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# SPECIAL REPORT

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## ABOUT THE REPORT

This report reviews the design and implementation of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) in Afghanistan, assessing the extent to which the DDR program met its goals and the effect this had on security sector reform (SSR). The report also focuses on the international community's failure to include DDR as part of the initial power-sharing settlement embodied in the Bonn Agreement, the implications this posed for rival groups' security, and the effects this had on both DDR and SSR. This report is one of a series focusing on DDR and SSR organized by the United States Institute of Peace's Security Sector Governance Center.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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*Caroline A. Hartzell*

## Missed Opportunities

### The Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan

#### Summary

- Afghanistan's disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program sought to enable the Afghan government to establish a monopoly on the use of force by helping break the linkages between former Afghan Military Forces (AMF) commanders and their troops, helping former combatants make the transition from military to civilian life, and collecting weapons in the possession of the AMF. Although Afghanistan presented an extremely challenging environment in which to implement DDR, a window for carrying out this task arguably existed for a couple of years after the signing of the Bonn Agreement. During this time the security situation throughout much of the country was relatively calm, the population generally supported efforts to establish peace, and the politicization of the security sector that began in the wake of the agreement was not yet entrenched.
- Unfortunately, the failure to include DDR in the Bonn settlement was the first in a series of missteps that limited the program's contributions to security sector reform. Delays in the design and initiation of a DDR process, combined with the international community's initial decision to leave only a light footprint in Afghanistan, left armed Afghan actors to contend with the type of security dilemma that has proven detrimental to other efforts to stabilize the peace. Competing militias' efforts to provide security as well as some groups' attempts to gain control of the security sector apparatus generated mistrust among the militias and reinforced the power of commanders and warlords. This situation was exacerbated by the coalition's reluctance to check the growing factionalization of the DDR process and a civilian-implemented DDR program that lacked the coercive capacity to contend with spoilers.
- DDR provisions should be part of a peace settlement. If armed groups prove unwilling to agree to such measures, their commitment to the settlement and to a durable peace must be considered suspect. Once such settlement measures have been agreed to, third-party actors—international or regional peacekeeping forces, third-party armies—should commit to providing security before, during, and after DDR; this sends a message to civilians and combatants that DDR will not endanger their safety.

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Establishing national security in Afghanistan is a fundamental precondition for fostering development. While various security programs have been initiated in Afghanistan in the wake of the December 2001 Bonn Agreement, this report focuses specifically on the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program undertaken from February 2003 to July 2006.<sup>1</sup> DDR, a core part of Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program (ANBP), a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) initiative responsible for security sector reform (SSR), had three objectives: to break the "historic patriarchal chain of command" between former commanders and their troops; to assist former armed members of the Afghan military forces (AMF) in making the transition from military to civilian life, particularly by equipping them to find alternative sources of gainful employment; and to collect, store, and deactivate weapons in AMF possession.<sup>2</sup>

Achieving the DDR program's goals was an integral part of enabling the Afghan government to establish a monopoly on the use of force, a crucial step in its efforts to protect citizens from threats and uphold the rule of law. A successful DDR program could contribute to this outcome in a variety of ways. First, breaking the links between commanders and militiamen could help to weaken the power of groups competing with the government for control of the state. Second, the DDR program could limit armed challenges to the state by providing nonstate armed actors with incentives to enter civilian life. Finally, DDR could help reconstitute statutory forces responsible for security, as formally trained ex-combatants find employment in the new security sector.

Postwar reform of a security sector is always a complicated process, but particularly so in Afghanistan, which has yet to make the transition to a postconflict environment. Convincing armed actors to give up their arms and dismantle their forces while an insurgency is ongoing is an enormously challenging task.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, there was an opportunity to do so in the two years after the Bonn Agreement was signed. During that time the security situation in the country was relatively stable, the population supported efforts to establish peace, and the politicization of the security sector that began once the agreement was signed had not yet become fully entrenched. Unfortunately, this opportunity was not seized, and the international community's failure to engage fully with the DDR process limited the positive effect of DDR on SSR, as well as generating problems for the state-building process.

## Armed Conflict in Afghanistan

Afghanistan has experienced armed conflict almost continuously since December 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded the country. The Soviets, who intervened in support of the Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a radical leftist party, were met with a decade-long armed resistance in the form of major Islamist factions—the mujahidin—backed by countries including the United States, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989 and the collapse of the Najibullah regime in 1992, civil war broke out. The country split into a number of semiautonomous regions, mainly along ethnic lines, with different factions fighting for control of Kabul. The Taliban formed in reaction to the prevailing anarchy, particularly in the rural regions of the country. Although the Pashtun-dominated Taliban controlled some 90 percent of Afghanistan by 1998, fighting continued throughout the country between them and other ethnic factions.<sup>4</sup>

The next major phase of armed conflict in Afghanistan began in response to al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon on September 11, 2001. A U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan, Operation Enduring Freedom, was launched in October 2001 with the goal of overthrowing the Taliban regime and clearing the country of al-Qaeda. Coalition forces attacking from the air were supported on the ground by the Northern Alliance, a group of militias opposed to Taliban rule. Although President George W. Bush had

asked the Northern Alliance specifically not to occupy Kabul until elements of the Pashtun resistance or a United Nations peacekeeping force joined them—a request to which it agreed—the Northern Alliance, numbering some 50,000 forces at the time, entered the city in November 2001 following its desertion by Taliban forces.<sup>5</sup> As a result, the Northern Alliance, dominated by Shura-i Nazar-affiliated militias from the Panjshir Valley, was positioned to lead the shaping of the Afghan security sector as it came to dominate key security organs, including the military, the Department of Defense, the Department of the Interior, and the National Directorate of Security.<sup>6</sup>

Following the Taliban's collapse in 2002, militias that had collaborated with coalition forces assumed local and regional power. At the national level, the loosely linked commanders of the anti-Taliban coalition and the Northern Alliance were formally integrated into the government of Afghanistan through the creation of the eight-corps AMF. This had two effects. First, the integration converted a disparate collection of local militias into a formal military structure by process of decree rather than rational reform. Second, the AMF “effectively legitimized many commanders and private militias by association,” regardless of what their previous affiliations had been.<sup>7</sup>

The security situation in Afghanistan remained relatively stable for nearly three years after the December 2001 Bonn Agreement.<sup>8</sup> During this time coalition forces focused on continuing combat operations in the southern, southeastern, and eastern parts of the country against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces while the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) helped to maintain security in Kabul. Perhaps because the relatively low levels of conflict fostered a sense of complacency in the international community, comparatively few resources were dedicated to helping promote security in the country during this period; Operation Enduring Freedom reached a peak level of 20,000 troops and ISAF of 6,000 troops in early 2004.<sup>9</sup> Whatever the source of the international community's initially tepid engagement, it was crucial to shaping security-sector reform in Afghanistan.

## **Developing a Framework for SSR and DDR in Afghanistan**

Afghanistan's DDR program and security sector reforms were developed in fits and starts over more than five years. The first step in the process took place in 2001 with the international conference that produced the Bonn Agreement. The agreement, in turn, established the Afghan Interim Authority, the leadership of which would play a role in choosing a successor regime after six months and organizing national elections.<sup>10</sup> The Bonn Agreement only indirectly addressed SSR and did not contain any agreement on DDR. Chapter V notes that “all mujahidin, Afghan armed forces and armed groups in the country shall come under the command and control of the Interim Authority, and be reorganized according to the requirements of the new Afghan security and armed forces,” while Annex III calls for “the United Nations and the international community, in recognition of the heroic role played by the mujahidin in protecting the independence of Afghanistan and the dignity of its people, to take the necessary measures, in coordination with the Interim Authority, to assist in the reintegration of the mujahidin into the new Afghan security and armed forces.”<sup>11</sup>

The SSR process received more sustained attention at the Group of Eight (G8) security donors' meeting in Geneva in spring 2002. The Geneva conference set the agenda for SSR and established a framework for donor support. Conceiving of the reform process as having five pillars, donor nations were assigned responsibility for different SSR tasks. The United States was to lead military reform, which called for creating the Afghan National Army (ANA). Germany took the lead on reforming the national police force. The United Kingdom agreed to design a counternarcotics campaign and Italy to oversee judicial reform. Japan took responsibility for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of ex-combatants.<sup>12</sup>

***The Bonn Agreement only indirectly addressed SSR and did not contain any agreement on DDR.***

Although there were logical connections among the five pillars of SSR, the donor nations initially set about implementing reforms in their assigned arenas without much coordination or joint planning. Not until the December 2002 conference of foreign ministers in Germany were the two pillars of military reform and the DDR process connected. Recognizing that armed groups in the country must be disarmed if a sovereign, government-controlled army was to be built, and that the new army had to be created in tandem with disarmament to address the potential security vacuum that the disarmament process would produce, the Petersberg Decree established the creation of an “ethnically balanced” ANA to consist of 70,000 soldiers and a DDR program.<sup>13</sup>

The next step in establishing the infrastructure for the DDR process came in January 2003 when President Karzai appointed four defense commissions. Created to establish Afghan ownership of the DDR process as well as to facilitate coordination among the many actors tasked with its implementation, the commissions consisted of the National Disarmament Commission (NDC), the Demobilization and Reintegration Commission, the Officer Recruiting and Training Commission, and the Soldier Recruiting and Training Commission. However, problems with the NDC stemming from efforts by factions within the Ministry of Defense to use the commission to advance their own security-related interests soon prompted a transition to an internationally led DDR process, the ANBP, proposed by President Hamid Karzai at a donor conference in Tokyo in February 2003.

The ANBP was to be implemented by UNDP on behalf of the Afghan government,<sup>14</sup> with assistance from the disarmament commission and the demobilization and reintegration commission. Eight donor governments would contribute to the ANBP, with the Japanese government in the lead position. With the framework for DDR now in place, the work of disarming, demobilizing, and reintegrating the AMF was ready to begin, almost two years after the collapse of the Taliban regime.

## The ANBP and DDR

The DDR program in Afghanistan involved unilateral disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of the professional and jihadi personnel that made up the AMF.<sup>15</sup> Initial estimates of the number of combatants eligible to participate in the program ranged from 50,000 to 250,000.<sup>16</sup> Because no comprehensive needs assessment was conducted to inform the program’s design, ANBP officials had to rely on figures from the Afghan Ministry of Defense. A compromise figure of 100,000 participants was initially settled on. The ANBP later lowered this figure to 50,000, recognizing that AMF commanders had overstated the number of combatants in order to collect salaries from the ministry. The lower number also accounted for the spontaneous demobilization of many militia members after the Taliban’s defeat.<sup>17</sup>

Even with the DDR program’s formal framework in place, the process started slowly. Some of the delays in implementing the program stemmed from the donor community. Japan, which was responsible for nearly two-thirds of the ANBP budget, called for comprehensive reforms of the Ministry of Defense before DDR activities began, resulting in a delay of four months. During this time the ministry failed to make all the personnel changes that had been called for as part of a process of ethnic balancing within the military. Nevertheless, “donors decided to forgo the outstanding reforms as they would have caused additional, serious delays.”<sup>18</sup>

Other factors making it difficult to initiate the DDR process were growing levels of insecurity, a lack of commitment on the part of key commanders, and inadequate support from the Ministry of Defense. Only in the autumn of 2004, when two political factors came into play, did the DDR process begin to achieve perceptible results. The first of these stemmed from President Karzai’s approval of the Political Parties Law on October 11, 2004. The law,

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**Table 1. Phases of DDR in Afghanistan**

Phase	Start date	End date	Total disarmed	Total demobilized
Pilot phase	October 1, 2003	May 31, 2004	6,271	7,550
Main phase I	June 1, 2004	August 30, 2004	8,551	7,257
Main phase II	September 1, 2004	October 30, 2004	7,169	3,733
Main phase III	November 1, 2004	March 31, 2005	22,440	20,375
Main phase IV	April 1, 2005	July 31, 2005	18,949	23,461
Total		22 months	63,380	62,376

Source: United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre, "Country Programme: Afghanistan," <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121> (accessed March 23, 2011).

which prohibited political parties from possessing military organizations or being affiliated with armed forces, "provided a powerful incentive for armed factions with political ambitions to comply with the program."<sup>19</sup> Additionally, the United States, which sought to provide additional support for Karzai's candidacy before the October 2004 presidential elections, became more engaged in the DDR process, pressuring stubborn commanders to comply with the program.<sup>20</sup>

### ***Phases and Components of DDR***

The ANBP was initially established as a three-year program. The disarmament and demobilization process lasted from October 2003 to November 2005, when UNDP deemed AMF forces to have been completely disbanded. The ANBP concluded the reintegration component of DDR on July 1, 2006, "in time and within costs."<sup>21</sup> DDR was implemented through an initial pilot phase and four successive phases (see table 1).

### ***Disarmament***

DDR in Afghanistan differed from traditional DDR processes in that it was implemented without encampment. Between the war's end and the program's initiation, many AMF combatants had become part-time soldiers and officers with family homes and strong ties to their local communities. In addition, only a small proportion of former combatants had been displaced from their homes during the fighting. Thus cantonment sites were not employed. Instead, mobile disarmament units (MDUs) met with the combatants at regional sites throughout the country.<sup>22</sup>

Disarmament began with the Ministry of Defense giving lists of AMF volunteers to the ANBP. These lists were originally submitted by commanders who paired the combatants with small arms or heavy weapons. Working under the supervision of an international observer group consisting of representatives of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and donor countries, a regional verification committee verified the volunteers, who were then confirmed by an MDU. To enter the program, combatants needed at least eight months of military service and a working weapon they could hand over. An official disarmament ceremony was held at regional headquarters, during which combatants were awarded a medal for distinguished service and a certificate of honorable discharge.<sup>23</sup> The regional MDUs later sent the weapons to a central collection point.

### ***Demobilization***

Demobilization of ex-combatants began the day after disarmament was completed and lasted one day. Individuals were directed to a caseworker for demobilization at an ANBP regional

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office, where they were briefed on the demobilization and integration process. Electronic fingerprints and photos were taken to physically identify ex-combatants and individuals were registered for elections. Using a pre-established set of questions, each former fighter was asked about his demographic and skills backgrounds as well as his career preferences and aspirations. Each received an introduction to reintegration choices.<sup>24</sup>

Ex-combatants were requested to take an oath of conduct stating that they would not bear arms for illegitimate purposes. Upon completing the process, each individual received a *shalwar kameze* (traditional Afghan clothing) and a food package. In the early stages of the program, the ANBP paid each ex-soldier in two cash installments of \$100. This was discontinued when it was found that some commanders were extorting the money from their soldiers, often violently. The ANBP then redirected the payments into ex-combatants' reintegration packages.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Reintegration***

The reintegration phase of the ANBP's DDR program was characterized by three components.<sup>26</sup> One consisted of literacy assistance, emergency employment, and food aid. Literacy classes that taught the Dari or Pashto alphabet and developed reading comprehension skills were offered when it was found that more than 80 percent of all demobilized soldiers were illiterate. Beginning in August 2004, emergency employment was provided through the National Emergency Employment Program (NEEP), funded by Japan and administered by the World Bank. Additional assistance in winter food packages was made available to vulnerable families of ex-soldiers.

A second component of the reintegration process consisted of reintegration assistance and job training for ex-combatants, which began two to three weeks after disarmament and initial demobilization. Ex-combatants returned to the ANBP regional offices, where caseworkers classified each individual based on his experience and grade in combat and provided career counseling, attempting to match his goal with the reintegration packages (see table 2) that ANBP and the implementing partners offered.<sup>27</sup> ANBP's caseworkers then tracked the ex-combatants' progress through the reintegration process.

The third component of the reintegration process, the Senior Commanders' Incentive Programme (CIP), did not begin until the end of 2004. Even though one of the central objectives of DDR was to sever the chain of command between former commanders and their troops, there had been no effort to engage commanders in the DDR process until the behavior of a number of the AMF commanders proved problematic. They engaged in fraudulent activity involving ANBP identification cards and the regional distribution of DDR benefits, withheld stockpiles of working armaments, and pilfered reintegration assistance.<sup>28</sup> The ANBP launched the CIP in response.

The central component of the CIP was a financial redundancy package, which provided senior commanders with a monthly cash stipend of \$550 to \$650 for two years in exchange for their cooperation with the ANBP. Other options for commanders included overseas travel (pilgrimage *umra haj* or *haj* visits and trips to observe countries with democratic systems of government), business management training, and access to advanced medical or clinical treatment. The two-year, \$5 million program, funded by Japan, ended in September 2007. By the program's end, 809 commanders had benefited from it. Of those, 463—140 Ministry of Defense officers and 323 commanders—received the financial redundancy package, 335 attended the business management training, and 11 went on an overseas trip to Japan.<sup>29</sup>

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**Table 2. Reintegration Options**

Option	Description	Participants	Percent
Agriculture	Standard agricultural packages were developed in consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. Varying from region to region, they included the following options: nursery development, beekeeping, fisheries, cattle raising, or a package of seeds, tools, and fertilizer.	24,160	43.3
Vocational training and job placement	Carpentry, masonry, computer training, auto mechanic, tailoring, and metal work.	13,253	23.7
Small business	Training courses, small subsidies, and continued assistance with undertaking.	14,687	26.3
De-mining	Community-based de-mining program. After completing de-mining training under United Nations Mine Action Centre for Afghanistan (UNMACA), ex-combatants were referred to de-mining agencies for employment.	1,102	1.4
Afghan National Army (ANA) or Police (ANP)	Officers and soldiers wishing to join the ANA or ANP were directed to the appropriate recruiting centers. Former soldiers wishing to join the ANA Officer Corps had to pass an officer's exam and demonstrate an adequate level of literacy.	ANA: 761 ANP: 105	1.4 0.2
Contracting teams	Assistance in creating teams of building contractors.	501	0.9
Teacher training	Up to 600 officers who had completed twelfth grade were eligible to take teacher training courses in Kabul.	462	0.8
Other		773	1.4
Not participating		2,659	4.8
Total		55,804	

Source: United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre, "Country Programme: Afghanistan," <http://www.unddr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121> (accessed March 23, 2011).

### **Military Reintegration**

Because Afghanistan's DDR plan explicitly linked decommissioning AMF units to establishing the new ANA, it is worth taking a separate look at some of the issues surrounding the reintegration of ex-combatants into the ANA. As table 2 makes clear, entering the ANA was one of the reintegration options for former AMF members. Relatively few ex-combatants did so, however. One reason for this was that U.S. plans to create the new national army allowed for only 10 to 20 percent of all recruits to come from the ranks of the DDR-ed militias.<sup>30</sup> Age requirements (18–28) for recruits also prevented many from joining the ANA. Finally, some former combatants were simply war weary.

Problems surrounding military reintegration appear to have been more pronounced among officers, as employment in the ANA was the first choice for almost all of them. As Paul George, ANBP senior program advisor, has noted, "Many want their old jobs back, but 99 percent of these officers can't get a job in the ANA because there aren't enough slots in either the army or officer training."<sup>31</sup> Of the 7,530 officers registered for reintegration into the ANA, only 193 were reintegrated through implementing partners. The remaining 7,337 were asked to take an exam prepared by the Ministry of Defense. All told, 898 officers were reintegrated into the ANA.<sup>32</sup>

With a low number of AMF officers able to enter the ANA, the ANBP agreed to provide reintegration packages for 5,899 former officers. Registration for the officers' reintegration program ran from July 1 to September 30, 2006. In cooperation with the Ministry of Defense,

the ANBP and UNDP proposed a small-business training program, which was to include reintegration workshops, technical assistance, and staggered cash payments to support the start-up costs of a new business. The officers' association rejected this proposal and demanded full cash payouts to officers without any ties to training or skills development. Because the ANBP/UNDP could not agree to such a condition and donors to the DDR program expressed reservations, the proposal was ultimately withdrawn.<sup>33</sup>

## **Assessing the Effect of DDR on SSR**

Any assessment of the effort to reform Afghanistan's security sector must begin by acknowledging the enormous challenges involved in the process. National institutions effectively were destroyed by three decades of war. Simultaneously (re)building all military and civilian institutions involved in providing security in an environment still mired in conflict was demanding; doing so to create "a safe and secure society that enjoys good governance and operates under the rule of law" in a country where such conditions arguably had never held was highly ambitious.<sup>34</sup>

How successful was Afghanistan's DDR program in contributing to reform of the country's security sector? Evaluations of the program have tended to focus on its outputs, with some reports claiming significant achievements.<sup>35</sup> The disarmament process netted 106,510 weapons: 38,099 light weapons and 12,248 heavy munitions were handed over to the Afghan Ministry of Defense and 56,163 weapons were destroyed.<sup>36</sup> A total of 63,380 ex-combatants completed the disarmament process. The ANBP demobilized 62,376 former soldiers and 260 AMF units were formally decommissioned. Of the ex-combatants who entered reintegration, 97 percent completed the process, making this "one of the highest reintegration success rates among DDR programmes worldwide."<sup>37</sup>

A more meaningful way to evaluate the DDR program, however, would be to consider the extent to which it met its objectives of deactivating AMF weapons, assisting AMF members to make the transition into civilian life, and breaking the chain of command between militia leaders and their troops. By these measures, the program has had more limited success. Although large numbers of weapons were collected, some militias either held on to caches of weapons or disarmed more slowly than others, generating suspicion of the DDR process. Shortcomings associated with the reintegration process as well as the weak Afghan economy have posed difficulties for ex-combatants seeking to make the transition back into their communities. Perhaps most critically, political factors associated with the manner of DDR implementation reinforced the patron-client relations between commanders and their followers that the program was meant to break. In addition, the politics of disarmament and demobilization, at least initially, compromised the legitimacy of security sector institutions such as the Ministry of Defense and the ANA.

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### ***The Politics of Disarmament and Demobilization in Afghanistan***

Security sector reform, and by extension DDR, are political and highly contested processes. Efforts to disarm and dismantle armed groups and reconstitute the state's security forces alter the balance of power among groups in states emerging from conflict. Where survival and the exercise of power have been associated with key actors' control of men with guns, before initiating a DDR process it is imperative to make plans regarding how best to provide for the security of competing groups and contend with powerbrokers' expectations. The failure initially to engage with these issues in Afghanistan limited what could be achieved in disarmament and demobilization and opened the door to the factionalization and ethnification of the SSR process.<sup>38</sup>

The initial decision by the U.S.-led coalition and the ISAF to operate with a “light footprint” in post-Taliban Afghanistan led to inadequate levels of security within the country. That the institutions normally responsible for providing security—the ANA and the Afghan National Police—were being created at the same time as the DDR process was underway exacerbated the situation. Not surprisingly, the resulting security vacuum reinforced communities’ reliance on militias to provide safety, effectively legitimating the role of militia commanders.<sup>39</sup>

Militia leaders who sought to consolidate their power quickly took advantage of the security void. Meeting little resistance from the United States and other coalition actors, who relied on militia commanders in their military operations against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, leaders of the Panjshiri-led militias of the Northern Alliance took control of the main organs of the security sector, using these to advance their own parochial interests. This was facilitated by the Bonn Agreement’s failure to engage with DDR and the piecemeal fashion in which SSR was implemented. With the positions of minister of defense, minister of the interior, and the director of the National Directorate of Security initially occupied by Shura-i Nazar militia members, many Afghans grew to mistrust SSR, as it became increasingly politicized along communal lines.<sup>40</sup>

The Ministry of Defense exercised control over key parts of the DDR process, including the ability to decide which ex-combatants would be disarmed and demobilized. Northern Alliance leaders clearly used this power to their advantage. According to one report, 80 percent of participants in the disarmament and demobilization phases of the DDR program in the center region of the country were not legitimate candidates for demobilization, as they had not served as full-time fighters for the required eight months; rather, they were members of self-defense groups selected to participate in the process by commanders who sought to retain control of seasoned troops. Shura-i Nazar-affiliated units also disarmed and demobilized at a much slower rate than did AMF formations in other regions of the country, further feeding the perception that certain commanders sought to enhance their power and suppress their competitors.<sup>41</sup>

The politicization of the disarmament and demobilization processes carried over into the formation of the ANA. One source reports that “although U.S. plans for the creation of a new national army allowed for only 10 to 20 percent of all recruits to come from the ranks of the DDR-ed militias, the Ministry of Defense managed to allocate that reduced quota almost entirely to Shura-i Nazar’s militias.”<sup>42</sup> Although international stakeholders have pushed to construct a more ethnically diverse army, discrepancies that fuel factionalism and deepen patronage networks continue to exist. An analysis of data from an Afghan official in January 2010 finds that Pashtuns represented 42.6 percent of the army, Tajiks 40.98 percent, Hazaras 7.68 percent, Uzbeks 4.05 percent, and other minorities 4.68 percent, and concludes that while the presence of Pashtuns at all levels of the military corresponds to their proportion of the general population, Tajiks continue to dominate the officer and noncommissioned officer ranks.<sup>43</sup>

### ***Stinting on Reintegration***

The reintegration component of the DDR program was arguably much less politicized than were disarmament and demobilization, possibly reflecting a sense on the part of militia commanders and politicians that the modality of reintegration was likely to have little effect on either security or their power bases.<sup>44</sup> Despite the apparent latitude this provided for those involved in implementing reintegration, the program had limited success in assisting former combatants to make the transition from military to civilian life and in dissolving the ties of authority between former commanders and their troops. These results can be attributed to

***Although international stakeholders have pushed to construct a more ethnically diverse army, discrepancies that fuel factionalism and deepen patronage networks continue to exist.***

failures of planning, resource inadequacy, and the short time frame dedicated to this phase of the process. All these problems indicate the low prominence the international community gave to reintegration in Afghanistan.

Planning for reintegration suffered from several deficiencies. One was the failure to gather baseline data on participant needs as well as information on conditions and resources in local communities. Without such an assessment, one saw groups of men migrating from their communities in search of work because they had all been trained in the same skill; disarmed soldiers from one area chose the same agricultural package, flooding the local market with identical products. Reintegration planning for militia commanders also was inadequate. The CIP was not initiated until late in 2004, and no incentive program was funded—or, for that matter, designed—for low- and mid-level commanders; they were offered the same reintegration packages as their soldiers. As the subsequent involvement of many of these commanders in smuggling and the drug trade suggest, treating the needs and expectations of soldiers and commanders in the same fashion was short-sighted.<sup>45</sup> One report concluded that “the Commanders who are now causing the greatest local problems are these low level commanders” and that the “lack of ability to deal with the most destabilizing forces in the AMF has opened the way for these Commanders to revert back to their informal power structures.”<sup>46</sup> According to one estimate, it would have cost only an additional \$20 million to create a program for these commanders that could have prevented them from doing this.<sup>47</sup>

***Reintegration packages frequently required former fighters to adapt their livelihood strategies to the packages they received rather than supporting their efforts to reinsert themselves into the local economy.***

Resources clearly affected reintegration efforts in Afghanistan. One important problem stems from the type of support provided to ex-combatants. The sectorally focused reintegration packages frequently required former fighters to adapt their livelihood strategies to the packages they received rather than supporting their efforts to reinsert themselves into the local economy.<sup>48</sup> Many ex-combatants expressed their lack of satisfaction with this: 2,900 of the ex-soldiers replying to the ANBP’s 2005 client satisfaction survey—71 percent of respondents—noted that the agricultural packages they were provided were “mediocre,” while 3,302 respondents—81 percent—felt the same about the package they received as support for starting a small business.<sup>49</sup> Without any other viable economic options, many former combatants relied on the patronage system that reinforced the relationships with local commanders the DDR program had sought to end. Resource inadequacies also extended to the amount of funding committed to reintegration.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the time frame devised for the DDR program clearly limited what could be achieved during the reintegration phase. Donor guidelines stipulated that DDR had to be completed in three years. Less than half that time was available for reintegration efforts given that “it took 18 months to establish the ANBP, recruit staff, purchase vehicles, visit AMF units, and plan and negotiate the DDR process.”<sup>51</sup> The time allotted to reintegrate ex-combatants was clearly inadequate, particularly given the complex environment; when it found that 56 percent of the demobilized forces earned less than one dollar per day, UNDP eventually created a reintegration support project for ex-combatants extending the reintegration phase to more than 35,000 demobilized combatants for an additional twenty-three months.<sup>52</sup>

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

Four and one-half years after the ANBP concluded the reintegration phase of DDR in Afghanistan, many of the goals associated with the program have yet to be secured, and some of the gains that were made have been undermined. Widespread rearmament has occurred across the country.<sup>53</sup> There is some evidence that faction leaders—particularly the leaders of northern minorities who fear increased Taliban influence as a result of Karzai-initiated reconciliation efforts with the latter—may be seeking to revive disbanded militias. Inter-

views with ex-combatants suggest that commanders' power expanded in the wake of DDR. Taliban insurgents have been able to regroup and in some instances have seen their numbers grow as unemployed DDR-ed ex-combatants join their ranks.<sup>54</sup> These outcomes are not the product of DDR itself, but of the manner in which it was implemented and the slow progress in other areas of SSR.

The Taliban regrouped in the security vacuum created as factions jockeyed for position and delayed implementing DDR for two years. Delays in rebuilding the ANA, prompted in part by disagreements between Defense Minister Mohammed Qasim Fahim and U.S. officials regarding the integration of former militia into the army, exacerbated this situation.<sup>55</sup> Perhaps most worrisome, the continued abuse of local communities by commanders whose influence in some instances increased following DDR generated a popular perception that the DDR process was "unfair."<sup>56</sup> As long as that belief holds, the experience of DDR in Afghanistan cannot be construed as having contributed to building a legitimate Afghan government able to protect its citizens and uphold the rule of law.

Every DDR program will differ because each is (ideally) designed to address a unique context and set of conflict-related conditions. But Afghanistan's DDR program provides some valuable insights the architects and implementers of future DDR programs would do well to keep in mind.

- **Make DDR an integral part of a peace settlement.** Because DDR can shift the balance of power among competing groups it must be understood as a political process. Accordingly, mediators and political stakeholders in the international community should ensure that groups address this at the settlement table and that details regarding the goals and nature of the program are specified as elements of peace agreements. Powerbrokers are unlikely to be willing to engage in meaningful SSR unless they have a sense of the process's effect on the strategic and political interests of all groups involved. If some will have to be compensated to convince them to engage in reform, then that should be spelled out as part of the agreement. If in the course of peace negotiations and the design of a settlement, armed groups prove unwilling to agree to these measures, it likely indicates a lack of political will to implement DDR, and perhaps to commit to the peace.

Circumventing the issue of DDR may have been necessary to conclude the Bonn Agreement but it generated serious problems in the long run, as it allowed some groups to manipulate reforms to increase their share of power. The lack of U.S. willingness to pressure Northern Alliance representatives to include military power-sharing measures as part of the Bonn Agreement appears to have stemmed from its desire not to weaken its erstwhile ally in the fight against al-Qaeda and remaining Taliban forces, as well as the Bush administration's antipathy to "nation building."<sup>57</sup> Regardless of the source of its reluctance, the United States missed an important opportunity at Bonn to pressure Afghan participants to arrive at an agreement that would account for the long-term security interests of rival groups.

- **To address the security concerns of competing groups, have outside actors provide security.** Including DDR as part of a peace settlement can help to ameliorate the security problems groups face when they are asked to give up their guns and disband. Including mutually reinforcing forms of power sharing can also help to minimize groups' security concerns and stabilize the peace.<sup>58</sup> These measures are unlikely to suffice to reassure adversaries, however, particularly in conflicts such as Afghanistan's, where the fighting has dragged on for years, destroying virtually the entire security sector apparatus. In such instances, outside actors—international or regional peacekeeping forces, third-party armies—must commit to providing security before, during, and even after DDR is implemented. Only if

*The Taliban regrouped in the security vacuum created as factions jockeyed for position and delayed implementing DDR for two years.*

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groups can be assured that DDR does not risk their lives or other vital interests will they be likely fully to engage in the process.

- **Initiate DDR promptly.** Negotiating parties may interpret delays in initiating the DDR process as signaling the international community's lack of commitment to the peace process. Delays may also lead to frustrations among combatants who wish to reintegrate into their communities but cannot do so without DDR. Prompt initiation of the DDR process can also prevent maneuvering of the nature engaged in by Northern Coalition factions in Afghanistan.
- **Provide adequate resources.** The resources for DDR should be ample enough to accomplish the task at hand. Resources may be required to help augment the power of some groups in order to ensure that DDR does not produce an imbalance of power among adversaries. At the individual level, since combatants are not likely to constitute a homogeneous group, funds should be available to provide the level of benefits necessary to persuade different groups—such as mid- and low-level commanders in Afghanistan—to comply with DDR.

## Notes

1. This report does not cover the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) project, initiated in January 2005 as part of the ANBP and slated to run through March 2011. The DIAG program seeks to help the government improve human security by disarming and disbanding approximately 2,000 non-AMF groups that were classified as illegal in July 2004.
2. Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, "DDR in Afghanistan: When State-Building and Insecurity Collide," in *Small Arms Survey 2009: Shadows of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 294.
3. See C. Christine Fair and Seth G. Jones, "Securing Afghanistan: Getting on Track," working paper, United States Institute of Peace, 2009, <http://www.usip.org/publications/securing-afghanistan-getting-track> (accessed February 23, 2011). They note that virtually all successful disarmament programs have taken place after war ends.
4. International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army," Asia Report no. 190, Brussels, May 21, 2010.
5. James F. Dobbins, *After the Taliban: Nation-Building in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2008).
6. International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments."
7. Michael Vinay Bhatia and Robert Muggah. "The Politics of Demobilization in Afghanistan," in Robert Muggah, ed., *Security and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Dealing with Fighters in the Aftermath of War* (London: Routledge, 2009), 129. See also *Small Arms Survey 2009*.
8. The first major surge in violence during this time centered on the 2004 presidential elections and was followed by another surge of violence during the 2005 elections for the lower house of the National Assembly and the provincial councils. See U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Afghanistan's Security Environment," GAO-10-613R, May 5, 2010, [http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf\\_docs/PCAAC053.pdf](http://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PCAAC053.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2011).
9. Michael Bhatia, Kevin Lanigan, and Philip Wilkinson, "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results: The Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan," Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) briefing paper, Kabul, June 2004.
10. Dobbins, *After the Taliban*.
11. Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, [http://www.afghanembassy.jp/pdf/Bonn\\_Agreement\\_on\\_Afghanistan.pdf](http://www.afghanembassy.jp/pdf/Bonn_Agreement_on_Afghanistan.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2011).
12. Mark Sedra, "Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan: The Slide towards Expediency," *International Peacekeeping*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2006), 94-110.
13. Sedra, "Security Sector Reform;" Peter Dahl Thruelsen, "From Soldier to Civilian: Disarmament Demobilisation Reintegration in Afghanistan," Report 2006:7, Danish Institute for International Studies, Copenhagen, 2006.
14. *Small Arms Survey 2009*. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), established by the UN Security Council on March 28, 2002 to support Afghanistan's reconstruction and provide assistance with the DDR program, proposed a DDR plan in conjunction with UNDP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the transitional Afghan government, and the International Organization for Migration in May 2002. This initial program, developed during 2003, was assigned to UNDP and the ANBP. See Lorenzo Striuli and Fernando Termentini, "Afghanistan: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration," report, ARG0: Osservatorio sull' Asia minore, central e meridionale, Florence, 2008, <http://www.argoriente.it/arc/paesi/afghanistan/afghanistan-ots-DDR-ENG.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2011).
15. The ANBP's work actually encompassed three related projects: DDR; DIAG, which was slated to be undertaken after DDR was completed; and anti-personnel mine and ammunition stockpile destruction (APMASD). A fourth project, heavy weapons cantonment, was added later. The focus of this report is on the DDR component of the ANBP's work.
16. International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track," Asia Briefing no. 35, Kabul/Brussels, February 23, 2005.
17. Sedra, "Security Sector Reform;" *Small Arms Survey 2009*.
18. *Small Arms Survey 2009*, 294.
19. Sedra, "Security Sector Reform," 101; International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan."
20. Sedra, "Security Sector Reform;" *Small Arms Survey 2009*.
21. UNDP, "DDR: Reintegration Has Been Completed in Time and within Costs," July 1, 2006, [http://undp.org.af/News/2006/2006\\_07\\_01\\_DDR.htm](http://undp.org.af/News/2006/2006_07_01_DDR.htm) (accessed February 23, 2011).
22. *Small Arms Survey 2009*; A. Caramés and E. Sanz, *DDR 2009: Analysis of the World's Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) Programs in 2008* (Bellaterra: School for a Culture of Peace, 2009); United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre, "Country Programme: Afghanistan," <http://www.unndr.org/countryprogrammes.php?c=121> (accessed February 23, 2011).
23. *Small Arms Survey 2009*. Regional offices were established in Kunduz, Kabul/Parwan, Gardez, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, Bamyan, Jalalabad, and Hera. A central office was located in Kabul.
24. Caramés and Sanz, *DDR 2009*; Simonetta Rossi and Antonio Giustozzi, "Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration of Ex-combatants (DDR) in Afghanistan: Constraints and Limited Capabilities," Working Paper no. 2, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, 2006.
25. United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Resource Centre, "Afghanistan."
26. See Bhatia and Muggah, "Politics of Demobilization," for a discussion of the program's threefold approach to reintegration.
27. ANBP contracted implementing partners to provide the training and materials offered in integration packages, including international and national NGOs, government ministries, and UN agencies.
28. *Small Arms Survey 2009*; Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament."
29. Michael Bhatia and Mark Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict: Armed Groups, Disarmament, and Security in a Post-War Society* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008); Robin-Edward Poulton, Javid Ahmadi, Jayaseeli Bonnet, and Chimene Mandakovic, "Report of the Evaluation of DDR and CIP in Afghanistan: Collecting One Gun at a Time Makes Peace," EPES Mandala Consulting, 2007, [erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/downloaddocument.html?docid=1700](http://erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/downloaddocument.html?docid=1700) (accessed

- March 22, 2011). As this evaluation of the CIP makes clear, many commanders never heard about some of the options open to them through the CIP and many of the promised options never materialized.
30. Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament."
  31. International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track," Asia Briefing no. 35, February 23, 2005, 8.
  32. Poulton, Ahmadi, Bonnet, and Mandakovic, "Evaluation of DDR and CIP," 6.
  33. Poulton, Ahmadi, Bonnet, and Mandakovic, "Evaluation of DDR and CIP."
  34. Sean McFate, "Securing the Future: A Primer on Security Sector Reform in Conflict Countries," Special Report no. 209, United States Institute of Peace, September 2008.
  35. See, e.g., Caramés and Sanz, DDR 2009; see also UNDP Afghanistan—Disarmament, Demobilisation, and Reintegration (DDR), June 2003–June 2006, *Annual Project Report 2006* (New York: UNDP, 2006). A number of assessments have deemed DDR the most successful aspect of Afghanistan's security sector reform. See, e.g., Poulton, Ahmadi, Bonnet, and Mandakovic, "Evaluation of DDR and CIP."
  36. Bhatia and Muggah, "Politics of Demobilization."
  37. UNDP Afghanistan, *Annual Project Report 2006*.
  38. Michael Bhatia, "Violence in Afghanistan: An Overview," in Michael Bhatia and Mark Sedra, eds., *Afghanistan, Arms, and Conflict: Armed Groups, Disarmament, and Security in a Post-War Society* (London: Routledge, 2008).
  39. Barnett R. Rubin and Humayun Hamidzada, "From Bonn to London: Governance Challenges and the Future of Statebuilding in Afghanistan," *International Peacekeeping* 14, no. 1 (2007), 8–25; *Small Arms Survey 2009*.
  40. Qasim Fahim, who was appointed defense minister at Bonn, staffed his ministry with other commanders from the Shura-i Nazar faction, with which he was associated. Originally a military coordination council established by Ahmad Shah Massoud, Shura-i Nazar is now used to refer to a network of largely Tajik military and political figures. International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan."
  41. Christian Dennys, "Disarmament, Demobilization, and Rearmament? The Effects of Disarmament in Afghanistan," published through the Japan Afghan NGO Network (JANN), June 6, 2005; International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan."
  42. Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament," 6.
  43. International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments," 19.
  44. Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament."
  45. Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament." As a review of DDR programs makes clear, a number of DDR programs have suffered from inadequate planning. See Leontine Specker, "The R-Phase of DDR Processes: An Overview of Key Lessons Learned and Practical Experiences," Clingendael: Netherlands Institute of International Relations, Conflict Research Unit, The Hague, 2008, [http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20080900\\_cru\\_report\\_specker.pdf](http://www.clingendael.nl/publications/2008/20080900_cru_report_specker.pdf) (accessed February 23, 2011). Another survey of DDR programs concludes that "disregard for mid- and low-level commanders may make DDR programmes less efficient." Tatjana Stankovic and Stina Torjesen, "Fresh Insights on Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration: A Survey for Practitioners," Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, Oslo, 2010, <http://english.nupi.no/Publications/Books-and-reports/2010/Fresh-Insights-on-Disarmament-Demobilization-and-Reintegration> (accessed February 23, 2011), 10.
  46. Dennys, "Disarmament," 3.
  47. Rossi and Giustozzi, "Disarmament."
  48. Ibid.; Dennys, "Disarmament."
  49. Ali Ahmad, "Client Satisfaction Survey: Comparative Analysis," report, Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program, 2005, [erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/downloaddocument.html?docid=1064](http://erc.undp.org/evaluationadmin/downloaddocument.html?docid=1064) (accessed March 22, 2011).
  50. The DDR budget was US\$140,930,315. See UNDP, "Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP)."
  51. *Small Arms Survey 2009*, 294.
  52. Caramés and Sanz, *DDR 2009*.
  53. Rates of rearmament are estimated to "range between 2–20 percent depending on the source of information and the area discussed." Dennys, "Disarmament," 7.
  54. Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," Congressional Research Service RL30588, November 19, 2010, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/row/RL30588.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2011); Dennys, "Disarmament;" Bhatia and Muggah, "Politics of Demobilization;" Tribal Analysis Center, "Starfish, Spiders, and the Jellyfish: Pashtun Cultural Factors Limiting Warlord Development," Williamsburg, VA, 2008, <http://www.tribalanalysiscenter.com/PDF-TAC/Pashtun%20Cultural%20Factors%20Limiting%20Warlord%20Development.pdf> (accessed February 23, 2011).
  55. International Crisis Group, "A Force in Fragments." The Regional Command South, one of the areas of the country where the Taliban has been most successful in regrouping, saw the initial replacement of several thousand members of the Second Afghan Militia force who were DDR-ed by only two companies of ANA troops. Tribal Analysis Center, "Starfish."
  56. Arne Strand, "Fighting for Peace? Former Combatants and the Afghan Peace Process," in Stephen Baranyi, ed., *The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding Post-9/11* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).
  57. Dobbins, *After the Taliban*.
  58. Caroline A. Hartzell and Matthew Hoddie, *Crafting Peace: Power-Sharing Institutions and the Negotiated Settlement of Civil Wars* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2007).



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