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“No Going Backward”

AFGHANISTAN’S POST-PEACE ACCORD SECURITY SECTOR

By Annie Pforzheimer, Andrew Hyde, and Jason Criss Howk



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ABOUT THE REPORT

Drawing on Afghan capabilities and international best practices, this report considers post-peace agreement security requirements in Afghanistan and suggests what kind of security forces will be necessary. The research was supported by the Afghanistan and Governance, Justice, and Security programs at the United States Institute of Peace.

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Cover photo: People take a picture with a soldier at the Afghan Security Forces Exhibition in Kabul, Afghanistan, on March 3, 2021. (Photo by Rahmat Gul/AP)

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Summary



Serious conflict risks will exist in Afghanistan even after a peace agreement is finalized. After so much suffering and expense, expectations will be high for a brighter future, with peace taking hold and reduced international involvement. Past experiences in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world, however, underscore both the fragility and the possibilities of this moment. Planning to meet the likely post-settlement security challenges must start long before hostilities have concluded and a formal peace agreement is reached.

In particular, expectations for a peace agreement should be adjusted now to accommodate both positive and negative security perceptions. All parties should understand that a peace accord will not mean an immediate end to violence and will not result in the immediate assertion of any entity's complete authority across the country. Though the rule of law may have a firmer grip, it will not necessarily be in ways recognizable to the international community or to more metropolitan Afghans. A strategy for achieving a sustainable peace in Afghanistan must include planning for the likely enduring, expanding, and emerging security challenges after a political settlement.

This report explores some of the specific security issues Afghanistan is likely to face once the Taliban insurgency ends, drawing on the experiences of other conflict-prone nations in managing similar dilemmas. Post-settlement security challenges and diminishing international resources will require a reconfiguring of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) to focus on increased capabilities for policing and intelligence coordination, fewer kinetic counterinsurgency operations, and continued counterterrorism cooperation, both among the ANDSF services and with Afghanistan's international partners. The report additionally outlines what international donors can do to maximize the capacity and preparedness of the Afghan security sector to meet these challenges.



Afghan National Army soldiers run drills at their base on the outskirts of Maidan Shahr, Afghanistan, on November 7, 2020. (Photo by Marcus Yam/Los Angeles Times/Shutterstock)

Introduction

Countless examples from across the world and throughout history suggest it is . . . likely that the peace process will be neither easy nor linear and that Afghanistan will face a new pattern of security problems.

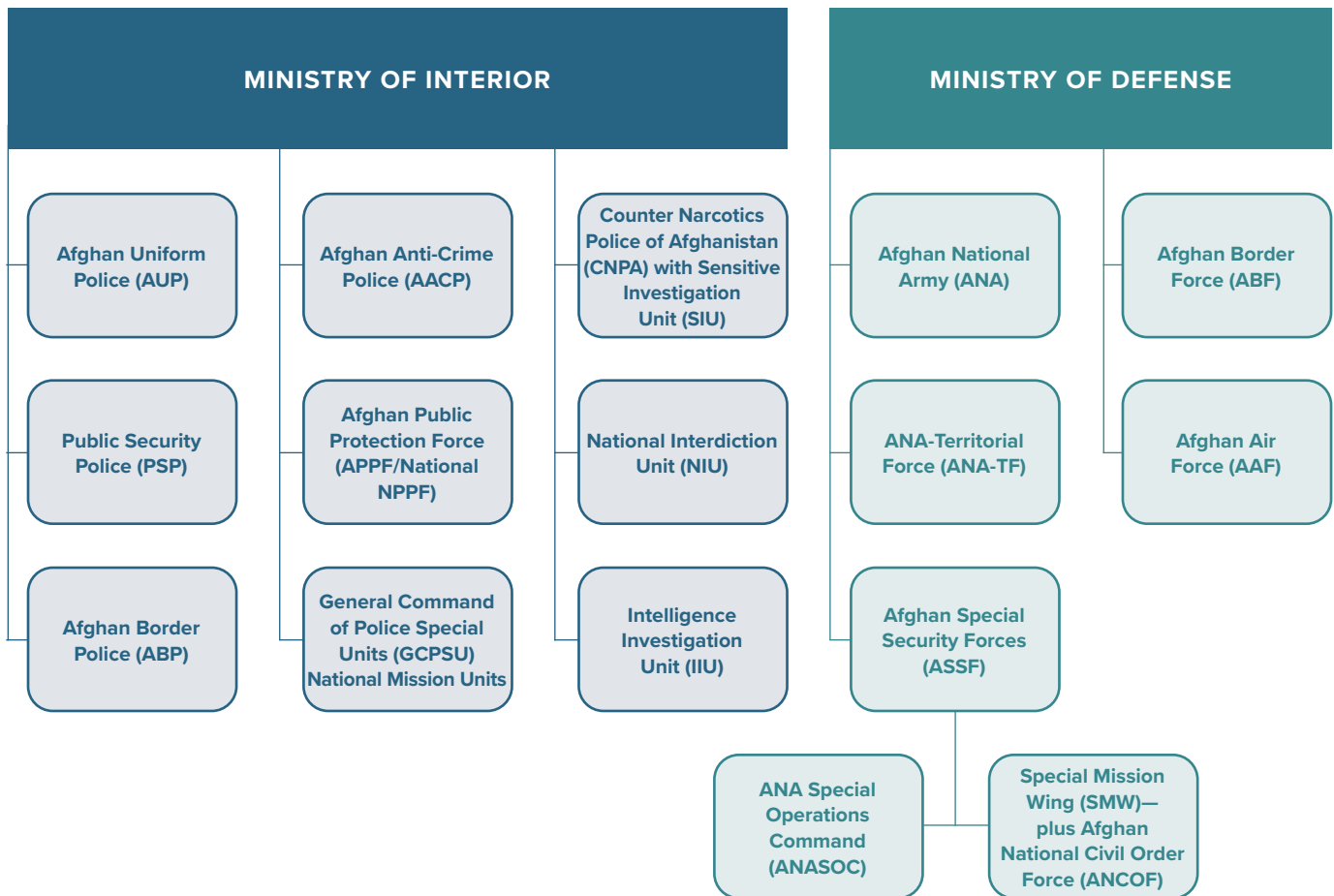
Afghanistan after a peace agreement should be a country at rest, with its security assured, millions of displaced people able to return home, and economic and political institutions strengthening over time. But countless examples from across the world and throughout history suggest it is more likely that the peace process will be neither easy nor linear and that Afghanistan will face a new pattern of security problems. Some concerns will diminish, others persist and evolve, and new ones emerge.

A durable peace is never achieved quickly or cheaply, and a return to violence after the suspension of civil conflict is common. Afghans frequently use the phrase “no going backward” on social media today. Most intend the phrase to signal the rejection of any deal with the Taliban that sacrifices the political and social freedoms and economic improvements achieved since 2001. Even if there is a viable political settlement, however, “no going backward” could equally be read as a call not to lose these Afghan societal advancements in the face of the new slate of security challenges that will inevitably emerge.

This report explores the specific issues Afghanistan’s security sector is likely to face once the Taliban insurgency ends. In doing so it reflects on how other conflict-prone nations have managed similar dilemmas and how the existing Afghan security forces

Figure 1. Organization of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces

The Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) in this report include but are not limited to these organizations.



could realign to address these likely challenges, assuming a minimal international footprint, and suggests what international donors could do to help Afghan security institutions meet these challenges. Planning now for a future Afghan security sector is imperative since the high expectations for peace will likely outpace reality and the ability of all parties to adapt.

The dominant feature of Afghanistan's instability over at least the past forty years has been an active and somewhat organized insurgency. At a minimum, a peace process and agreement should see an end to, or a drastic reduction of, violence from the current insurgency. Even the most optimistic scenarios involving a peace agreement, however, still accept that, owing to Afghanistan's history, geography, resource scarcity, and various social

and political fault lines, violence in various forms will undoubtedly remain a part of life for many Afghans. The sources of violence are likely to be multiple, potentially including irreconcilable insurgents turned into spoilers of the peace agreement, indigenous and foreign-born terrorists, organized criminals, traders in illicit goods such as narcotics and opium, conflict involving displaced populations, ethnic tensions, and competition for scarce and valuable natural resources. Some of these threats could become severe. Interactions among the threats could also further magnify them—for instance, if those engaging in organized crime and terrorist groups decide to make common cause. As well, neighboring countries or elements within those countries could decide that it is to their advantage to begin or to continue to support, direct, or intensify such security threats.

Peace itself, and the process by which peace is achieved, could become factors contributing to an increased sense of insecurity among some groups and in certain regions. Both worldwide examples and Afghanistan's own history underscore the fragility of a post-agreement environment. Civil wars commonly reignite, and refugee flows remain unstable years after an accord is reached. Those who, for ideological or criminal reasons, prefer chaos emerge as powerful threat actors and gain regional and international backers—again, participating for their own reasons. Returning refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) upset local power balances. Local variations on difficult national issues can be expected to emerge during the implementation of a peace agreement and may prompt flare-ups of violence, which in turn can escalate to become a national calamity. All that said, many nations do escape this fate, and their successes are instructive.

This report assumes that Afghanistan's post-settlement security sector will include the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) recognizably resembling their current form even as they adapt to accommodate a role for Taliban political and military leaders, mid-level officers, and fighters.

This assumption reflects the practical point that there are no realistic plans or existing Taliban demands to dismantle or remake the ANDSF entirely. It also reflects the fact that there would realistically be no international interest or funding on the horizon to meet such a massive task, in part because of the sunk costs of establishing the current ANDSF. In fact, amounts of international funding and direct military support will most likely decline over the near to medium term, given competing priorities worldwide. Furthermore, experience with post-civil war security force integration in other parts of the world demonstrates that rather than replacing security institutions, a reconfiguration involving small, carefully tailored modifications is a better option.

This report also assumes that some level of external security funding and assistance will be essential for

the viability of the Afghan security forces in the near to medium term, and that, with appropriate legal authorities, such assistance may include support for the integration of Taliban elements. For reconciliation through the visible inclusion of former enemies into the security forces in some form is essential. Here the positive and negative lessons from the most significant wholesale Afghan security sector reform (SSR) initiative (2001–03), which folded the various non-Taliban militias from the mujahideen, civil war, and Taliban regime era into a new Afghan National Army (ANA), should prove helpful. As well, peace agreements to conclude civil war in other parts of the world offer precedent for working with individually demobilized members of terrorist groups, such as the ex-FARC fighters in Colombia, or with new entities formerly part of a listed organization, such as the Palestinian Authority, and for delisting entire organizations that have joined a peace process, such as the Colombian self-defense forces. Although integrating ex-combatants can negatively affect morale and force cohesion and increase intra-force violence, such instances are relatively rare.¹

Post-settlement security challenges will require a reconfiguration of the ANDSF that focuses on increasing the security sector's capabilities for improved policing and intelligence coordination, anticipates fewer kinetic counterinsurgency operations, and plans for continued counterterrorism cooperation, both among the services and with international partners. Since the police force is currently the weakest ANDSF institution, it should receive the most urgent attention in the near term: allowing a poorly performing police force to continue its efforts without training and then opting to use the military and intelligence services to conduct law enforcement undermines long-term stabilization efforts. In addition, as part of reconfiguring the ANDSF, costs should be reduced in anticipation of reduced international support for the ANDSF with a peace agreement.

During peace agreement negotiations and after, it will be important to calibrate public and international expectations for an agreement to accommodate an

Managing expectations and planning should begin even while negotiations take shape, with an eye to retaining and even improving the current capability of and public trust in the ANDSF, to ensure the long-term viability of the security sector.

outcome that encompasses both positive and negative peace. A peace accord will not mean an immediate end to violence or result in the immediate assertion of any entity's complete authority across the country. Though the rule of law may be firmer, it will not necessarily be so in ways readily recognized by the international community or by more metropolitan Afghans. These assumptions underlie this report's recommendations for defining sustainable security sector success. The international examples adduced in support of the recommendations tend toward the relatively modest metric of a negative peace, or staving off a return to civil war, with the hope that mitigation of widespread unrest can create space for building faith in a new order over time.

The Afghan government should heed the lessons learned from Afghanistan's past and from other post-conflict situations in forming a security sector strategy. Chief among these is the need for security forces to prioritize gaining and keeping the trust of all Afghans, practicing political neutrality, and ensuring accountability for their actions. Forces also must be right-sized, retrained, and capable of carrying out their new missions; organized in appropriate structures; and ready

to meet security funding decreases over time. Security institutions with robust and sustainable partnerships with bilateral and alliance counterparts should retain the option of allowing their partners to aid in security tasks; the predictability of future funding is vital, even if the amounts are diminishing. Finally, civilian leadership and civilian oversight of security forces are essential.

Another key to preparing for a post-peace agreement Afghanistan is to start now the dialogue among Afghans—including both the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban sides—and their security partners and international donors about possible operational issues and a variety of possible solutions. Managing expectations and planning should begin even while negotiations take shape, with an eye to retaining and even improving the current capability of and public trust in the ANDSF, to ensure the long-term viability of the security sector. If Afghans debate and create a strategy now that can incorporate these ideas, then a national commitment to protecting citizens' lives will never be in doubt. This study aims to help Afghans and the world to bring a durable peace to Afghanistan, which in turn will help the region bloom economically and rid itself of terrorism and instability.

The Post-settlement Threat Landscape: Global Examples



Afghanistan has never suffered from a shortage of actual and potential security challenges. Its ability to tolerate some, navigate around others, and confront the most pernicious head-on will be a principal factor in a successful peace process leading to a durable peace. To get there requires an openness to learning from experience, both from Afghanistan's own history and from other parts of the world, along with an ability to adapt to shifting circumstances and emerging trends.

A settlement will necessarily see the most significant security threat—the Taliban's organized, active use of violence to topple the government—diminish and change character. This could become the basis for an improved quality of social, political, and economic life across the country. But as the organized use of insurgent violence gradually dissipates, new issues and challenges will come to the fore. Some will be recognized as existing threats, now become more prominent; others will evolve with changing conditions; and still others will be relatively new to Afghanistan. Examples from the climate following peace settlements in other parts of the world offer some lessons as to what to expect and how to respond.

ENDURING TERRORISM CONCERNS

For international actors, terrorism is the most widely recognized single threat to Afghanistan's security and will likely remain so even after the signing of a peace agreement. Al-Qaeda operating from Afghanistan provided the original rationale for international intervention in Afghanistan in 2001, and the Islamic State–Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) continues to mount bloody and extensive attacks, primarily on soft targets. A promised

Taliban willingness to deny sanctuary to recognized terrorist groups, including but not limited to al-Qaeda and ISIS-K, is one of the main pillars of the US-Taliban agreement signed in February 2020 in Doha, Qatar.

However, in light of the existence of rural and urban ungoverned spaces in many parts of Afghanistan, and past links to certain Afghan and regional power elements, it appears likely that certain groups will continue to base themselves in Afghanistan and exploit weak national institutions and structures, whether or not the Taliban intend or are able to keep their promises. Surviving terrorist groups will also be a logical early destination for any disaffected militants unwilling to compromise with Kabul; in one scenario, terrorist recruits could swell the ranks of a group like ISIS-K at an especially vulnerable moment for Afghanistan. Neighboring countries may also contribute to instability if they seek to challenge their own insurgents operating on Afghan territory or prop up Afghan proxies willing to use terrorism for regional political advantage.

Without a concerted approach to confront them, these groups could be a major destabilizing factor in critical parts of the country. Even very remote areas on Afghanistan's eastern border where some groups base their operations are within striking distance of major population centers such as Kabul and Jalalabad, making high-profile attacks with maximum public impact easy to pull off while leaving the attackers less exposed to retaliation by security forces. Until recently, the United States led most of the counterterrorism fight, but a peace agreement accompanied by a US troop drawdown and eventual withdrawal could hand the ANDSF full responsibility.

Global Experience

Other post-conflict or otherwise vulnerable countries employ a varying mix of military, police, and civilian authorities against terrorism. A military-led counterterrorism approach in Afghanistan will continue to be essential, but kinetic military activity carries the risk of overreach, with loss of civilian lives. Therefore hybrid approaches that involve both police and paramilitary forces are worth exploring because they incorporate the power to arrest and to activate the criminal justice system while still harnessing tough military tools against potent enemies. Indonesia's police force, for example, leads investigations and operations through its counterterrorism unit, Detachment 88, and can deputize Indonesian military units for operational support. It has been largely successful in preventing deeper violence in a volatile region.² Detachment 88 mainly comprises tactical response teams equipped to perform both policing and quasi-military functions such as bomb disposal; it has robust intelligence capabilities and mines information from community and religious leaders.³ Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service is another potentially relevant example. Extensive US training helped make it Iraq's most effective counterterrorism force. It operates directly under the prime minister's office, which has helped the unit bypass Iraq's sclerotic bureaucracy and protected the unit's internal culture, though this administrative connection has also risked politicization of the service, limited accountability, and excessive use of the unit in a crisis. Like many similar entities, it has a mixed human rights record, but it is Iraq's most effective national force in combating ISIS and other terrorist threats.⁴

Other governmental counterterrorism groups that are outside the military take a robust "formed policing" (self-sustaining units of up to 125 officials who can carry out security operations) approach, such as specialized gendarmerie units in francophone African states such as Mali, Chad, and Burkina Faso. These structures operate best under strict centralized government control. Mali's special units have had success in repelling terror attacks, including a 2017 hotel siege, but in 2020 they were subject to political misuse against protesters. Another paramilitary

body is the Palestinian Authority Security Force (PASF), which has received US State Department training. Since 2008 the PASF has emerged as a crucial security partner for Israel in helping prevent attacks from Hamas and lone spoilers.⁵ Its National Security Force unit takes the lead in public order and counterterrorist operations that are beyond the capacity of the civil police, while its elite rapid response battalion conducts high-risk arrest operations and hostage rescues in densely populated and politically volatile areas such as refugee camps.⁶

International and intraservice intelligence cooperation is also valuable in fighting transnational terror groups. Such cooperation depends on trust, particularly trust that the information shared by countries or services will be protected.⁷ In Senegal and Mauritania, a system of bilateral cross-border patrols and information sharing among military units from each country helps track the movement of groups like ISIS and al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb. Eleven Central and East African Great Lakes nations also use shared intelligence arrangements to fight illegal armed groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that are exploiting porous borders, including by posting military representatives to the UN-sponsored Expanded Joint Verification Mechanism and the Joint Intelligence Fusion Centre.⁸

Government-aligned counterterrorism militias can be useful for a limited period of time after a peace agreement is signed, despite inherent complications. The Misratans in Libya and the Sahwas in Iraq, for example, have made significant strides toward reducing terrorist operations that the government could not contain. On the other hand, the lack of accountability can lead to abuses; militias and governments can eventually turn on each other, and overly empowered antiterrorist forces can evolve into little more than local gangster outfits outside the government's control. In Nigeria's northern regions, under threat from Boko Haram since 2009, the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) emerged from community self-defense initiatives and in 2013 became part of an official effort with the government security forces. The

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members have not, overall, devolved into vigilantism or ethnic militias and have rescued hostages while helping identify Boko Haram members.⁹ However, the CJTF was cited in 2016 for recruiting children and in 2017 signed an agreement with UNICEF to end the practice. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is helping to reintegrate former fighters and militia members, rebuilding communities devastated both by Boko Haram and by those fighting against the group.¹⁰

SPOILERS TO AN AGREEMENT

A hallmark of the Taliban has been the remarkable unity and singular purpose they have demonstrated, as evidenced by their disciplined approach to the 2018 and two 2020 Eid ceasefires with the ANDSF and the February 2020 reduction in violence against US/NATO coalition forces.¹¹ Yet a future comprehensive ceasefire or cessation of hostilities could leave behind rogue militant elements anxious to sustain the insurgency either by continuing to fight the authority of what they see as “illegitimate” power centers in Kabul and the provincial capitals or simply by pursuing ongoing local grievances. Those “irreconcilables” willing to take up arms in an organized and regular manner to fight government authority could even come to include current Afghan government loyalists who feel that a peace agreement has delegitimized or undermined the authority of the state. Some of these elements might be content just to resist the authority of the state (and remain on a payroll), while others might feel the need to actively challenge the state’s authority to establish a more favorable distribution of power.

As Andrew Watkins put it, “Any potential fragmentation has much more to do with the content of an agreement than with the fact that the Taliban might sign an agreement at all.”¹² A peace agreement and its subsequent process will necessarily involve compromises that could leave those who have thrived in a climate of violence or

who have absolutist goals feeling they have no recourse but to split off and continue an armed struggle. An agreement by itself will not solve political polarization in the country since the terms of the agreement will leave some populations aggrieved. The shape, nature, and timing of the compromises are of critical importance.

Global Experience

Spoilers are traditionally defined as parties to an accord who attempt to delay or derail it, perhaps in the hope of getting better terms, through actions that may even be reasonable and that are designed to elicit a strategic political response, such as inducements or sanctions.¹³ However, not all such conflicts can be fixed by renegotiating the agreement. As Edward Newman and Oliver Richmond have pointed out, “Some groups have clear incentives for the continuation of conflict or contesting the nature of peace.”¹⁴ Such irreconcilable or violent spoiler actions, when they occur, target key components of an accord, such as a ceasefire on the line of conflict or cantonments housing former fighters. Addressing domestically based spoilers generally requires military counterterrorism operations, although some capability for actions against enablers (such as recruiters) may be more appropriate for law enforcement or even civilian dissuasion. In a study of the phenomenon in locations ranging from Rwanda to Chechnya to Israel-Palestine, one analyst points out that while spoilers and terrorists are both “small-group phenomena” that must be dealt with decisively to preclude an existential threat to the state, there is also a clear need to avoid excessive actions that might inadvertently garner these violent actors broader popular support.¹⁵

Intelligence capabilities are especially important in containing spoilers after an accord, as security forces will need to take immediate and continuous action to thwart a breakdown of the process. Because such operations may risk blurring the lines between those who pose



An Afghan man walks through a poppy field in Surkh Rod District in Nangarhar Province, Afghanistan, on April, 14, 2017. (Photo by Rahmat Gul/AP)

a danger to the state and political opponents, strict oversight of the use of intelligence in law enforcement is necessary. Northern Ireland's 1998 accord survived, despite shocks and setbacks, in part because of a partnership between the UK's MI5 and the Police Service of Northern Ireland to disrupt dissident Republican groups, which had continued to operate and fundraise.¹⁶ The intelligence service cultivated human sources within the terrorist groups, according to a Northern Irish policing expert, while local police worked with street assets who could give partial information about enablers.¹⁷ Spoilers have successfully derailed many accords in the Middle East and North Africa; one example of a successful government response was in Algeria, when the military opened a secret channel to a moderate faction leader who was under pressure from both extremists and the government and persuaded him to support a ceasefire, allowing peace implementation to proceed.¹⁸

ORGANIZED CRIME AND COMPETITION FOR RESOURCES

Armed conflict across Afghanistan has allowed organized crime and trafficking in illicit goods, notably narcotics, to flourish; by some measures, Afghanistan now produces 84 percent of the world's heroin.¹⁹ A peace agreement that resulted in less violent but still ungoverned spaces would allow organized criminal activity to continue or even increase. Disaffected Taliban and other fighters and terrorists might also opt to transition directly from insurgency to illicit activities. An economic peace dividend would likely be more than offset by the expected reduction in international assistance. Declining aid could in turn incentivize even more drug trafficking and other illicit cash-based activities, such as the smuggling of wildlife, timber, minerals, and people. Key power groups in neighboring countries might ally with domestic actors and exploit Afghan territory for their own economic ends, for example processing

opium destined for the Iranian market or marketing illegally mined gemstones through neighboring countries. New international networks could emerge from insurgent organizations like the Taliban; from nominally pro-government cliques, like those around northern warlords; or from existing criminal enterprises, such as southern Afghanistan's narco-trafficking networks.

Population increases and steady if unspectacular economic growth, combined with the effects of climate change, have increased the importance of reliable access to scarce natural resources, exemplified by skirmishes over illegal timber harvesting in eastern Kunar Province or the struggles over water rights in western Afghanistan. This competition for access has also stoked tensions with Afghanistan's neighbors.

The abundance of some valuable natural resources such as gems and precious metals could also become a greater driver of conflict even after a political settlement is reached. Disputes over ownership of resources and the division of rewards between national and local power brokers could spark increased conflict and instability in certain regions. Afghanistan's mining industry, reputed to be worth billions of dollars annually if fully developed, holds enormous possibilities for the country's future economic development but today is beset by large-scale smuggling that deprives the national treasury of significant revenue. Smuggling may also engender new opportunities for corruption and unrest among competing economic interests.

Global Experience

Worldwide, powerful "conflict entrepreneurs" profit from continued violence, disorder, and weak government regulatory institutions. As in Afghanistan's border areas, where well-connected smugglers work with local power brokers, in post-conflict areas around the world organized criminal networks are often better armed than the police and enjoy extensive logistics networks and local economic relationships and support. Different methods have been proposed for dealing with such actors in a

post-conflict space. Confronting them with too little force may allow them to entrench, whereas an overly militarized response fails to help police enforce the rule of law and may provoke popular discontent that weakens trust in the military and the government.

Colombia's current legal and operational responses to this threat could provide a model to help with future Afghan security planning. After the 2016 peace agreement with the FARC, the government took aim at the Urabá Cartel, an empowered criminal organization with expansive territorial and economic control over drug markets previously controlled by the FARC. New procedures for acting against apolitical armed groups, including drug cartels, have put Colombia's national police in the lead on individual and some organized criminal investigations, while the military specializes in fighting a smaller category of what the Ministry of Defense calls "Organized Armed Groups."²⁰ These groups are categorized in a national directive mainly in terms of their weaponry and potential for widespread and serious violence, and are defined as having no political agenda yet being in control of their adherents.²¹ The framework gives Colombian political leaders responsibility for strategic direction and sets procedures for intelligence-sharing analysis by relevant agencies and for cooperation between the police service and the military.²² The ongoing Operation Agamemnon against the Urabá Cartel is led by the head of the Colombian National Police's criminal investigation branch, the first time that a joint security task force has been placed under police rather than military control.²³ Through extensive arrests, the killings of top leaders, and seizures of drugs and assets, Operation Agamemnon has reduced the cartel's ability to threaten government functions.²⁴ The government has also sought to engage the affected population through social spending, especially on water resources.

Illegal mining is a particular source of conflict throughout the world. Confronting the associated networks requires information sharing and legal cooperation across agencies and borders to bring complex cases to court and to control the illicit use of licit systems. It

also requires specialized intelligence and investigation capabilities, and above all the political will to enforce remedies against rich and well-connected smugglers. Peru used an integrated 1,500-person police and military raid in 2018 to displace illegal miners and producers at the massive La Pampa gold mine in the Amazon region, a \$70 million per year operation that covered 40 square miles, employed over 30,000 workers, and poisoned local water sources. The government is also investing in programs aimed at providing employment alternatives so that people do not return to unauthorized mining.²⁵

International mineral and mining containment regimes, such as the Kimberly Process (designed to stem trade in West African conflict diamonds) and UN Security Council Resolution 1533 (adopted to halt arms trafficking and support legal control of mineral resources, including diamonds, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Africa's Great Lakes region), may help reduce post-settlement violence if accompanied by legal enforcement in demand countries.²⁶ And while the "blood diamonds" regime is far from perfect, US military analysts note that "bad actors and illicit power structures can no longer use [diamonds] with impunity to finance their wars and motivate their soldiers."²⁷ The value of Sierra Leone's licit diamond exports—suppressed while the illicit trade flourished—grew from \$1.3 million in 2000 to \$154 million in 2015, helping improve livelihoods in that country.²⁸ Through travel bans on those supporting illegal armed groups, financial penalties, and the power of independent inspectors who visit mining sites unannounced, UN sanctions regimes can become tools for domestic law enforcement and may prod neighboring states into regulating illegal trade rather than claiming conflict minerals as their own products.²⁹

Cooperative international judicial proceedings and policing actions are useful in fighting commodities trafficking of all kinds. The US Drug Enforcement Agency conducts joint investigations and arrests with West African nations, targeting cocaine flows; and Interpol, Europol, MI6, the UN, and regional organizations take action to block illegal goods originating in fragile states. Such joint operations

work best if handled by a consumer state and a viable local partner in the sending state, such as vetted police personnel or prosecutors. In some cases, however, the parties lack a sufficiently strong legal, judicial, or law enforcement system to proceed with interdiction, and turn for assistance to countries that do. In the 1980s, for example, Colombia's beleaguered criminal justice system could not bring cases against the most powerful cartel leaders and benefited from US indictments and extraditions, while currently West African nations cooperate with European authorities to fight the illicit transit of drugs and people.

ETHNIC DIVISIONS AND RETURNING REFUGEES AND IDPs

Afghanistan's traditional ethnic and tribal divisions could once again pose a significant security risk following a peace settlement. These divisions have had a lower profile in recent years with greater unity in the fight against the Taliban. Regional power brokers have historically taken advantage of alliances with different groups, deriving their power from patronage networks tied closely to tribal and ethnic loyalties and using these connections to undermine or sidestep Kabul's influence. Blunting that reliance on tribal affiliations in recent years has been the increasing professionalization of key sectors of the armed forces, which has benefited from international financial, military, and political support.³⁰ Kabul's increasingly sure grip on the levers of economic development and the rise of younger technocrats in key ministries and in traditional patronage jobs such as provincial governorships also have helped dilute the influence of tribally aligned power brokers.³¹

Nonetheless, an agreement that results in a fragile power-sharing arrangement with the Taliban could mean a reappearance of these deep fault lines, with a resulting decline in security. A strong perception among certain groups that the peace agreement disrupted the delicate balance of political power could precipitate a return to armed factionalism. A peace agreement with the predominantly Pashtun Taliban might result either in the marginalization of the non-Taliban Pashtuns or in an outsized

political role for Pashtuns that would sideline the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras.³² Hazara communities, which are particularly targeted by ISIS and are also subject to other forms of ethnically based violence, believe the government has not done enough to protect them; Tajiks, who have long been significant contributors to the military, may take issue with the Taliban getting leadership positions in the ANDSF. The overlay of patronage networks on top of ethnic divisions could further destabilize the country.

Meanwhile, although refugee returns can be seen as an outgrowth of peace, they may conversely threaten it, especially in certain parts of Afghanistan where long-standing and diverse diaspora waves must be integrated.³³ There are over 2.7 million Afghan refugees, most of whom are now living in Iran and Pakistan, and more than 700,000 IDPs as a result of conflict, drought, and other factors.³⁴ Gradual returns have been ongoing since 2002, with a robust infrastructure of international agencies helping villages learn how to accommodate the new arrivals. However, a peace agreement may lead refugee host nations to push more firmly for large-scale or accelerated repatriation, especially if the agreement includes specific provisions meant to welcome refugees home, as both the government and the Taliban often suggest it should. Such a movement of people back to Afghanistan may initially be seen as a sign of returning normalcy and relative calm, but it will dilute economic opportunities for non-leavers and upset local balances of power. Moreover, an influx of returnees is likely to exacerbate disputes over land ownership, an important potential source of economic and political friction, especially where records are incomplete and dispute settlement capabilities limited.

Global Experience

Though some post-conflict environments, notably the Balkans, have never seen a complete subsidence of ethnic tensions, the relationship of these societal fault lines to violence is complex. In some cases there is a clear correlation between a sustainable peace and ethnic elites agreeing to institutional power sharing and competition. Lebanon's confessional division of government posts, in which

different religions are accorded proportional representation, is a commonly adduced example. One of the most important categories in which elites strive to participate is the leadership of newly integrated post-conflict security institutions. It is all the more important that senior military and police officials maintain apolitical profiles and insist on evenhanded treatment of populations.³⁵ Scholars of areas of success in Balkan reconciliation note the importance of avoiding the view that ethnic categories are inherent, "irreversibly exclusive and antagonistic"; instead, careful efforts to bring all components of national identity into key institutions pays off with a more sustainable peace.³⁶

Worldwide, post-conflict ethnic tensions often flare up at a local and personal level, sometimes with national implications, over population returns and landownership questions. In another country that witnessed horrific ethnic violence, Rwanda, informal, village-level Gacaca courts, a traditional justice process that predated the 1994 genocide, were repurposed as IDPs and fighters began returning after 2001 to allow communities to apply restorative justice that included all sides without swamping the court system. Gacaca deliberations branched out to "broader questions of obligation . . . amongst neighbors who knew each other before and were going to have to again live side by side."³⁷ The courts created a space to rebuild relationships across groups, which proved helpful given the complexity of ethnic relations after the genocide.³⁸

Afghan refugees, IDPs, or fighters may return as a minority to a location that has become politically or ethnically homogenized through land-grabbing, such as the northern Afghan provinces dominated by Uzbek militias (Jowzjan, Sar-e Pul, and Kunduz), which Pashtuns left soon after the fall of the Taliban. There are two schools of thought on such returns. One view holds that helping to reestablish a pluralistic society and bringing back those who had to leave their homes because of ethnic cleansing or other factors is an absolute good. The other view holds that the safety of the individual being returned is the greater good. The first view, remixing, prevailed in Bosnia, with the international community

pressing local authorities to evict squatters, put adherence to the law before pleasing powerful constituencies, and reconstruct municipal services for the returning population. This extensive (and expensive) effort yielded the appearance of returns to formerly ethnically cleansed areas but only “limited access to public services, credit, and police protection” for minority returnees; in time, most returnees were able to claim their property, only to immediately sell it and resettle in ethnic areas.³⁹ In Bosnia, this approach did yield some measure of restitution for victims and facilitated a tenuous peace based on restorative justice, but Afghan forces, lacking an international backer, could be drawn into unwinnable local battles if they promise fully protected or compensated returns. In Iraq, for example, over 150,000 claims for property restitution were filed by those who were displaced prior to the 2003 US invasion.⁴⁰

While violence is a possible outcome of competing claims, police or military enforcement is unlikely to have a stabilizing effect. A 2015 World Bank study on refugee returns highlights successful examples in which a more restorative rather than retributive approach was used to empower local and traditional authorities to settle disputes.⁴¹ Some dispute resolution processes address the bigger social problems along with land issues. As a 2002 evaluation prepared for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees regarding successful returns in East Timor notes, “land is life,” so “community acceptance and political support” are preconditions to a viable system of land administration.⁴² In Angola, the 2015 World Bank study notes, refugees returned without much international support and reintegration worked through informal authority structures such as local mediators, who redistributed land and resolved community conflicts, or through churches, which gave returnee and “stayee” groups a forum in which to try to overcome trauma.⁴³

The World Bank report also points to the value of a hybrid justice system that blends local legitimacy with formal assurances. When Burundi’s many waves of refugees finally returned in large numbers around

2011, those who had stayed had more resources and political clout to win land claims in formal courts or to persuade the authorities not to carry out evictions.⁴⁴ Burundi’s traditional justice system, though weakened during the colonial and postindependence periods, remains an important component of dispute resolution. Until 2005, “the law provided that [the formal justice system’s] communal tribunal ask whether the parties had had their dispute heard by the Council of Notables before bringing it to the court, and could refer the parties back to the *bashingantahe* [Council] before hearing the case.”⁴⁵ The law now affords the traditional system only a consultative role, as a mediator in local disputes, but according to opinion surveys, the vast majority of Burundians support using these councils in tandem with the formal system. Liberia faced similar challenges. A 2016 report by the Council of Catholic Bishops characterizes Liberia’s twenty-year postwar period as a “negative peace” in which one of the main irritants is land-based disputes.⁴⁶ Liberian traditional authorities have performed a valuable arbitration role for returnees by getting at the facts of the matter and passing a ruling. The parties can go to a higher-ranking chief if they perceive bias by the first chief, or they may use the formal justice system to resolve issues of duplicate legal titles or sales documents.⁴⁷

In addition to traditional Afghan dispute resolution bodies, the Taliban arguably have a version of a traditional dispute mechanism already in place in much of the countryside, with procedures for land claims reportedly acceptable enough that some citizens voluntarily use them, either alone or in combination with the formal Afghan system.⁴⁸

URBAN CRIME AND KIDNAPPING

Battling the Taliban has propelled greater urbanization across Afghanistan, with a resulting negative impact on economic opportunities and the social fabric. Those impacts in turn have turbocharged criminal activities, particularly in Kabul.⁴⁹ Anyone with money—typically international visitors or people who work for foreign companies and NGOs—is a target, according to US embassy

reporting and businesspeople.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, with peace there may come a demobilization of the thousands of people employed as workers and security guards for international entities, the sudden spike in unemployment creating a new source of instability. The Afghan National Police (ANP) service is notoriously ineffective at preventing or investigating crimes or threats of terrorism, especially in growing urban areas. One result is Kabul's Hazaras turning to self-governing security options.⁵¹ Pervasive crime impedes post-settlement commerce and confidence; in some post-conflict countries, the number of lives lost in the course of criminal activities exceeds the number lost during the conflict.⁵²

Spikes in urban crime are a particular outgrowth of post-conflict disorder. Criminal activities and networks often flourish after a peace agreement, especially if returning refugees or fighters gravitate to cities for safety and improved economic opportunities. UN refugee specialists note that

IDPs and returnees have increasingly chosen to move to urban or semi-urban areas where they often live with host community families, in rented or shared accommodation, or in collective shelters. [They] often have few options for coping with their situation and limited social protection networks . . . because of their prolonged absence from the country, and may be confronted with threats and challenges.⁵³

They may also face poor health prospects, forced criminal recruitment, limited educational opportunities, and lack of legitimate civil documentation.⁵⁴

Urban violence in Afghanistan is also worse and taking new forms. Compared to violence perpetrated in rural areas, urban violence tends to be more concentrated, more lethal, more variable, and less detectable.⁵⁵ Kabul's rampant growth since 2002 makes it a natural destination for migrants and an environment conducive to urban crime.⁵⁶ Organized crime, including kidnapping, is a frequent income source for spoilers and terrorists. Insurgents have used kidnapping for decades as a tool against foreign nationals, and it is logical that this practice will become more

widespread as insurgents and private security personnel are decommissioned. It is already a problem that inhibits investment; in 2018 the Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industry alleged that sixty international businesspeople were abducted over a two-month period, although official estimates are unavailable.⁵⁷

Global Experience

The global experience shows that to fight or prevent urban crime, the police need community cooperation, which gets harder in a conflict-ridden society that distrusts the security forces or in a city with newly arrived residents (such as former fighters or migrants) living in squatter communities.

Kosovo's ethnically divided police service (Serbs and Albanians) struggled to prevent violence between its two rival communities. A tactic with some success in Kosovo has been the creation of "community safety action teams" composed of police from both ethnic-language groups and community leaders.⁵⁸ Northern Ireland experimented with "community restorative justice," whereby local groups provided structured expiation of misdemeanors, an approach that avoided formal court proceedings but involved the police and was oriented toward building trust and providing accountability.⁵⁹ This program became a gateway to a subsequent effort, Partners and Communities Together, which entailed public meetings between police and communities. These meetings helped the police make contact with a more diverse range of citizens while harnessing local knowledge to solve more serious crime and disorder problems.⁶⁰

An example in Mexico of community cooperation on security was the turnaround in the border city of Ciudad Juárez, once characterized by drug turf wars, murder with impunity, and unchecked migration and irregular population growth. After a 2009 peak in violence, business owners, police, government leaders, and citizen groups united under the banner "We are all Juárez" to strengthen community resilience through economic development and security cooperation. The result was a sixfold drop in homicides from 2010 to 2013 and a decline in other crime indicators.⁶¹

Operationalizing formal–informal policing structures runs a risk of vigilantism but, if managed strictly, may from a citizen’s perspective be preferable to the complete absence of authority. For example, while Somalia remains a country of weak institutions and lawlessness, the area of Somaliland in the north has managed to avoid much of this chaos in urban areas through de facto public-private partnerships, “with the state generally assuming a dominant role despite its institutional weakness.”⁶² In practice it boils down to two activities: sharing security responsibility between police and private companies (such as a bank that is guarded by police during the day and by a private firm at night) and patrols by lightly armed neighborhood watch groups; these activities are undertaken with the cooperation of businesses and clan leaders. The police have formal lists of these groups’ members, who can call on the police to respond to emergencies.

Community-based “violence interrupters” can, if used appropriately, help police keep the peace. The 1991 South African National Peace Accord created an architecture of national and local bodies to manage problems that could have derailed national reconciliation. As part of that dispute resolution structure, rural and urban local peace committees (LPCs) have helped contain violence in the immediate postapartheid period.⁶³ LPCs effectively mediated disputes, overcame specific areas of communal resistance, and addressed local concerns. They made use of a wide range of actors to create credible problem-solving mechanisms; police participated along with “labor experts, social activists, clerics, politicians, community leaders, and business gurus.”⁶⁴ LPC members also defused tense public gatherings and protests through a network of thousands of peace monitors affiliated with the committees. A similar approach is part of successful gang prevention programs in Los Angeles and Central America, while India in 2019 established *Mahali mitras*, formal citizen groups that help police combat crimes against women.

Other highly destabilizing urban crime includes kidnapping, assault, and extortion. US capacity-building efforts to combat serious crimes have favored the creation of

higher-paid, vetted police units capable of managing sensitive information and less susceptible to corruption. Kidnapping for ransom is a particular problem in weak states. It may be long term in nature or “express” (forcing a victim to withdraw money at various ATMs over a short period). In the absence of strong policing, kidnapping can become rampant, as currently experienced in Mexico and Nigeria, paralyzing the middle class. Kidnapping requires (and thrives on) unchecked criminal networks, corrupt officials, and ungoverned urban spaces.⁶⁵

Successfully countering kidnapping requires coordination among the police service, intelligence agencies, and the judicial sector’s investigative and prosecutorial branches. Colombia mounted an all-out effort to bring its levels down from a high of 3,600 victims in 2002 to 174 in 2018. While most of the earlier cases had been related to the insurgency, by 2011 the majority were criminal in nature and occurring in urban areas.⁶⁶ Key elements in reducing the numbers included community cooperation to share information; a clear legislative framework to support evidence collection and actions against networks; interagency doctrine development and operational cooperation, including police–military special units; and the formation of specialized police groups to process intelligence and investigate and prevent criminal activity.⁶⁷ The Philippines National Police’s robust Anti-Kidnapping Group blends police and intelligence functions to dismantle criminal bands, even after a spike in crime linked to newly opened casinos.⁶⁸ Other notably successful examples include Haiti and Guatemala.⁶⁹

Political leadership matters as well. In a prototypical example in India, a high-ranking politician ready to face down criminal interests by using existing laws, such as those regarding weapons possession, and the shrewd targeting of well-connected ringleaders to send a message that impunity would end, plus the appointment of an uncorrupted police chief who had the full backing of his governor, were pivotal to fighting kidnappings and organized crime in lawless Bihar State.⁷⁰

Evaluating Security Forces for Post-settlement Afghanistan

The global examples suggest that post-settlement Afghanistan will inevitably need to make some adjustments to its security forces to meet the challenges of a post-settlement scenario. Getting those adjustments right, however, depends on Afghan authorities accurately and honestly identifying their country's future needs today, and starting to phase in changes now. A failure to plan realistically and to face up to those needed changes will lead to post-settlement instability and a possible relapse to the levels of violence of the past four decades. In the end, a key component of any security sector evolution will be to ensure the forces remain representative of, and enjoy the participation of, the broadest range of Afghan stakeholders.

The ANDSF have already developed much of the foundation for the capabilities they will need in the future.⁷¹ Polling shows the ANDSF have earned a fair level of trust and, just as important, are seen by most as respectful of the Afghan people. Integrating former anti-government combatants into the security sector following a peace agreement will compound the challenge, and add to the complexity, of retaining that hard-earned trust, however.

One of the biggest wild cards challenging proven capabilities and trust in the security sector after a peace agreement is reached is often the use or dissolution of irregular forces, in this case the Taliban. Afghanistan, however, can point to some past success in the wholesale demobilization and realignment of militias. It is worth looking to lessons from Afghanistan's last comparable initiative, the 2002–03 SSR program. Though it had flaws, and though the challenges of establishing a

single, state monopoly of force are acute and persistent in Afghanistan, the SSR effort helped establish a cohesive national security force under conditions partly analogous to those of today.⁷²

Afghan leaders can ensure the security services retain their hard-earned capabilities and sufficient trust of the Afghan people. Since 2001 Afghanistan has made significant headway but has also suffered setbacks in efforts to develop the security sector into a more professional force. There is clearly scope for further progress to encourage retention and continued professionalization. Security sector capability, leadership, and trust will be the cornerstones of a lasting and successful peacebuilding process for Afghanistan.

CAPABILITIES OF THE ANDSF

Which security forces are capable now of maintaining peace, conducting counterterrorism missions, and enforcing the law in a post–peace settlement scenario? How can other security services be readied to do so? After the end of major combat against insurgent forces, Afghanistan's security sector will need to be reconfigured to confront the most likely threats outlined earlier.

The key attributes security organizations need to handle peace sustainment tasks include leadership, logistics, high morale, an understanding of local dynamics, rapport with the local community, a proactive spirit of quickly solving problems without waiting for orders, tactical-level planning, and the ability to carry out those plans through small-unit operations. From conversations about leadership with Afghan generals, mid-grade and junior officers, and US

special operations personnel mentoring them over the last few years, observers who study organizational culture can see the results of two decades of a cultural shift in regard to leadership. Many of the junior and mid-grade security leaders who grew up in today's ANDSF embody several of the critical leadership attributes listed above. While those personnel are not evenly spread around the ANDSF, and the services still have a large number of corrupt or inept leaders, a willing cadre already exists to prepare the ANDSF for a post-settlement Afghanistan.⁷³ While deployed in November 2020, a US Special Forces officer with multiple tours assessing ANDSF since 2002 said:

Truly impressed by the ANDSF on this tour. They are showing more positive initiative than I expected, and likely more than their leaders are comfortable with. Junior leader initiative is a key metric for our evaluation of their capability. It is a hard skill to teach. Those who have been advising them for 18-plus years have a lot to be proud of.”⁷⁴

Although the Afghan security sector has progressed since 2002 to become more professional, there are still areas in need of vast improvement.⁷⁵ Reports from the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, the US Department of Defense (DOD), the Asia Foundation, Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies, and others, as well as private discussions with leaders from the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD), Ministry of Interior (MOI), and other security sectors, find ANDSF are adequately performing many of their primary missions, struggling with logistics in a manner that can cause collapse, slowly but steadily professionalizing their leaders, and still having difficulties with their utilization of money.⁷⁶ That said, international donors are likely to continue at least some funding to Afghanistan's security sector under an agreement scenario, since without that support in the near to medium term, the ANDSF would be unable to perform the necessary peace sustainment tasks. Moreover, the current Afghan security forces enjoy sufficient popular support across Afghanistan to act as the core framework for absorbing other armed groups.

The ANDSF have steadily increased in size and geographic locations. With significant international combat help until 2015, Afghanistan's capital and government have not been under threat of collapse since 2001, and no major cities have been lost for more than a few days. The ANDSF have fought the current Taliban insurgency to a stalemate, helping to lead most interested parties, even Pakistan, to admit there is no military solution to this war.⁷⁷ This also contributed to the start of direct peace negotiations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban. The ANDSF have been leading the war in Afghanistan since 2015, when the NATO-led mission switched to support mode (replacing the International Security Assistance Force [ISAF] with the noncombat advise-and-assist mission Resolute Support [RS]). As of October 13, 2020, the Afghan government announced its forces were leading 96 percent of all missions without international force support and will achieve 100 percent in 2021.⁷⁸ Since Afghanistan took the lead for combat operations in 2015, the ANDSF special operations forces (SOF), for example, have noticeably improved their capabilities. This was evident at a 2020 Central and South Asia military conference hosted by US Central Command. Following a brief on ANDSF and Afghan National Army Special Operations Command (ANASOC) capabilities by ANASOC Lieutenant General Farid Ahmadi, three nations approached the Afghan SOF commander seeking attendance slots for their commandos at the Afghan special operations school and discussed how to improve long-term multinational counterterrorism training and cooperation. Such measures of effectiveness must not be overlooked when assessing the ANDSF capabilities.

Solutions to many of the existing challenges facing the ANDSF must include improved leadership at every echelon and engaged oversight from the civilian government. At a junior level, improving leadership means senior leaders engaging in constant mentorship. Lieutenant General Ahmadi spends time every day during his travels helping to develop the leaders that will replace him, whom he describes as people who care about the men in their commands and do what is right when no one

is watching. Leadership development also comes from peers teaching each other. That some ANDSF junior and mid-grade leaders are using WhatsApp messaging groups to share their ideas on leadership and planning so that best practices can move quickly across the forces is evidence of their understanding of the need for professional development.⁷⁹

The Afghan senior security leadership will need to carry out broad-based operational planning to support the national government peacebuilding strategy and oversee operations. Some senior leaders have already shown they are prepared. The security operations surrounding the 2019 presidential election and the 2019 and 2020 *loya jirgas* demonstrated that Afghan interagency capabilities and senior leadership in Kabul have made significant strides in strategic and operational planning. These same capabilities will be critical to sustaining peace as they shift from major combat operations.⁸⁰

The ANDSF leadership development began in 2002 when the first ANA *kandaks* (battalion-level units), ANA training cadre, and military schools were created, and the MOD and MOI reforms began. Solid leadership is not an easy factor to quantify. Informal 2019 surveys with company-grade ANDSF officers suggest that leaders were strongest in the SOF units (a phenomenon observed globally), and that bright spots in non-SOF units also existed.⁸¹ However, peace support operations necessarily entail a pivot away from a reliance on SOF and ANA capabilities, which are expensive and heavy on logistics and have wide parameters for the use of force, and toward lower-cost and more appropriate police and paramilitary structures. Constrained budgets and years of abuse mean the leaders in the security ministries must improve their service delivery capability and decrease corruption, or already scarce funding will disappear. Biometric applications such as the Afghan Personnel and Pay System have been welcomed by Afghan generals because these tools can help find corrupt commanders and decrease the funds wasted on “ghost” soldiers and police. This system will

also be critical to the ANDSF’s likely absorption of well-screened, low-level Taliban fighters, and its maintenance is essential.

Better training and development are key to creating generations of solid leaders. In July 2020 the MOD announced the launch of a comprehensive policy for training, education, and higher education for the ANA. Most assess that further ANDSF professionalization without NATO mentors and advisers will be a struggle, but the human capital that makes up the uniformed and civilian organizations in the ANDSF is greatly improved since 2002. A useful contrast to the human capital that exists in the modern ANDSF is to review the disintegration of the communist-era military and police, detailed in Craig Karp’s seminal State Department special reports from the 1980s, which led to the chaos of the 1990s.⁸² Personal interviews and Afghan social media show that the survival mode characteristic of ANDSF forces then has been replaced by an increasingly career-minded professional force that openly exhibits patriotism, confidence, and pride.⁸³ There is unanimous agreement that much work remains to spread that emerging professionalism evenly across the ANA and police forces, however.

Finally, across ANDSF organizations, it will be the ability of leaders to address specific and more mundane challenges that will determine the ANDSF’s lasting ability to protect the country. Some of the most worrying ANDSF capability issues revolve around institutional viability for basic operations. Logistics can make or break the ANDSF. Soldiers and police can fight their external enemies, but they cannot do so while also fighting their own supply system and hope to survive. Simple issues such as contracts with corrupt entities that rob soldiers and police officers of safe and healthy food must be addressed quickly. Some ANDSF members are living on bases mere hours from their homes, so if they do not have good leaders and are not supplied with food, clothing, and adequate facilities, they will just go home.

Table 1. Afghan Security Sector Organizations Aligned with Peace–Sustainment Security Operations

Operation	Organization ^a
Counter ideological spoilers and terrorists	ANASOC, SMW, ANA, GCPSU, ANA-TF, ANCOF, AAF, government militias, National Directorate of Security (NDS)
Fight serious organized crime (drug and natural resource smuggling)	CNPA, SIU, NIU, IIU, ABP, AUP APPF, ANASOC, SMW, AAF, PSP, AACP, GCPSU, ANA, ANA-TF, government militias, NDS
Control local land conflicts and conflicts between ethnic groups (arising from refugee, IDP, fighter return)	Huquq/MOJ and traditional dispute resolution councils, ABP, AUP, PSPS, APPF, ANA-TF, ANCOF, AAF
Fight urban and major destabilizing crime (kidnapping, extortion, riots)	AUP, ANA-TF, APPF, PSP, AACP, GCPSU, SMW

Note:

a. Listed in order of most likely relevance to leading the missions.

Table 1 sorts the Afghan security organizations into the four major kinds of operation that stability forces must manage. This affords a quick glimpse of the wide array of capability overseen by the MOI and MOD that, with proper service training and staffing, can be used to maintain stability (see figure 1 for an explanation of the initialisms).

Of all the components of the ANSDF, the MOI likely has the most work ahead of it in a post-settlement Afghanistan.⁸⁴ It is authorized 124,626 personnel and should expand in the future to meet the growing demands for law enforcement as the Afghan population grows. The ministry has not yet filled its current approved structure or *taskhil* (“organization” in Dari), in part because of corruption issues at various levels of leadership and resource constraints. According to recent US DOD reports, “The ANP are several years behind the ANA in terms of development,” underscoring the need to find creative possible solutions through SSR dialogues. Right

now, the MOD is authorized 227,130 personnel, so SSR plans for a post-settlement Afghanistan could include a transfer of MOD personnel authorizations to the MOI or seconding military units to the MOI to support policing efforts in key locations. The military does not and should not have the legal authority to engage in policing, particularly with respect to arresting suspects and conveying evidence to the criminal justice system, so ANA personnel cannot perform the duties that will be needed. Each option, transferring MOD personnel to the MOI or seconding military units to the MOI, has both risks and advantages that Afghans should assess—soon.

The solid leadership skills of the Afghan SOF and Police Special Units are one of the notable strengths of the ANSDF.⁸⁵ The skills necessary to conduct complicated high-risk, low-profile missions are highly transferable to a peace maintenance environment. These security service members have the discipline to use force as necessary

and to deescalate situations. They are also trained to make decisions and take the initiative at lower levels of leadership, and the Police Special Units are able to make arrests and work with the criminal justice system. This capability allows a force to engage in the often more delicate operations that cannot wait on lengthy planning and decision processes conducted far from the activity locale.

The military special operations units specializing in counterterrorism may need to be exempted from losses in structure and manpower to policing organizations since terrorism will still be an ongoing threat in a post-peace agreement environment. Overutilization has also been a constant threat to Afghanistan's SOF, so ministerial-level engagement will be critical to preserving the hard-won advances in SOF capabilities.⁸⁶

While the capabilities of the MOD and MOI outside the special operations community are not as highly regarded, those "regular" units are vastly more professional than the first kandaks were in 2002. The modern ANA and police service have kept the nation from returning to Taliban control since 2015, when they took over the lead for security from NATO's ISAF/RS mission. No city has fallen permanently into Taliban hands, and residents of major cities and government personnel are able to travel and follow the same daily routines as they did under the NATO security umbrella.⁸⁷

The MOI has begun to look ahead to a postwar period. At the August 2019 Future Force Conference in Kabul, the MOI developed its strategy to determine its goals and priorities, and how it can meet the post-settlement missions outlined in this report. It is already carrying out some of the security sector reconfiguration we identify as critical. Also, the MOI began a series of leadership changes in 2019 to "improve efficiency and police activities."⁸⁸ Such measures are among the many prerequisites for MOI's international partners to provide sufficient and predictable flows of assistance to help the MOI transition into an appropriate law enforcement institution for future stability operations. Foreign funding cannot be

the mainstay of a sustainable force, however, so costs must come down further, and the government must make paying for defense a budget priority. The MOI forces still have a long way to go to achieve the "protect and serve" status that is expected of a police service.

A huge gap remains between the skills of an average soldier and those of a police officer in matters of leadership and the planning and execution of complex, high-risk missions, and this gap needs urgent attention. Shifting from a military or paramilitary culture to one of appropriate policing behaviors, such as using the least force required and relying on close ties with the community, can take years to achieve. Sustaining this change in culture requires recognition in the form of satisfactory benefits and public stature for the police, who lack the career stability and recognition of the military. The risk of disruptions of the peace and a restart of violence will remain high for a decade or more, and failure to plan for a post-settlement Afghanistan security sector could cost Afghans a hard-earned peace.

PUBLIC TRUST

Trust is one of the most vital factors in peacebuilding. Do the citizens trust their government leaders at every level? Do they trust their military institutions? Will they encourage their children to enter government service? Most important for law enforcement, which will be a critical part of post-settlement Afghanistan, do citizens trust police officers enough to bring them their problems? Trust is hard to establish and easily lost through mistakes or unjust government actions. A full assessment of the prospects for public trust in the ANDSF after a peace agreement will have to consider how that trust can be extended to a force that includes former Taliban combatants, and whether Afghan security personnel can also learn to rely on those integrated former Taliban fighters. Thoroughly planning for these challenges to trust building will be critical in upcoming reforms of the security sector. How each of the major combatants in the current war acts during the peace process will further affect trust building between citizens and their security forces in the future.

Table 2. Trust in the ANA versus Trust in the ANP (Percent Who Strongly Agree)

Security organization	Improves security?	Protects civilians?	Honest and fair?
ANA fewer than 15% disagree	53%, steady low 49% high 57% 13-yr avg 54%	52%, steady low 50% high 58% 6-yr avg 53%	60%, increasing low 48% high 64% 13-yr avg 58%
ANP avg 17% disagree	36%, lowest recorded 13-yr avg 41%	32%, not lowest but trending downward from 2017 12-yr avg 35%	41%, not lowest but trending downward from 2017 13-yr avg 44%

Source: Tabasum Akseer and John Rieger, eds., *Afghanistan in 2019: A Survey of the Afghan People* (San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 2019), 67, questions 24 and 25.

The Asia Foundation’s 2019 public survey of Afghanistan’s premier security concerns provides insight into the current level of public trust in the ANDSF.⁸⁹ While any survey of this type has its limitations, especially in societies where elites’ attitudes and prejudices hold a disproportionate sway, the Asia Foundation’s survey is able to reveal trends over time by using the same survey questions and methods for more than a decade. The survey shows relatively high levels of public trust in the ANA, with the ANP pegged a good bit lower and trending downward.

Table 2 shows the percentage of Afghan respondents who “strongly agree” with the Asia Foundation statements in the annual survey conducted for thirteen years.

The higher levels of trust in the ANA versus the ANP highlight the biggest problem for the law enforcement community in Afghanistan. Without trust, policing problems can multiply, and this could happen at exactly the same moment in a post-peace environment that the ANP should be taking on a larger security role. Because the ANA should have a smaller security role post-settlement, the police will pick up a larger workload and will need

to improve trust fast. As global issues with policing in advanced nations have recently proven, trust is of critical importance for law enforcers and is easily lost.

Though the ANP’s image is sliding, the force still enjoys a bedrock of trust. Afghans seem to look past the issues with the ANP because the citizens still “strongly or somewhat agree” with sending their children to join the ANP at an increasing rate that now stands at 73 percent, an impressive figure even when the situation of limited economic choices is considered. Also notable is that despite their trust issues, nearly half of Afghans choose the ANP first when reporting crimes. The next groups to be notified first of a crime are *shuras* or elders, at 36 percent, tribal leaders or *maliks*, at 26 percent, district governors, at 18 percent, and the ANA, at 16 percent. Reportedly, only a mere 2 percent of the public would choose the Taliban, and 1 percent would turn first to a local warlord.⁹⁰ Former Taliban combatants who join the ANDSF may benefit from the ANP’s higher public trust; in contrast, a faulty integration program and process risk damaging a critical link between the ANDSF and the citizens those forces serve.

The police must especially focus on earning the trust of urban inhabitants because urban crime is likely to increase, especially in comparison with rural violence, after a peace settlement. Furthermore, city dwellers are more dependent on established law enforcement institutions for security and dispute resolution than are rural populations. Whereas the ANP is seen nationwide as the preferred security provider by 58 percent of citizens (a decline from 69 percent in 2018), in cities that preference climbs to 79 percent, in contrast to only 51 percent of rural dwellers. In a post-settlement future, urban residents will face even more challenges and have fewer options for security than rural Afghans, so a greater reliance on security institutions and personnel is inevitable.

Only 1 percent of those surveyed viewed the Taliban as a security provider, well below the percentage of those who viewed the ANP, ANA, or local police force as providing security.⁹¹ The political and operational effort required to recast the image of former Taliban fighters as providers of security as part of a reconstituted ANDSF will be enormous. Trust building is an area the Taliban should focus on during the peace talks and after. Time and again, nations emerging from civil conflict have proved that reconciliation is possible following bloody internal wars and brutal externally funded insurgencies. The Afghans on both sides of this war must study the lessons other countries' experiences offer and make the hard choices needed to succeed.

The perceived extent of ANP and ANA corruption is another important challenge, although this perception has declined over the past decade.⁹² Respondents to the 2019 survey said they encountered no corruption in interactions with the ANA 68 percent of the time, and none with the ANP 58 percent of the time. This places the ANA ahead of courts, civilian employers, hospitals, school registrars, and the state-owned power company when it comes to a reputation for honesty. While the

majority of interactions with the police and military are considered corruption-free, the significant minority of cases that implicitly involve corruption will continue to undermine trust in the security sector unless this issue is taken more seriously at every level of leadership.

Along with fairness, the efficacy of justice delivery is also important. The ANDSF can succeed in their mission only if they are backed up by a capable and vigorous political commitment to the rule of law; the constituent forces should refrain from involvement in local rivalries and disputes when other, more civic or informal solutions are available. Property disputes, family disputes, and civil rights issues are all to be expected in conflict resolution cycles, and informal mechanisms still retain reserves of trust. While the Ministry of Justice's dispute resolution (*huquq*) department is seen as less "efficient and just" than local shuras or jirgas, it has a rating of 73 percent when it comes to being fair and trusted, and 63 percent when it comes to following societal norms.⁹³ The local shuras or jirgas are rated at 81 percent and 74 percent on these matters, though they are much more likely to be used by rural residents than by urban residents. As in other countries emerging from conflict, in Afghanistan after a peace settlement is reached, both formal and informal mechanisms will be critical to successfully keeping disagreements over local issues from spiraling into broader violence. The high level of trust in both the government's dispute resolution mechanisms and the local councils' mechanisms is something solid to build on, especially since the cases heard by these entities are already mostly about land, family, and property.⁹⁴

The ANDSF and other major security sector institutions must build trust every day for years to come, and they must rid their ranks of those who risk jeopardizing that trust. Corruption, cruelty, violence, theft, and looking the other way can undermine the confidence the Afghan public has placed in the country's security institutions.

Reconfiguring the Security Sector to Sustain Peace



The Afghan security sector must continue to adjust in order to retain and expand on current capabilities, retain and increase trust, and meet the new demands of a post-settlement security situation. Afghanistan will need to prioritize SSR to ensure the full capability of all the elements that will be contributing to future stability missions.

Some SSR challenges have been successfully addressed previously in Afghanistan, and on a shoestring budget—much smaller than the amounts currently available for this purpose. The SSR experience in 2002–03 provides a valuable lesson on how to incorporate selected Taliban militia members into the ANDSF and integrate the rest into other parts of the society. Some of the same Afghan leaders who drove the 2002–03 SSR program are now in key government positions, an indication that Afghanistan can successfully surmount this challenge.

SECURITY SECTOR CONSIDERATIONS

The number of reforms required of the security sector could match or exceed the 2003 reforms, and they will be more complex, leaving Afghans with many risks to mitigate. As a result, the reconfiguration of the security forces should draw on accepted post-conflict principles, including earning trust through transparency and confidence; displaying respect and political neutrality; being subject to civilian oversight; and having the appropriate size, resources, and capability for the required tasks.

A few key factors should be considered by Afghans in their SSR dialogues.⁹⁵ The first is to attempt, during the negotiations, to preserve bilateral security arrangements with international partners and the funding that comes with

them. Continued and effective implementation of security agreements will depend on proper SSR planning starting now, while the forces of international security partners are present in Afghanistan and able to train and advise, and possibly extend into the future. The Taliban currently reject most proposed security pacts, and creativity will undoubtedly be needed to find successor arrangements that the Taliban will accept under a peace deal, but the underlying point remains: the post-settlement Afghan security forces will need international assistance.

A related question is whether international engagement might also include a continued troop presence. That decision will be the product of intra-Afghan negotiations, but a continuing troop presence must be a factor in Afghan and international community calculations.⁹⁶ Any presence of international forces is expected to be controversial, complicated, and costly. In particular, there would need to be clarity concerning the mission and purpose of any international troop presence. One role might be to help support or even enforce the peace agreement. However, even monitoring and verification missions, a common feature in peace agreements and one that may be possible in Afghanistan, could be contentious. At best, any foreign force presence would likely fall below standard peacekeeping troops-to-civilians ratios. Peacekeeping options might include (1) keeping a large foreign force in Afghanistan; (2) keeping a light-footprint peace assistance force, along with a surge option as needed, to augment ANDSF forces; (3) maintaining only some counterterrorism trainers from various nations as part of an Afghan-led Center of Excellence to train

counterterrorism forces regionally; or (4) no international force presence outside embassies, which would risk leaving the ANDSF unable to complete all missions, struggling with logistics, and not maintaining stability.

A second major SSR issue to consider is external funding from the United States and other partnering nations. Current funding amounts are not likely to be sustainable in light of US domestic concerns, even if the costs for maintaining US forces in Afghanistan decrease rapidly. Cost saving must therefore be a basic consideration in post-settlement SSR planning. Even if international security assistance funding declines over time, the international community will continue to expect high levels of transparency and accountability. Any corruption on the part of the Afghan government will cause even more loss of revenue to and confidence in the Afghan security sector, as US and other donor inspection reports underscore.⁹⁷

A third factor is the need for the security forces to remain politically neutral in the future, irrespective of the outcome of any type of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process or any resentments about the outcome of a peace settlement. A reconfiguration of the ANDSF that reflects a peace settlement with the Taliban and includes the group's former fighters, perhaps with some Taliban in leadership positions, will above all still need to be seen as apolitical and able to serve all citizens equally. Any security sector changes that put ANDSF neutrality at risk must be avoided.

SECURITY SECTOR CAPABILITIES NEEDED

A remaining question in reconfiguring the security sector is how best to allocate security sector personnel to meet future challenges while retaining the sector's capability in the face of declining funding. At the heart of the answer is how to protect counterterrorism capabilities, special operations, and specialized investigation skills while developing a larger law enforcement capability that conducts mostly community-based policing instead of combat or static protection.

The ANA and the ANA-TF

As the need for combat forces to fight insurgents decreases, it will be logical to reduce the size of the ANA, as in most nations emerging from major conflicts, and move personnel allotments to the MOI. The downsizing of the ANA, Afghanistan's most capable security institution and combat force, must be done selectively to ensure it retains capabilities that might be needed in the future, such as its counterterrorism capability, to minimize risks. Any transfer of personnel allotments should also include assurances that competent leaders will be in place in other organizations in the security sector.

Afghanistan already has a capable force that can greatly assist in ANA downsizing and cost saving, and can even aid MOI forces in community policing.

The ANA-Territorial Force (ANA-TF), now eighty-three companies strong and with an end goal of 105 units, can function like the US National Guard and reserve system. According to a 2019 US DOD report, "The ANA-TF is comprised of locally recruited ANA units intended to serve as a *hold force* to serve in permissive security environments," consolidating security and protecting local populations after the ANA's "liberation of local districts," thus allowing the ANA to conduct other offensive operations.⁹⁸ As the need for combat-focused infantry battalions decreases, ANA soldiers who want to continue to serve can be shifted to the ANA-TF companies, each of which can include up to 121 soldiers.

The ANA-TF is designed specifically to connect the local population to the government of Afghanistan by providing local security at the district level and below. It can act as a sensor to alert MOD and MOI forces to activity contributing to insecurity. Although not designed for civil policing, a locally recruited and locally focused ANA force can secure key infrastructure and routes in support of policing efforts. Because the post-insurgency period will require better civil governance and police operations, the ANA-TF's training to support

humanitarian operations and natural disaster relief and to provide security for local events will also be an asset.

Essentially, the ANA-TF leverages local knowledge of the people and terrain to provide better security in areas that lack a substantial insurgent presence. The force is specifically excluded from conducting civil policing, as that responsibility belongs to the MOI within the Afghan government. A further purpose of the ANA-TF is to provide security that is cost-effective relative to the security conditions.

The ANA-TF, as designed, recruits and trains by squads, not individuals, making it a logical option for absorbing large numbers of Taliban fighters who are integrating into the ANDSF.⁹⁹ Those fighters reintegrated would have to go through national training and serve under active-duty ANA leaders. Limiting ANA-TF service to only local areas is designed to optimize relations between the formal security forces and local officials and elders. For example, ANA-TF leaders working with local elders may be better able to assess the loyalties of new soldiers and to anticipate and counter insider threats during the integration of former militia members into the ranks of the ANA-TF.

The ANA-TF was also set up to aid the ANA and MOD in their quest to cut costs. It was supposed to cost only one-third of an equivalent national ANA force, though the actual proportional cost is difficult to gauge. Increasing ANA-TF force allotments may be one way to decrease the costs of a DDR program when former militia fighters choose to join the ANDSF.

While expansion of the ANA-TF moves forward, national security leaders need to prioritize leadership changes, training in peace sustainment missions, and infrastructure funding for the force. ANA-TF units are currently performing fixed-site security of existing, former ANA field fortifications. They struggle with recruitment processes, pay problems, and a lack of logistical support from the ANA (such as unreliable supplies of food, water, and ammunition).¹⁰⁰ Though ANA-TF troops do not complain

of neglect more than the rest of the ANA, these logistics issues, which likely also include corrupt leadership, limit community trust, destroy the retention program, and cause AWOLs. As with all the remaining ideas, any SSR changes that do not also strengthen MOD anti-corruption capabilities will likely result in failure.

If the ANA-TF is able to accommodate many of the MOD's cost-cutting demands, the rest of the ANA can focus on assisting SOF personnel with counterterrorism missions, training to maintain troop readiness as a combat force, and educating their members as a way to continue professionalizing the army. Right now, the majority of the ANA leadership is struggling with how to utilize the ANA-TF.¹⁰¹ Some clarity concerning the ANA-TF's role must be achieved in the near future for the force to adequately realize some of these key opportunities.

Core strengths of the ANA are its professional reputation and political neutrality. If the MOI is able to expand and take on most law enforcement tasks, then ANA units will not be drawn into politically fraught situations. One of the worst-case scenarios in the vulnerable environment following a peace agreement would be the loss of ANA neutrality. Moreover, conflict resolution tasks such as settling land, property, or water disputes or managing political demonstrations could result in the manipulation of the ANA by other political powerbrokers in and out of government and lead to further corruption. These considerations suggest that in the future the ANA might be best utilized less in combat-focused missions and more in humanitarian and disaster relief efforts in support of the ANA-TF and local authorities and in partnership with governmental and nongovernmental entities. Such a shift in the organization's tasks from combat to sustaining peace would be expected to strengthen both trust in the ANA and its stature nationwide.

Finally, another downsizing opportunity for the ANA may come from reducing large staffs. In most armies, senior-level staff and other high-personnel-cost items typically are a target of budget cuts. Afghan military

culture traditionally did not require large staffs, so staff reductions could offer an opportunity for cost saving. The risk of reducing senior staff sizes could be that commanders of this modernized force find themselves unable to carry out their missions and take care of their own force's needs. Political leaders will need to ensure that commanders have adequate staff to lead effectively, including using staff to carry out logistical functions while the commander runs the operations.

ANA Special Operations

The ANA Special Operations Command (ANASOC) forces are currently stretched beyond capacity. Their role in the future should be confined to the most critical of missions to allow for proper rotations between operations, training, and rest or refit.

According to the US DOD, "The CSOJTF-A TAA [Combined Special Operations Joint Task Force—Afghanistan Train, Advise, and Assist] efforts remain focused on building the ASSF's [Afghan Special Security Forces'] capacity in logistics, command and control, fire support, intelligence analysis and sharing, aviation, and ASSF/conventional force interoperability."¹⁰² Afghan political leaders should prioritize continued improvement in these tasks. To be sure of sustaining their critical counterterrorism capabilities, the ANA SOF should seek creative ways to continue training with the world's most capable forces, partner in educating other regional SOF, and find a new source of funding for some of the SOF's counterterrorism expenses.

The creation of an ANASOC-run SOF/counterterrorism school and center of excellence along the lines of Jordan's King Abdullah II Special Operations Training Center would be one way to strengthen and sustain the ANA SOF's counterterrorism capabilities. The well-functioning facility in Jordan regularly brings in international counterterrorism partners to train and collaborate with Jordanian units. The Afghan government could likely obtain NATO funding and cooperation to create such an institution and, more important, sustain it. This type

of South and Central Asian regional school is already of interest to some of Afghanistan's neighbors. An Afghan-owned school operating in four to five Afghan provinces would allow the best SOF trainers from across NATO and other nations to gather and train together. To avoid the risk of other national intelligence agencies trying to misuse such a regional resource, the Afghan school should maintain full administrative transparency regarding its functions and resources, which would preclude it from accepting any country's intelligence community funding.

Such a school would have the additional benefit of allowing NATO to constantly assess the skills of the Afghan SOF and their regional partners. Afghans are on the front line of the global war against terrorism, and many international security partners of the ANDSF want to be sure that the Afghan counterterrorism capability does not falter. A combination school and center of excellence for counterterrorism efforts that serves the region would help ensure that Afghan forces maintain their current standards and would have the potential to bring together regional partners to increase interoperability in counterterrorism operations. Should NATO or separate nations be unwilling to fund such a center, it might still be financially feasible for Afghans in light of the benefits of this simple effort.

Simplifying ANA and Afghan Air Force Equipment

Another large area for cost saving in most militaries is the air force. The Afghan Air Force (AAF) is among the country's youngest security forces. On September 17, 2020, the MOD announced that with the acquisition from the United States of four more A-29 Super Tucano aircraft, "the AAF now has the capacity to plan and implement operations independently."¹⁰³ Because the AAF has only recently acquired the level of expertise needed to sustain its own air operations, and in light of the cost-saving downsizing expected to occur across all the security forces, the AAF's expenditures warrant close scrutiny to ensure that the critical milestone of the minimum capacity to conduct independent planning and implementation of operations is not lost.



A-29 Super Tucano aircraft are on display at the military airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, during handover from the NATO-led Resolute Support mission to the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces on September 17, 2020. (Photo by Rahmat Gul/AP)

The Afghan MOD should prioritize acquiring aircraft that are easy and cheap to maintain and appropriate for the planned missions. Effective close air support and reconnaissance are vital pieces of the security model, however, so the balance between savings and capability must be correct. In the immediate term, because a modern air capability is still being built, financial resources for the AAF should remain at current levels; a later review would be worthwhile.

Ensuring that Afghanistan's military sticks to cost- and mission-appropriate equipment for the likely tasks it will face should be a core component of future force planning. The ANDSF will be responsible for keeping the peace, not for facing a large modern army alone in full-scale combat. As one US Special Operator who returned from Afghanistan in spring 2020 stated, "If a WhatsApp-encrypted phone that ANDSF are comfortable using

works better than an expensive communication set that even US forces have trouble using properly, then don't sell them complex radios."¹⁰⁴ For nineteen years the ANDSF services have benefited from access to sophisticated, expensive gear supplied by coalition partners, which they will not be able to afford in the future and which may already not be fully used. Going forward, the art will be to choose lower-cost, sometimes lower-tech tools that fit the evolving mission.

The ANP and Other Policing Services

The Afghan MOI stated in the summer of 2020 that "at the strategic level, the MOI is focused on pivoting the ANP toward its constitutional and professional mandate which is to protect lives and property, enforce law and order, as well as respond to calls for police services across cities and districts."¹⁰⁵ This is a key ingredient in preparing ANP officers for the post-settlement tasks they

will face. The more the MOI can make policing accountable and responsive to community concerns, including through enhanced local oversight bodies and improved cooperation between police and citizens in dealing with criminals and corruption, the more public trust it will earn.

According to the US DOD's June 2020 semiannual report, in the first six months of 2020, MOI leaders focused planning on future force needs, in both manpower and equipment.¹⁰⁶ They are thinking right now about their shift from military-like combat operations to stabilization and peacebuilding roles. The report asserts that this has already led to a reduction in corruption at checkpoints through arrests of crooked police officers and the identification of checkpoints for closure and has prompted more discussion of how to train and educate a "law-and-order" police force. Additionally, the MOI has worked to improve the public reputation of the police services and raised expectations of police behavior. These are important and valuable first steps toward building the trust needed to sustain peace in a post-settlement era.

The additional MOI attention to fighting corruption in the ANP is of signal importance. Nothing erodes trust and damages the integrity of a police force more than corrupt police preying on communities. The Major Crimes Task Force of the ANP, whose members were trained by the FBI, should continue to investigate, prosecute, and resolve corruption at checkpoints and other bribery activities. This must involve stepped-up efforts that include the removal of ineffective and corrupt police leaders across the nation. The role of the MOI in pursuing cases of political corruption should be paramount, and, as a function of the criminal justice system, the MOI's intelligence functions should be firewalled from the National Directorate of Security's intelligence role.

Though the security environment makes proper training in community-based policing nearly impossible, the MOI should continue to pursue pilot initiatives in permissive environments and to build the curriculum and training cadre needed to quickly revamp its forces

if and when a more long-term ceasefire takes hold during or after negotiations.

Beyond continuing current reforms, the MOI could try to straighten out and simplify its structure and missions. It could consider consolidating specialized forces under its aegis at the national level and surging them to assist when local forces are overwhelmed, perhaps also conducting interagency national security missions as needed.

A restructured MOI could administratively house provincial police forces/gendarmerie; city-focused police forces; specialized national forces, criminal investigation department, and prison operations; and the police academy.

Under this realignment the MOI could still administer the police academies nationally to ensure a standardized police force, but it could look toward gradually handing over the authority to direct and the responsibility to sustain local police forces to city mayors and district or provincial governors. While this topic may become a component of a larger debate about the centralization of powers, it has significance in the context of addressing security challenges, particularly urban crime. The community-based policing needed in the future may work best when city mayors and other local leaders can demand accountability of their police officers and ensure community engagement.

An effective law enforcement focus on policing and the development of a true protect-and-serve culture in the MOI will over time increase Afghan citizens' trust in the police and also help combat the corruption that halts many cost-saving measures. Moving toward models in which highly functioning, formal police stations use radio dispatch to control mobile patrols of police on foot and in vehicles would establish a more responsive police presence and eliminate the need for small and useless checkpoints, which are magnets for attack by large criminal elements. Some extant world examples, such as in the UK, Kosovo, some US cities, the Republic of Georgia, and South Africa, indicate that

A core task for Afghanistan’s leadership following a peace agreement will be incorporating Taliban fighters and adherents into the larger society, and particularly into the security services. This will be an adjustment challenge for many communities, the ANDSF, and the Taliban.

a community oversight board that shares information about crime patterns and holds police to account is worth exploring.¹⁰⁷

Improved analysis and situational awareness will also be critical to the MOI’s success in this endeavor. Afghan political leaders should consider transferring analytical and investigative capabilities relating to criminal justice issues to the MOI from the National Directorate of Security, which would become exclusively externally focused. This long-term realignment of analysis and operations focus should not hinder critical whole-of-government activities and partnerships among the security services.

The Afghan or National Public Protection Force (NPPF) is another service that should be able to alleviate some of the need for uniformed police to conduct nontraditional police missions.¹⁰⁸ The NPPF is designed to conduct protection operations and could be used in various peacebuilding missions nationally, including assisting in crowd control, whether as a government entity or, should the NPPF be privatized and moved out of MOI control, as a contracted support service.

The creation of some higher-paid, well-vetted police units, along the lines of the existing anti-narcotics police or similar units in Mexico and Colombia, that are capable of conducting specialized investigations, managing sensitive information, and withstanding corruption should be useful in combating highly destabilizing urban crime such as kidnapping, assault, and extortion. A successful fight against urban crimes of this sort will require coordination among policing, intelligence, and the judicial sector’s investigative and prosecutorial branches.

The challenges of confronting illegally armed militias in Afghanistan are well-known, and failure to stop their

growth could be an existential threat. Ensuring that clear legal authorities and protocols exist for defining “illegal armed groups” within the criminal justice system is a critical first step. These authorities and protocols will allow hybrid (police-military) operations to fight transnational organized crime and prioritize development and utilization of specialized police units to tackle serious crimes. Some current examples of this are the Crisis Response Unit teams to ensure public order and other units to pursue cases of kidnapping and narcotics trafficking.

FILLING THE RANKS WITH QUALITY PERSONNEL

A publicly visible effort to rid all forces in the security sector of corrupt leaders must be a top priority for leaders at all levels. Initial efforts should zero in on those officers who steal from or otherwise abuse their own rank-and-file unit members. These officers not only drive down public trust in the institutions, they also drive out quality members who want to serve their country, and they undermine the effectiveness of the force.

There is a plethora of technical and procedural systems built up, at least on paper, in Afghanistan’s security institutions to safeguard against corruption, but the impediments to changing the organizational culture are still enormous. Enforcing use of the inspector general staffs can help identify weak or corrupt leaders and retrain or remove them. Community oversight boards may be one way to instill more transparency, especially regarding the various police services. Ridding the security sector of corruption is not easily accomplished by any nation, so perfection will be elusive.

Creating interagency leadership and staff positions in every organization of the security sector will help share the best talent. For example, this will allow some of the highly qualified personnel who are currently

concentrated in ANASOC and MOI Police Special Units to apply their leadership skills and better understand the unique challenges facing these other institutions. In ANASOC units, company-level officers and sergeants are capable of planning and executing high-risk, complex missions. These skills are transferable to peace-building tasks, where discretion and allowing junior leaders to take the initiative in fluid situations can keep small issues from expanding into large problems.

Transferring select SOF leaders across the security sector, much as the United States does with its Army Ranger regiment personnel, is an easy way to build expertise in leading and planning. Interagency teams that combine military and police members have also been shown to bring the strength of one part of the security sector into contact with another. Because the Afghan SOF are currently overstretched, this suggestion should be tempered by the need to ensure the SOF are not drained of their best leaders. But when SOF leaders are found to need additional training, 10–15 percent of the best leaders could be loaned out to other security organizations to help them learn new methods of leadership and training. With less international money coming into the system, senior leaders have a newfound urgency to prod commanders to use key staff and other agencies to improve their organizations.

INTEGRATION CHALLENGES

A core task for Afghanistan's leadership following a peace agreement will be incorporating Taliban fighters and adherents into the larger society, and particularly into the security services. This will be an adjustment challenge for many communities, the ANDSF, and the Taliban leadership and rank and file. In particular, the ANDSF will face challenges to its structure and cohesiveness. By some estimates, up to 60,000 Taliban fighters and thousands of Taliban supporters could need integration.¹⁰⁹ Those numbers are expected to swell with the inclusion of other militias and armed groups who could threaten the security environment if left out. Planning for integration is a critical part of

Afghanistan's SSR that needs to start now; how to conduct integration would be a valuable discussion topic during the Afghan Peace Negotiations. Whether reforms are called security force integration, reconfiguration, or DDR, the lessons from previous related Afghan attempts should be studied.

Globally, the post-conflict combining of government security forces with former fighters has tended to be most sustainable when there is international support for the peace process, such as in Mozambique, Colombia, Sierra Leone, the Philippines, Kosovo, El Salvador, and Bosnia, according to a 2014 Rutgers University study.¹¹⁰ It has even occurred with minimal international oversight, such as in South Africa and in post-genocide Rwanda. Each country example is complex and highly situational, with substantial challenges to be met, but there are commonalities in the issues faced, such as integration at the level of individuals versus units, the use of amnesties or a concurrent reconciliation process that applies to former combatants seeking military billets, and how to adapt basic and officer training to reflect the skill sets of former insurgents.¹¹¹

The primary emphasis in Afghanistan following a peace agreement will likely be on integration rather than on disarmament and demobilization. For a range of reasons, including the ubiquity of weapons in Afghanistan, the Taliban's strength, and the long and bitter history of the conflict, it seems unlikely that Taliban fighters will disarm, at least not in the early stages (and potentially never when it comes to their small arms); demobilization may be achievable only over an extended period. Instead, a robust, agreed-upon, clearly delineated program for integration or realignment of former insurgents either back into the community or allied with the ANDSF, with some Taliban eventually becoming trained members of the ANDSF, should be the primary focus. Non-Taliban militias could pose their own threat to peace, even if they are pro-government. A final Afghan militia-dissolution program will be a critical signal of success for the agreement itself and for key actors in local communities, across the country, and throughout the region.

The success of an integration program and process will have a direct bearing on the prevalence and intensity of the security challenges Afghanistan is likely to face. An incomplete or poorly designed arrangement will probably compound those challenges. Afghans will not find peace if disillusioned former insurgents join irreconcilable insurgent or terrorist groups such as ISIS-K or opt to engage in criminal enterprises. Even a program that appears successful up front will be vulnerable to corruption, malfeasance, or a weak formal economy unable to absorb new participants and offer them viable economic opportunities. Moreover, former insurgents will not automatically be welcomed back into every community, so a sustainable integration process will also need to provide adequate benefits to the receiving community to ensure popular support. A workable integration strategy probably should be implemented in phases, starting with building trust and confidence among the still separate ANDSF and Taliban fighting forces and the future receiving communities, then moving on to more thoroughly embedding former fighters into the economy and rhythm of the community.

Many returning combatants would likely opt out of a continuing security role, preferring instead a civilian life over becoming part of the national security forces.¹¹² For this group, important objectives would likely include community acceptance and sufficient economic opportunities to ensure gainful employment. For those interested in the security sector, however, the chance to have a role in the ANDSF will be critical, despite inevitable qualms in many quarters about converting Taliban fighters into soldiers and police. The conversion might occur in stages and utilize autonomous and parallel structures, with a roadmap for a unified force.

Since 2002, Afghanistan has utilized several programs seeking to integrate ex-combatants into civilian life or formal or informal security roles. These programs differ from what will be needed after a peace agreement because they either targeted fundamentally pro-government militias or promoted the defection of

disaffected or disillusioned fighters from the Taliban movement. There was no question of Taliban political input or support for any of the previous DDR programs. The first Afghan program, heavily assisted by the UN with Japan's help and in coordination with the US ANA-building mission from 2002 to 2003, was DDR under the Afghan DDR Commissions. The program's ultimate effectiveness is still debated, but it did succeed in reducing the size and power of the United Front and other anti-Taliban militias. It also aimed to bring heavy weapons and some militia fighters and leaders into the new ANA. Taliban members were not eligible for this round of DDR because the Taliban regime was viewed internationally as terrorist aligned and because most Taliban adherents melted away and fled to Pakistan. This program eventually morphed into the New Beginnings Program (NBP), managed by the UNDP.¹¹³

In 2005 the Afghan government rolled out several complementary programs. The Disbandment of Illegally Armed Groups program was created and eventually placed under the MOI to continue to decrease the number of militia members nationally as the NBP arm of the Afghan government.¹¹⁴ That year Kabul also established the Independent Peace and Reconciliation Commission (known also as Program Tahkim e Sulh/Peace Through Strength, or PTS) to facilitate the reconciliation process with the Taliban directly.¹¹⁵ The PTS program offered amnesty to even the most senior Taliban leaders, in addition to encouraging defections from the Taliban and related groups. The program was hobbled by inadequate financial resources, uneven Afghan political support, and incomplete information about the new recruits, which led to mistrust.

The most serious and sustained effort, the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP), lasted from 2010 to 2016 and, with more overt and muscular US backing, sought to correct earlier budgetary and political problems. The APRP was created with the specific capability of supporting a political decision by President Hamid Karzai to prepare his nation to engage in a

diplomatic end to the war, not a military one—and to get the international community to support this move. The 2010 program document states its purpose:

The goal of the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Program is to promote peace through a political approach. It will encourage regional and international cooperation, will create the political and judicial conditions for peace and reconciliation. . . .

The primary political/policy objectives of the program are to communicate and build confidence with Afghans, combatants, and communities—around H. E. President Karzai's peace and reintegration policy, and to set the international, regional, national and local political and judicial conditions and support for peace and reintegration to occur.¹¹⁶

While it ultimately helped facilitate the contemplation and beginning of a peace process, it suffered from limited administrative capacity and insufficient intake of combatants, and in these respects resembles most reintegration and reconciliation programs globally.¹¹⁷

In 2010 the APRP, developed jointly by Minister Masoom Stanekzai and the ISAF Force-Reintegration Cell, contributed to efforts by President Karzai to shift the international community's position toward launching a direct dialogue for peace with the Taliban and start the political process to find a way to end the war.¹¹⁸

The APRP led to the 2010 Peace Jirga, which gave national approval to the full APRP, including forming the High Peace Council and an endorsement to pursue Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace talks with the Taliban leadership.¹¹⁹

While these reintegration and reconciliation programs yielded some positive changes and lessons, they also illustrate what can go wrong. All of the DDR programs assumed the continuance of the existing Afghan

political and security structures and took place in the midst of an ongoing conflict with a major insurgency. A postwar program would presumably involve orders of magnitude more reintegrating individuals and would be carried out in cooperation with the Taliban leadership instead of over their violent objections.¹²⁰

A successful integration and security alignment program in the coming years will need, first, to be at the core of a political settlement and enjoy a significant degree of ownership by major political leaders across the spectrum. Lasting political support will also need to be matched by a sustained financial commitment from the national budget and, likely, international donors. At the same time, an integration program cannot be purely top-down: local involvement and active community participation will be required for long-term success. It will also be essential for receiving communities to see economic benefit in the program. In addition, an integration process needs to be woven into how the political settlement tackles transitional justice and SSR to ensure coordination and clarity for public acceptance.

Finally, in light of the existing and prospective influence of neighboring countries on Afghanistan's security, they will need to be enlisted as active participants to ensure they do not act at cross purposes to undermine it. For example, the ongoing existence of safe havens in Pakistan for Taliban fighters will continue to offer an alternative to the uncertainty of returning to home provinces and starting the hard work of rejoining communities.

Even the most carefully planned and well-funded reintegration programs, however, may never bring in the number of candidates sought. That is not necessarily a failure. Reintegration programs can be thought of as an insurance policy of sorts, a safety net for fighters who do not integrate organically into society and the economy.

Recommendations



The world and the region have been heavily invested in the security of Afghanistan since 2001, when many nations realized the cost of abandoning Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1990s. Afghans, the international community, and Afghanistan's security sector partners need to address how to sustain Afghan security capabilities during this period of military disengagement, shifting threats, and the challenging integration of former insurgents. International partners, despite current global challenges and inevitably shrinking aid budgets, must be willing to continue working with and supporting their Afghan partners.

A durable peace in Afghanistan will depend heavily on the future security sector. Ensuring that the security sector is the right size and structure for anticipated security challenges and fully capable of conducting the right missions, and that adequate resources are allotted for the next decade, is critical. Also key will be enabling the security sector to evolve to match the shifting post-settlement terrain in terms of threats and political leadership.

But all of this might not be enough following a peace agreement. Even if the Afghan government improves leadership across the forces, other issues could weaken the ANDSF in the aftermath of a departure of NATO and coalition partners. Some of those issues include the infiltration of the ANDSF by irreconcilable fighters, systemic corruption, a complete breakdown of essential logistics, unsafe food, inadequate shelter, the misuse of forces by government leaders, and the overuse of SOF. The long-term viability of the ANDSF will hinge on facing up to and solving these problems.

Great leadership plays a critical role, but those leaders need visible political backing, especially when they take on corrupt practices. Afghanistan's political and

professional security leaders should ensure that in the future ANDSF, the best and brightest are retained and not marginalized in powerless positions.

Success for a post-settlement Afghanistan is up to the Afghan people and their leaders. However, a clear and forthright dialogue now between Kabul, the government's security partners, and international donors about possible issues and a slate of possible solutions is also important. Shaping expectations and detailed planning should begin even while negotiations are underway. In that context, proposals can be built on retaining the current capability and trust of the ANDSF and improving it to ensure the long-term viability of the security sector.

An Afghan-owned and Afghan-led strategy that incorporates some of these ideas would make an important contribution to the success of the peace process and provide a lasting foundation for Afghan and regional stability.

The following recommendations apply to Afghan-initiated changes to the ANDSF. Though the recommendations are mostly delineated for distinct ministries, implementation of interagency training in new responsibilities and operations may be beneficial. (Contributions the United States, other countries, and international organizations can make to the successful emergence of a secure Afghanistan post-peace settlement are listed in the box on page 38.)

As a start, **prioritize the further development of sustainment and logistics, public finance, and basic administration expertise for civilian leaders, commanders, and staffs across the MOD and MOI.** At the same time, the authorities and responsibilities of services under the respective ministries warrant careful delineation, especially



Afghan police comfort a man after an attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan, on May 12, 2020. (Photo by Rahmat Gul/AP)

in matters of policing, interdicting criminal activities, and maintaining civil order, which currently are effectively conducted by different services without coordination. Clear lines separating the judiciary from the security services should also help tamp down corruption in the ANDSF.

Prioritize actions against corruption and the politicization of the ANDSF. Reconfiguring the security sector will require strong political leadership and the full support of the Afghan government and citizens. Afghanistan's leadership should engage in a highly visible, public effort to rid the security sector of corrupt leaders, especially those who abuse the services' rank-and-file members. Anti-corruption efforts could be enhanced through the use of community oversight boards for urban crime control, which would bring neighborhood leaders into more routinized contact with police to share information about crime trends and possible suspicious activity.

Such community oversight boards would be expected to instill more transparency regarding the activities and organization of the police services.

Specific measures to address corruption include the creation of interagency leadership and staff positions in every organization of the security sector, with the best leaders from across the forces loaned out to clean up troubled service units. The technological and procedural systems of Afghanistan's security institutions can be leveraged to safeguard against corruption. MOI leadership should support the efforts of the Major Crimes Task Force's work on corruption and other bribery activities of the ANDSF and elected or appointed officials. Because anti-corruption measures may involve personnel from different services, a clear separation should be maintained between criminal investigations, especially those relating to government corruption,

which are part of the MOI's portfolio, and the National Directorate of Security's intelligence operations in order to sustain MOI primacy on issues that should be managed through the criminal justice system.

To avoid politicizing the security services, it is important to reinforce discipline in ANDSF public statements, especially those that appear to take a position on peace arrangements and possible compromises.

Prioritize communication of police roles and responsibilities and training of MOI elements. The roles and responsibilities of the police services should be defined both legally and operationally in relation to the roles and responsibilities of other forces and justice entities. The vision for a new policing model must be understood by both security sector personnel and citizens, as it will be critical to the success of future policing and community engagement.

The training of some police services and units for future missions should start now in a phased and prioritized approach, rather than be deferred and conducted as a wholesale training effort at a later date. Future missions may be expected to include anti-smuggling actions, the management of local land disputes, and urban crime control. The training should be oriented toward the tenets of community-based policing, such as building trust with community leaders and problem-solving based on information derived from local sources. This enhanced focus on community engagement should prove attractive to future donors, which the police services should pursue.

A signal problem affecting both police services and the military is appropriate authority in dealing with non-governmental armed groups, both those based within Afghanistan and those crossing the border from neighboring countries. A pressing task is to define "illegal armed groups" within the criminal justice system so that hybrid (police-military) operations can be undertaken to fight transnational organized crime. To this end, the development and utilization of specialized police units

to tackle serious crimes, such as Crisis Response Units to maintain public order and units to pursue cases of kidnapping and narcotics trafficking, should be prioritized.

Legal parameters are also needed to realign local militias or self-defense groups and other informal security forces so that they fall under effective governmental oversight. Central government guidelines are needed to promote local solutions and legal frameworks for empowering citizen oversight of the security forces, particularly those carrying out policing functions.

Finally, continued simplification of the MOI's structure and controls should free up resources for specialized law enforcement and community-level policing. The needs of these centralized functions will differ between national and local levels, and the most appropriate level of governance—and hence resource distribution—for each should be identified.

Plan now for downsizing and reconfiguring the ANA.

To avoid abrupt decommissioning and security disruptions, which could jeopardize Afghans' trust in their military, planning should start now for downsizing the ANA as part of combatant force alignment and integration and SSR. Talented leaders should be moved from the ANA into interagency positions in the MOI to ensure enough qualified and experienced leaders exist to handle a likely enlargement of the police forces. In addition, mechanisms should be in place to ensure that in all future force planning, Afghanistan's military sticks to cost- and mission-appropriate equipment.

As part of SSR, the future role of the military in settling local disputes, including land and ethnic disputes arising from the return of refugees, IDPs, and fighters, should be minimized, and more emphasis should be placed on security force cooperation with civil or traditional structures that have strong local knowledge and legitimacy. Here, greater reliance on the ANA-TF, which is more attuned to local dynamics, would allow downsizing of the ANA while maintaining security.

Maintain Afghanistan's regional counterterrorism leadership through international cooperation. The focus here should be on developing the capability to conduct intelligence-driven military and paramilitary operations to fight terrorists, including future spoilers who violently reject their organization's demobilization. The security organs should also seek to isolate extremist violent spoilers from their base of popular support.

One fairly clear option for Afghanistan would be to create a South and Central Asia regional SOF/counterterrorism center of excellence in Afghanistan that could help unify and improve regional counterterrorism operations and SOF capabilities. Such a center could also become a source of funding for the ANDSF as other nations pay to attend the courses and utilize the facility. NATO and bilateral funding and advisory partnerships could be sought to establish and sustain this center, which might extend to as many as four regional training facilities across the country. Modifying the current ANASOC training institute to absorb this mission could be considered as an alternative to starting an entirely new center. International and intraservice military and intelligence cooperation is critical in fighting transnational terror groups; a regional center of the sort described can contribute to these efforts and would be welcomed by Afghanistan's neighbors.

A military-led counterterrorism approach in Afghanistan will continue to be an essential tool, but since kinetic military activity with significant firepower carries more risks of unintentional violence against the population, this could be a prime opportunity for police-paramilitary hybrids. The calibrated use of police-paramilitary hybrids should be considered on a case-by-case basis, with close government oversight and observation by human rights groups.

Develop new long-term international security partnership arrangements. The departure of NATO and coalition partners should see Afghanistan turning toward new partnerships with specific nations and intergovernmental organizations that will take into account future DDR and reconfiguration requirements. Current agreements will need to be adjusted and sustained during this period.

Learn from the 2002–03 Afghan SSR experience. A review of Afghanistan's experience with SSR in 2002 and 2003 should focus on the need to gain early and broad-based Afghan (including Taliban) consensus on SSR aims and the future of the ANDSF while also retaining the core capability of the ANDSF to prevent chaos. Numerous techniques for getting former soldier-level war rivals to become security partners are available from the earlier SSR experience and may be implementable in post-settlement Afghanistan. It will be important to build faith in the government security institutions among former combatant leadership circles so they can encourage former fighters to join government-controlled forces.¹²¹

Prepare for a widespread and sustained integration effort. A dialogue on integration of combatant forces should be on the agenda during the Afghan Peace Negotiations on a political settlement to the conflict. Integration considerations include a realistic, clear, durable, and sufficiently resourced and financed program and specific ways to provide economic opportunities to those willing to leave the field of conflict. Security sector leaders should also consider follow-up actions, such as bringing Taliban commanders to meet with ANDSF junior members to foster direct dialogue and model professionalism.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

Afghanistan will need long-term support and financial assistance to reconfigure its security sector in preparation for a post-peace agreement future. Here is a list of areas in which US and international support will be vital.

UNITED STATES

- Commit to predictable and sustainable funding levels over the next decade for the ANDSF and security sector ministries during implementation of the peace agreement.
- Shift toward an SOF/counterterrorism and Embassy Defense Office military footprint in Afghanistan, subject to the terms of the peace settlement, focused on counterterrorism and border security that involves SSR oversight and can take advantage of foreign military training programs. Lead the effort to establish a NATO-funded SOF/counterterrorism center of excellence, and support any other international military efforts the Afghan parties agree on.
- Support and provide input to the World Bank-coordinated economic planning process and an eventual program to integrate Taliban members into the security forces, within the context of overall SSR and ANDSF reconfiguration. Demand transparency on DDR funding.
- Focus more US military efforts on Afghan leadership education and development, and emphasize developing sustainment and logistics expertise among the Afghan security services.

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

- Build on the recommendations on funding and support for Afghanistan's security sector arising from the UN and World Bank November 2020 Afghanistan Donor Conference in Geneva, highlighting the connection between adequate security and durable economic development.^a
- Consider a commitment to fund the ANDSF at current levels through NATO's ANA Trust Fund or some other mechanism over a five- or ten-year period, in an amount that reflects the cost saving from withdrawal of international forces.
- Update existing bilateral and multilateral security agreements with Afghanistan to continue support for security sector viability and reform. All existing security agreements can be discussed during the peace talks and could be renegotiated as appropriate once a settlement is reached. NATO in particular should use its extensive experience to contribute to a successful SSR. NATO and select bilateral partners should support the creation and funding of an Afghan SOF/counterterrorism center of excellence that strengthens South and Central Asian counterterrorism collaboration and capability. This will allow international SOF partners to stay connected to their Afghan counterparts and continue reinforcing counterterrorism efforts in the region.
- Seek explicit commitments from Afghanistan's neighbors to provide visible and significant support for implementing a peace process that contributes to Afghanistan's long-term stability, and to crack down on any potential spoilers.
- Employ sanctions, travel bans, UN Security Council proceedings, and international forums to help Afghan authorities confront transnational threats such as cross-border support for Afghanistan-based illegal armed political groups, illegal mining, drug trafficking, and human trafficking.
- Support and collaborate with Afghan agencies involved in specialized intelligence and investigation capabilities to resolve complex crimes.

Note:

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71. In-person, telephone, and email interviews with recently returned and currently deployed US Special Operations Forces from Special Forces and Special Mission Units, by Jason Criss Howk, 2018–20. Overall findings are that conventional ANDSF units have developed partial capabilities for post-settlement missions, while Afghan SOF in MOD, MOI, and NDS are now conducting counterterrorism and other SOF missions without US assistance, with planning and execution conducted as trained by junior officers and sergeants. Additional 2020 discussions with the commander of ANASOC verified these assessments.
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73. US Department of Defense (DOD), *Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, June 2020, 37, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Jul/01/2002348001/-1/-1/1/ENHANCING_SECURITY_AND_STABILITY_IN_AFGHANISTAN.PDF; and Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress* (Arlington, VA: April 30, 2020), 77, www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2020-04-30qr.pdf; SIGAR and DOD continue to report that the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan considers leadership to be a critical part of the solution to ANDSF issues and also one of the top ten critical areas of effort. Leadership is not evenly spread across the services, and poor leaders damage many units outside of Afghan SOF.
74. Telephone interview by Jason Criss Howk. The interview was conducted after the officer's quarterly assessment of the Afghan forces his teams are mentoring.
75. Craig Karp published numerous annual special reports on the Afghan security situation in the 1980s for the US State Department. His assessments are detailed and allow easy comparison with current ANDSF capabilities to evaluate the level of professionalism and capability of each era's forces. See Craig Karp, "Afghanistan: Six Years of Soviet Occupation," Special Report no. 135, US Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, December 1985, 4, <https://play.google.com/books/reader?id=Tp5Bi5nm7IAC&hl=en&pg=GBS.PA4>.
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See Jason Criss Howk, "Assessing the ANDSF: The Intangibles," *Dispatches from Pinehurst* (blog), February 10, 2019, <https://dispatchesfrompinehurst.com/2019/02/11/assessing-the-andsf-the-intangibles/>.

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