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P A P E R



Reintegrating Afghan Insurgents

Seth G. Jones

Prepared for the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity

Approved for public release; distribution unlimited



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Preface

This paper is intended to be a short, policy-relevant assessment on reintegration in Afghanistan.

This research was sponsored by the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity and conducted within the Intelligence Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

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Summary

Successful counterinsurgency requires getting insurgents to switch sides. Former insurgents provide an invaluable source of information on their previous colleagues, sow discord, and ultimately cause momentum to shift toward counterinsurgent forces. This brief analysis examines reintegrating Taliban and other insurgents into their local communities in Afghanistan and outlines steps to facilitate the reintegration process.

Reintegration refers to operational and tactical efforts to assimilate low to mid-level insurgents and leaders peacefully into their local communities.¹ It is generally distinguished from *reconciliation*, which involves high-level, strategic, and political dialogue with senior leaders of major insurgent groups—such as the Taliban, Haqqani network, and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-i-Islami (HIG)—to terminate their armed resistance against the Afghan government.² As U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates explained: “With respect to reintegration, this is really about getting the foot soldiers to decide that they don’t want to be a part of the Taliban any more.”³ Some Afghan government documents use slightly different definitions of reintegration and reconciliation.⁴

This assessment asks two questions: What factors increase the likelihood of reintegrating fighters? What are the key options for fighters as they consider reintegration? It reaches several conclusions:

- At least three factors appear to raise the probability of reintegration: (a) increasing the perception that Afghan and Coalition forces are winning the war, especially at the local level; (b) utilizing coercion against insurgents, including targeted raids to kill or capture insurgent leaders; and (c) addressing key grievances, such as tribal or sub-tribal conflicts, employment, security, or governance failures.
- Based on an analysis of 36 reintegration cases in Afghanistan since 2001, in 36 percent of the cases insurgents reintegrated because they believed the Taliban or other groups were losing the war (at least in their local areas); in 33 percent of the cases coercion was a critical factor; and in 71 percent of the cases insurgents reintegrated because of grievances.
- Reintegration should not be a *reactive* process in which Afghan and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) officials merely respond to individuals or groups that contact them. Instead, *proactive* efforts can be conducted that identify individuals as favorable candidates for reintegration. For example, proactive assessments can be conducted that identify individuals, villages, and even larger entities (such as clans or sub-tribes) as favorable candidates for reintegration.
- Although reintegration requires Afghan government leadership, the central government is sometimes poorly synchronized with local officials. Tactical units cannot always wait for the central government to act in a timely manner. Consequently, effective reintegration

may require tactical units to cooperate with local officials; provincial and district governors; tribal and community leaders; and National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan National Army (ANA) officials.

- Past reintegration cases suggest there are a range of helpful procedures once a fighter—or group of fighters—considers reintegration:
 - *Screening of candidates.* Conduct in-depth questioning, contact human sources, analyze databases, and gather biometric and other relevant data. Afghan and ISAF units should be aware that insurgents may use reintegration as a way to attack ISAF or Afghan forces, collect intelligence, or stall operations.
 - *Holding and security procedures.* Establish holding procedures if necessary. Detention should be used as a last resort and, in some instances, may be counterproductive if it triggers a backlash from local communities. Detainees should be treated fairly, kept safe, and not be punished if they are willing to talk.
 - *Incentives.* Consider a range of financial and other assistance for potential candidates, including resettlement aid and security protection. Afghan programs that support a long-term solution, such as employment or education, can be particularly helpful.
 - *Engaging tribal and other local leaders.* Operate through legitimate local institutions, including *jirgas* and *shuras* (local councils), to help resettle reintegrated personnel into villages. Reintegration may only be successful when tribal and other local leaders are involved, supported by the Afghan government and ISAF units, and prepared to stake their prestige to help reintegrate former combatants.
 - *Information operations.* Disseminate information that reintegration is a viable option to the local population and neutralize insurgent propaganda. Reintegrated personnel can help create opportunities by demonstrating to insurgents the benefits of switching to the government side.
 - *Active use of reintegrated individuals.* Consider utilizing individuals in a range of ways where feasible: to collect intelligence, to participate in local defense forces, to act as scouts, and to accept positions in the Afghan government.

This analysis adopts a straightforward methodology: It examines 36 reintegration cases in Afghanistan since 2001, including explanations of why insurgents opted to reintegrate.⁵ Table 1 in Chapter One presents the cases; the lessons learned from the cases are integrated throughout the document. However, any study of reintegration has methodological and analytical pitfalls. There is no complete data set of reintegration cases, and many cases are not regularly reported—or compiled—by Afghan or ISAF officials. In addition, it is not always clear why insurgents reintegrate. Some discussions are clandestine and occur with Afghan or other intelligence agencies, and insurgents may publicly or privately misrepresent their reasons for reintegration. Nevertheless, the initial dataset in this document is a major step forward that provides a critical lens with which to examine reintegration.

This paper is divided into three parts. First, it presents factors that have contributed to reintegration in Afghanistan and other counterinsurgencies. Second, it outlines operational and tactical steps to take when insurgents consider reintegration. Third, it offers a brief conclusion.

Factors That Enable Reintegration

Over the past several decades of warfare in Afghanistan, low-, mid-, and even senior-level fighters have regularly changed sides. Indeed, reintegration is an integral part of Afghan culture. The concept of truce is encompassed in the Pashto word *tiga*, which means “placing the stone.” The word symbolizes the process of utilizing a respected elder or peacemaker to mediate a dispute among disagreeing parties.¹

There are at least three types of reintegration: noncompliance, informing, and switching sides. Noncompliance involves such actions as evading taxes from insurgents and fleeing from insurgent-controlled areas. While it is the most benign form of defection, it can trigger cascades of more-serious defections if grievances with insurgents significantly increase. Government officials can exploit noncompliance by identifying the individuals involved and providing rewards to those willing to play a more substantive role. Informing is the act of supplying information about one side to its rival. While informing is a form of defection, it differs from switching sides because it is usually a private act that requires secrecy. Reasons for informing may reflect political preferences, expectations of personal gain, private grudges, blackmail, or survival considerations. Switching sides involves formally breaking with insurgent groups and assimilating into local communities.²

Switching sides is the focus of this study, and it has been common across insurgencies. In China, many Communists joined the Nationalist side, especially after losing out in factional conflicts. They were the rebels’ worst enemy, one study concluded, “for they knew the guerrillas’ ways and were thirsty for revenge.”³ In Vietnam, the Vietcong considered defection to be one of their greatest problems.⁴ But collaborators were harshly punished. When the Vietcong regained control over a village that had joined the government, they sometimes seized the headman and his family, disemboweled his wife in front of him, hacked off his children’s arms and legs, and then emasculated him.⁵ In Oman, military setbacks and containment of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman followed steadily increasing desertions during the 1970s. In Thailand, there were a series of reintegration cases among Thai insurgents in the 1980s following a return to civilian rule and an amnesty program.⁶ Indeed, reintegration has been a pivotal component of successful counterinsurgencies and has significantly weakened insurgent groups.

Table 1 provides a list of 36 reintegration cases in Afghanistan since 2001. At least three factors appear to raise the probability of reintegration: (a) increasing the perception of winning at the national level and especially at the local level, (b) utilizing coercion, and

The author would like to thank those who reviewed earlier drafts of this paper: Michael Semple, a fellow at Harvard’s Carr Center for Human Rights Policy, and RAND colleagues Olga Oliner and Barbara Sude.

Table 1
Example of Reintegration Cases, 2001–2010

Name	Year	Former Designation	Location	Reasons for Reintegration
Mullah Syed Abdullah	2007	Military commander	Ghor	Coercion: Intimidated after his commander, Mullah Abdul Jalil, was killed
Mullah Abdullah	2010	Military commander	Helmand	Coercion and grievances: Captured by ISAF forces and offered assistance
Noor Ahmad	2010	Military commander	Helmand	Coercion and grievances: Intimidated by Afghan and ISAF forces and offered assistance
Sayed Ahmad	2009	Military commander	Kapisa	Grievances: Some of his grievances addressed; offered employment in ANP
Mullah Abdul Salam Akhund	2007	Governor	Helmand	Grievances and perception of war: Developed grievances with the Taliban; also appeared to view the war as turning against Taliban
Mullah Aminullah	2010	Military commander	Helmand	Coercion and grievances: Captured by ISAF forces and offered assistance to address grievances
Suleiman Amiri	2010	Military commander	Herat	Grievances: Some of his grievances addressed; promised a job in ANP
Mohammad Anwar	2009	Military commander	Helmand	Grievances: Developed a range of grievances with local Taliban
Abdul Wahid Rais Baghrani	2005	Military commander	Helmand	Grievances: Developed some grievances with the Taliban, including their support of al Qa'ida; offered support from President Karzai
Mullah Bahauddin	2010	Military commander	Badghis	Grievances: Unhappy with the Taliban harassment of local civilians and other Taliban practices
Mullah Ebrahim	2006	Military commander	Kandahar	Grievances: Offered support from Afghan government and held grievances against Taliban
Habibullah Fauzi	2005	First secretary, Islamabad embassy	Ghazni	Grievances and perception of war: Assessed that Taliban would lose; increasingly developed grievances with Taliban
Mullah Abdul Ghayas	2007	Military commander	Ghor	Coercion: Intimidated after his commander, Mullah Abdul Jalil, was killed
Haji Syed Hazrat Gul	2006	Military commander	Konar	Grievances: Local tribal leaders and Afghan government vowed to address key grievances; developed grievances with local insurgents
Musa Hotak	2002	Deputy minister, planning	Maidan	Perception of war: Assessed that Taliban was losing the war
Malem Jan	2005	Military commander	Kapisa	Grievances and perception of war: Developed grievances with local Haqqani leaders and concluded that ISAF forces would ultimately win
Haji Kaduz	2009	Military commander	Helmand	Grievances: Developed grievances with local Taliban; ISAF and Afghan forces offered him employment with ANP
Mullah Abdul Samad Khaksar	2001	Deputy minister, interior	Kandahar	Perception of war: Concluded that Taliban lost the war
Abdullah Khan	2009	Military commander	Helmand	Grievances: Developed grievances with local Taliban
Naeem Kuchi	2005	Military commander	Logar	Coercion and grievances: Captured by U.S. forces and agreed to support Afghan government; some of his grievances addressed
Mullah Mohammad Isa	2009	Military commander	Badghis	Grievances: Unhappy with the Taliban harassment of local civilians and other Taliban practices
Abdul Hakeem Munib	2001	Deputy minister, public works	Paktia	Perception of war: Concluded that the Taliban was losing the war

Table 1—Continued

Name	Year	Former Designation	Location	Reasons for Reintegration
Mullah Naqib	2001	Alikozai tribal leader	Kandahar	Perception of war: Concluded that the Taliban was losing the war
Tor Jan Pirzai	2001	Military commander	Helmand	Perception of war: Concluded that the Taliban was losing the war
Mullah Rahim	2008	Military commander	Helmand	Coercion: Concerned that he would be killed by U.S. forces, especially after the targeted killing of several colleagues
Mawlvi Arsala Rahmani	2005	Minister of higher education	Paktika	Grievances and perception of war: Concluded that Taliban would lose war, and increasingly developed grievances with Taliban
Mullah Abdul Salam Rocketi	2001	Military commander	Zabul	Perception of war: Concluded that the Taliban was losing the war
Mawlawi Abdol Samad	2006	Military commander	Badghis	Perception of war and grievances: Promised support; may also have been believed the Taliban was losing in Herat and Badghis
Rahmatullah Sangaryar	2008	Military commander	Uruzgan	Coercion and grievances: Promised assistance by Afghan government following capture and detention in Guantanamo Bay
Mawlawi Shafiollah	2006	Military commander	Zabul	Grievances: Offered a range of incentives to reintegrate, including amnesty
Mawlawi Ahmad Shah	2010	Military commander	Helmand	Coercion and perception of war: Intimidated by ISAF and Afghan forces; may also have concluded that Taliban was losing in his area
Mullah Solaiman	2009	Military commander	Herat	Coercion and grievances: Concerned about his safety after being coerced by ISAF forces; also promised employment
Abdul Wahab	2009	Military commander	Herat	Coercion: Wanted protection against U.S. raids
Rahmatullah Wahidiyar	2005	Deputy minister, martyrs	Paktia	Perception of war and grievances: Concluded that Taliban would lose war and increasingly developed grievances with Taliban
Sayed Wali	2009	Military commander	Herat	Coercion and grievances: Targeted by ISAF forces; promised employment opportunities
Mullah Mohammad Zaher	2006	Military commander	Kandahar	Grievances: Promised assistance by Afghan government to address key grievances

NOTE: Part of this list was generated by Michael Semple, in *Reconciliation in Afghanistan*, pp. 95–96. Some individuals on the list, such as Tor Jan Pirzai, reintegrated after the overthrow of the Taliban regime but eventually defected to the insurgency.

(c) addressing grievances. These factors are not mutually exclusive, and Afghan and ISAF units can utilize several of them at the same time to increase reintegration prospects. Following are key conclusions:

- In 36 percent of the cases, insurgents reintegrated because they believed the Taliban or other groups were losing the war, at least in a specific area.
- In 33 percent of the cases, coercion was a critical factor in reintegration.
- In 71 percent of the cases, insurgents reintegrated because of grievances. Afghan and ISAF units addressed key grievances or effectively exploited grievances that had surfaced among insurgents.

All three factors—perception of winning, coercion, and grievances—require an effective communications strategy that reintegration is a viable option. The target audiences can include insurgents and local communities.

Perception of Winning

One of the most significant reasons that fighters and their supporters reintegrate is the perception of who is winning the war.⁷ As used here, “winning” is a relative concept and refers to the side that is able to control or influence more territory in a given area.⁸ Control or influence of territory indicates that one group obtains the collaboration of civilians, rather than its adversary; destroys all or most of its adversary’s cells; and prevents adversaries from entering or operating with effectiveness. It may do so by co-opting locals or through intimidation.

Winning is important at both the local and national levels. Perceptions of winning the local war (such as in a specific village or district) appears to be particularly critical because power and politics are local in Afghanistan.⁹ Indeed, reintegration can occur if the Taliban or other insurgents begin to lose in a specific district or group of villages—even if it is unclear who is winning the overall war. The perception of winning is partly psychological because it hinges on local perceptions. But it requires changes on the battlefield. Insurgencies typically conclude with a military victory for one side, not a negotiated peace settlement. Of the roughly 55 wars fought for control of a central government (as opposed to secession or regional autonomy) since 1955, 75 percent ended with a clear victory for one side. The government ultimately crushed the rebels in at least 40 percent of the 55 cases, while the rebels won control of the center in 35 percent. Power-sharing agreements that divide up control of a central government among the combatants have been far less common.¹⁰

The operational and tactical goal should be to help trigger a situation in which momentum against the Taliban becomes difficult to stop and in which reintegration becomes a viable alternative. This can be termed a “tip” or “cascade.”¹¹ Tips often occur because people’s choices about their actions are based on what they think others are likely to do.¹² Afghan and ISAF units can impact the likelihood of a tip by effectively clearing and holding areas, as well as conducting information operations, which are discussed in more detail later in the assessment. These steps can happen simultaneously. The goal should be to help create the perception that Afghan and Coalition forces are winning the war, at least in specific areas.¹³

In 2010, for example, some low-level Taliban in the Marjeh area, such as Ammand Ullah, expressed an interest in reintegration during Operation Moshtarak because of perceptions that the Taliban were losing. More importantly, successful operations in central and southern Helmand by Afghan forces and U.S. Marines led to the reintegration of several individuals in 2010, including Mullah Abdullah, Noor Ahmad, Mullah Aminullah, and Mawlawi Ahmad Shah.¹⁴ In late 2007, Mullah Abdul Salam Akhund, an influential Alizai tribal leader from the Pirzai sub-tribe, reintegrated in Helmand. Throughout 2006 and 2007, Coalition forces and the Taliban had engaged in heavy fighting in Musa Qalah. Mullah Salam appeared to have a range of grievances with the Taliban, including unhappiness that some local Taliban had developed close links to foreign fighters.¹⁵ However, he also appeared to believe that the war was turning against the Taliban in Musa Qalah, as Coalition forces began to capture a growing number of villages in the district, including Khyajehbad.

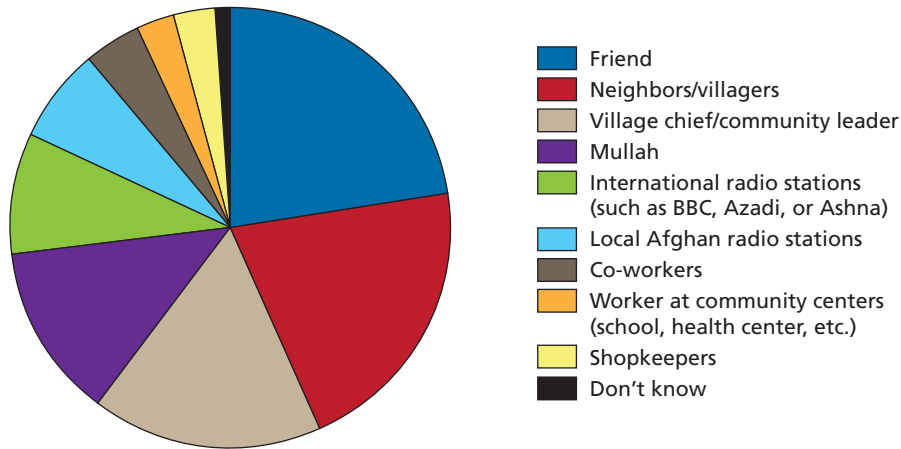
In considering information operations, which refer to technological and other actions used to influence others, messages should utilize the primary communication mediums where villagers get their information.¹⁶ This often varies from village to village. In past Afghan reintegration cases, examples have included radio, *shura* or *jirga* leaders (who distribute information to their constituents), and mullahs (who distribute information during Friday prayers and through other venues). Efforts such as mullah engagement programs, which reach out to local mullahs, may be useful in encouraging reintegration. Indeed, polling data indicates that locals get information on what is happening in their community from a range of sources: friends (23 percent), neighbors and other villagers (21 percent), village chiefs and community leaders (17 percent), mullahs (13 percent), international radio stations (9 percent), and local Afghan radio stations (7 percent).¹⁷ However, these percentages vary considerably across Afghanistan. Figure 1 highlights the findings of the polls across Afghanistan.

One of the best illustrations of the tipping model mentioned above is the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001, which triggered substantial reintegration. The mobilization of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, and ultimately Pashtun communities in October and November 2001 caused a tip as momentum against the Taliban became too significant to overcome.¹⁸ Barely a month after the bombing campaign started, a series of cities fell to U.S. and Afghan forces—Mazar-e-Sharif on November 10, Taloqan and Bamiyan on November 11, and Herat on November 11—until Kabul fell on November 13. All these cases involved the reintegration of Taliban fighters.¹⁹

One of the most successful cases of reintegration during that period was Mullah Abdul Salam, who was nicknamed “Rocketi” for his skill in handling rocket-propelled grenades.²⁰ In addition, Alikozai tribal leader Mullah Naqib, who had helped the Taliban conquer Kandahar City in 1994, supported U.S. efforts in Kandahar and was pivotal to the Taliban collapse

Figure 1
Where Do Locals Get Their Information?

Question: If you wanted to find out about something important happening in your community, who, outside of your family, would you want telling you about it?



SOURCE: Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2009: A Survey of the Afghan People* (Kabul: Asia Foundation, 2009), p. 171.

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in southern Afghanistan.²¹ The change of perception required battlefield victories, which first occurred in northern Afghanistan. These 2001 reintegration cases also illustrate the importance of patronage. Insurgents are sometimes more likely to reintegrate if there is someone on the inside whom they trust and to help take care of them. Mullah Abdul Salaam Rocketi had been a commander of Pir Ahmad Gailani during the jihad and relied on the involvement of Gailani, among others, to reintegrate in 2001.²²

In the 1990s, the Taliban also capitalized on the perception of winning to reintegrate local fighters. Beginning in 1994 in Kandahar Province, Taliban units reintegrated some local networks through bribery and others through promises of power-sharing, such as the Alikozai, who agreed to ally with the Taliban and hand over the city of Kandahar. When the Taliban failed to co-opt groups along the Kandahar-Kabul highway, such as Commander Saleh's militia, Taliban forces defeated them on the battlefield.²³ The combination of negotiations and battlefield successes had a domino effect, and a growing number of local groups subsequently defected. The perception of winning increased the Taliban's reintegration prospects when they expanded beyond the south in 1995. In Helmand Province, a range of local power-brokers defected to the Taliban, such as Abdul Wahid Rais Baghrani in Baghran District, Hajji Mullah Hamdullah and other Ishaqzai leaders in Sangin, and Mullah Habibullah Noorzai in Garmsir.²⁴ In eastern Afghanistan, the Taliban co-opted a range of Pashtun tribes, sub-tribes, and local powerbrokers. The large Suleimankhel tribe in Paktika assisted the Taliban take-over of the province's capital, Sharan, after hearing they had conquered Ghazni.²⁵

Applying the tipping model to Afghanistan has an important caveat. Tribes, sub-tribes, clans, *qawms* (social groups), and other entities can be temporarily co-opted—or coerced—but usually only for finite periods of time. As Nadir Shah, Zahir Shah, and Daoud Khan demonstrated during the Musahiban dynasty, there are several factors that can lengthen the time that local communities can be co-opted or coerced. They include benefits from the central government, such as financial aid, and a competent army that crushes revolts. As anthropologist Thomas Barfield noted, “While the central government had been effective in expanding its power into the countryside, its goals were limited to encapsulating local political structures in order to prevent them from causing trouble.” This was especially true of Pashtuns, whom the central government made a particular effort to co-opt: “Pashtuns along the Durand Line received special treatment and benefits via the Ministry of Tribal Affairs,” such as land, money, or an exemption from conscription into the military.²⁶

Coercion

A second factor that appears to increase the probability of reintegration is the specific, targeted use of violence—or threat of violence—to coerce fighters to reintegrate.²⁷ The goal should be to instill a fear of being killed or captured. Coercion is different from the previous factor, a perception of winning, because it involves impacting an individual's survival. Coercion is not necessarily about winning or losing a war, but about staying alive.

The effective use of coercion requires understanding the organizational structure of insurgent groups. The military formation of Taliban in many areas is called a *mahaz*, or front. It often includes roughly 20 fighters who are grouped around a single charismatic leader, though *mahaz* numbers can vary. A commander's fighters are called his *andiwal*, or comrades. Their ties may come from blood relations or a common village, clan, *qawm*, tribe, or other iden-

tification.²⁸ Based on this structure, the targeted killing or capture of a mahaz commander can increase the probability of reintegrating his andiwal if they are successfully intimidated. Indeed, the loss of a mahaz commander may be a trigger to initiate engagements.

One of the most illustrative cases was the targeted killing of Ghulam Yahya Akbari during Operation Wild Mustang in 2009. His network had established a relationship with the Taliban and was involved in assassinating public officials, smuggling weapons, attacking Coalition forces, and kidnapping for ransom.²⁹ In October 2009, Afghan and U.S. forces killed Ghulam Yahya in Herat, and nearly 100 of his andiwal surrendered to the Afghan government and agreed to reintegrate.³⁰ The immediate cause of reintegration appeared to be coercion. Ghulam Yahya's followers believed they faced a decision point: Reintegrate with the government or risk being killed. There are a number of other cases.

In November 2009, Mullah Solaiman and 56 of his men reintegrated in Herat Province. They were promised positions in the Afghan National Army or Afghan National Police, partly since Solaiman had previously served in the Afghan Border Police. During the ceremony to celebrate the return of Solaiman and his men, he gave a speech explaining that he returned after threats from ISAF forces.³¹ In 2009, Abdul Wahab, a Taliban commander in the Pusht-e-Zargon district of Herat, wanted protection from U.S. raids when he decided to reintegrate in November 2009.³² In 2008, Taliban commander Mullah Rahim reintegrated in Helmand Province, partly out of concern that he would eventually be killed by Coalition forces. He surrendered after the targeted killing of several of his colleagues, including Mullah Sheikh and Mullah Sadiqullah.³³ In 2007, several Taliban commanders in Ghor Province, including Mullah Abdul Ghayas and Mullah Syed Abdullah, reintegrated after their commander, Mullah Abdul Jalil, was killed.³⁴

These cases illustrate that precision targeting of individuals, including mahaz commanders with their andiwal, can coerce some insurgents to reintegrate. But this action needs to be followed by concerted efforts to reach out to the andiwal, leverage local communities, and use effective information operations.

Addressing Grievances

A third factor that appears to increase the probability of reintegration is addressing grievances. This can be in one of two ways. Afghan and ISAF units can provide assistance to an insurgent and address his key grievances, or they can effectively exploit grievances and infighting among insurgents. One major issue is rivalry. If an individual's rival becomes a government official or insurgent leader, he often joins the opposition. In addition, personal safety is almost always a key grievance. Virtually every reintegration negotiation since 2001 required ensuring safety for the individual, since there are numerous cases where the Taliban and other insurgents have assassinated reintegrated fighters.

During insurgencies, the most immediate reason that a disgruntled individual joins a group is to increase his options for attaining such goals as companionship, self-definition, reinforcement of shared beliefs, and security.³⁵ In Afghanistan, there are multiple reasons why individuals join—or support—the Taliban and other insurgent groups. Key reasons include: tribe, sub-tribe, clan, and *qawm* affiliation, especially with groups that have been alienated by the Afghan government; money; employment; a desire for power; grievances against NATO or Afghan forces because of civilian casualties; grievances against the Afghan government

because of corruption or other governance failures; or a combination of the above. In some cases, ANP or NDS personnel have mistreated individuals, compounding grievances against the government. A study that interviewed 42 Taliban in Kandahar Province, for example, found that a major grievance was tribal: “The Taliban have exploited the resulting anger among . . . Pashtun tribes, many of whom find themselves on the wrong side of disputes over money, land, opium, or water.”³⁶

Addressing these grievances can increase the probability of reintegration. In March 2010, approximately 50 HIG fighters in Baghlan Province reintegrated after the Afghan government provided assistance, including medical aid.³⁷ They had been involved in an escalating conflict with local Taliban over control of territory and taxes on local farmers, especially since Taliban fighters apparently moved into villages that HIG commanders had controlled.³⁸ Several Taliban fighters reintegrated in Badghis Province, such as Mullah Bahauddin in 2010 and Mullah Muhammad Isa in 2009, partly because they were unhappy with the Taliban’s harassment of local civilians and other Taliban practices.³⁹

In August 2009, Sayed Ahmad, a Taliban commander in Kapisa Province, and several of his fighters surrendered to Afghan government officials in exchange for employment in the ANP. In 2005, Malem Jan, a member of the Saberi tribe and a commander in Khowst Province with links to the Haqqani network, reintegrated along with four others because of local grievances with Haqqani leaders and the belief that ISAF forces would win.⁴⁰ Also in 2005, Abdul Wahid Rais Baghrani, an influential Alizai tribal leader from the Khalozai sub-tribe in northern Helmand, joined the government. He appeared to have a range of motivations, including disillusionment with the Taliban’s relationship with al Qaeda. “In the beginning [the Taliban] stood for peace and stability,” he noted. “But then later there was a lot of foreign interference and we tried a lot to persuade them to come over to the right way.”⁴¹

While ameliorating grievances can increase the probability of reintegration, a failure to address grievances can trigger defection to the Taliban and other insurgent groups. In 2008, Abdul Rahman Jan—a key Noorzai leader, former police chief, and ally of former governor Sher Mohammad Akhunzada—joined the Taliban in Helmand Province. It was partly an act of factional politics, including an attempt to undermine the latest Helmand governor, Mohammad Gulab Mangal. His poppy fields were targeted for eradication by the Afghan government’s Poppy Eradication Force, with support from the U.S. government. He was also coerced by local Taliban commanders who had carried out an effective campaign in Nad Ali. Consequently, he helped facilitate the August 2008 desertion of Nad Ali Afghan National Police from their posts, which aided the Taliban in their offensive against Lashkar Gah.⁴²

One of the most illustrative cases was the tenure of Sher Mohammad Akhunzada, an Alizai tribal leader from the Hassanzai sub-tribe, who served as governor of Helmand Province from 2001 to 2005. He developed a reputation for brutality, corruption, and the marginalization of important swaths of Helmand’s population. Significant components of the Noorzai, Ishaqzai, and Barakzai tribes, as well as several sub-tribes of the Alizai (including the Khalozai sub-tribe), defected to the Taliban because of Sher Mohammad Akhunzada’s governance practices. In areas such as Musa Qalah, the Taliban established a range of *otaqs* (command centers) and recruited locals who had become disaffected with Sher Mohammad Akhunzada. Examples included the following:

- Mullah Ghafur, who joined the Taliban after he was harassed by the Afghan National Police and his vehicles were stolen

- Hajji Abdul Bari, who joined after he was allegedly tortured by Sher Mohammad Akhunzada's fighters
- Maulana Syed Gul, who joined when individuals from Sher Mohammad Akhunzada's militia apparently stole his weapons and vehicles
- Mullah Matin, who joined after repeated harassment by Sher Mohammad Akhunzada's fighters
- Mullah Saif, who joined after several of his in-laws were murdered, possibly by individuals loyal to Sher Mohammad Akhunzada.⁴³

Effective Afghan governance can ameliorate some of these grievances and undermine the temptation to defect to the Taliban. The initial challenge in addressing grievances has to do with intelligence, since it is necessary to understand why an individual or group is considering reintegration. All insurgents will take money. But what is their primary grievance? In sum, several interrelated factors appear to increase the probability of reintegration, and they have direct implications for Afghan and ISAF operations in the field. They include creating a perception of winning by successfully clearing and holding territory, as well as conducting psychological operations; utilizing targeted violence—or the threat of violence—to coerce fighters and their networks to reintegrate; and addressing key grievances.

Reintegration Procedures

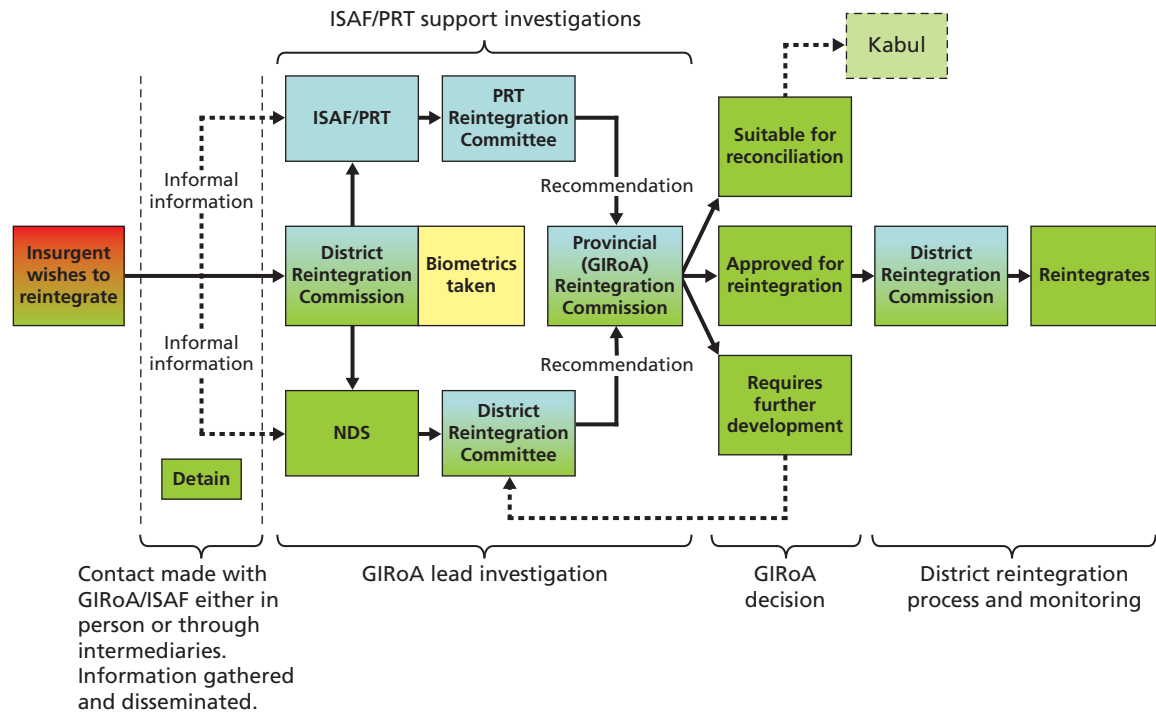
There are several options for ISAF and Afghan forces once fighters consider reintegration, some of which require immediate decisions. Reintegration should ideally be led by the Afghan government, as well as managed by local communities and their leaders. The goal must be to facilitate the Afghan government's ability to reintegrate former combatants. However, the weakness of the central government in rural areas makes reintegration challenging in some cases, and it is sometimes poorly synchronized with local officials. Tactical units cannot always wait for the central government to act in a timely manner. Consequently, effective reintegration may require tactical units to cooperate with local officials; provincial and district governors; tribal and community leaders; and NDS, ANP, and ANA officials.

In 2010, the Afghan government approved the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program to “encourage Taliban fighters and leaders, previously sided with armed opposition and extremist groups, to renounce violence and join a constructive process of reintegration to benefit from a chance at peace and sustained governance and economic development.”¹ In addition, ISAF created a Force Reintegration Cell to help facilitate the delivery of policy, resources, and capabilities in support of reintegration. ISAF Joint Command had the responsibility to operationalize reintegration and to help synchronize efforts from the Afghan government, ISAF, United Nations Development Program, and other entities. However, the operational and tactical capabilities of these organizations are limited, and ISAF units on the ground may face reintegration opportunities that require an immediate response.

In general, reintegration efforts should be centered on the “three Ds”: define, dialogue, and desist. Define means examining the reasons that insurgents are fighting, the nature of the individual or group, and their grievances. Dialogue includes keeping communication open with reintegration candidates. Desist has to do with encouraging potential candidates to stop fighting, cease support to insurgents, stop criminal activity, and demonstrate a commitment to the reintegration process.² Past reintegration cases suggest a range of useful procedures once a fighter—or group of fighters—considers reintegration. Figure 2 highlights the reintegration process used by British and American forces in some parts of Helmand Province.

A central tenet of reintegration is community mobilization, focusing especially on communities that wish to reject insurgent groups.³ These communities must be supported and offered alternative options to the insurgency. Several steps are critical for the reintegration process, although reintegration procedures need to remain flexible, since Afghanistan has distinctive regional, ethnic, tribal, *qawm*, and village structures.⁴ There is significant overlap among these steps, and many of them need to happen at the same time rather than sequentially. These steps include the following:

Figure 2
Reintegration Process Used in Helmand, 2010



SOURCE: Author correspondence with British soldier in Helmand Province, May 10, 2010.

NOTES: GIROA = Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; PRT = Provincial Reconstruction Team.

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- proactive efforts
- screening of candidates
- holding and security procedures
- incentives
- engagement of tribal and other local leaders
- information operations
- active use of reintegrated individuals.

Proactive Efforts

Reintegration should not be a *reactive* process in which ISAF forces merely respond to individuals or groups that contact them. Instead, *proactive* intelligence assessments can be conducted within the area of operations that identify individuals, villages, and even larger entities (such as clans or sub-tribes) as favorable or unfavorable candidates for reintegration. Local communities and insurgents should be informed that insurgents have an opportunity to turn in their arms and reintegrate into their local communities.

Afghan and ISAF units can get this message out through radio broadcasts, leaflets, and meetings with local leaders, such as village elders, mullahs, and other community leaders. Provincial and district governors can play a critical role. There are several examples of governors proactively launching local initiatives to reintegrate combatants. For example, the Musa Qalah

Accord in 2006, which gave control of the district center to the local tribal *jirga*, began as a governor's initiative and was signed by the governor of Helmand and the district's tribal elders. Asadullah Khalid, the former Kandahar governor, tasked individuals to penetrate insurgent networks and approached some of the Taliban commanders to encourage reintegration. Governors in other provinces—Zabul, Paktia, and Konar—have conducted their own diplomacy with insurgent networks and encouraged reintegration, in some cases effectively.⁵

In preparation for reintegration opportunities, it would be helpful for Afghan and ISAF officials—with the Afghan government in the lead—to establish local agreements with regional, provincial, district, and village leaders. Key issues include

- methods for informing counterpart(s) of initial contact with insurgents
- methods for reintegration within local communities (including protection arrangements and approach to community leaders)
- employment opportunities available
- weapons turn-in or accounting procedures
- biometrics collection procedures
- detention procedures
- a monitoring plan before, during, and after reintegration
- a public information plan, with the Afghan government ideally in the lead.

Screening

One of the most significant challenges is identifying fighters and learning how serious they are about reintegration. This requires conducting in-depth questioning, contacting human sources to verify information, analyzing databases and intelligence reporting, and gathering biometric and other relevant data. Key questions include the following: What is the status of the fighter—e.g., foot soldier or commander? What are his major grievances and motivations for pursuing reintegration? Gathering this information makes it important to structure debriefing, vetting, and processing systems to facilitate extraction of intelligence from individuals.

One of the most significant goals should be to reintegrate the network—not just an individual. In addition, units must be careful to protect the identity of individuals seeking to reintegrate since they may become targets by the Taliban and other insurgent groups. It is normal for a commander to be in contact with the other side for a long time before being prepared to move into open reintegration. During the period of semi-covert contact, one of the main objectives should be to identify other commanders who can come on board to generate a critical mass. But ISAF units should be concerned about identifying spies who are using reintegration as a means to aid insurgent groups. There are several ways insurgents might utilize the reintegration process for their benefit.

First, reintegration candidates may seek to attack ISAF or Afghan forces. Feigning an interest in reintegration allows insurgents direct access to Afghan or Coalition soldiers and bases. For example, Fazel Rabi, after going through the United Nations–sponsored Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration (DDR) program, joined the Taliban and became an active commander in Wardak and Logar Provinces before he was killed in 2008.⁶ The Taliban, Haqqani network, and other insurgent groups have repeatedly attempted to infiltrate the

Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Reintegration offers insurgents face-to-face access with ISAF and Afghan government officials.

Second, insurgents may want to collect information on the Afghan government and Coalition forces, which they can pass back to the Taliban and other groups. In August and September 2007, a HIG commander in northeastern Afghanistan directed four of his fighters to reintegrate as a ruse to gain access to Afghan and Coalition forces.⁷ The possibility of utilizing reintegration to attack or collect information on Afghan and Coalition forces suggests the need to carefully vet candidates before meeting them, as well as considering other options such as meeting them at safe houses rather than on bases.

Third, insurgents may want to undermine or stall Afghan and Coalition operations. In 1983 and 1984, for instance, Ahmed Shah Massoud reached a ceasefire agreement with Soviet forces in the Panjshir valley, which included the possibility of reintegration. The agreement gave Soviet convoys safe passage to Kabul and allowed Soviet forces to focus on other mujahideen groups. But it also allowed Massoud to expand his influence in the Panjshir, buy time, and rest and rearm his forces.⁸

In some cases, individuals with little or no involvement in the insurgency may try to reintegrate to receive financial or other benefits. Small-scale UN surveys suggested that up to 80 percent of participants in the DDR program were not regular combatants; in some areas, up to 50 per cent of those who reintegrated were not genuine fighters.⁹ In 2010 in Shindand District, Herat Province, roughly 800 local nationals expressed interest in reintegrating with the Afghanistan government. Presidential advisor Mohammed Massom Stanekzai and other senior Afghan officials met with representatives from the group, referred to as the “Shindand 800.” Yet a range of Afghan, U.S., and UN assessments indicated that few, if any, of the candidates were connected to the insurgency.¹⁰ Regardless of the incentives, candidates need to be screened. Many types of data are collected and entered into such databases as the Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE).

In some cases, such as with cell phones, ISAF units may want to issue reintegration candidates cell phones and ensure they are monitored. Local officials—such as NDS operatives, the ANSF, and provincial and district governors—may be helpful in collecting or verifying some of this information. They can also begin building consensus within communities for reintegration of the individual or group into society, including screening and verifying information with locals. Intelligence is also critical in the later stages of the reintegration process to monitor reintegrated personnel and ensure they do not return to the insurgency or provide useful information to the Taliban and other groups.

Holding and Security Procedures

An understanding must be reached regarding holding procedures between ISAF and Afghan government agencies (including Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and National Directorate of Security). Detention should be used as a last resort and, in some instances, may be counterproductive if it triggers a backlash from local communities. But if necessary, detainees should be treated fairly, kept safe, and not be punished if they are willing to talk.

If a candidate for reintegration displays the potential for operational or intelligence value and requires further questioning, there must be holding options available. A large group of perhaps a dozen or more fighters may require back-up from ANSF or other Coalition forces.

Several issues need to be addressed in weighing detention procedures. Are individuals currently on the Joint Prioritized Effects List (JPEL)? How malignant is the individual? In some cases, the benefits of working with someone who has significant American and Afghan government blood on his hands or is a senior-level drug trafficker may be outweighed by the costs, but will require a case-by-case assessment and coordination with the Afghan government. Reintegration candidates who are on the JPEL need to be properly vetted and their names should be forwarded to the regional command and the target support cell to coordinate reintegration procedures.

One of the most significant barriers to reintegration is a fear of punishment. This can be either a perception that an individual will be placed into a detention facility and tortured, or, perhaps more importantly, fear of retribution from insurgents who view the individual as a collaborator. These issues must be addressed. In 2007, British and Afghan government forces offered protection to Mullah Salam after he reintegrated. The Afghan government provided him security, logistical support, economic assistance, and a case officer to manage these issues.¹² Mullah Salam survived several assassination attempts by the Taliban who stigmatized him as a collaborator. The same was true for Haji Kaduz, a Barakzai leader in Helmand who reintegrated in 2009 and survived several assassination attempts.¹³

There are numerous instances in which insurgents assassinated individuals, partly as a deterrent to those considering reintegration. In November 2009, two members of the Nawa Community Council—Mohammad Anwar and Abdullah Khan—were assassinated in Helmand Province after they reintegrated. Other members of the Nawa Community Council, including Mir Wali Khan, were also killed as part of a broader Taliban intimidation campaign.¹⁴ In 2006, Mullah Abdul Samad Khaksar, who served as deputy minister of the interior under the Taliban government, was assassinated near his home in Kandahar City.¹⁵ He had left the Taliban and publicly spoken out against them, noting that “if armed Taliban go to the villages, the people cannot resist personally, but I think they don’t support them.”¹⁶

In some cases, it may be necessary to offer commanders a reintegration option that moves them out of their area for a period of time. This could include placement in a madrassa or, in some cases, joining the police or an appropriate local defense force to ensure protection.

Incentives

Financial and other incentives—such as resettlement assistance, security, or cash for information leading to successful counterinsurgency operations—have long been an important enticement in reintegration programs. As the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program highlighted, “the ex-combatants, and their families where necessary, will receive immediate security and humanitarian and social assistance, based on needs assessments.”¹⁷ Programs that support a long-term sustainable solution, such as employment or education, are particularly helpful. They should not be a quick fix that allows the individual to rejoin the insurgency once the incentives end.

There are a range of incentives that ISAF forces can provide to reintegration candidates. They may be able to use money from the Commanders Emergency Response Fund (CERP) to provide work for reintegrated fighters, as well as others in the community they are settled into. Larger CERP projects can be used for longer-term projects or programs that support Afghan government and ISAF security objectives. In Baghlan Province in March 2010, for example,

the Afghan government provided medical care from mobile hospitals to potential candidates.¹⁸ In April 2006, Afghan officials provided amnesty to reintegrated fighters such as Mawlawi Shafiollah, a commander in Zabul Province.¹⁹ The Afghan government has offered a range of other incentives—including amnesty—to reintegrate.²⁰ Beginning in 2005, the Afghan government's main effort to reintegrate and reconcile insurgents was through the *Proceayee Tahqeem Solha* (PTS), or Strengthening Peace Program, headed by Professor Sibghatullah Mojaddedi. By 2007, it claimed to have overseen the reintegration of 4,634 former combatants. The program provided some incentives, including residence at a commission-run guest house in Kabul and a small financial incentive for participation in the program.²¹

In addition to CERP, other types of assistance can be leveraged, such as the Department of Defense Rewards Program. This program pays rewards to individuals for providing information or nonlethal assistance that is beneficial to armed forces operations or activities conducted outside the United States against international terrorists or the protection of U.S. military armed forces. There are, however, some limitations. For instance, ISAF forces cannot offer candidates amnesty or immunity from Afghan government prosecution. Nor should they cede political authority or territorial control to insurgents, especially in the absence of a direct Afghan government role in the reintegration process. There may also be legal limitations to providing some funding, such as CERP, directly to insurgents to get them to stop fighting.

There are a range of negative lessons from past reintegration cases. Incentives can backfire if promises are unfulfilled, and individuals may consider returning to the Taliban or other insurgent groups. In 2010, Suleiman Amiri reintegrated in Herat Province under the impression that he would get a job in the Afghan National Police, but had become disillusioned by little progress. "If I have no choice, I have to become a Talib."²²

In 2009, a low-level insurgent leader in Wardak Province approached Afghan security forces with an offer to quit fighting if the government would relocate him, his 50 fighters, and their families (approximately 400 people) to Kabul, since they no longer felt safe from the Taliban. The government's response, however, was to turn the offer down: "Thank you—let's keep talking to each other, but we can't resettle you."²³ Also in 2009, Taliban commander Sayed Wali reintegrated in Herat Province and was promised employment, along with his supporters. By 2010, however, he had not secured employment, and he and his fighters returned to insurgent and illicit activity.²⁴ In November 2009, Mullah Solaiman and 56 of his men reintegrated in Herat and promised positions in the ANA or ANP. However, Solaiman and many of his supporters returned to illicit activity by 2010 when their jobs did not materialize.

In addition, the Taliban and other insurgent groups have often lured Afghan government officials with incentives and encouraged them to defect, indicating that providing incentives in some areas should be viewed as competition with insurgents. Grievances over pay can cause defection to the Taliban. In February 2010, for instance, roughly two dozen ANP defected to the Taliban in Wardak Province, in part over a dispute about pay. Taliban in the vicinity apparently offered the police a better deal.²⁵ These Taliban advances can be mitigated by helping local government officials develop counterproposals, such as helping resolve payment disputes.

In general, the failure to deliver on promises can be catastrophic for reintegration efforts. Recidivism has been a common problem in Afghanistan, especially since fighters who do not secure employment frequently return to the insurgency or illicit activity.

Engagement of Tribal and Other Leaders

Effective reintegration requires operating through legitimate local institutions. Reintegration is likely to be successful only when tribal and other local leaders are involved, supported by the Afghan government and ISAF units, and prepared to stake their prestige on working with the government to establish administrative and security arrangements.

In a range of Pashtun areas, where the bulk of the insurgency is occurring, *Pashtunwali* shapes daily life through such concepts as *badal* (revenge), *melmastia* (hospitality), *ghayrat* (honor), and *nanawati* (forgiveness). These concepts and mechanisms have significant implications for the reintegration process. *Pashtunwali* is an oral tradition that consists of general principles and practices (*tsali*) applied to specific cases. *Jirgas* and *shuras* are instrumental for decisionmaking, and tend to be used interchangeably to signify temporary or permanent councils.²⁶ Unlike formal criminal codes, under which individuals who have been found guilty pay fines to the government or are imprisoned, Pashtun customary law primarily seeks compensation based on social reconciliation. Community members are the primary fact-finders and decisionmakers, although respected outsiders may be used as well. The key functions of arbitration and judgment are usually fulfilled by the local *jirga* or *shura*. These bodies, for example, can demand that the wrongdoer apologize publicly to the victim and make a payment for *sharm* (shame). Reintegration efforts need to work closely with legitimate local institutions, including village and district *shuras* and *jirgas*. In cases where *shuras* or *jirgas* are not functioning, ISAF and Afghan units still need to identify key legitimate powerbrokers. An individual seeking to reintegrate may first have to seek forgiveness for his prior actions before negotiations over compensation can begin. *Pashtunwali* justice demands the compensation of loss. In cases where a reintegration candidate may rejoin a specific village, ISAF and Afghan government officials will likely have to broker a series of *shuras* between the individual and local leaders, who must decide how they want to proceed. Since power and politics in rural areas are local, supporting this process is critical to the reintegration effort. Indeed, long-term reintegration is virtually impossible without local support. In order to be welcomed back to their communities, reintegration candidates will likely have to take several additional steps:

- Stop fighting the Afghan government and Coalition forces.
- Admit their mistakes to the *shura* and community.
- Cut their ties to the Taliban and other insurgents, and pledge no future involvement.
- Repay for any damages, based on negotiations with local communities.

Tribal and other community leaders have played a key role in several reintegration efforts. In 2006, for instance, local tribal leaders in Konar Province brokered the reintegration of insurgents, such as Haji Syed Hazrat Gul, and promised to protect them.²⁸

Information Operations

Information operations are critical to effective reintegration. As a proactive measure, Afghan and ISAF units can acknowledge that reintegration is a viable option during meetings with tribal and other community leaders. Leveraging the local population is critical. The idea of reintegration is sometimes most appealing if candidates are not forced to participate in—or

even openly support—the Afghan government. In many Pashtun areas, there is some animosity toward the central government and a strong desire for local autonomy, including for self-protection. Where appropriate, Afghan and ISAF units can also highlight successful cases where insurgents have reintegrated, using face-to-face meetings with locals, whisper campaigns, mullahs, radio announcements, and other forms of communication.

In November 2006, for example, HIG commander Mawlawi Abdol Samad delivered a public message over radio and television after reintegrating with approximately two dozen of his forces: “During the Taliban regime, I was acting as head of the provincial court in Badghis Province,” Abdol Samad noted. “After hearing about the peace commission, I decided to hand over all these weapons and I feel there is no need for these weapons as there is a legal government in place.”²⁹ In July 2006, Afghan government officials organized a press conference for Mullah Mohammad Zaher, a Taliban commander from Kandahar who reintegrated.³⁰ And in 2005, Alizai tribal leader Abdul Wahid Rais Baghrani denounced the Taliban in public, arguing that they undermined peace and stability.³¹

However, there can be extraordinary risks with such public statements, since they may increase the likelihood that the individual will be targeted by the Taliban or other insurgent groups. In some cases, a reintegrated insurgent may want to live a normal life and not want to make public statements repudiating his former colleagues. Naeem Kuchi, a former Taliban official and leader of the Ahmadzai tribe, was arrested and sent to Guantanamo. After his release, however, he was allowed to return quietly to his tribal position where he helped with other reintegration efforts.³² In other cases, public broadcasts conducted in *other* provinces or districts may mitigate the likelihood of retribution.

Afghan and ISAF units can also conduct information campaigns directed at insurgents, using mass communication tailored to the ways insurgents receive their news. The goal should be to increase awareness of reintegration options and encourage reintegration. In some cases, family members can be leveraged to make direct appeals to individual insurgents. In addition, providing good treatment can trigger additional opportunities once the treatment becomes known among insurgents. There are some misconceptions among Taliban and other insurgents about reintegration. Many expect harsh treatment if they reintegrate and anticipate abuses of the Qur’an.³³ Some expect to endure lectures on Christianity and Western concepts of government and society.³⁴

In some cases, reintegration candidates have indeed been treated harshly by Afghan or Coalition forces. In December 2001, for instance, the Haqqani family sent a delegation of Zadran tribal elders to meet with Afghan officials about reintegration. The convoy was bombed and the effort was aborted. In addition, Hajji Ibrahim, the brother of Jalaluddin Haqqani, traveled to Kabul to discuss reintegration and briefly served with the Afghan government. He was subsequently seized by ISAF forces and spent two years in the Bagram Theater Internment Facility before being released. In another case, Tor Jan Pirzai reintegrated after the collapse of the Taliban regime and worked as a tailor in the Musa Qalah bazaar. But he was later arrested and apparently beaten on the orders of Amir Mohammad, who was a district administrator at the time. When he was finally released, Tor Jan rejoined the Taliban as one of its most active commanders.³⁵ In 2002, the Taliban’s foreign minister, Wakil Ahmad Mutawakil, voluntarily left the Taliban. But he was taken into custody by U.S. forces and spent three years in prison before being released. The Taliban eventually killed his brother in Quetta and publicly noted that Mutawakil “does not represent our will.”³⁶

These cases need to be effectively countered at the tactical and operational levels with recent successful examples—and advertised through effective information operations. During the reintegration process, there is a critical need to neutralize Taliban and other insurgent propaganda. This may include insurgent efforts to highlight shortfalls in reintegration and to discredit the program and the Afghan government's ability to support it. The failure of past programs—such as DDR and the Disarmament of Illegally Armed Groups—to provide promised land and jobs to candidates has reinforced skepticism among some Afghans that reintegration could pay off. Messages should serve several purposes:

- Demonstrate that the Afghan government and Coalition forces are not their enemy, and that insurgents who lay down their arms will be accepted and treated with respect.
- Drive a wedge between insurgent leaders and their rank-and-file.
- Convince rank-and-file insurgents that better alternatives exist. Those who continue fighting will be killed or captured.

Those who have reintegrated can help create opportunities by demonstrating to insurgents the benefits of an end to fighting and the weakness of support among the insurgency's members. In Vietnam, for instance, the South Vietnamese developed the Chieu Hoi Program to encourage reintegration by the Viet Cong and their supporters. Reintegration was urged through a psychological campaign, usually leaflets delivered by artillery shell, material dropped over enemy-controlled areas by aircraft, or messages broadcast over areas of South Vietnam.³⁷

Active Use of Personnel

Successful reintegration programs weaken an insurgency by reducing its support base and by effectively using former combatants. While the primary role of reintegration is to stop insurgents from fighting the Afghan government and ISAF forces, reintegrated fighters can be valuable sources of information on the insurgency. They can be used in a range of ways.

First, they can be used for intelligence collection. Examples include providing valuable information on the identity and location of insurgents, patterns of life, broader insurgent networks, sources of funding and support, and the weaknesses that can be exploited. However, using reintegrated fighters for intelligence or other purposes must be done with extraordinary caution. Reintegration candidates may seek to attack ISAF or Afghan forces, collect information and pass it back to insurgents as double agents or stall Afghan and Coalition military operations.

Second, individuals can participate in local defense forces that protect communities and counter insurgent activities. The Afghan government and U.S. Special Operations Forces established the Village Stability Operations program in 2009 and the Afghan Local Police program in 2010, which helped local villagers provide security, development, and governance to their villages.³⁸ These programs have been helpful in reintegrating insurgents. During the insurgency in Oman from 1962 to 1975, for example, reintegrated Dhofar tribesmen participated in *firqats*, irregular units that defended their communities from rebels. The government provided a cash incentive to rebels who surrendered, with a bonus if they brought their weapons. The surrendered rebels formed *firqat* units, trained by teams from the British Special Air Service.³⁹ In Malaya, the British and Malayan authorities developed the Special Operations

Volunteer Force (SOVF), which existed from 1952 until the end of the emergency in 1960. Typically, an SOVF platoon would operate near villages where disaffected Chinese lived and conduct operations to induce further defections.⁴⁰

Third, reintegrated fighters can be used as scouts to provide information on the location and movement of insurgents. In Vietnam in 1966, the U.S. Marine Corps created the Kit Carson Scouts. They were used to identify Viet Cong guerrillas among the civilian population and to provide narrative descriptions of how the Viet Cong moved and interacted with civilians. In addition, the scouts helped identify booby traps, caves, tunnels, and caches of enemy weapons, and were also used for conducting tactical interrogations before newly detained prisoners were sent to the rear.⁴¹ In Colombia, the government employed individuals as scouts because of their familiarity with the local terrain and ability to identify insurgents.⁴²

Fourth, reintegrated personnel can be given government positions at the district, provincial, or national levels. When Mullah Salam reintegrated in late 2007, the Afghan government appointed him district governor of Musa Qalah. Haji Kaduz, a Barakzai from Helmand who reintegrated in 2009, was brought into the Afghan National Police.

Fifth, individuals can be used for a range of lower-profile tasks:

- Returning home and maintaining a regular liaison with local leaders and the government
- Ceasing attacks in their areas of responsibility
- Allowing schools to remain open
- Encouraging nongovernmental organizations to enter their areas and helping ensure their security
- Reporting on insurgent activity and movement in their area.

Conclusions: Reintegration from the Bottom Up

Amilar Cabral, a nationalist leader from Guinea-Bissau, once noted that an insurgency is like a train journey. At every stop, some people get on and others get off.¹ Afghan and ISAF units that engage in reintegration need to be cognizant of the tremendous difficulties involved. Reintegration is inherently controversial because it requires working with individuals who have been fighting—and perhaps killing—Afghan and Coalition forces. In some cases, these challenges can be mitigated by reintegrating insurgents in out-of-area locations where the reintegration candidates have not committed any crimes or been involved in tribal feuds. As past insurgencies demonstrate, however, reintegration is a necessary part of successful counterinsurgency.

The unpopularity of insurgent groups in Afghanistan suggests that reintegration is a viable option. More importantly, reintegration can facilitate mobilization of the local population against insurgents and begin to change local perceptions that momentum is shifting against insurgent groups. Ultimately, however, effective reintegration cannot be separated from reconciliation with insurgent leaders. Over the long run, attempting to reintegrate mid- and lower-level insurgents—while refusing to consider reconciling leaders—may undermine reintegration efforts by increasing caution among insurgents.

There are numerous negative reintegration lessons in Afghanistan. The Afghan government's PTS program, for example, had minimal success in reintegration and reconciliation. Afghanistan's National Security Council was also involved in reintegration and reconciliation but with mixed success. Insurgents could reintegrate by approaching a representative at a provincial office or contacting the headquarters. Yet the program failed to facilitate mobilization of the local population against insurgents or to change local perceptions that momentum was shifting against insurgent groups. The commission struggled even to maintain the quality of its basic reception services. There were persistent complaints of poor living conditions and inadequate, low-quality food at the program's guest house. Although this may seem a minor matter, numerous Taliban-associated figures have commented that a shoddy reception undermines the confidence that is fundamental to any real reintegration.²

But there are also positive lessons. As this study found in examining 36 cases, at least three factors appear to raise the probability of reintegration: increasing the perception that Afghan and Coalition forces are winning the war, especially at the local level; utilizing coercion against insurgents; and addressing key grievances. Although reintegration requires Afghan government leadership, the central government is sometimes ill prepared and poorly synchronized with district and provincial officials. Consequently, reintegration requires a bottom-up strategy as well as a top-down one. This includes coordination between ISAF units and provincial and district officials; tribal and other community leaders; and NDS, ANP, and ANA officials. Tactical units cannot always wait for the central government to act in a timely manner.

Notes

Summary

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Chapter Three

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