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THE TRIPLE COMPACT: IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY IN STATE BUILDING

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SUMMARY

As a result of international state-building efforts, progress has been made in Afghanistan, however, political dysfunction and a lack of accountability remain problems. It has been suggested that failures of accountability may, in fact, be a product of the state-building effort itself. In the hybrid form of governance where authority is divided between the government and the international community, it can be difficult for the population to determine where accountability lies, leading to feelings of frustration and disempowerment.

A solution proposed in this paper is to establish a triple compact, involving the international community and the government of Afghanistan, the government and the people of Afghanistan, and the international community and the Afghan people. Such an agreement could guide the interaction of the international community and the Afghan government with the common goal of advancing the interests of the population. Although the triple compact could be perceived as a violation of national sovereignty, the needs of the population must be upheld over those of the state if the goal is to end the conflict in Afghanistan.

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INTRODUCTION

The international mission to reconstruct Afghanistan may be the most ambitious state-building exercise ever undertaken. Among the least developed on Earth, the country has been the focus of tremendous international political will, copious development assistance and, at least since 2009, overwhelming military power. An insurgent group that is disliked by most of the Afghan population and with virtually no overt sympathy from other countries is the principal opponent to state building.

The international effort has generated real progress. Afghanistan's GDP has quadrupled over the past decade (The World Bank, 2011), literacy rates have climbed steadily (Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2010) and the infrastructure of a modern state has grown to the point where the national government can exercise its will in provinces that previously considered Kabul a distant abstraction. The Afghanistan National Security Forces are growing dramatically and have begun to assume primary responsibility for certain provinces as international forces prepare to scale down. And yet after all this effort, the news coming out of Afghanistan is dominated by stories of political dysfunction — electoral fraud, unchecked corruption and venal power brokers. A survey of headlines about Afghanistan over just six months demonstrates the scale of the problem. For example:

- “US investigations suggest that \$3 billion has been siphoned out of the country over the past three years”¹ (June 2010)
- “A corruption probe into the President’s office is publicly blocked by President Karzai”² (August 2010)
- “Levels of fraud in the Parliamentary election judged to be just as significant as the August 2009 Presidential elections”³ (September 2010)
- “The President admits to receiving direct cash transfers from Iran”⁴ (October 2010)
- “Reports of government collusion in defrauding Kabul Bank customers of billions of dollars”⁵ (December 2010)

These stories obscure the progress being made in the state-building effort and on the battlefield. But the stakes of failures of accountability are not trivial; if the principal goal in Afghanistan is to establish a legitimate

1 Matthew Rosenberg (2010). “Corruption Suspected in Airlift of Billions in Cash from Kabul.” *The Wall Street Journal*. June 25.

2 Dexter Filkins and Alissa J. Rubin (2010). “Graft-Fighting Prosecutor Fired in Afghanistan.” *The New York Times*. August 28.

3 Alissa J. Rubin and Carlotta Gall (2010). “Widespread Fraud Seen in Latest Afghan Elections.” *The New York Times*. September 24.

4 Dexter Filkins and Alissa J. Rubin (2010). “Afghan Leader Admits His Office Gets Cash from Iran.” *The New York Times*. October 25.

5 Matthew Rosenberg and Maria Abi-Habib (2011). “Afghan Officials Probed Over Bank.” *The Wall Street Journal*. February 1.

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His thematic expertise is in peace building and democracy promotion. A senior associate at the Center on Strategic and International Studies in Washington, DC, he is the co-editor of *Iraq: Preventing a New Generation of Conflict* (2007). He founded the Democracy Unit in Canada's foreign ministry, and is an inaugural recipient of the Palmer Prize for Diplomats awarded by the Community of Democracies.

state that can exercise authority over its territory, but the population associates the government with such abuses of power, legitimacy will remain elusive.

Much of the commentary on failures of accountability revolves around the particular personalities of Afghan leaders and the peculiarities of Afghan politics. But what if these issues are not unique to the Afghanistan mission? What if they are a product of the state-building effort itself?

This paper will examine failures of accountability as a structural issue in state building. Informed by the international experience in Afghanistan, it will examine the dynamics of power that are likely to undermine accountability in any state-building exercise that draws the international community deeply into the domestic political sphere.

Confidence in the world's ability to conduct state building has been shaken in Afghanistan. With few realistic alternatives for confronting the threat of failed states, however, we would do better to learn from the experience of Afghanistan for the next time the world steps in to reconstruct a country torn apart by conflict.

THE STATE BUILDERS' DILEMMA

International support for a state-building process creates a hybrid form of governance. The process of building a state is fundamentally an internal matter for the population under the authority of the state. When a state is fragile, or when it fails completely, however, the chaos that ensues can generate violence that extends across borders and threatens other countries.

If the threat is serious enough, as it was in the case of Afghanistan in 2001, other countries will be compelled to uphold international peace and security by intervening in that country. In its attempt to reinforce the state whose very failure generated the problem in the first place, the international community gets drawn into a state-building process that would otherwise remain a domestic concern.

The landmark 2008 report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), "Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations from Fragility to Resilience," defined state building as "action to develop the capacity, institutions and legitimacy of the state in relation to an effective political process for negotiating the mutual demands between state and societal groups" (OECD, 2008).

The irony of international efforts to support state building is that to re-establish the state's authority,

the international community must perform some of the functions of that state: restoring a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, providing basic services to the population, administering public finances, and so on. To repair a broken social contract between the governed and the governing, in other words, the international community must insert itself between the two. This unnatural insertion of external actors into an inherently endogenous relationship muddies the relationship between power and responsibility. Such a model of governance clearly violates the norm of national sovereignty. The violation is masked by a reliance on the hope that this will be a temporary aberration, a "transitional" process on the path to resuming full sovereignty.

The mission in Afghanistan is not the only state-building exercise whose longevity suggests that "transition" may be a misleading term. When the international community exercises preponderant political power for years on end, it becomes a part of the political landscape. Set aside hopes for an imminent transition, what state building leaves behind is a hybrid form of governance involving both internal and external players shaping domestic affairs.

This hybrid form of governance serves as an obstacle to accountability in two ways. First, when the international community performs some of the functions of a national government, citizens find it harder to recognize who in fact wields power. The lack of clarity and transparency make it more difficult for the population to know who decides what and who to blame when the public interest is not served. Second, the power of the international community conditions the behaviour of domestic actors, making the emerging government more answerable to outsiders than to its own citizens. The international community provides the emerging government with military and financial guarantees, with the result that it owes its survival more to the international community than to the support of its own population. This insulates the government from domestic pressures and weakens the incentives it has to respond to popular demands.

When those in power take advantage of the lack of accountability, corruption, electoral fraud and even predatory behaviour can manifest themselves. At worst, these behaviours can further alienate a population, generating further destabilization as dissatisfaction and resentment generate new recruits for insurgency.

What we may be observing in Afghanistan, then, is not the result of any particular defect in the country's political culture or deficiencies in any particular

individual. Failures of accountability may be the result of incentives established by the state-building effort itself. Insulated from both internal and external sources of pressure by the unique position it occupies in this hybrid form of governance, the Afghan government can act with impunity if it chooses to do so.

In situations where a government chooses to take advantage of the incentives inherent in an international state-building effort, it creates a state builders' dilemma. In reconstructing a government in countries that are generally poor and severely lacking in infrastructure, the international community must invest heavily in building up state capacity. More capacity means a better ability to deliver basic services, thus reinforcing the relationship between the people and its government. The more resources that donors pour into increasing the size and power of government structures, however, the more beholden those structures are to outsiders and not to the population. If measures to strengthen the power of a government outstrip measures to subject that power to the will of the people, abuses of power become more likely.

Why does this present a dilemma for the international community? Because by strengthening capacity, it could actually undermine accountability. If resources are power, providing more resources to a government that need not be accountable to its own population could incite abuses of power and decrease the government's legitimacy in the eyes of the people — the exact opposite of what state capacity-building programs are meant to achieve.

EFFORTS TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Over the past 20 years, the international community has experimented with different approaches to the problem of accountability in state building. In the early days of the explosion of multilateral "peacemaking" or "peace-building" missions in the 1990s, peace treaties established institutions by which international representatives played a direct role in the domestic political sphere, allowing them to uphold accountability by confronting abuses of power directly.

At the conclusion of the Bosnian conflict, the Dayton Peace Agreement established an appointed high representative to "facilitate the Parties' own efforts" (The Dayton Peace Agreement, 1995) to implement the agreement. This high representative also coordinated the disparate organizations devising and implementing reforms that affected every aspect of Bosnia's politics

and institutions. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) was in charge of elections, the legal system and ensuring civilian control of the armed forces. The United Nations (UN) International Police Task Force performed police work while reforming the police into an ethnically balanced and professional force. The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia was in charge of transitional justice. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) took the lead on refugee return, and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund led economic reforms (Dobbins et al., 2003: 94).

In response to the intransigence of the parties coerced into an agreement against their interests, the UN's Peace Implementation Council voted on the "Bonn powers" that gave the high representative the power to enforce the implementation of Dayton. Each high representative used these powers with increasing frequency, interpreting them broadly to enforce any internationally suggested reform, from privatization to a new national flag (Knaus and Martin, 2003: 62 and 68). With the power to threaten and even remove democratically elected leaders from office, the high representative became a benevolent autocrat, reflecting the implicit view that "what Bosnia and Herzegovina needs is not democratic domestic politics, but government by international experts" (Knaus and Martin, 2003: 61).

Kosovo followed a similar path, with the 1999 Kosovo War ending in an agreement that mandated a UN transitional administration. The UN oversaw the international effort and directly controlled the security sector, the UNHCR dealt with humanitarian issues, the OSCE watched over elections and the press, and the European Union managed reconstruction and development (Dobbins et al., 2003: 115). The transitional administration assumed nearly all power, as they had "structures [that] included councils with Albanian and Serbian leaders, but initially none of the Kosovars had decision-making authority." Although the international community explicitly stated that they would temporarily assume power, the return of sovereignty has been as lackluster as in Bosnia. Five years after the war, Kosovo was still described as "an international protectorate with limited administrative powers devolved to the local population and with an international military and civilian presence" (Chesterman, 2004: 82-83).

By the first decade of the new century, the risks of establishing a direct political role for international representatives began to outweigh the benefits. In both cases, the preponderant political role of outsiders

served as a disincentive for domestic actors to reconcile and establish coalitions of interest across the former boundaries of conflict. Freed from the responsibility of holding final authority, domestic parties had an incentive to pander to their base to retain influence.⁶

This accompanied a more general concern about the destabilizing effect of elections in post-conflict situations, leading to debates about the “sequencing” of political development in state-building exercises. This debate was brought forward by proponents of institution building as an essential prerequisite to accountability. Advocates of this approach argued that strong institutions were a prerequisite to democracy and political liberalization.

Perhaps the clearest articulation of this approach came from Roland Paris, who made the case for “institutionalization before liberalization,” in which external forces perform certain state functions, strengthen institutions, and then return authority over time (Paris, 2004: 179). Francis Fukuyama went so far as to claim that state building and democracy work at cross purposes, with one strengthening the state and the other constraining it. Both are necessary, but to have a democratic state you must first have a state (Fukuyama, 2005: 87-88).

If democratic governance is a luxury that states recovering from conflict can ill afford, however, what constraints exist to ensure governments do not abuse power? In other words, how can state-building exercises uphold accountability when the government is not accountable to its own population?

In 2008, former Afghan Finance Minister Ashraf Ghani and co-founder and CEO of the Institute for State Effectiveness Clare Lockhart offered a compelling answer in their book, *Fixing Failed States*. The international community and the government would enter into a “double compact,” in which the government would make commitments to its own population that would be upheld by commitments the international community makes to the government. Ghani and Lockhart’s approach stems from the recognition that in the hybrid form of governance that state-building exercises represent, the government is not fully sovereign. If it is not the only actor exercising power over the lives of its citizens, it cannot be held

to account. The double compact therefore establishes a “sovereignty strategy,” in which the international community transfers increasing degrees of power and responsibility to the government. This strategy would set out a vision for the future of the country, identify responsibilities in each sector and harness collective effort and capital to meet those responsibilities.

In Afghanistan, the government and the international community explicitly negotiated a double compact at the London Conference on Afghanistan in 2006.⁷ Parties to the Afghanistan Compact signed at the conference outlined a vision in which all state responsibilities would be in Afghan government hands by 2011. It laid out a series of benchmarks for the performance of those responsibilities in the areas of security, development and governance capacity.

RETHINKING ACCOUNTABILITY IN STATE BUILDING

The double compact works well on paper because it respects national sovereignty. But it fails to offset the state builders’ dilemma when the government does not live up to its compact with the international community. Lacking institutions to compel compliance, the international community must fall back on diplomatic means of pressure to address abuses of power.

A more effective way to ensure governments are accountable to their own population would be to develop accountability mechanisms that are adapted to the hybrid form of governance that is international state building.

This requires unpacking the concept of accountability. Authors such as Philippe Schmitter of the University of Chicago define accountability as a relationship between two sets of actors, in which one submits his actions to the judgment and sanction of the other (Schmitter, 2003). In simple terms, it might be described as a relationship between those who exercise power and those for whom it is wielded. The former submits its action to the judgment and sanction of the other.

The two poles of that relationship can vary, depending on the type of accountability. In corporate accountability,

6 See, for example, Richard Caplan (2004). “The Exercise of International Authority in State-Building: The Case of Bosnia and Herzegovina.” Paper presented at the 45th annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Le Centre Sheraton Hotel, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. March 17. Available at: www.allacademic.com/meta/p74488_index.html.

7 See “Security Council Unanimously Endorses Five-Year ‘Afghanistan Compact’ Aimed at Bolstering Security, Development, Counter-Narcotics Efforts,” United Nations Security Council Department of Public Information, February 15, 2006. Available at: www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8641.doc.htm.

for example, the relationship might be between the management of the firm and the shareholders. For the purposes of state building, political accountability is the relevant type and so the relationship that matters is between rulers and those in whose name they rule.

In a seminal 1999 article, Andreas Schedler identifies two dimensions of accountability. As with any relationship, each side has a responsibility to the other. The government's role is to be answerable to the population, informing them of its decisions and providing justification for them. The population's role is to judge the government's decisions and, if they are not satisfactory, to enforce its will on the government (Schedler, 1999).

There are a number of forms that enforcement can take. Sanctions could include public rebuke, legal action and/or ultimately the government's removal from power. This process is often termed vertical accountability. But the state itself can also ensure enforcement through mechanisms of horizontal accountability.

When constitutions such as Afghanistan's separate the powers of different branches and create checks and balances between them, one state actor can take action against another. If a president acts in a manner inconsistent with the public interest, for example, the legislature may attempt to sanction him. If a provincial judge accepts bribes, the governor may seek his removal. These internal rivalries offer more feasible means for limiting abuses of power than external constraints on the state.

How should the international community incorporate accountability into state-building efforts? First and foremost, by recognizing that the fundamental relationship for accountability must be between the government and its own population, not the government and its foreign partners. While this point is intuitively obvious, the domestic pressures at play in countries contributing to state-building missions often get in the way. When countries place millions or billions of dollars on the line and sacrifice dozens, hundreds or thousands of soldiers' lives, their governments are tempted to demand specific commitments from the recipient of these efforts.⁸

If all parties agree that the government must be accountable to its own population above all, other activities should be aligned where possible to

strengthen that primary accountability relationship. The government must take measures to answer to its own population. When the population believes the public interest is not being served, it must have the means to enforce its will.

The international community must then be given an explicit mandate to advance both of those objectives. It must help the government become answerable to its population, informing them of its actions and justifying the decisions it takes. And it must stand up for enforcement measures when the population judges that the government's actions are wanting. To institutionalize this role, the international community must move beyond the double compact and enter into a triple compact with both the state and the population of the country recovering from conflict.

A TRIPLE COMPACT

The key failing of the double compact is that it makes the international community entirely reliant on the government to uphold the public interest. When the government is not willing or able to do so, the state builders' dilemma sets in and further international support risks eroding legitimacy and stability.

A triple compact would overcome this by explicitly recognizing a political role for the international community, consistent with the de facto role it plays when it supports state-building exercises. It would draw the international community into a direct relationship with the population as well as the government, and commit all three parties to measures that would build the accountability of the government to its population.

The triple compact would consist of three mutually supporting undertakings to uphold accountability.

1. Government ↔ Population: The primordial accountability relationship must be between domestic actors — the rulers and the ruled. In this relationship, the government undertakes to answer to the population for its use of this power, and submits to enforcement of the public will. In return, the population entrusts the government with power and accepts its authority. In essence, the population agrees to seek change through the existing political system in return for a commitment that the system can deliver change when required.
2. International Community ↔ Government: Recognizing the limited capacity of the

⁸ Take, for example, the US decision in 2007 to set "benchmarks" for the Iraqi government to meet in return for receiving US taxpayer largesse. See http://waysandmeans.house.gov/media/pdf/tax/HR_2206_text.pdf.

government and the daunting prospect of having the population hold it to account, the international community provides the government with capacity to deliver for the population, but also undertakes to assist the government in its efforts to be answerable to it for the use of its power. In turn, the government agrees to accept responsibility for its own population, discarding the option of blaming the international community for shared failings.

3. International Community ↔ Population: The international community commits to use its power to ensure that the public will is heard and upheld. This entails efforts to help the population express that will, and efforts to reinforce mechanisms to enforce that will when necessary. In return for the population's commitment to seek change within the existing political system rather than seek violent alternatives, the international community applies its influence to ensure the system can deliver change.

Like the double compact, the triple compact would not be a legally binding engagement. Rather, it would be a normative framework for the state-building process: a public commitment by the international community and the government to place the interests of the population at the centre of the state-building effort. It would not require the identification of specific representatives of the population to enter into an agreement with the international community, a process that would be fraught with political and practical challenges. Instead, the triple compact would guide the interaction of the government and the international community by invoking the common goal of advancing the interests of the population, and by upholding the public interest as the standard against which their performance would be based.

The triple compact would mitigate the normative constraints that sovereignty places on the international community's exercise of its political role by shifting the terms of the debate away from the sovereignty of the state and to popular sovereignty, recognizing that the ultimate authority must rest with the people if stability is to take root.

IMPLEMENTING A TRIPLE COMPACT

The most controversial element of the triple compact must surely be the threat it could represent to the sovereignty of the state being rebuilt. It openly acknowledges the obvious but awkward fact that the international community plays a determining role in the domestic political sphere. But acknowledging this fact is the first step to changing the incentives that state-building efforts tend to create, which undermine accountability. Granting an explicit role to the international community in the domestic sphere would indeed place constraints on the government. The purpose of these constraints is to create incentives to operate in the interests of the population.

How should the international community use its domestic political role to place the population's interests at the heart of the state-building effort? Most importantly, by placing a focus on the population at the centre of the state-building effort. And then by working with both parties, the government and the population, to build up both dimensions of accountability — by helping the government answer to the population and strengthening measures to enforce the public will. Each of these will be treated in turn.

FOCUS ON THE POPULATION

With a triple compact, the most significant difference from existing state-building practice is that international representatives would engage with the population in a partnership that is separate from, and equally important to, their partnership with the government. In order to perform the responsibilities it would undertake in a triple compact, the international community needs to develop this partnership with the population.

To engage with the population is not to deny the government's responsibility to speak on behalf of its citizens. By the same token, any process to identify other representatives that hold greater authority to convey public views will be fraught with controversy. Rather than search in vain for a defined set of actors that represent the population, the international community should approach the task as an ongoing challenge to reach out and understand popular views.

Maximize Interaction between International Representatives and the Population

Partnership requires constant engagement to understand the views of the population. Diplomats and aid workers should travel outside protected bases

as much as they can, to reach out to as diverse a series of actors as possible. A greater understanding of local political dynamics and social relations improves the efficacy and relevance of development assistance, but also demonstrates to the population that the international community is there to support them. International representatives should endeavour to understand the country through the eyes of its people, not just its rulers.

Strengthen the Capacity of Society, Not Just the Government

Partnership should also involve capacity building for civil society, understood as the collective set of organizations outside the state through which the population organizes itself. For a population to hold a government to account, society must have some ability to mobilize and voice its views. Societies emerging from conflict are usually too fractured to do this. Building the capacity not only of government, but of civil society as well, is thus an essential role for the international community.

This should span political, legal, social and cultural domains. Political organizations that empower a population include political parties to aggregate individual interests into coherent political platforms, advocacy groups to influence decision making, and independent media agencies to keep the public informed and monitor public officials. Legal organizations could include professional associations of lawyers and judges, legal aid agencies and human rights non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Social and cultural organizations and movements to advance the interests of women and youth are also significant. In other words, there is a wide range of organizations that can help individuals and communities come together to voice their needs and communicate them to those in power.

Work with Indigenous Sources of Authority

If state building is primarily an endogenous process, then it can only succeed when it proceeds through institutions that the population knows and understands. Efforts to help the state connect to society should not be limited to NGOs, political parties and civic associations familiar in Europe or in North America, but should embrace indigenous forms of social organization as well. Religious, tribal and clan-based organizations can also serve to mobilize a population and convey its demands to those in authority.

Indigenous practices also offer political processes that may enjoy more legitimacy than processes familiar in

more established democracies. Many political cultures have traditions of consensus building, which may be a useful complement to elections in discerning the preferences of the population.

Pursue Community Empowerment Programs

The international community can also help governments focus on the population, through community engagement programs. Guiding local communities through the entire progression of project planning, design, budgeting, procurement, implementation and evaluation builds local capacity to voice priorities, advocate for their own interests, and successfully and directly improve their own quality of life through a cooperative, representative process. This bolsters citizen confidence to take ownership of the reconstruction process over the longer term and place demands on those who hold power. A prominent example of this kind of endeavour is Afghanistan's National Security Program.

Community empowerment programs also have important benefits for the accountability and therefore efficacy of the international community. It allows international representatives to engage directly with individual communities, to gain a better understanding of local priorities and dynamics, and to avoid elite capture.

Maximize the Length of Expatriate Tours of Duty

One of the constraints on interaction at this level is the limited time the average international representative spends on assignment. International representatives are often just gaining language fluency and a rudimentary understanding of the socio-political landscape when their tour expires. Extending the length and expanding the coverage of both civilian and military posts would improve the efficacy of programming, increase trust and build good will through consistent interactions.

HELPING THE GOVERNMENT ANSWER TO THE POPULATION

The mere act of having the government inform the public of its activities and justify its actions establishes the relationship required for accountability, as those that exercise power engage with those over whom it is exercised.

In a sense, the ongoing conversation is more important than the content in connecting a government to its citizens. To citizens of a country that has not seen a functioning state in years or even decades, the act of

speaking out and having those in power respond is an important first step to establishing confidence, legitimacy and, subsequently, accountability.

Help the Government Establish a Full Cycle of Engagement with Citizens

The international community can help government leaders establish a full cycle of engagement with the population. This involves enabling these leaders to consult widely among the population to identify needs, to develop plans to meet these needs, to work with ministries and central authorities in the capital to deliver on these plans, and then to engage with the same communities to showcase the results and collect feedback. Helping these officials with the day-to-day details of governing fills a void and demonstrates to a skeptical population that the government can both listen and deliver.

The emerging practice of grievance-based approaches to stabilization has generated a cycle of government consultations with the population. Such cycles begin and end with the population, proceeding through three general steps:

- **Listening to the population:** The starting point for the process is not the needs of the government, but rather the needs of individuals at the community level. International mentors facilitate outreach by government representatives to engage with key sectors of the population and listen to their needs.
- **Helping the government to respond:** Identifying the population's needs will serve no purpose if the international community then rushes in to address them. Instead, the international community's role should be to help government representatives align initiatives to improve security, establish health clinics, rebuild schools and create jobs to the particular needs put forward by constituents. The key is to equip the government to respond, and to ensure that it gets the associated credit to the extent possible.
- **Letting the population judge the results:** Not all needs can be met, and not all plans can be implemented successfully. If they are to buy into the process, citizens must be given the opportunity to voice their opinion on how well the government is doing — if it is not meeting their expectations, then they must be able to hold it to account. Those same government leaders

who listen to their grievances and coordinate responses must also “face the music” when it comes time to assess whether the activities they have undertaken or decisions that they've made truly represent popular will.

Help the Government Tell Its Story through Strategic Communications

The simple act of a government informing citizens about its activities is a powerful tool for accountability. If accountability is a relationship, after all, dialogue is an indispensable part of the process of linking the rulers and the ruled.

The governments of countries recovering from conflict generally do not have the capacity to engage in a continuous, strategic and well-resourced media campaign. This is a promising area for programming to support accountability. A strategic communications campaign helps the government publicize progress and gives profile to provincial and local leaders.

Fostering the development of independent media can be a critical component of such a strategy. Donors can have a substantial impact in this area through the establishment of training centres for independent journalists and government communications staff that provide equipment as well as mentoring and technical assistance. An independent media that can be objective and credible conduits of the population, as well as systematically placing governors, mayors, and other district leaders before the microphones to explain what they are doing to address the needs of their constituents, is essential to ensuring a government that is more accountable to its people.

Employing alternative technologies that are more accessible and widespread, such as those designed to work on mobile phones, can also help make information more broadly available, particularly in rural areas, as well as help citizens to coordinate reporting and advocacy.

Prioritize Sub-national Governance

Building the relationship between government and population is easier at the subnational level, since local and provincial/regional governments have more direct interaction with the public. The proximity of the governing to the governed provides greater incentives for the former to be answerable to the latter and enhances the ability of the latter to monitor and sanction the former. The population can more easily enforce its will if it finds the public interest is not being served. This more direct relationship tends to augment

popular participation, transparency, legitimacy and accountability.

STRENGTHENING ENFORCEMENT

Having a government that is answerable to its own people is only one part of accountability. The government can inform the public and justify its actions all it wants, but if the public disapproves of those actions, there must be consequences. Accountability requires enforcement.

This is the area in which the international community has been least successful in bringing accountability to state building. In part this is because of the legitimate limits that status as a sovereign state imposes. Any attempt to influence outcomes in a country's domestic political affairs will come at a cost for the relationship between the international community and the government.

It is far better for enforcement to be driven by local actors themselves. The government should not be accountable to the international community, but to its own people. When it acts in a manner judged to be inconsistent with the public interest, its own citizens should be the ones to take it to task.

The principal mechanism by which the general population can enforce accountability is an election. That is why the integrity of the electoral process must be defended even in the face of daunting challenges. Given the huge security and logistical problems involved with organizing elections in a conflict zone, however, elections cannot be the only mechanism to hold the government to account.

Many political systems rely more heavily on horizontal accountability mechanisms, by which formally independent organizations within the state impose sanctions on one another if they are judged to have acted against the public interest. These can include legislatures, courts, anti-corruption commissions and ombudsmen. Horizontal accountability offers a much more promising avenue for enforcement in state building.

How can the international community use its political weight to strengthen enforcement in state-building exercises?

Depersonalize Political Relationships

In a state-building exercise, the international community and the government are partners, not adversaries. Inevitably, working closely together to combat an

insurgency will create strong personal bonds. The partnership itself will likely be seen in personal terms, as a relationship with the chief of state. That personal bond can serve as a deterrent to helping the population hold the government to account, since international action could be seen as an attack on a friend or ally, or as an attempt to aid a political rival.

The politics of state building can be depersonalized by emphasizing institutions over individuals. The international community has a relationship with the president, to be sure, but if the president engages in a dispute with the legislature, the international community should be free to support the position of the legislature. If a governor stands accused of corruption, the international community's relationship with that governor should not preclude it from calling for the rule of law to be upheld.

Broaden Relations beyond the Executive Branch

In any system of divided government there is more than one institution representing the people. The international community should place equal emphasis on its relationship with the legislative branch as with the executive branch. In a federal system of government, it should place equal emphasis on its relationship with provincial or regional leaders. Independent relations with different branches of the state equip the international community to keep its options open when those branches are in conflict with one another. When state-building exercises grant the international community a de facto political role, it should ensure it is even-handed in playing that role.

Uphold Horizontal Accountability Mechanisms

The most effective checks on the executive branch of government are likely to come from other institutions in the government. Between elections, the general population will have very few opportunities to enforce its will on the government, while direct pressure from international actors will invariably provoke protests against violations of sovereignty. By contrast, branches of the government are free to challenge actions of the other branches at any time, and without violating sovereignty.

If the international community is silent in the face of these challenges, that silence is likely to be interpreted as support for the executive branch given the resources that it provides that branch through the capacity-building programs that underpin much of the state-building effort. Often the executive branch will merit the support of internationals, but not always. In situations when government officials stand accused of

corruption or another abuse of power, the international community should insist that proper procedures be upheld, and that the executive branch cooperate with investigations and comply with whatever sanctions are prescribed.

CONCLUSION

The experience of Afghanistan has been a trying one for the international community, and even more so for Afghans themselves. The ongoing instability in that country has demonstrated the limits of state building, leading many to question the wisdom of engaging in any future state-building exercises.

Until more practical alternatives to addressing the threat of failed and fragile states exist, however, the international community is not likely to have the luxury of abandoning state building. The Afghan experience can be used to understand how state building functions in practice and the practice can be adjusted accordingly.

One principal lesson of Afghanistan is that the very structure of state-building exercises serves to undermine accountability. The hybrid form of governance split between the government and the international community tends to obscure where accountability lies, leaving the population disempowered and frustrated. In these situations, efforts to build state capacity can further undermine accountability and destabilize the country further. Negotiating a double compact to enshrine accountability in the design of the state-building effort itself is likely to fail if no enforcement mechanisms are created.

A more viable strategy for building accountability in state-building exercises would be to establish a triple compact in which the international community could work directly with the population to hold the government to account, alongside its efforts to help the government deliver to its population. A triple compact may strike some as a violation of national sovereignty, but if the objective is to end conflict the needs that must be upheld are not those of the state itself, but of the population it exists to serve. Applying the power of the international community to help the population hold its government to account can reverse the dysfunctional politics of state building, which insulate the government from the demands of the people.

If the international community and the government can agree that the principal beneficiaries of the state-building process must be the people themselves and that they should be given a real say over the governance

of their country, the population may finally come off the fence. Such an agreement It could demonstrate to a skeptical population that change is more likely to come through the government than through its violent overthrow.

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The Centre for International Governance Innovation is an independent, non-partisan think tank on international governance. Led by experienced practitioners and distinguished academics, CIGI supports research, forms networks, advances policy debate and generates ideas for multilateral governance improvements. Conducting an active agenda of research, events and publications, CIGI's interdisciplinary work includes collaboration with policy, business and academic communities around the world.

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