

Liberal Peace Building and the Challenges to Enhance State Legitimacy

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Including a preliminary analysis of the joint research project "*Peace and Liberal Peace building in Afghanistan*." between the CERI Programme on Peace and Human Security (Sciences Po, Paris) and the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences, (Kabul University).

Let us look back to a time before it became fashionable and expedient to talk of reconciliation with the Taliban as the surest way for an exit strategy for the international community and in order to prevent a descent into chaos of not only Afghanistan but also of Pakistan. This new talk seems to be a desperate recognition of the supremacy of not only security concerns, but also of politics in general and geopolitics in particular. It has become evident in all corners, be it NATO commanders, donors with check books, diplomats planning in capitals instead of at the Security Council, ministries in old and new buildings in Kabul, that stabilisation is a priority concern. And that stabilisation of an increasingly volatile situation depends on "fixing" the original Bonn agreement, seven years later, by sharing a piece of the so-supposed peace dividend with the Taliban. The flaw of the Bonn agreement, which was designed as a blueprint for democratic transition and not as a peace accord between warring parties, threatens to bring down the house of cards. This realization is brushing away old formulas into closets of memories: security/development nexus, integrated approaches, human rights, democratisation, peace building, marketisation, state building etc.

For students of international relations, the Afghanistan case is now going back to Conflict Resolution 101. But for advanced students studying international interventions, the case still remains as an ideal terrain for the study of models, methods and flaws of international peace building, and the role of values in international relations.

It was with this in mind that in September 2007, the Programme for Peace and Human Security, which I was heading at that time

at CERI, the research centre of Sciences Po university in Paris, France, signed a memorandum of understanding with the Department of International Law and Political Sciences of Kabul University to make a joint research on models of peace and modalities of peace building in Afghanistan. The project was funded by the French Embassy in Kabul and was designed to be, more than a research project, an opportunity to exchange pedagogical methodologies on peace theories and peace research.¹⁰ During the course of 10 months, three graduate students and myself teamed up with five Afghan students, a senior and two junior professors at Kabul University. The project was designed in three parts: A first stage consisted of me and my students installing ourselves at Kabul University to share through regular courses what we thought were the latest theories of peace studies, the Liberal Peace challenge. Questionnaires were designed jointly with the Afghan team of students and professors, and personalities and focus groups were identified. The second stage was that of in-depth interviews based on the questionnaires we targeted for different profiles: the Afghan students conducted 100 interviews, including 40 with a variety of Afghan persons in Kabul (experts, politicians, government workers, police, NGOs, students, clergy, etc), 10 with leaders of major political parties, and 50 with persons in the provinces of Herat, Maidan Wardak, Balkh, Parwan and Nangahar (governors, police, experts, clergy, NGOs and tribal leaders). The French students conducted 60 in-depth interviews with members of the international community (UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), NATO, Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), embassies, aid organisations, NGOs). During the third stage the professors and I rolled up our sleeves and tried to make sense of the materials. The preliminary findings were presented at a conference in Paris

¹⁰ Members of the team were:

From France: Team Leader: Professor Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Students: Romain Malejacq, Christian Olsson, with support from Nassim Majidi and Yann Braem.
From Afghanistan: Team Leader: Professor Nassrollah Stanekzi; Professors; Daud Nouri and Kouhestani. Students. Vida Koushan, Monisa Bahram, Khaled Bahrami, Ghazi Hashemi, Ahmad Fawad Zarbi.

in June 2008. Below are some of the preliminary findings of this research. The full report will be available in early 2009.

Let me set the scene of the findings of this particular case in a brief theoretical detour. In my research centre, we were working on the questions of legitimacy of Liberal Peace building in post-conflict situations using a human security critical lens. In evaluating the impact of the role of international organisations in post-conflict environments, at least two different angles of query can be used. One relates to questions of efficiency and effectiveness of peace building efforts. Another concerns the rationale for assistance provided to post-conflict countries, the model of the ultimate state presumed in state-building efforts, whether there is consensus among different actors on the supremacy of this model, and sufficient legitimacy for imposing it as conditionality for assistance. Ultimately such a query would have to scrutinise the model and assumptions permeating in the ideology of aid, which increasingly has been based on a consensus around “Liberal Peace”.

Liberal peace is based on an assumption that liberal systems bring long lasting development while avoiding conflicts. The idea has been around since mid-twentieth century, but was consolidated especially with the so-called triumph of the liberalism over socialism at the beginning of the 1990s. Since then, this “consensus” has been translated by peace builders, i.e. external actors involved in post-conflict situations, be they the UN, IFIs or donor governments, as the blueprint model for state building: liberal economic instruments of “open markets” and democratic practices of “open” societies including all tenants of liberalism in terms of personal freedoms and human rights. Liberal peace in practice can be characterised as embracing certain processes and values – democracy, free markets, human rights, integration into globalisation, state-based security and citizenship.

We set out to Afghanistan to study not the **efficiency** of this model, based on whether there was enough resources, enough institutional capacity, enough coordination and coherence among international actors, but to study its **legitimacy**. Our point of departure was that legitimacy depends on two things: a) how the

model of Liberal Peace and its principles were valued among local populations and b) how much they had been successful in improving people's every day lives. Our definition of legitimacy, using the human security perspective, rested squarely on the perceptions of local populations. This point of departure is different from other uses of the word legitimacy. Legitimacy is usually associated with the institutions of the state, for example. Even when we talk about the legitimacy of the state, we must bear in mind the dual tension that exists: The state is caught between legitimacy from outside, whether its institutions are open and liberal enough, whether aid is absorbed or corruption rules, whether it is able to control non-state actors so that they do not take planes and go crash into symbols of "freedom" and "prosperity" in rich countries, whether it can uphold its sovereignty vis-à-vis external influences, etc, in short, whether the state is a "stable democracy" worthy of its name to be part of the international community of nations. But legitimacy is also, and especially viewed from inside, whether the state can provide, protect and empower its own citizens, how it responds to them and upholds a social contract. In an ideal world, the two should coincide, but as those following Afghanistan can admit, there are sometimes trade-offs to be made. In Afghanistan, the entire tension has been around the universal demands on a centralised, rule creating state with modern institutions in a traditional, fragmented society that wants overall security but no interference in traditional, local doings. To make what can be called universal legitimacy coincide with local legitimacy is the challenge.

But our interest in the question of legitimacy for our research was based on the legitimacy of the model used by the international community and not the state institutions, although undoubtedly they are related. Peace building in general, because it usually involves external actors, is deemed, for example, as illegitimate from a post-colonial perspective where all neo-colonial features of global politics are seen, where external actors violate internal norms and traditions in the name of peace and development. We are tempted but are not following the post-colonial school. Instead, our query would be more in line with the communitarianism school that scrutinises peace building efforts,

especially of the liberal kind, as not always being in accordance with local, indigenous values, politics and informal institutions. There are two trends of critical school around Liberal Peace building: the problem is either that the model is wrong (that there is no benefit to neoliberal development economic models, or to competition based democracies) or that the model is right with liberal principles of individualism, universalism, egalitarianism, human rights and democracy around the core principle of individual moral freedom that are shared by all, but that the conditions are not ripe. The communitarian school of thought wants to make that judgement focus directly on local voices, local experiences, local responses, sometimes in adoption, sometimes in rejection and sometimes coming up with a hybrid model.

We did not make any assumptions that Afghans were not “humans” for whom principles of human rights were not important or relevant. We wanted to see to what extent the principles of individualism and personal freedom, embodied in the push behind participatory democracy and liberal market economy, matched with the values and expectations of people in Afghanistan. With their ethos of collectiveness, and not just among the Pashtuns but also among Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras, with their experiences of socialist models that had controlled the state and the market, with their horrendous sacrifices of war, the question was how much did they understand or covet liberal values today.

We did, however, make one serious mistake in our presumptions. We assumed that the international community was genuine about its Liberal Peace building intentions. We had observed the preparation of presidential elections, the writing of a constitution, the setting up of a parliament, of shaping up local governance systems through shuras etc. We followed the debates about the turf war between the military’s building of schools for hearts and minds and humanitarian organisations being uncomfortable about the blurring of lines. We had also read the National Development Framework, looked at the budget, heard about article 10 in the constitution that clearly states that market economy is the goal, followed the preparation of the ANDS with its different pillars,

heard about the conditionalities of the IMF for debt relief and HIPC (Heavily Indebted Poor Countries) status in Afghanistan and concluded that the machines of Liberal Peace building were set in motion. We had even heard conversations in the couloirs of the French military in Paris who were asking whether the l'Etat Finale Recherché, the military term for the end state (or exit strategy one may say), is indeed democracy. In the years preparing for this study, we had ourselves, like the international community, started to deny a fundamental fact: even if Liberal Peace building had started, despite the presence of the World Bank, the IMF, the private sector, despite the mandate of the UNAMA, despite books after books on this subject, we were not sure that Afghanistan was in a peace building stage at all.

Hence you can image the first reaction of the Afghan students and professors when we presented to them the hypothesis we wanted to test. When we asked on our first interaction: Is Liberal Peace building the model understood and coveted by the Afghans? Their answer was blunt: What peace are you talking about? So we went back to the drawing board and the research was redesigned to include a first part about the differences in understanding both between Afghans, within the international community and between both as to what constituted “peace” in the first place. If the research had assumed that we were going to scrutinise the model behind positive peace (where livelihoods, dignity and security were provided), we realized that the priority was on negative peace, being the absence of armed conflict and violence. We could not talk about legitimacy of Liberal Peace alone. The whole project had to be redesigned along four lines:

1. There is no peace, so talking about Liberal Peace is premature. We added questions about what is peace and what is security in the first place.
2. Legitimacy alone could not be studied in distinction from efficiency. The Afghan team insisted on carrying out an evaluation of aid and the institutions of the state. The conclusion drawn was that the instruments which provide that model of Liberal Peace (the state, the international community) are part of the model.

3. Liberal Peace was the imported model we wanted to look at. But it had to be discussed also vis-à-vis two other underlying cultures: tradition and religion. Both were values that were affecting decisions, although as systems, they had not necessarily been codified. As values, they feature in minds and decisions, they shape reactions to experiences.
4. The real alternative to Liberal Peace, as Prof Stanekzi, the Afghan team leader insisted, was about collectivism versus individualism.

Caveats about the interviews

This study cannot be considered a formal opinion poll, or a survey of the situation, and pundits will find a host of methodological problems with the sample of 160 people. This study is not presented as an exact representation of any definitive aggregation that xx percent think that the country is going this way or that way, although a quantitative analysis of the results was also conducted. I prefer to stress that the study was first and foremost an opportunity to team up students and professors to work together on a research project. Second, it was an opportunity for a conversation with selected stakeholders in Afghanistan, around the concept of Liberal Peace, *solheh liberal*.

The student team consisted of two girls, one Pashtun and one Tajik and three boys, two Pashtuns and one Tajik. The regional distribution was made in an ethnically sensitive way. Once the students became aware of the theories and concepts, and once the Afghans had made the necessary phone calls to set up the interviews, it was them who went to the field to question the target groups. This was a good thing since the respondents did not feel threatened and adopted a pedagogical view of enlightening the students. It would have been different if the French team or the professors had made the interviews.

Although respondents were selected from a variety of professions, including some ministers, parliamentarians, tribal leaders etc, they represented their own views, as Afghans, in the individual interviews, devoid of power interests. There are of course regional variations in the answers. They had to do with the degree of insecurity and the experiences with the price of

commodities in local markets. Besides that, there are not that much differences in the overall answers.

The results

Below are brief summaries of the overall results of the Afghan interviews. The report, available in early 2009, gives the complete results, including disaggregations by region and by profession, as well as the results of interviews with the international community and a brief comparative analysis of the two points of views.

Part 1) Peace and Security

Part 2) Legitimacy Questions: Perceptions and Understanding of Models of Liberal Peace Around Democratisation and Marketisation

Part 3) Efficiency Questions: Perceptions about Evaluation of Institutions: the Role of the International Community and the Role of the State

Part 4) Some preliminary conclusions

Part 1) Peace and Security

Security was seen as a priority

Physical security was priority number one, and it was evident to all that it had not been achieved despite prioritisation by all during the past seven years. But security was seen in a dialectical relationship with political, economic, social and cultural security. They are interrelated and have to be balanced. The root causes of insecurity had to be understood. How security was provided also mattered. The methods used and lack of attention to the priority needs of people had created general dissatisfaction, hence giving more reasons for opponents to take up arms. Denial of culture and values led to dissatisfaction and mistrust. Military solutions were not sufficient, especially with current methods (civilian deaths created fear and mistrust).

How is peace defined by the Afghans?

Bringing peace is much more than defeating the Taliban. In the narrow sense, peace meant the end of war, be it in the sense of active combat, or the more general notion of violence and

insecurity. But peace also meant for the large majority economic security, a situation where the population would not have worries about poverty, hunger, inadequate housing, and, especially, unemployment. Peace is also peace of mind, without worries. It is about psychological security. A large number of respondents claimed that Islam was the best way to reach durable peace. Islam advocated for morality as a duty and equality as a right.

Why was there no peace?

There was a lack of coordination between internal and external actors and also between international actors themselves. On behalf of the international community, this lack showed a) mistrust of the capacity of national institutions, b) lack of knowledge about the specificity of operating in Afghanistan and b) lack of desire to cooperate among each other due to each country's own geostrategic interest. There was an overall lack of knowledge about the specificity of Afghan people's needs among the international community.

Other reasons as to why there was no peace included the following: Extensive force was used by the international community, often violating local traditions; National institutions lacked independence and were weak internally in terms of incapacity and corruption; Attention was not paid to other issues such as unemployment and lack of overall justice in society; There was internal armed competition between interest-based groups and finally, it could not be denied that the lack of peace was also due to the malevolent interventions of some neighbours and open borders through which arms came in and drugs went out.

How could peace be achieved?

The only way to achieve multiple goals, according to the interviews, was cooperation and coordination between external and internal actors around a clear, unified and transparent strategy. To stop the spread of arms and insecurity means closing borders and monitoring them more closely, while putting pressure on the neighbouring countries to stop their continued interference. Diplomacy (political solution) was necessary, but the problem of the Taliban (an Afghan problem which needs

negotiation and reconciliation) needed to be separated from that of international al-Qaida (which requires dealing with Pakistan and international injustices). To answer the grievances of people, it is necessary to create more jobs and provide equal opportunities for everyone to take advantage of the transition taking place in society. There was a need to relieve the general mistrust, create social justice and better understanding of the real every day problems of people. To make peace last, it was also necessary not to neglect values.

Whose responsibility is it to create peace?

Most respondents said that compassion needs to come from within. The responsibility for peace rests on people first of all, on their will and capacity. It is also the duty of the state to improve people's lives and create social, cultural and economic conditions for peace. The international community is needed, but its role is ambivalent. On the one hand, the international community is needed for pacifying spoilers of war through hard security measures, and donor money was primordial for the recovery of Afghanistan. On the other hand, however, the presence of the international community in itself is fuelling the conflict and most Afghans have the memory of abandonment in the early 1990s.

Part 2) Legitimacy Questions: Perceptions and Understanding of Models of Liberal Peace around Democratisation and Marketisation

What is Liberal Peace in Afghanistan? Is it understood? Is it valued? Are the conditions ripe? Does it fit a religious and traditional society? How can it be made more relevant?

Liberal Peace has two parts

1. The "political" model: democracy, human rights, etc
2. The "economic model": private sector as the engine of growth

Perceptions about the Political Model of Liberal Peace

Is the political model of Liberal Peace valued? Does it fit Islamic and traditional society?

Overall, **yes:**

- Democracy is like water, primordial

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- It translates into “mardom salary” (rule by people). People have to play a role in their own future (but so far, they have played mostly a symbolic one)
- If democracy is understood correctly, it is the best way of administration because democracy, participation and freedoms are all necessities for people
- It is humanism
- Accepting it means joining “civilisation” like many countries, but Afghan values should not be forgotten. “We have to develop positive things and reject negative ones with logic“
- It requires and leads to rule of law.

But, - **no**:

- Overall, many people were sceptical, because Liberal Peace was tested in the past seven years, but has not provided many tangible benefits
- Afghanistan had democracy 40 years ago. Then there was better capacity than today, but we could not grow democracy as needed
- Theoretically, Liberal Peace can lead to peace, but in the case of Afghanistan, it has not
- When it is misunderstood, it can be badly misused. Democracy is for example understood as bihayayi (lack of shame), or unlimited freedom
- There is also scepticism that it can be externally imposed because of the past bad memories of imposed socialism.

Does it fit Islamic society?

Yes, it does:

According to the interviews, democracy is a western word, but its tenants are not new. Islam believed in democracy centuries ago (the successor of the prophet, Abu Bakr was elected (for sunnis). If Islam is understood correctly, it is not against democracy. In the holy religion of Islam, there are already something like elections, respect for people and personal freedom There are democratic rules, for example election of leaders, voting, freedom of expression within the Islamic framework, morality,

responsibility. All kinds of freedoms are there, but of the right kind that does not hamper on the freedom of others. Islam is the best methodology of peace, because everyone is a believer and respects Islam, and without Islam, peace is not possible.

No, it does not:

Some respondents also argued that Afghans would be against liberalism if it meant sole insistence on individual freedom. Islam is against absolute freedoms but for relative ones. The rights that exist in democracy or in Islam are not the same. In liberal West, there are no limitations of freedom, it is unregulated. Freedom of expression, for example, means that anyone can insult the prophet. But for the Afghans, there are limitations, and they are morality (akhlag) and faith (iman) that create morality. There is therefore a moral clash between democracy and Islam.

Democracy that is perceived as western does not fit society, because Afghanistan is first of all an Islamic and then a traditional society. The red army occupation already showed that rejecting Islamic traditions and values creates deadly problems.

What challenges Democratic Peace in Afghanistan?

- *Rushed time table*: One of the reasons why there is no peace is because Afghans are jumping from a closed to an open society
- *Lack of knowledge and understanding*: People can be in charge of their destiny when their knowledge goes up. But more than 2/3 of the Afghans are illiterate and they do not understand the real meaning of democracy
- *Lack of conditions*: Poverty and illiteracy make people misunderstand words like rights. Differences in socio-economic conditions hamper democracy
- *Lack of experience* of democracy after decades of dictatorship.
- *Mismatch with local values*: Peace freedom without limits is an offense to tradition

How can Liberal Peace be made more relevant?

Educate, advocate, raise awareness, clear misconceptions. Use schools, media and Ulemas.

Show by example. Undemocratic behaviour, like lack of consultation and participation, hurts democracy.

Go slowly. It took a long time in Europe, so why rush? Afghans cannot go from a closed society to an open one suddenly, transition is needed.

Work on conditions. There is a need for jobs, education, security, social justice.

Accept that Afghanistan is a religious country. At least don't go against tradition and religion. Liberalism, democracy, individual freedom and market economy can only be beneficial in Afghanistan if they are not against tradition and religion.

Accept that the real clash is between tradition and modernity. Neither can be rejected, need a balance, have to have to reconcile them.

Allow for an Afghan alternative to come forth, don't copy blindly from the West.

Perceptions about the Market Economy

What is the understanding of market economy in Afghanistan? Does it function? Is it valued? Do preconditions exist? How do Islam and traditional values reconcile with the economy?

There are three observations about liberal market economy in Afghanistan: Article 10 of the Afghan Constitution squarely states that "the State encourages and protects private capital investments and enterprises based on the market economy".

However, rising prices every day, mafias in the economy, inequality and poverty hurt the acceptance of a liberal market. The economic system is still based on a planning model inherited from the 1960-1980s which stated the supremacy of the state in development. People still have expectation on a welfare state.

The private sector is the engine of growth, but the open market has created many problems: Among them, respondents argued that the government was not controlling the market, laws were not respected and speculation and lack of government control had

led to high prices. Monopolies were also problematic: the market was captured by traders, which led to lack of control over quality and quantity of goods available. Respondents lamented that imported goods had flooded the market. These were often of bad quality and with low prices and because local products could not compete with them, unemployment had risen. The handicraft industry is an example.

Respondents also lamented that inequalities had widened between those who had captured the market and those who wanted to earn through wages. The market economy had put benefits and interests in the pockets of some and made others poorer. The public sector was shrinking, curbing employment opportunities. Private clinics and schools were open only for the wealthy.

The Market economy was also seen by some as being against the values of Islam. Capitalism, they said, was based on competition and had no pity, and was therefore against social cohesion and harmony.

Consequences

All these problems had led to speculation, monopoly and lack of price control. The labourers migrate to other countries, but to low paying jobs in the black and grey markets. Opium plantation prevailed, and the national economy (other than drugs) could not be jumpstarted.

Why?

According to the respondents, preconditions for a market economy did not exist in Afghanistan. There is no national economy or national production necessary for healthy competition. The state is weak and has neither the necessary experience nor a concrete strategy. Market principles cannot operate over a population that does not understand them, and the market is captured by mafia and powerful individuals whom the state cannot control. The private sector does not function because of corruption and lack of security and capital goes abroad.

Under what conditions would the market economy be beneficial?

First, it must be remembered that an agriculture country should first become self sufficient in food, then it can go to a market economy. For the majority, who is poor, the market economy cannot be beneficial, so poverty should first be eradicated. Corruption must be curbed and national interests be protected. A mixed economy is a better alternative, where there is a role both for the government and the private sector. The market must have social responsibilities.

The government has four important roles to play in the market

1. Control prices and quantities of goods available, not through control but through competition. Prevent prices of primary goods from rising: the government should keep a stock of primary goods and pour them into the market when prices rise.
2. Correct injustices. Without social justice, economic and social inequalities increase. Redistribution is needed.
3. Create opportunities. The government should encourage the private sector, supporting traders in the private sector so that the economy grows. This also means ending monopoly.
4. Protect traders, create security for the market.

Part 3) Efficiency: Perceptions about Evaluation of Institutions: the Role of the International Community, the Role of the State

Role and Effectiveness of the International Community

Perceptions about the role of the international community

The presence of the international community is deemed as extremely important. Expectations have been high as the international community was very much needed, especially because Afghans alone could stop the intervention of others with their present limited capacity. Yet, respondents mentioned that if the international community had been transparent and worked on a unified clear strategy for the use of national resources, it would have been more positive and reached common goals better.

What has been achieved with their help?

State building had been jumpstarted with the help of the international community. For the first time, elections were held, and a constitution was created. Roads and bridges have been reconstructed, schools opened and thousands of girls enrolled in the university. The National Solidarity Programme (NSP) was an adequate project. Media got enhanced freedom and capacity, and there is freedom of activities for civil society institutions.

Which are the challenges for aid?

The root cause of the problem of aid is the inefficiency of the administration, leadership and management. Corruption has influenced the structure of the international community as well as the appointment of people of high level. Furthermore there has been a lack of proper coordination between national and international actors. Aid has also not been dispersed according to the needs and priorities of the people: there was not enough knowledge about the specific Afghan needs. Furthermore, insecurity in some regions had hampered reconstruction.

The international community often brought in experiences from other countries, but Afghanistan has its own culture and geography and needs its own specificity. The international community did not have time to, or did not want to, study and analyse it but brought other experiences, which created challenges. Afghanistan is a traditional and Islamic society, and the values of international aid and models should be linked to the culture and the religion of the people.

Afghanisation of the reconstruction could also have been helped more. This could have been done through Afghan state companies (Ariana, telecom). Instead, much of the aid had been given to the private sector and captured by the mafia.

The use of aid by the international community

Overall, the main complaint was the lack of proper consultation with the Afghan people. Afghans were aware of the inefficiency of aid, not only through the many reports that had come, but also through the lack of visible and tangible results in their daily lives. Corruption in construction projects claimed many grievances in

the interviews. There were briberies in tender. Afghan human resources and construction materials were not used sufficiently. Aid had also gone too much to what respondents considered as frivolities: purchase of cars, high salaries for consultants, what they called “luxury” office set-ups, useless and incessant workshops and conferences. The respondents complained that the money had gone back out of the country to western countries in the name of engineers and advisors. ACBAR had set the number at a staggering 40% of the total aid. The international community complained about lack of capacity, but there has not been a clear and transparent strategy to build capacity in the past six years. People had not got enough information about what was being given as loans and what as grants.

How could aid be made more efficient and legitimate?

- Prioritisation
- Plans to be feasible and operational
- Consultation with Afghans by the international community
- Mechanisms for monitoring of international aid by the government and Afghan civil society
- Corruption to be curbed
- Enhanced capacities for project delivery
- Better coordination between the centre and periphery
- Jobs to be created first
- Roads and dams for irrigation and electricity to be constructed agriculture growth
- Long term investments.

Role and Effectiveness of the State

According to the interviews, the government was not able to provide, protect and empower people, predominantly because of a combination of three elements:

- Lack of sufficient independence and sovereignty, be it administrative or budgetary,
- Lack of sufficient capacity,
- Corruption and administrative bribery.

Order in state administration was said to be a requirement for stability. Institutions had been created, but the rule of law was lacking.

Has the government been successful in attracting aid?

On this question, the interviewees were mostly positive. The government had been able to attract money to a large extent. The interviewees knew that 15 billion had been spent in Afghanistan, although not many knew that actually 39 billion had been pledged until 2010. So the problem was not the quantity of aid, but its quality, its use, and the lack of absorption capacities.

Has the government been successful in deciding on the orientation of aid?

Largely no. Many interviewees complained that international institutions had a powerful say over the political, economic and military administration of the country and that this influence had an overall negative impact on perceptions of the reputation of the government and national institutions and on their independence and sovereignty. As one respondent put it colourfully, “We have to monitor if with this aid a cow was bought so that its milk and cheese would help the country’s reconstruction, but I think aid was like snow and melted or went out again to foreign banks”.

A good number of respondents claimed that the government did not have any ‘national feelings’ to keep and defend its national interests. While real demands and the population’s needs were not met, corruption and lack of capacity in the government had also led to decreasing trust among donors.

The government could have had better influence on the use of aid had it showed more strength and more national compassion. The interviewees were not asking for a blank check from donors, but better alignment against actual needs, more efficiency of the government through increased capacity and curbing of corruption, and better overall alignment between national and international decision makers and actors.

Consequences

As a consequence, corruption prevailed. Aid money was often spent on personal use of officials instead of on social goods.

There was not a clear economic strategy to make systematic use of aid and not capacity for adequate administrative management and economic planning. This situation had led to mistrust among the population, who would question the credibility of their representatives, and mistrust among donors, who would tighten their purse.

Part 4) Some Preliminary Conclusions

- Afghans are highly experienced people. They have seen realities that most people in the West only read about in books. They can grasp realities better than most. They not only know what they want but also why things do not work. It is therefore baffling that there is not enough trust to open up a dialogue directly with people so that adequate methods are found and mistakes are avoided.
- Peace is a complicated thing that should be discussed among scholars, intellectuals, national institutions, civil society, leaders at national level. In these discussions, focus should not only be on the methods of bringing short term peace, but also on the values of Afghan society and the type of future that the Afghans want to build with their own responsibilities. Peace should be seen as a social contract where everyone has a responsibility. It should not be imposed. Peace building is often seen as an external project to which players have to be better aligned, instead of understanding that it is about the dynamics of a local society to which externals should adapt.
- Despite what is repeatedly said in anthropological opinions or in orientalist fantasies, the Afghans have large expectations on their state. That state may not have to interfere in some instances in collective behaviour, but it is responsible for providing welfare, security etc. External actors sometimes talk about state substitution, when the state is seen as incapable or corrupt to deliver services. But substitution is never the answer that would satisfy the Afghans. When things go wrong, they blame their state. This needs to be kept in mind when discussing the Taliban reconciliation. Even if the Taliban come to power, can they represent the just, welfare state that is expected from the people?

- There is a lot of talk about whether the state in Afghanistan is legitimate, failed, weak etc because it can threaten the stability of the international community, because it can be a narco-state, etc. But it must be stressed that the state gets most of its legitimacy from **within**. What has not been created in Afghanistan is the social contract, that the state is more responsible towards its own citizens than to its external financial backers. The entire notion of what citizenship means, and how people should participate in the state, has not been designed in the grand strategies for democracy, rule of law etc.

Afghans have strong values. These values come from their experience with modernity, but also from their historical experiences with different models of development, from their religion, from their traditional and family ties and from different ethnic ethos. It is very important to accept that these values should not be trampled upon by external intervention. It would be difficult to conclude that Afghans are against liberalism because they manifest elements of collectivism, tradition and religion. Such a culture based argument would presuppose that modernity means liberalism and that it is against tradition, which means underdevelopment. These are false assumptions. When many of the tenants of liberalism have proven to be de-developing, when collective societies can find prosperity, when tradition is the backbone of informal institutions and primordial for, and not against, progress, it would be best not to make any sorts of conclusion damning the Afghans. Instead, perhaps, it should be stressed that everyday life of individuals, their access to job, food, security, harmony in family etc shape their experience with 'isms'. In principle, values of liberalism with a collectivist context, devoid of selfish individualism, are embraced by the Afghans. However, if it means not seeing any tangible results in their everyday lives, if they see society moving towards a wild form of individualism where some become corrupt and others poorer, when prices rise, when the government officials they elected are not accountable to them, they cannot understand and accept its benefits. When there are no jobs and no food, political participation and participation in a free market may give hope

once, but if that job and food are not provided, there will not be a second time. Afghans can be said to be “aliberal” in this sense, neither for nor against, but waiting for results. Afghans as a whole, devoid of those interested in specific types of power, want to see tangible changes in their lives rather than the adoption of ideologies.

The Liberal Peace model requires a serious revision. With the crash of global markets, with the heavy interventions by the states in industrialised countries to bail out economies, with countries like China showing different paths to development, with the disillusionment about the tangible benefits of formal institutions of democracy, there is a scope to believe that the model will definitely be revised in the next few years. It is, however, very important to keep in mind that if the model is revised in the West, it will not continue to be imported, like outdated medicine and factory rejects, to post-conflict situations in the aftermath of international interventions for peace building.

These types of joint projects with universities should be continued, despite logistical difficulties, language and cultural gaps, etc. They can only be beneficial for both sides. The French students in the team became interested in pursuing a PhD on Afghanistan after they saw the realities with their own eyes. The Afghan students learned about different theories and got to understand their implications in their own societies. They developed a critical and alert mind through implementing a hands-on project.