US soldiers on the border were tasked with endless battles with

⁹ On 27 March 2003, Ricardo Mungia of ICRC was killed at a checkpoint in Kandahar. Mullah Dadullah, a Taliban commander responsible for ordering the killing and for the organization of numerous suicide attacks, was killed in a NATO raid in May 2007. On 16 November 2003, Bettina Goilard of the UNHCR was killed in a fusillade of bullets while driving in Ghazni.

¹⁰ “Afghanistan and Iraq: Failed States or Failed Wars?” Lakhdar Brahimi Lecture on Public Policy, Princeton University, 28 March 2007.

insurgents crossing freely across the border.¹¹ Then came the US war on Iraq. The newly opened frontline perhaps served to buy some security time for Afghanistan, as the foreign extremists rushed over to fight the Americans in Iraq. However, the Iraq experience only seemed to have created a new generation of better-trained and more vicious rebel fighters who eventually returned to the Afghan border, and violence surged in 2006. The war on Iraq not only impacted Afghanistan security-wise but, more importantly, it diverted attention and world resources.

Governance: threats to legitimacy and national solidarity

Despite the success of the presidential and parliamentary elections, people have begun to express disappointments and doubts about their elected government. The rush in international assistance has undoubtedly created expectations amongst the war-affected population, perhaps at unrealistic levels. While schools and canals are being reconstructed with development assistance and many areas are free of general violence, many Afghans are still left without job security. Impressively large houses in the city are built by the rich few, creating some jobs but only temporarily. Electricity remains a problem, hindering industrial development, and corruption and general crimes are often left unaddressed, particularly in the rural communities.¹² Meanwhile, Afghans see affluent internationals shuttling around in armored vehicles, rarely communicating with ordinary people on the street. Whether or not they are justified, more Afghans are questioning the fairness or prospects of the current situation as expressed in the local media.

Facing past criticisms for traveling too often abroad, President Karzai has been touring throughout the country since 2007, meeting people directly. While his presence is zealously welcomed by villagers, it is difficult to govern a country by personality alone. His personal apologies are certainly appreciated by people affected by misguided NATO attacks¹³, for example, but what is alienating people are not just the occasional misguided missiles but the frustration that the central government is incapable of caring for their lives, particularly in rural areas.

¹¹ There were only speculations about the impossible fights against insurgents at the porous border until Frank Gardner of the BBC produced a report in 2003.

¹² Attorney General Abdul Jabar Sabit tirelessly sees individuals who travel for days from all over the country to seek his audience and justice. While he impressively handles every claim on the spot with his legal texts and mobile phones, one is left to wonder if this is an effective way to rule justice in a vast country with more than 30 million people. (Taped and interviewed in May 2007)

¹³ On 16 May 2007, the President flew to Shindand to speak to some 600 villagers after 57 civilians had been killed in a NATO airstrike between 25 and 27 April. The ICRC reported 173 houses had been destroyed and nearly 2,000 people left homeless by the attack.

Of course, building the state capacity is no easy task. As one government official put it: “Afghans do not have the experience and do not know what a ‘democracy’ looks like, even for us in the government.” Combine that with the serious lack of bureaucratic capacity to build a “modern” state, and it will still take years for public systems to function satisfactorily throughout the country. Reality cannot wait, however. Without effective measures to address corruption, insecurity and steady income, the government cannot be expected to maintain credibility and the trust of its people. The blame will continue to go to the most visible, Western-backed president.

Aid dilemma

As parts of Afghanistan are becoming insecure and civilian aid workers are seen as government-supporting “enemies” from the rebels’ perspective, civilian access to those areas has lessened. However, desperate needs remain that require reaching those people, lest the extremists get to them first, making the place even more hostile. There have been endless debates over an aid dilemma: assistance is most needed to stabilize insecure areas, but it cannot be delivered to insecure areas. Even humanitarian aid agencies experienced in emergencies cannot be expected to run the gauntlet, and some stability is required for longer-term development assistance.

Civilian and military aid

Hence, provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) have been created to support aid access as well as to build schools and bridges, technically in areas that civilian agencies cannot reach. Nonetheless, this has also created much confusion. It is hardly possible for Afghan villagers to distinguish between combat troops and those in PRTs assisting communities, while such a distinction is simply moot for the rebels. Sometimes even combat troops deliver assistance to villages and each PRT has a distinct mandate assigned by the home country. NGOs have raised serious concerns over such military engagement, claiming that it jeopardizes the neutrality of humanitarian aid .¹⁴

As controversial as the PRTs may be, however, the need for assistance remains large in remote, insecure areas. Without tangible benefits and protection from the central government, people are left without much choice but to obey the rebels’ rules.

¹⁴ Most aid activities in Afghanistan are clearly on the side of stability, supporting the government, than on that of the destabilizing rebels, yet agencies have legitimate concerns that the cross-over between military and civilian activities will further compromise safety of their aid operations. For a study on the military-civilian debate, see for example, “Fighting for Humanitarian Space: NGOs in Afghanistan,” Lara Olsen, *Journal of Military and Strategic Studies*, Fall 2006, Vol 9, Issue 1.

Nevertheless, as Deputy Minister for Rural Rehabilitation and Development Asif Rahimi said, “PRTs may be helpful in building schools in insecure areas, but they could never substitute for the official development program nor cover the whole country.”¹⁵ To begin addressing this civilian-military dilemma, it would be useful if, on the one hand, the military mandate would be clarified and coordinated and, on the other, humanitarian and development agencies would find ways to reach areas that may not be 100% secure. The latter, of course, requires deeper understanding of communities and the cooperation of the Afghan people.

Humanitarian relief and development aid

One of the objectives in assisting Afghanistan has been to bridge the gap as quickly as possible between emergency humanitarian aid and development assistance. Since their engagement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR have been addressing the existence of an unavoidable time gap between the two types of aid. For communities to become stable and self-sustainable, people must at some point cease to depend on humanitarian aid. Development assistance then becomes important in providing people with tools and skills to take charge of their livelihood but, as most development agencies have limited experience operating in unstable conditions, humanitarian requirements tend to lag. In the Afghanistan experience, the government itself provides the crucial missing link between humanitarian and development actors. Supporting the authorities and enhancing their capacity, therefore, has become the core requirement for effective delivery of international assistance.

The efforts to fill this “transition gap” have been a continuous challenge in practice, however. While many development agencies managed to engage relatively early, they have had to learn on the job to deliver under unpredictable situations. Meanwhile, Afghan capacity has to be built to absorb the assistance schemes. The so-called “transition gap” in assistance may be due also to the inevitable difference in funding bases. The bulk of humanitarian aid is delivered by multilateral agencies such as the UN. As requirements shift to development needs, larger development projects are delivered directly by governments. Bilateral aid by nature tends to be more rigid in its delivery requirements, as it comes under closer domestic scrutiny by the donor country. As such, development programs take more time before implementation, requiring more careful planning and agreements between the donor government and the recipient government. The gradual diversification and decentralization of international

¹⁵ Interviewed on 22 May 2007 in Kabul.

assistance may be due partly to this shift in the nature of assistance. Yet, the burden of improving the delivery system still lies with the donor community.

Rethinking “ownership”

To enhance Afghan ownership, the Afghan government led by then Minister of Finance Ashraf Ghani established a Consultative Group (CG) for each sector, with various donors and international agencies signing up to support the line ministries. CGs offer an innovative structure to coordinate international assistance under the Afghan national budget, officially executable as government strategy. The actual implementation, however, has been more than a challenge, as international actors have found a gaping lack of bureaucratic capacity in the Afghan government to absorb aid. Those who can communicate in English are precious few among the ministries and those having college degrees even fewer. What the international workers are facing is a sad result of the violent past that has over 23 years created a “lost generation”. Educated younger Afghans returning from abroad, on the other hand, tend to seek higher-paying jobs with international agencies, which understandably angers the Afghan authorities. In such circumstances, “placing Afghans in the driving seat” or respecting “ownership” inevitably has been more on paper, or in spirit at best, than in reality, when in fact tasks needed to get done yesterday. If “ownership” is to be seriously addressed, there needs to be a refocus on building Afghan capacity from a longer-term multi-generational perspective beyond the current focus on secondary school education.

If securing a stable Afghanistan is a requirement for global security, the international community may need to refocus its strategy for building Afghan capacity. Afghan “ownership” by definition requires sufficient level of delegation of authority to the nascent government, however clumsy it may seem. It remains the responsibility of donors to ensure that a given program actually supports the will of the Afghans and to refrain from donor-driven assistance as much as possible. Should Western-style “democracy” be hastily enforced beyond their capacity, for example, the efforts are bound to fail.

Way Forward

Human security

In reviewing the international intervention in Afghanistan to date, its effectiveness must be evaluated against the progress in enhancing human security.¹⁶ In

¹⁶ For a comprehensive study on human security, see “Human Security Now”, Report of the UN Commission on Human Security, May 2003.

Afghanistan, state security itself remains fragile, but military efforts to improve state security should not come at the expense of human security, nor should the responsibility of ensuring human security be left with the military alone. Military intervention may be a tool to improve state security, which is important, but it only partially serves the security needs of the civilian population in communities. People require a more comprehensive sense of security -- including physical welfare, employment, education, etc. -- in order to exercise their rights in all aspects of human life. To put it in the simplest terms, what the majority of Afghan citizens long for as basic guarantees are security (no more conflict), law and order (no arbitrary harassments in their communities) and sustainable livelihoods. If for whatever reason people see the government as unable or unwilling to fulfill these expectations, discontent will grow and in turn feed the destabilizing forces. As the government capacity is low, all the more attention must be paid to raising the level of self-sufficiency of rural communities, to eventually tie in with the central administration.

In this respect, the establishment of the Community Development Council (CDC) under the National Solidarity Program is an interesting initiative designed to have communities work together through the reestablishment of communal structures.¹⁷ It is an ambitious national program designed eventually to reach all areas. The on-going experiment illustrates the difficulties of working in communities that merit further studies and modifications. One report recommends that the program diversify projects to include income-generation activities for future sustainability and warns that, once people are mobilized, the results of unfulfilled expectations can be harmful.¹⁸ While building roads or waterways is no doubt beneficial to the communities, what the people need are jobs to sustain their livelihood and to be able to build on such initiatives and take charge of their own communities.

To enhance security and the rule of law in communities, the US and Germany revamped in 2007 a program to train up to 82,000 Afghan national police. It may yet be effective to have a civilian police force to guard the communities, but the policing system itself is rather a foreign concept to the Afghans.¹⁹ In fact, Afghans have had their own ways of regulating conduct in communities, often enforced by village leaders or mullahs and deeply engrained in their tribal base. Years of conflict certainly have eroded

¹⁷ See various reports produced by ACTED, which implements CDC projects.

¹⁸ "Transition Strategy and Cycle 2+ Communities" A Study of NSP, ACTED.

¹⁹ Commander of the Police Academy, Lt. General Sayed Mohammad Qudossi, interviewed in May 2007.

communal structures, but the basic values and principles still exist among the people. Building on them, not destroying them, is crucial especially at a time when the extremists seem to be taking advantage of the vacuum created while attempting to establish “modern” societal structures.

Seen from a human security perspective, some of the challenges have common problems. Returning refugees, demobilized soldiers and poppy-growing farmers, for example, all have the same need to find viable means to support their families. As Rubin and Sherman importantly point out in their recent study on narcotics,²⁰ it is not the poppy-growing that makes the places insecure. Rather, it is the insecurity that forces people with no choice but to grow poppies or engage in other illegal activities for survival. The vast majority of Afghans hope to engage in peaceful, legal livelihoods, finds the report. If so, there could be more attempts to create jobs and markets, however small, to reach people in remote communities. Currently, aid agencies are shut out from insecure areas, but even the most insecure areas have pockets and moments of peace. The international community must find ways to reach those communities, with deeper understanding and cooperation from the local population. In terms of Afghan capacity, it should not be forgotten that the Afghan people have much more experience negotiating their ways through troubles than foreigners, precisely because they understand the human relations in the communities. For aid agencies to gain better understanding, more expertise could be shared also between humanitarian and development agencies, as many local partners working for years with humanitarian agencies have gained much experience reaching out to communities throughout Afghanistan.

Since employment is key to self-sufficiency and sustainable livelihood, more attention could be paid to helping private businesses create jobs and markets. A young Afghan businessman who returned from the West says that, while a couple of hundred young Afghan entrepreneurs returned to Afghanistan in 2002, many have since left as the security situation and commercial environment made it too difficult for smaller businesses to thrive. The lack of facilities and regulations stifled exports, he says, and fruits, for example, were left to rot at customs as suspected drugs. In addition to promoting long-term training and higher education, more could be done to help nascent companies gain access to markets and facilitate distribution. Delays in government regulations to facilitate commerce feed the discontent of aspiring youths, many of whom

²⁰ “Counter-narcotics to Stabilize Afghanistan: The False Promise of Crop Eradication,” Barnett R. Rubin and Jake Sherman, Center on International Cooperation, February 2008.

are still willing to take risks for the future of their country.

The Taliban question

Perhaps the most difficult challenge in the Afghan nation-building process is the issue of the Taliban, who are mainly ethnic Pashtuns with links to the south. The Bonn Agreement effectively excluded the Taliban from the political process, casting shadows over the country's stability. Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi, the former UN Secretary General's Special Representative heading UNAMA, recognizes that including the defeated "enemy" in the talks was impossible at a time when the US-led coalition forces had ousted the Taliban with the help of the rival Northern Alliance of mainly ethnic Tajik and Uzbek origin. Driven by the importance of inclusion, Mr. Brahimi had attempted to reach out to the moderate Taliban, but the idea hardly gained any support in international fora.²¹ For the most part, the Taliban issue was also thought to have disappeared at the end of 2001, until violence resurged by 2006.

The issue is further complicated by the widespread international use of the term "Taliban". The term is applied to militant foreigners, jihadists, boys in madrassas who may or may not be taught the extremist philosophy and even villagers who simply disagree with what they see as Western disrespect of their communities. Broad-brushing with the term "Taliban" leads to more tragedies. If villagers affected by missiles reject the international troops, they are too easily labeled Taliban and termed a legitimate target. Collateral damage may not be avoided completely in an open war, but this is hardly the way to win the "hearts and minds" of the people.

When asked about how Afghan suicide-bombers have emerged, a government official said in private, "If a family were killed by US forces and a boy left an orphan with nothing, he might seriously consider a suicide mission to avenge their honor..." Without distinguishing the real "enemy" and reaching out to the rest, the problem of the "Taliban" is likely to continue, if not multiply. As President Karzai said in 2006, "Taliban are also children of Afghanistan"; the issue can no longer be ignored if the country is to become a whole. Reconciliation and justice for past violence eventually need to be addressed also, in ways that would allow communities to move forward.²²

²¹ "Afghanistan and Iraq: Failed States or Failed Wars?" Lakhdar Brahimi Lecture on Public Policy, Princeton University, 28 March 2007.

²² The Amnesty Law was passed in March 2007, generating much controversy.

Regional security

Of all the assistance necessary, that which requires more international attention is regional security. International agencies and embassies have country-specific mandates, so cross-border issues tend to fall from their agenda.²³ Yet stability in Afghanistan cannot be gained in isolation from developments in neighboring countries. Should Pakistan become unstable, it would surely impact security in Afghanistan. Uncontrolled escalation of the confrontation between the US and Iran, for example, would surely be a recipe for failure in Afghanistan.

The world is recognizing that the sources of instability in the southern and eastern provinces derive mainly from the tribal areas of Pakistan. Having to hold the southern front with an ever-broadening mandate, NATO is also starting to recognize that the current military strategy alone is insufficient to secure the country.²⁴ Yet NATO being the military wing of the international intervention, its ability is limited when engaging in political or aid discussions with surrounding countries, which is sorely required to secure the border areas. However, as current world politics do not seem to allow major powers to engage officially, no effective regional forum exists to address imminent issues. Ways to encourage dialogue between countries in the region should be found to ensure the stability not only of Afghanistan but the region as a whole.

Advocacy

Finally, the international community requires a stronger reasoning to sustain the commitment to Afghanistan. Six years after the 9/11 terror attacks, the public opinion trend in Western countries as well as in Japan is that of increasing indifference or frustration toward the issues of Afghanistan.²⁵ If a stable Afghanistan is deemed a requirement for global security, governments need to better present the case for continued assistance to Afghanistan and regain support of their domestic constituencies. It is no longer sufficient and perhaps inaccurate to continue referring to abstract terms as “the war on terror”, as the required commitment goes well beyond securing the deployment of military troops. The goals to be achieved and the consequences of failure

²³ UNHCR is one of the few agencies that routinely engage in cross-border dialogue, to ensure the protection and orderly return of some 2.14 million refugees remaining in Pakistan and 910,000 in Iran. The agency has hosted tri-partite meetings regularly since 2002 to facilitate discussions on refugee matters between Afghanistan and the two governments.

²⁴ A Lecture by Jamie Shea, NATO's Director for Policy, during the NATO delegation's visit to Tokyo in December 2007.

²⁵ NATO officials deplore the increasing public opinion pressure in Canada and the Netherlands, for example, to withdraw their troops. In Japan, the political debate on assistance to Afghanistan is entangled with Iraq and the controversy over the deployment of Self-Defense Forces for a refueling mission in the Gulf.

could be better articulated by having the global community refocus on issues such as those outlined above. Effective stories may differ from country to country on how the well-being of the people of Afghanistan relates to that of other citizens, but if Afghanistan were to return to its violent past, its effects would surely be felt again around the world.

Chapter 2
Three Different Layers of Discussion
on the international intervention in Afghanistan

Yoshiyuki Yamamoto

Several meetings of this study group clearly showed that we cannot even agree to disagree to the extent to which the international community's intervention to Afghanistan has succeeded. It has been evident from the literature and from the personal contact that there are some people who applaud the success of the international community in Afghanistan while there are others who are appalled by the failure. It is not just because we might tend to be disproportionately influenced by our personal experience; we might be incapable of establishing a common denominator to measure the diversity of indicators thrown in front of us, or we might be too cautious, being aware of the limited information available to us. However, it is because each of us often looks at Afghanistan in a totally different context that we have identified the need to establish at least three different layers of discussion: the first is the global political environment, the second the international assistance regime specific to Afghanistan, and the third the local populace in Afghanistan.

Global Political Environment

There are multiple theories on the reason why the "coalition of the willing" decided to topple the Taliban regime and continue military operations to this day. There is, however, no doubt that these military operations can be positioned in the Global War on Terror (GWOT) as Operation Enduring Freedom – Afghanistan (OEF – A). Therefore, in this context the success/failure of post-9/11 Afghanistan is measured by the degree of achievement and progress of the GWOT. One could argue that, on the one hand, it is not evident to what extent OEF-A has made or could make a positive impact on the GWOT and, on the other hand, it is evident that the security situation in Afghanistan has rapidly worsened recently.

As is often the case with any war, though, the discourse surrounding the war is motivated more by political considerations than the facts; in the context of the GWOT one would find it hard to paint the Afghan situation as unsuccessful to the same extent it is hard to be pro-terrorism.

Therefore from this standpoint, Afghanistan can hardly escape from being an almost definitive success case. The commentator in this sense is not talking about Afghanistan, but about the global political scene.

International Assistance

Secondly there is more country-specific discussion about Afghanistan in the area of international assistance. Briefly looking at it now, one might point out once again that the discussion is not about Afghanistan, or not particularly about the Afghan people, but about the regime of international assistance *in Afghanistan*.

Starting from Security Council Resolution 1368 of 12 Sep 2001, the international community, represented by the UN, based its decision to intervene in Afghan affairs on "threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts". Security Council Resolution 1386 of 20 Dec 01 authorized the deployment of peacekeepers as an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and Security Council Resolution 1401 of 28 Mar 2008 authorized the establishment of a PKO mission, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The mandate of UNAMA is vast, including virtually all sectors, categories of assistance and buzzwords: education, health, agriculture, returnee assistance, infrastructure, mine removal, security sector reform (national army, police, DDR, counter-narcotics, justice), rule of law, democratization, elections, governance, humanitarian assistance, post-conflict operations, reconstruction, development, human security, peace-building, etc.

There are a certain number of issues that make a difference in evaluating the situation in Afghanistan, among which are:

i) The ISAF authorized by the UN Security Council is different in nature from OEF-A in that it aims to maintain security, not to combat a particular group as OEF-A does. However, distinguishing between the two military operations has been difficult, if not impossible, for ordinary Afghans from the outset and has become increasingly vague, particularly since NATO took over the whole ISAF.

ii) As international assistance is modeled on the modern Western state/system with rare exceptions, UNAMA is essentially mandated to build a modern state from

scratch, or destined to engage in a huge enterprise that might mean the "external modernization" of Afghanistan.

iii) There existed a coordination mechanism for Afghanistan in the pre-9/11 period, which served as a leading case of UN coordination in the context of UN reform. After a few months' vacuum period, a PKO mission (UNAMA) was established to take over the coordinator's role. However, it took UNAMA a long time to build up functional capacity, particularly for Pillar II (Assistance), and during this time Afghans started to question the UN's role as coordinator.

vi) With UN coordination functions incapacitated on the one hand and contributions flagging among donor countries due to bilateralization and/or competition on the other, Afghans had a limited opportunity to gain a sense of ownership of the whole endeavor of reconstructing their own country.

v) While discussions on the structure and menu of the assistance regime menu were underway, the international community as a whole suffered from limited access to the indigenous knowledge about Afghanistan needed to make its intervention more effective. It can be hardly be blamed for applying templates.

Discussing such issues as the above could well lead to a different set of assessments of the Afghan situation from that one can get from the standpoint of the global political environment.

Community

Lastly there are those people whose assessment of the situation in Afghanistan is based neither on global politics nor the international assistance regime, but on Afghanistan and the Afghan people. Images and anecdotes of Afghan people in plight are extensively used as resources in the media, which in effect helped build an impression of Afghans as passive receivers of aid rather than active players in state building.

However, these people are facing challenges; security restrictions on the movements of aid workers prevent them from understanding and learning about Afghans in the rural areas, where the majority of Afghans reside. As the OEF has mostly fought out of sight of large cities, Afghan communities caught in the battle are beyond the reach of aid organizations and can hardly gain access to any relief.

Lack of understanding or biased understanding of ordinary Afghans in the rural areas was compensated for by community ideal types, on which the assistance projects were largely based. The convenience of aid organizations rather than the needs of Afghans served as the criteria for assistance provision, enlarging the development gap between urban dwellers and Afghans in traditional communities.

There have been many “community assistance projects” solely intended to reach the Afghan people. They often result in the creation of a new or artificial community despite the presence of a traditional community, as any assistance project attracts people who seek to benefit from it. It is not rare for aid workers engaged in community projects to be frustrated by the fact that the community itself does not keep to the agreed courses of action.

Even if such a newly made or rather artificial community largely overlaps the traditional community already in place, there remains on the one hand some part of the artificial community that is not part of the traditional one, and on the other some part of the traditional community that is not part of the artificial one. The former can be a spoiler as it does not belong to the real traditional community and hence seeks only short-term gain, while the latter can be a protestor as it naturally objects to the artificial community created by the external intervention.

The end result, despite the good intentions of the project, could be devastating: the creation of tensions or, worse, conflicts among Afghans within and around the community.

Not only simple disillusion on the part of Afghans caused by the lack of perceptible benefits from the international community but also such factors as the above causing tensions among Afghans have given rise to greater tolerance of outside insurgents among Afghan communities, which has worsened the overall security situation.

Concluding Remarks

We have seen three different layers of discussion about the situation in Afghanistan; the first is the global political environment, the second the international assistance regime, and the third Afghan communities. Each of them has its own merits in assessing the situation in Afghanistan. However, we find it not very productive to

present a view without identifying the layer that such view is addressing.

We are not charged to express a political opinion, and therefore we will not further address the global political environment. However, we need to be alert to its inevitable influence on views even when we discuss the other two layers. As to the second layer, the international assistance regime, we have identified some of its inherent issues, but perhaps the more fundamental issue is the fact that its funding is also highly dependent on the global political environment. It is fair to say that there has been increasing attention to local communities, to which we refer as the third layer here. It is partly because of the realization that, without community well-being, the stability of Afghanistan cannot be secured, and thus the global political goal would not be achieved. Therefore, from the first and second to the third layer, and then back to the first layer, they are interconnected in a circular relationship.

Chapter 3
Lessons learned from the provision of
Japanese assistance to Afghanistan since '9/11'

Nobutaka Miyahara

Introduction

Winning popular support

After seven years since the world started to intervene in the country's nation-building, we still find Afghanistan unstable, insecure, and undeveloped. The Bonn process, which was designed to bring the Afghan people reconciliation and to establish a basis for reconstruction and development, was completed successfully. The international community repeatedly made pledges to assist Afghanistan's nation-building: US\$4.5 billion in Tokyo in 2002, US\$8.2 billion in Berlin in 2004, US\$10.5 billion in London in 2006, and US\$20.0 billion in Paris this year. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was formed under the authority of the UN Security Council, deployed at first in the capital and environs but later throughout the country, and increased in size. Despite such tremendous efforts by the international community, the government is weak, controlling only limited parts of the population and the country; reconstruction has made little or only partial progress; and security has deteriorated to the extent that one half of the country is controlled or at least under the strong influence of the insurgents.

What has brought about this result? This author argued three years ago^(*1) that winning popular support was the key to peace and stability in Afghanistan and warned of two threats: the slow pace of reconstruction, especially in provincial areas, and the continuous fighting with insurgents, such as Taliban and Al-Qaeda activists, even while dealing with fierce opposition and resistance from warlords.

This argument seems still valid at the present moment. It is because the people cannot get security from the government or the international community that they extend their support or at least approval to the control of the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan by the insurgents. In terms of who has brought the most security to the lives of people in rural areas, especially in the southern and eastern areas, the drug

lords and insurgents have better records than the government and international community. They have given money and employment to the people, especially to the youth in rural areas.

This article seeks to elaborate on the causes, policies and programs for Japanese assistance to Afghanistan and to argue how the Afghan government and the international community could win popular support by showing the lessons learned from Japanese experiences and introducing the efforts of the local people to secure their own livelihoods. These lessons come mainly from security problems faced in implementing assistance projects, respect for the ownership of development by the Afghans and the lack of capacity of the Afghan authorities. One of the most important lessons learned is that winning popular support was a key to securing our road rehabilitation and other assistance projects in rural areas. In contacts with rural communities to secure our projects, we found it essential to bring residents security to win popular support.

Japanese assistance to Afghanistan

Japan has enjoyed an entirely friendly relationship with Afghanistan since the 1930s. Japan has provided sizable development assistance during this short history, especially in the 1970s, and augmented its humanitarian assistance during the civil war in the 1990s.

However, the tragedy of September 11 totally changed the meaning and position of Japan's humanitarian and development assistance in its foreign policy. Firstly, Japanese assistance to Afghanistan has become one of the main pillars for the Japanese contribution to the global war on terror (GWOT). Prime Minister Koizumi Junichiro clearly expressed this posture at the International Conference for Afghanistan Reconstruction (the Tokyo Conference), saying, "In order to eradicate terrorism, we must eliminate the conditions that allow terrorism to take root. To do so, it is essential that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan be built." (*2)

Secondly, based on the notion that peace be built on reconstruction, Japan attached great importance to the reconstruction of Afghanistan, playing a significant role in creating a reconstruction process and holding the Tokyo Conference. Japan assumed that, in the framework of GWOT, it should play a leading role in the

reconstruction of Afghanistan while contributing to the creation of better conditions for combating terrorism domestically and internationally.

The conditions enabling Japan to concentrate on Afghanistan reconstruction in the context of GWOT were in place by the end of 2001. Immediately after the September 11 terrorist attacks, Japan declared itself ready to work with other nations to fight terrorism and urged others to do the same. Prime Minister Koizumi sent letters and dispatched high-level special envoys to the heads of state of Islamic countries, including Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The government of Japan took the necessary measures to freeze the funds and other financial assets of individuals and entities, most prominently the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and those associated with them, in accordance with UNSCR 1267, 1333, 1373, and 1390. The Japanese Diet passed the Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law (ATSML), which allowed the government to provide logistical support for the coalition forces combating terrorism in Afghanistan and to use the Self-Defense Forces to extend humanitarian aid to Afghan refugees in neighboring countries. The Japanese government made large financial contributions to the governments of Afghanistan's neighbors, especially Pakistan, to enable them to give support to the international anti-terrorism effort.

At the Tokyo conference, over sixty countries of the international community pledged a total of US\$4.5 billion for Afghanistan reconstruction. Japan made a pledge of US\$500 million over two and a half years. Since then, Japan has maintained an assistance level of US\$200 million per year.

To use the pledged funds, Japan called for assistance to flow seamlessly from relief to development and set priorities for its aid based on a report by Ogata Sadako, Special Representative of the Prime Minister (SRPM) for Assistance to Afghanistan. These priorities were selected from the viewpoint of "human security".

Attaching great importance to the ideas of the seamless transition of assistance and "human security", Japan instituted several primary programs: a "Register for Peace" campaign to promote disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), later integrated into Afghanistan's New Beginning Program; the "Ogata Initiative (OI)," a program aimed at filling the gap between relief and development assistance and achieving comprehensive area development; and rehabilitation of the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat trunk road. In addition to these programs, Japan took a variety of measures to help the Afghan government in financing its administration and in

capacity and institution building for education, health and medical care, mass communications, agriculture, landmine removal, and other areas.

After the assistance strategy was formulated as described above, domestic interest and attention on Afghanistan and Japanese assistance there decreased in Japan, dropping sharply after the Iraq war.

Against this backdrop, Japan's assistance strategy towards Afghanistan was pursued at the official level. Some of the original programs disappeared and some transformed into other programs. Yet, the assistance policy itself has continued in the same line as the first stage. DDR was successfully completed but the urgent need for the disbandment of illegal armed groups (DIAG) led Japan continually to assist the ANBP, which was in charge of this effort. The OI itself ceased to function as funds from Japan dried up but other new programs inherited the idea of comprehensive area development from the OI. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) promoted the comprehensive development of rural areas by conducting several projects. JICA also continued to concentrate its efforts on capacity and institution development to address medical care and health, education, transportation, and gender issues. Furthermore, it newly took up urban development, supporting the construction of infrastructure in the Kabul metropolitan area.

As the security situation in Afghanistan worsened, more assistance to improve security was required. In early 2007, Japan made the decision to start cooperating with NATO provincial reconstruction teams (PRT). As NATO took over command of the ISAF, which was deployed all over Afghanistan, it asked Japan for support in the hopes that Japan would provide military support or send a PRT. Prime Minister Abe Shinzo responded to this request by providing funds for assistance projects found by PRTs.

Lessons learned from implementation of Japanese assistance projects

Japan designed numerous projects to help eliminate the conditions that allow terrorism to take root, as mentioned in Chapter 2, understanding that one such condition was the underdevelopment of rural areas. Japan thus targeted the comprehensive development of rural areas, created the OI and began rehabilitation work on trunk roads.

Through implementation of these programs we learned several important

lessons for participation in nation-building assistance. First, a project that benefits local people is welcomed by them, as is support extended in security and other areas. Secondly, foreign assistance may harm the ownership and capacity building of local authorities. Thirdly, the involvement of local officials and people in development activities is a key to project success.

Japan learned these lessons when it faced serious challenges and difficulties in pursuing reconstruction efforts amidst poor security as well as conflicts with Afghan authorities over ownership.

Security

The deteriorating security situation has been the largest threat to reconstruction assistance. The Japanese government is extremely cautious about security for its rehabilitation projects. Japan does not have its own intelligence apparatus to judge the security situation in a country such as Afghanistan but tends to rely on intelligence reports provided by allied or friendly countries. The final judgment on the security situation for a reconstruction project is made by Tokyo, although the local Japanese embassy can express its own views. No security casualties, whether human beings or property, are acceptable during implementation of a reconstruction project.

Road rehabilitation is one of the most unfortunate victims of bad security. Responding to a request from Afghan President Hamid Karzai, Japan, with the United States and Saudi Arabia, promised to rehabilitate the Kabul-Kandahar-Herat trunk road in August 2002 and took charge of paving a 150km stretch northeast from Kandahar. In November 2002, word of a threat to the Japanese research team working on this project came from an allied country, prompting an immediate withdrawal of the team and a three-month suspension of the project. This resulted in reducing the planned 150km section to 50km and in assigning to Japan an additional 115km of road rehabilitation westward from Kandahar. Moreover, direct attacks on the road work equipment in March 2005 that resulted in no human casualties nevertheless led to a suspension of road rehabilitation work for more than two years. The latter rehabilitation had still not been completed as of the end of June 2008.

JICA is an important apparatus for Japan to expand its reconstruction activities to rural areas. As the security situation has worsened, however, JICA's

assistance activities have been limited to the large cities in the northern and central regions of the country. JICA developed its own security codes for its staff and experts working in Afghanistan that still follow the general direction on security indicated by the foreign ministry. Now (*as of the end of June 2008) JICA does not allow its more than 60 experts, including experts on agriculture in Afghanistan, to work in rural areas, and conducts trainers' training in Kabul, sending Afghan trainees to Japan even as it looks for ways to provide assistance.

In deteriorating security circumstances, the Japanese Embassy in Afghanistan could not help but develop its own security measures. The main reason for opening the Embassy was to promote and implement Japanese assistance programs and projects. First, the Embassy tried to get security by United States forces for road rehabilitation projects in areas remote from the cities. In response to an unofficial request from the Japanese Embassy right after the withdrawal of the road project research team in November 2002, the American Embassy suggested Japan send a PRT or an expert to a PRT. At that time, deployment of PRTs was under serious consideration inside the American government. The Japanese Embassy took up this suggestion and asked the headquarters to consider sending a JICA expert to the team. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs turned down the request, saying that JICA did not want to send experts to a military organization.

In the end, the Embassy developed security measures for the road rehabilitation project before work started in August 2003. These measures covered information gathering and analysis; protection by the local police and private security, and the patrol and emergency evacuation plans of the US forces within the coalition force; and efforts to win the support of local people for the projects. For security information gathering and analysis, the Embassy developed a network to collect security information from locals. The Embassy asked the national and local police to protect the project and its experts and workers on the one hand, and suggested that the project contractor hire armed guards from a private security company on the other. Lastly, the Embassy staff visited a shura (council) in the district through which the target trunk road ran and asked the shura elders to support and protect the road rehabilitation work by offering assistance to the district.

During the rehabilitation of the 50km road east from Kandahar, all the measures worked well but the key was support by the local people. In the American part

of the road rehabilitation, the rehabilitation work sites were often attacked and experts kidnapped while in the Japanese part no attack or kidnapping occurred.

The local people benefited greatly in employment and improvement of social and economic facilities from the road rehabilitation and small projects for the district. They extended their support to the Japanese projects to protect their interests. As the Embassy's contacts with district shuras increased, so did the information on the situation of rural areas and the way of thinking of local people.

Afghan ownership and lack of capacity of Afghan authorities

“Lack of capacity”

Following successful completion of urgent rehabilitation projects such as the UNICEF ‘Back to School Campaign’ financed by Japan, the UNDP ‘Recovery and Employment Afghanistan Program (REAP)’ financed by Japan and the JICA ‘Urgent Rehabilitation Support Program (URSP)’, Japan, in accordance with the requests made of donors by the Afghan authorities, came to conduct its assistance within the framework of the Consultative Group (CG) system. Japan worked as a focal point for the transportation CG and the DDR CG and participated in other CGs such as those for health/medical care and education.

Japan performed well as a focal point in the DDR CG and until mid-2004 in the transportation CG, but it did not seem to have made a significant contribution to other CGs as a participant. One reason for this was Japan's lack of capacity to participate in joint approaches to tackling issues. The other reason lies in the government and the international community. Not all the ministries had sufficient capacity to make the CG system workable, which resulted in the creation of ministries run by foreign experts and financially supported by the main donors, keeping those ministries' capacity to deliver governmental services undeveloped. In this circumstance, Japan listened to what the ministers and foreign experts decided before the CG meeting while it conducted its assistance program that it bilaterally arranged in consultation with a group of ministers (sometimes deputy ministers) and foreign experts.

In the meantime, JICA quietly took up the responsibility of training the staff of ministries and their branch offices in medical care and health, education, job training,

and transportation issues and helped them develop administration systems. These efforts have gradually been producing concrete results (*3).

“Ownership and capacity building”

The concept of the OI is to bring about comprehensive area-based development based on the results of humanitarian and urgent rehabilitation assistance. Japan assumed that, for improvement of “human security” in rural communities, development of the entire area around targeted communities would be essential. To implement this concept, it was necessary for Japan to consult local authorities and share its vision for the development of the targeted areas. Japan chose three areas as targets for the OI: Kandahar; Nangarhar; and the northern five provinces.

When the Japanese Embassy informed Ashuraf Ghani, Minister of Finance, of the second funding of the OI of around US\$42 million in October 2002, however, he refused permission for direct contact with local authorities, that is, provincial governments. According to him, the government had created the national development programs (NDP), including those for rural development, and the donors should talk with the relevant ministries about assistance. In addition, he harshly criticized Japan for opening a pipeline other than the government to provide funds to local people.

By the end of 2002, the Japanese Embassy had asked the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD), which was thought to have much to do with the OI, to jointly hold an OI coordination meeting. The purposes of the meeting were firstly to involve MRRD in the OI and secondly to coordinate between NDPs and the OI. Since the OI was implemented by international agencies such as the UNHCR, WFP, and UNICEF, another purpose was to get the officers at those agencies to understand the concept of the OI and to urge them to coordinate their work with each other and with the central and local governments.

The joint coordination meeting by the MRRD, the Japanese embassy and UN agencies produced a program for the third funding of the OI. As information came in through contacts with UN officers and local governments, however, it was discovered that efforts to coordinate and share visions on development at the local level were lacking, with a few exceptions(*4). The joint coordination meeting then held a workshop on the OI, inviting local government officials and UN officers to work out their own

projects.

The workshop created a comprehensive program for the fourth funding. It attached great importance to the centrality of the NDPs and thought out a way for the OI to complement the NDPs in comprehensive area development. If Japan had funded this planned program in a timely fashion, the OI would have proven very successful in demonstrating administration capacity on development. Unfortunately, it failed to do so. The humanitarian part of the program was funded but the preparatory part of the program for development missed out on funding due to Japan's failure to create a budgetary item for this purpose(*5).

Winning popular support

The conclusion of the lessons mentioned above is that, for comprehensive rural development, you need local people's support/initiative and empowered local authorities. Japan (or we at the field level) discovered this reality by gradually relying on local people for security of its assistance projects and people. Furthermore, we were given insights into the realities and wishes of local communities and their people.

Confidence building between Japanese and local people

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the Japanese Embassy in Afghanistan developed three security measures for the road rehabilitation project in 2003 and it was found that, of the three measures, the key was winning the support of local people for the projects. To win such support, we first needed the confidence of the local people in us, and to gain such confidence, we needed to take definite actions.

At the first meeting with the shura of the district in which the trunk road to be rehabilitated ran, some of the elders said that many foreigners had promised help but that none of them had kept their promises. The embassy staff patiently listened to their grievances and offered them rehabilitation projects through the Grass Root Grant Aid scheme. The contractor for the road rehabilitation also went to the shura every week and nurtured a close friendship with its members.

From June 2003 to the end of that year, the projects we promised to the shura elders took shape month by month. In July, the embassy official in charge of the Grant

Aid for Grass-root Project (GAGP) appeared at the shura meeting and began discussing concrete projects such as digging a well and constructing a culvert. In August, the trunk road rehabilitation project started with the hiring of 500 local employees. In December, the first GAGP, a well was constructed while the first phase of the road rehabilitation project was completed.

In the following year, we were welcomed everywhere in Kandahar province. With the good reputation among the citizens enjoyed by JICA's URSP projects and the Japan-funded UNDP REAP projects implemented in the city of Kandahar, the Japanese assistance outside the city was highly appreciated. More requests by local people for assistance came to the embassy. The embassy tried to respond to them as much as possible by making use of GAGP and by persuading the Japanese Foreign Ministry to approve projects for rehabilitating secondary roads in the province. In July 2004, when the people of the province learned of Ambassador Komano's imminent departure, the elders sent him a letter thanking Japan for all its assistance.

Information on community circumstances and realities

As our good relationships with local communities and tribes grew, considerable information on community circumstances poured into our communication network. Three features were observed from this information: a rapid increase in anti-American feelings and distrust of the government, the need for livelihood alternatives to poppy cultivation, and a generation gap between the young and old.

“Anti-American feelings and distrust of the government”

In late March 2004, one of the local Afghans approached this author, then deputy chief of mission at the Embassy, and requested that Japan support communities in Zabul Province. This Afghan came from the influential tribal leader's family and was respected by the whole tribe. He said, “I talked with the elders of the tribe. They said that they were hit on the right cheek by the Taliban and on the left cheek by the Americans. Their villages were destroyed. They asked Japan to help them rebuild their communities. I guarantee your safety and request that you come with me. I will escort you.” This author, in consultation with the head of the mission, declined to visit Zabul and suggested he cooperate with the PRT stationed there and the government. He declined to cooperate with the PRT but later he arranged meetings with the government.

It was Minister of Finance Ashraf Ghani who met the representatives of Zabul communities. According to him, however, the meetings did not produce any concrete agreement. Minister Ghani asked them to cooperate with the PRT but they refused. He said, "I met Ashraf two times. At the beginning he said I came from Kuchi. Since his attitude was so arrogant, I told him that, if you are a Kuchi, you should wear nomadic clothes, live and work in a tent."

A high-ranking official in the government was concerned about the treatment of the local people by the coalition soldiers in August 2004. He said, "Recently, the coalition troops came to a village house in Helmand at 5:00 in the morning, and woke up and took all the family members out of the house. The family members were divided into two groups, men and women, and separately investigated. No man could observe the women's group. Even the Russians did not do this type of investigation. President Karzai raised this issue with the supreme commander of the coalition forces but fell silent after the commander declined by saying that American soldiers bleed for Afghanistan". This high-ranking official also said, "This is tremendously serious. I ought to speak loudly about it if I consider the impact on Afghanistan in five years' time."

In July 2004, this author went to the Panjway district of Kandahar Province to inform the shura of the Japanese decision to pave the 22km road connecting Kandahar City and its district center. The meeting room was full of elders who welcomed the Japanese delegation. Less than 10 minutes after the meeting started, however, coalition troops came by in military jeeps and entered the meeting room without permission and without taking off their shoes (all the attendants, including the Japanese delegates, had taken off their shoes and sandals before entering the meeting room). The commander of the troops said, "We are patrolling near here by permission of Provincial Governor Pashutoon. Our only purpose is to help reconstruct this country." The elders gathering there were dumbfounded and the atmosphere of the meeting was marred. This author at the time thought the commander was a good guy but believed that the elders saw him and his troops as alien and unwelcome.

"Poppy cultivation"

In April 2004, a Japanese delegation going from Kandahar City to Gereshuk in Helmand Province took the trunk road connecting the two cities (*6). Most striking to

them were the blooming poppy fields they saw from the car windows on both sides of the road. The delegation visited several district shuras, announced the planned road rehabilitation and asked for support for the project while offering assistance in community development as usual as in any district shura. At meetings, none of the delegation mentioned the poppy cultivation; however, the elders of the shuras said, in effect, “We know poppy cultivation is bad. But we have no choice. We have to grow poppies because we have no ability to grow alternative crops and sell them at the market. We really need help from you to undertake other kinds of agriculture.”

After this visit, the interpreter said, “You are now safe. Since you did not suggest anything to accuse them of poppy cultivation but offered assistance to community development, the elders told the young people at the service in the mosque not to attack the Japanese and their projects.” The late Mulla Nagibullah, who was made wealthy by the revenue from his fruit fields and oil business, sympathized with poor farmers, saying that they knew poppy cultivation was bad but could not survive without it.

“Generation gap”

The Afghan notable from Zabul, mentioned earlier in this section, once complained that young people had forgotten to respect their elders and did not follow the instructions of the community elders. He said, “In a community, a lot of young people lived in poverty without proper jobs. The elders are losing the power to instruct young people. Young people tend to be attracted by the parties employing them, whoever they are.” The elders of the three districts of Kandahar whom the Japanese delegation met in April 2004 came up with ideas during the meeting on influencing young people. In the case of the Daman district where the 50km trunk road rehabilitation took place, the Japanese road construction company gave job opportunities through the elders to young people in the community. Thus the elders took back the old order of the community, including respect for elders.

After withdrawal of Japanese assistance from the south

“Ideas for situation change from the Afghans”

In the southern provinces no Japanese assistance projects are ongoing, except

the 115km trunk road rehabilitation project and the nursing school project run by an Afghan NGO and financed by JICA, due to the deterioration of the security situation. No Japanese personnel officially live in the south. Thus, the communication network once developed for collecting community information has disappeared.

However, the struggle of elders for community survival continues. In December 2006, this author visited Kabul and met the Afghan notable mentioned above. He made two points. One was “Don’t use a device again that failed once.’ He meant that, as former commanders had shown their inability to rule as governors and security chiefs, they should not be posted to the same positions.

The other was an idea for community survival and development. According to him, this idea was not his but the conclusion of discussions by community elders in the south. The contents of the idea are as follows:

- a) A proposal by the government to entrust a community with internal governance, security and reconstruction/development;
- b) A third party, who knows the community, is necessary to help the community form its organization and is expected to conduct research on living conditions in the community and to inform the government of the results;
- c) The government, responding to the research report, should provide necessary materials and fund for the community; and
- d) Two to three years later, the government could provide able personnel for development of the community.

In the same trip by this author, Prof. Naderi, Special Advisor to the President, stressed the importance of planning a strategy for the people. A proposal from the community viewpoint emerged when the government realized the need for a strategy for the people. Without community survival and support for the government and the international community, it has become obvious that the situation cannot be reversed for improvement. It seems that the time may have come for the international community to support this.

“Security Plan”

In May 2008, the Afghan notable communicated a security plan by local Afghans to this author. This security plan was developed by local people (*7) in the southwest (*8) and sought to destroy the camps of the insurgents and drug mafias and

drug factories, to arrest all the members of the drug mafias involved in business and production, and to identify local Taliban commanders and communications with the outside of Afghanistan in southwest Afghanistan. This plan has already identified camps and factories near the borders. It includes hiring local intelligence services, consulting with local elders and mullahs and cooperating with all the forces (ISAF, Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police and Afghan intelligence forces). The notable added that this plan was secretly supported by all the communities.

This is a local initiative coming from the need to secure livelihoods, and is compatible with the direction of international assistance recently agreed upon in a G8 official level meeting. Local people want to restore security by destroying the facilities of drug mafias and insurgents. A combination of these arguments means that the international community and the government of Afghanistan now have an opportunity to gain the support of local people.

Observation

In August 2003, then Governor of Kandahar Province Eng. Pashutun (*9) said, “Fifty percent of the reason for bad security in the south is neglect of rural areas by the government, and the other 50 percent is Pakistan’s willingness to let the Taliban regroup and infiltrate into Afghanistan. If the government succeeds in reconstruction in the rural areas, half of the reason for bad security will disappear and the influence of the Taliban will be reduced to 10 to 20 percent.”

Although the security situation has dramatically worsened over the past five years, the words of Eng. Pashutun are still valid. The government together with the international community has failed in reconstruction in the rural areas, that is, in reconstruction of rural communities.

Japan started its assistance to Afghanistan in the context of contributing to the GWOT, and formulated a number of projects for assistance to reconstruction propping up peace and stability. In order to realize the purposes of these projects, Japan participated in a coordination mechanism respecting Afghan ownership and tried to ensure security for the project works. In implementation, however, Japan, at least at the field level, found that without community support, the projects would not succeed. Furthermore, as Japan attached importance to community development, a trade item

for community support of the projects, it came to realize the reality of communities. This reality comprises poverty, psychological and physical damage due to the coalition's military actions, anti-government feelings, and the collapse of the old order and security.

The points communicated by the Afghan notable suggest that the international community and the government of Afghanistan still have an opportunity to work together with local people for a common purpose that the local community wants and that is compatible with the direction of international assistance. This in turn offers the hope of winning popular support, absolutely necessary for winning the fight against terrorism.

[Notes]

*1: Gaiko Forum Spring 2005, "Winning Popular Support: The Key to Peace and Stability in Afghanistan" (Miyahara Nobutaka)

*2: Opening Statement by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi at the Tokyo conference, January 21, 2002

*3: For example, in medical care, a school and education system for midwives in Kandahar as well as the tuberculosis center and its education system

*4: The OI in Balkh province produced a unit supporting the provincial government and achieved partial success.

*5: In July 2005, Japan created another program in cooperation with the UNDP for comprehensive rural development.

*6: The delegation consisted of the Embassy staff and personnel from the consultant and contractor companies for the trunk road rehabilitation.

*7: According to the information, 'the tribe leaders and powerful people from the Afghan-Pakistan and Afghan-Iranian border areas' and '12 people staying near the enemy's camps and movement routes' were involved in drafting this security plan.

*8: The provinces of Kanadahar, Helmand, Zabul, Urzgan, Nemroz and Farah

*9: Presently he serves in the post of Minister of Urban Development and Housing.

Chapter 4

Principles for good international engagement with Afghanistan

Yukimasa Fukuda

“Don’t bypass us!”

That was the fervent and persistent call of Afghan officials from the moment the international community suddenly expanded its presence in Afghanistan after the ouster of the Taliban. The reason for their persistence needs to be examined within an Afghan context. The donor community, including NGOs, had played a significant role in service delivery to the Afghan population as subsequent governments gradually ceased to function, especially from 1992 when armed conflict started among the *mujahideens*. As a result, though out of necessity, donors took over the core state function of service delivery from the government. Now that the Taliban were gone, it was only natural that the new Afghan government wanted to demonstrate to its people and the international community that it had restored its sovereignty by reclaiming the service delivery function from the international donor community. For the Afghans, this was a serious matter of legitimacy for the responsible government they had longed to establish, and they urged donors to change their deeply ingrained behavior and mentality of the past, and not to bypass the new government thoughtlessly. Donors on the other hand were not fully sensitive to this background and, because many maintained their old habit of bypassing the government, the relationship between the new Afghan government and donors experienced occasional discord.

Afghans did not stop simply at balking at donors’ indifference. They tried to make sure that the Afghan government coordinated donors before being coordinated and made a plaything by donors in the name of aid effectiveness, coordination, and harmonization. Afghans insisted from a very early stage, as early as the time of the Tokyo Conference in January 2002, that Afghan-led aid coordination mechanisms should be established in Kabul; the Consultative Group (CG) mechanism had been up and running already since October of that year (2002).

Consultative Group (CG) mechanism: a vital tool for state-building

The outlook of the Kabul-based CG mechanism was not too different from the

mechanism applied in other developing countries. Sector-wise CGs, a dozen of them altogether, were established. In each CG, the minister of that sector chaired meetings together with active donors of that sector as members. A Focal Point was nominated among these donors in the sector to help serve as a bridge between the minister/ministry and the donors in the CG, aiming for effective coordination among them.

The major difference between the Afghan CG mechanism and those of other developing countries may be that the Kabul-based CG was not intended just for coordination among the recipient government and the donor community but was intentionally designed by the Afghan government to be an integral part of their budget system from the beginning. The budget in the case of Afghanistan meant mostly foreign assistance funds, as a matter of course, but Afghans emphasized that the budget was the core institution for their state building from the start, and they intended to have full control of it by demanding that donors place all their aid funds under the Afghan budget system, allowing no off-budget, no bypass. This was a matter of legitimacy to be taken seriously. Afghans wanted to establish a real government completely in control of its own budget. The budget process involves planning, execution, supervision, evaluation of outcomes, and feedback into the process. Actually going through that process, step by step, with real funds in their hands, they intended to build their policy-making and administrative capacity and ultimately to become a full-fledged functioning government in total control of its budget, including the collection of local taxes and revenues, which is the key to breaking free of aid dependency. Moreover, in the Afghan context, the establishment of a strong central budgetary system that firms up a consolidated 'national' budget was especially important to secure the unity of the cabinet, the government, and the country as a whole because still some cabinet members were powerful former warlords and the risk of the country becoming fragmented again was high. A national budget finalized in the name of the cabinet was expected to solidify and ensure coherence of the government as a whole.

That is also the reason the Afghan government strongly demanded, almost obsessively, direct budgetary support from donors so that the Afghan government could utilize the funds directly and could demonstrate to the Afghan people that this time around it is the government that is delivering, not foreign donors or NGOs.

Such was the idea behind the Kabul-based CG mechanism. However, it is quite questionable whether the very intentions and aspirations of the government were

fully recognized by the donor community as a whole. It is also a question whether the Afghan side itself fully and truly digested, owned, and shared the concept and the significance of the CG and the budget, a core facility of state building, during the rapidly evolving early stage of the reconstruction. Furthermore, the existence of many foreign experts and budget advisors in the government isolated working-level Afghan officials from the policy making process. At the same time, some ministers/ministries were receiving more attention and a corresponding number of foreign experts than other ministers/ministries, causing not only uneven development in government capacity but also distrust among ministers/ministers and officials, harming the very cohesion of the government both Afghans and the donor community had aimed to establish.

With hindsight, if the donor community were more mindful of the frustration of Afghans, and if the energy of both sides were concentrated on project implementation to deliver rather than on Afghans' almost obsessive arguments about the budget -- core or not -- things could have been different today. As for the frustration of Afghans, what they wanted donors to do was to fully consult with Afghans on a day-to-day basis and share with Afghans information on donor-assisted aid programs and projects. If that exercise had become a habit of donors -- and this is the very process of capacity development -- there should have been no room for argument about whether certain donor-assisted projects fell under the core budget or not. To add to the confusion, some donors insisted that all aid volume from the donor community as a whole should be directed to budget support. On the other hand, especially larger donors who had the will and capacity to extend larger volumes of assistance to Afghanistan could offer a variety of aid modalities according to the real needs of Afghanistan. The discord between those two ideas among the donor community and with the Afghan government was not vitally necessary, for in the eyes of ordinary Afghan people the actual delivery of basic services was what they expected very much to see.

One other aspect of the Kabul-based CG mechanism was that it was conducted in an extremely intensive English-speaking environment. The donor community with overwhelming capacity took that for granted, and any contentious participants could make their influence felt. That was not only too much for ordinary officials of the convalescent Afghan government but also for some donors who had a number of real projects to which to attend. The transaction costs of coordination began to be perceived as excessive.

Eventually, the CG mechanism, though generally accepted initially, lost its spirit as a whole along the way, and became a mere shell except in a few core sectors. To revive this CG mechanism the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) composed of the Afghan side and donors (21 countries and organizations) was established during the London Conference in January 2006. Nevertheless, a drastic improvement of the CG mechanism has yet to be confirmed.

In Afghanistan, delivery of basic services should be the first priority. With that in mind, donors should work closely with their Afghan counterparts as a matter of habit and intentionally incorporate capacity-development components in pursuing effective delivery, not bypassing their Afghan counterparts. On the other hand, the Afghan government in turn should at least work to facilitate donor efforts so that donors can operate smoothly in Afghanistan, and work with donors to intentionally absorb capacity from them, not waiting for donors to come forward. Furthermore, since all aid is supposed to be extended upon formal request to donors from the Afghan government and upon formal agreement between the two, there should not be any off-budget cases from the outset. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Afghan government to keep track of the implementation of those agreements. At the same time, donors should share necessary information, including disbursement data, with their Afghan counterparts so that project progress can be mutually monitored and so that the information can be compiled and reflected in budget execution reporting and also in planning. This is how the balance between capacity development and service delivery can be achieved practically.

The aid coordination CG setup is already in place, now monitored by JCMB by both the Afghan government and donors. However, the Afghan government and donor community may have already exhausted themselves over the coordination mechanism. Nevertheless, it is not too late to reconfirm the very aim of our efforts: to deliver. We are still too far away from satisfying the basic needs of Afghan people to be coordinated.

In any event, the current CG aid coordination mechanism can be useful in practically addressing major obstacles to state building and service delivery in Afghanistan by focusing on “do no harm”. That would include, first and foremost, parallel structures.

Parallel structures

The international community's efforts were very destructive to the building of governance capability in Afghanistan because they simply headhunted the best people from the government and hired them as local staff, though many of them ended up doing menial work at donors' outposts. These officials were working for US\$30 to US\$50 per month as civil servants when, all the sudden, donors rushed in and scrambled for personnel, especially English-speaking Afghans, offering them up to US\$5,000 a month. The result was an abrupt brain drain from the government to the donor community. The Afghan bureaucracy is said to have had more capability in 2001 and early 2002 without foreign aid than today. The rhetoric of the international aid system is that it is supposed to be building capabilities of recipient countries, but it is actually draining capability from the weak governments it is supposed to help.²⁶ The last day of the Tokyo International Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan (January 22, 2002) saw the presentation of a Co-chairs' Summary of Conclusions²⁷ comprising 22 points, the penultimate of which states, "The Conference noted the UNDP proposal for a Code of Conduct to avoid distortionary wage and rent inflation caused by the international presence, and urged the IG to work further on the proposal." In spite of this stipulation in the Co-chairs' Summary of Conclusions, the proposition has been ignored to date.²⁸ Now there are approximately 280,000 civil servants working in the government receiving an average of US\$50 per month, while approximately 50,000 Afghan nationals are working for NGOs, the UN and bilateral and multilateral agencies, where they can earn US\$1,000 per month or more.²⁹ Today, many students graduating from Kabul University end up as drivers in the UN system because a job in the government pays US\$50 while UN drivers get US\$400 per month. Hence, officials, doctors, lawyers, engineers, and university graduates become drivers.³⁰

In this way, meagerly surviving local capacity at ministries was scooped out overnight by donors, effectively undermining the very aim of capacity building of public institutions that Afghans and donors both initially intended to pursue, and effectively

²⁶ A remark by Dr. Ashraf Ghani at the JBIC Seminar "A Comparative Perspective on State-Building in Post-Conflict Conditions: Afghanistan, Lebanon, Nepal, and Sudan," January 21, 2007, Tokyo

²⁷ http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/middle_e/afghanistan/min0201/summary.pdf

²⁸ As of June, 2008, the issue has been addressed at the OECD/DAC, e.g., Fragile States Group.

²⁹ Ghani, Lockhart (2008) "Fixing Failed States", pp.100

³⁰ A remark by Dr. Ashraf Ghani at the JBIC Seminar "A Comparative Perspective on State-Building in Post-Conflict Conditions: Afghanistan, Lebanon, Nepal, and Sudan," January 21, 2007, Tokyo

creating parallel structures, with Afghan public servants and public institutions increasingly becoming prone to corruption on the one hand, and the donor community with its overwhelming capacities employing highly-paid local Afghan staffers on the other. This caused very rapid income gaps among Afghans and consequently aggravated discontent among Afghans, even raising hostility against donors.

One prominent Afghan ex-official did not hide his anger when spitting out, “I would close down all the UN agencies in Afghanistan overnight, and create a structure within the government that hires these people!”³¹ The principle of ‘do no harm’ should be seriously addressed in that regard.

DAC’s principles for good international engagement with fragile states and situations

As has been pointed out above, there was a serious mismatch between the Afghan government and the donor community in the process of Afghan state-building. However, the major problem seems to be with donors rather than the Afghans. First and foremost, the behavior and, moreover, mentality of donors have to change.

Nevertheless, there is good news for Afghanistan. Reflecting actual hard experience in getting difficult jobs done in a difficult country like Afghanistan, donors compiled and adopted at DAC in Paris ‘Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations’ in April 2007.³² “The long-term vision for international engagement in fragile states is to help national reformers to build effective, legitimate, and resilient state institutions, capable of engaging productively with their people to promote sustained development,” as the Principles’ preamble declares, and to realize this objective, the following ten principles, or ten commandments, were adopted.

1. Take context as the starting point
2. Do no harm
3. Focus on state-building as the objective
4. Prioritize prevention
5. Recognize the links between political, security and development objectives
6. Promote non-discrimination as the basis for inclusive and stable societies

³¹ A remark by Dr. Ashraf Ghani at the JBIC Seminar “A Comparative Perspective on State-Building in Post-Conflict Conditions: Afghanistan, Lebanon, Nepal, and Sudan,” January 21, 2007, Tokyo

³² <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/61/45/38368714.pdf>

7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts
8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors
9. Act fast...but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance
10. Avoid pockets of exclusion (“aid orphans”)

DAC donors will go through peer reviews among themselves, including of actual implementation of these principles. At the same time, Afghanistan and all other developing countries, especially those labeled as “fragile states”, should be encouraged to hold all donors accountable to what donors themselves had unanimously adopted as their principles of behavioral change, to make sure that donors really own up to these principles.

In Paris on June 12, 2008, the International Conference in Support of Afghanistan was held and the international community pledged more than \$21 billion for Afghanistan. All participants adopted the Final Declaration³³ of the Conference, which included a sentence -- “We also agree to focus on state building efforts and avoid parallel structures.” -- Very much in line with the DAC principles mentioned above. This is a welcome development, a sign at last that the international community is really embracing the DAC principles. If the Afghan government and international community are genuinely serious about state building in Afghanistan, they cannot disregard the problem of parallel structures, and the core of the issue is distortionary wages and rents caused by the international presence, as referred before, which also cannot be bypassed.

Is Afghanistan a “failed state”?

Not to be wedded to the current grim state of affairs in Afghanistan, it would be worthwhile to revisit some of the major achievements in state building by Afghans themselves.

There is still a persistently prevailing image of Afghanistan as a “failed

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http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files_156/afghanistan_498/international-conference-in-support-of-afghanistan-paris-12th-june-2008_6366/ministerial-conference-june-12-2008_6370/final-declaration_6375/declaration-of-the-international-conference-in-support-of-afghanistan-issued-under-the-authority-of-the-three-co-chairs-president-sarkozy-president-karzai-un-secretary-general-ban-ki-moon-paris-june-12-2008_11560.html

state”. However, without its enormous indigenous capacity, how could a failed state achieve the political Bonn Process almost on schedule, introduce a new currency in just three months, carry through the collection of duties/taxes from governors (in other words, warlords) controlling the borders, set forth a donor coordination mechanism and build it into the budgetary process before being coordinated by contentious donors, as mentioned before? Donors tend to treat countries like Afghanistan as if they undoubtedly have no capabilities. However, as Afghanistan has demonstrated, it has enormous capabilities. Before labeling Afghanistan a failed state, donors should have the sense and capacity to identify the surviving and functioning indigenous capacities that Afghans and their communities already possess, and donors should intentionally and tenaciously work to strengthen these with encouragement and, as an extension of that, donors should support Afghans’ own designs attuned to the Afghan context, not imposing donors’.

If donors are really serious about respecting and fostering the ownership of Afghans so that they can stand on their own feet someday, donors may as well abandon micromanagement of their funds. However, the question is whether donors can be patient enough with the pace of Afghan development. After all, development is a difficult and lengthy national enterprise that requires national ownership, and for it to take root it must be homegrown. Donors should also be modest enough to admit that what they can do is limited because it is Afghans, not outside donors, who know their context better than anybody else and who will have to bear the consequences of the decisions they make.

Emerging champions

In 2006 and 2007, there were two important elections for Afghans that were not elections in Afghanistan, although both involved a particular Afghan individual. The one in 2006 was the election of Kofi Annan’s successor as UN-Secretary General. The other in 2007 was for the nomination of the President of the World Bank to replace Paul Wolfowitz. In both cases, Dr. Ashraf Ghani, former Afghan Finance Minister, was listed as a prospective candidate. Afghans were profoundly excited at the news that Dr. Ghani might be elected as the head of either of these prominent world organs. However, that feverish mood began to change around the time of the nomination of the World Bank’s President. Of course Afghans wished Dr. Ghani to become the head of the World Bank, but at the same time they were also anxious about the possible loss of Dr. Ghani to

Washington when Afghanistan needed him most. Since Dr. Ghani, the architect of the CG mechanism and most of the major reconstruction policies, had left the cabinet at the end of 2004, Afghanistan had begun to drift. Then a certain segment of younger Afghans suddenly realized their over-dependency on a strong personality such as Dr. Ghani. They began to realize that it is they who have to act to carve out their own futures.

Time is not static. During the six years or so since the new government came in, the younger generations of Afghanistan have seen a lot and, profoundly frustrated about the present state of affairs, they began to emerge as a new force.

One such promising movement is the Center for Policy Priorities (CFPP),³⁴ which emerged sometime in late 2007 as an independent think-tank comprising a group of dedicated young Afghan professionals. Their aim is to support the efforts of the government and the international community across a wide range of policy reforms through concrete research, to generate healthy debates among citizens in formulating public opinion, and to provide capacity development for future leadership positions in both the public and private sectors. Currently they are involved in basic training for parliamentarians on legislation, among other projects. In November 2007, CFPP held a 'First Young Afghan Professional Summit' in Kabul attended by more than 100 young Afghan professionals from all over the country and from abroad as well, essentially the launch of CFPP.

CFPP has only just begun operating, and it might be too early to judge its future prospects. However, such a development is encouraging, especially when the present state of affairs in Afghanistan is being excessively characterized as increasingly overshadowed by uncertainties. At last an Afghan version of the Young Turks, real patriots, may be in the making. Such a movement should be watched and encouraged as it grows. One need not be too pessimistic about the future of Afghanistan, after all, because there are always new generations taking over from the older ones.

³⁴ <http://www.cfpp.org.af/>

Short CV

Maki Shinohara has served as UNHCR Spokesperson in Afghanistan, 2001-2003. She worked extensively in former Yugoslavia, and was the special assistant to Mrs. Sadako Ogata, President of Japan International Cooperation Agency, former UN High Commissioner for Refugees and former Japanese Prime Minister's Representative Envoy for Afghanistan. She is currently leading emergency teams in Iraq and other complex humanitarian situations, as UNHCR's Senior Emergency Preparedness and Response Officer. Prior to joining UNHCR in 1992, she was a staff writer for a major US newspaper.

Yoshiyuki Yamamoto has worked as Programme Coordinator, United Nations Office for Humanitarian Coordinator's Office for Afghanistan (1998-1999), Officer-in-Charge, Sub-office, Kabul (2000-2001) and Senior Reintegration Officer, Office of Chief of Mission in Afghanistan (2002), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). He served as Associate Professor, Graduate School of Law, Nagoya University for a year (2002-2003), and served as Head of Programme Section, United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (2004-2007). He is currently working as Portfolio Manager, North America Office, United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

Nobutaka Miyahara has served as deputy chief of mission, Embassy of Japan in Afghanistan from August 2002 to August 2004 after he, as director of the second Middle East division of the Foreign Ministry of Japan, participated in planning post-9.11 Japanese policy towards Afghanistan. He quit the foreign ministry in July 2005 after having worked for it for more than 22 years. He is currently a professor at the Faculty of Literature, Kurume University and a senior associate fellow at the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA).

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