The Reconstruction of Iraq: To Whose Benefit?

For more than six months now, planning for the war in Iraq has been relentless. Planning for what comes next has been a somewhat less streamlined affair. As we look ahead to any post-conflict political settlement in Iraq, perhaps the most obvious failure has been the absence of any recognised Iraqi Government in Exile waiting in the wings. Plans emanating from Washington, and from US officials in Kuwait, indicate that the US envisions both an American-led government and American control over the reconstruction process.

From the perspective of post-war reconstruction and development, there are a number of key observations to be made:

**FIRSTLY**, the US/UK need to be clear about their objectives. Coalition rhetoric has spoken of “liberation” and the desire to build “a strong, stable and democratic Iraq”. It is vital they demonstrate commitment and integrity in relation to those objectives. Sadly, with US firms jockeying for position in relation to reconstruction contracts, the evidence thus far points to decision-making guided more by strategic and economic self-interest, masquerading as compassion, than by any informed knowledge or in-depth understanding of the needs on the ground.

**SECONDLY**, there are clear dangers in undertaking so much planning in the absence of a clear and stable political settlement. It is vital to ensure that decisions are informed by a deep understanding of the needs on the ground, not just by economic and strategic considerations.

Martyr’s Monument, a major landmark in Baghdad which commemorates Iraqis who have died for their country since the Iran-Iraq war, symbolises the sacrifice of the Iraqi people – for whom, and by whom, Iraq should now be reconstructed.

**Focus on Iraq’s Post-war Reconstruction**
- Time to turn from pipelines to people
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- To whose benefit? (cover story)

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The Reconstruction of Iraq

Time to turn from pipelines to people

HRH Prince Hassan of Jordan is internationally renowned for his work in the area of peace building over the last 30 years, and has been much sought after for his views on the war in Iraq. Awarded an honorary degree by The University of York in 2002, he has since agreed to Chair the PRDU’s Council of Reference on post-war reconstruction. In this article he outlines his thoughts on post-war Iraq and the Middle East region.

For many years now I have been asking the questions: “How do wars end?” and “How can we win the peace?” The end of war is not the end of conflict; nor is peace the absence of war. Peace results from peaceful attitudes within a trustworthy rule of law. For conflict to cease, a population must acquire the habit of peacefulness through feeling secure and being justly represented. I believe this means today that Iraqis must be enabled both to contribute to and also to subject themselves to an Iraqi rule of law that consistently strives to uphold human dignity and rights.

Each Middle Eastern nation has bilateral outside ties – but in terms of Arabs speaking to Arabs, Sunnis Muslims to Shia Muslims, Gulf states to the eastern Mediterranean and the eastern Mediterranean to North Africa, we are sorely deficient. The ‘day after’ in Iraq is not only about Iraq but about the region. If we wish to avoid further violence, then Iraq must be reconstructed within a regional framework incorporating:

• an ongoing regime of weapons inspections across Western Asia;
• a clear and internationally-agreed definition of terrorism so that we may address this grave issue cooperatively;
• a Muslim benevolent fund (analogous to the Marshall Plan) in order that the region help its own peoples; this would include an arrangement by which international donation would match raised funds.

Iraq requires a Forgiveness and Reconciliation Commission which will refer to Iraqi-led and Arab-led courts, alongside a participatory democratic process rather than a military democracy imposed from the outside. The ‘three phases’ of rule proposed by (former US Secretary of State) James Baker strike me as extremely risky. I do not think that we can talk about outside rule or government from exile or government by garrison. When we talk of rebuilding Iraqi society we are not only talking about Western commentators’ notional division of Iraq into Kurds, Sunnis and Shiias; we are talking also about nationalists, communists, Islamists, and other categories, with extremists and moderates in all groups.

Public order must therefore be maintained. This should probably initially be achieved with outside and preferably multinational help including Arabs and Muslims, while representative systems are established which can reflect Iraq’s pluralism whilst maintaining its territorial integrity. It is to be hoped that the “vital role” described by President Bush for the UN and other partners will then find the full support it needs. Whatever the relationship between Iraq’s oil and the petrodollar, there must be no domino effect now. It is necessary also to consider how to engage Israel with Syria and Lebanon in peace initiatives, and here US and European initiatives will have to coordinate both quickly and amicably. Furthermore, I need hardly emphasise that firm US pressure towards a just and enduring resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict remains a precondition for stability in this region.

It is time to turn from pipelines to the people who live near the pipelines. They will seek change if they need change from whomever offers it – and so positive change must be offered and protected from a centrist and representative platform by Iraqi consent. The focus of reconstruction efforts must be upon soft security – upon the availability of basic material needs and ongoing healthcare, upon dependable opportunities for employment outside the grey or black economies, and upon the acknowledgment of many valid cultural and religious dimensions. Lastly, or perhaps firstly, when considering how to implement such policies, we must ask ourselves: Does the West want to promote the democracy and freedom of which it speaks, or does it want business partners?

In Britain we talk about ‘joined-up government’, an ideal rarely, if ever, achieved. In this revival we hear that reconstruction contracts for ‘liberated’ Iraq – an ‘Iraq for the Iraqis’ – are going to US firms (front page); that of President Bush’s $75 billion war budget only $7.6 billion is earmarked for foreign aid, and two-thirds of that is going to coalition partners as ‘sweeteners’ for their support (page 2); whilst an Afghan Minister can only dream of the $12 million dollars – the price of one Attack Helicopter or nine Tomahawk Cruise Missiles – he estimates is the cost of building a dirt road which would benefit more than half a million of his people (page 10). Is there any hope for a little piece of ‘joined-up world’? is the UN the forum in which to try? Grammy Ward

What role for the UN in post-war reconstruction?

As world powers begin to set the agenda for UN involvement in post-war Iraq, Hugh Bayley – MP for the City of York and a member of the House of Commons International Development Select Committee – foresees some hard bargaining ahead.

Iraq faces a huge challenge of political, economic and social reconstruction. It is not just damage from the current war which Iraq needs to repair but the consequences of its war with Iran (1980s), the Gulf War (1991) and 12 years of UN economic sanctions since.

An Iraqi economic advisor, who worked for the UN, estimates that Iraq’s GDP per capita at current prices fell from $2,143 in 1980 (the year after Saddam Hussein came to power), to $718 in 1990 (immediately after the Gulf War), to $97 the following year, and recovered only to $289 per capita by 2000.1 UNICEF reports that one Iraqi child in eight dies before the age of five, one in four is chronically malnourished, and five million people lack access to safe drinking water, following two decades of bad governance.2

The House of Commons International Development Select Committee

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What role for the UN? continued from Page 2

published a report on the humanitarian consequences of war with Iraq. Sixty per cent of Iraqis are wholly dependent on the oil for food programme which costs $800 million a month, and the report noted that a UN Security Council resolution would be needed to give the UN Secretary General authority to take it over if hostilities began. The report also called for the UN to have the lead role in a post-conflict Iraq, as multilateral and bilateral donors and NGOs will not play a full part in reconstruction if Iraq is administered by a military governor.

Clare Short, Minister for Overseas Development, responded to the Committee’s recommendations saying, “The Government agrees a UN mandate will be required to provide legal authority for the reconstruction effort, and to make possible the engagement of the International Financial Institutions and the wider international community.”

While the international community appears willing to provide humanitarian aid, many countries and multilaterals remain silent about reconstruction. Poul Nielson, EU Development Commissioner, told the Select Committee that the EU had not considered reconstruction.

In March, following the outbreak of war, the Select Committee went to the US to question people about trade and development and, inevitably, Iraq. World Bank President, Jim Wolfensohn, said the Bank would not support reconstruction without a UN mandate. Most American politicians brush the UN aside. Democrat Charles Rangel, no enthusiast for war, asked, “Why would the US want to give France or Germany a say on the future of Iraq? We didn’t need a second resolution for war, so why do we need it for peace?” On the other hand Calvin Dooley, a ‘new’ Democrat, was asking Congress to sign a letter to the President saying that “UN involvement in a post-war Iraq will help add international legitimacy and needed stability to a new, representative Iraqi government”, but his is a minority view.

President Bush wants Congress to approve $75 billion for Iraq including $7.6 billion for foreign aid. The Republican chairman of the House Foreign Operations Appropriations Committee, which controls the aid part of the budget, says two thirds will go to coalition partners (Israel, Turkey etc) and one third to reconstruction in Iraq.

Britain was seen as playing a positive role at the UN. Dumisami Kumalo, South African Ambassador, opposes the war but acknowledged that the UK provided the best hope of drawing the Americans back into the UN system. Commenting on the Security Council’s decision, the UNDP chief, Mark Malloch Brown said, “The only hero in this is Blair.”

Post-war planning began late; donors did not wish to signal that war was inevitable. The US created its Office for Reconstruction & Humanitarian Affairs within its Department for Defense only on 20 January. It draws officials from US government agencies and secondees from DFID, the Foreign Office and our Ministry of Defence. Headed by retired US General Jay M Garner, it is leading the humanitarian effort, but the US Administration wants an American civilian to lead post-war reconstruction.

Andrew Natsios, head of USAID, said the US Administration wants a post-war role for the UN but is divided about what it should be. “No one,” he said, “is arguing for a World War II, MacArthur-style military leadership.” The Pentagon are looking for an Iraqi, equivalent to Afghan President Karzai, to run a civilian government while the US retains control of military and security. Some hard bargaining will now take place in Security Council.

Notes and references
(2) www.unicef.org/media/iraqfactsheetfacts.htm

Reconstruction: to whose benefit?

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Washington, without detailed awareness of local realities.

THIRDLY, there are risks in running reconstruction activities in the same top-down way in which a military campaign is conducted. Lessons learnt from all over the world, over the past 20 years, in both general development and post-war reconstruction and development activities, suggest that such approaches, driven as they are by an ‘assumed urgency’, are expensive, unsustainable and ineffective. What is needed are approaches that harness the capacities, knowledge and expertise of the local population and, in so doing, help to kick-start the local economy, stalled as a result of conflict and international sanctions.

The reconstruction issues

The US claims to want to encourage the democratisation of Iraq, but such authoritarian, top-down, short-term approaches do nothing to strengthen and build-upon the capacities of Iraqi civil society, which is the essential foundation for a functioning democracy. One of the key lessons learnt from post-conflict experiences around the world is that the hour of post-war reconstruction is as, if not more, important than the what.

In all the current discussion of reconstruction approaches, the starting question should be: To whose benefit is the reconstruction? It is perhaps not
surprising that most recent comment from the US/UK, in relation to Iraqi reconstruction, has focused on Iraq’s oil infrastructure. In contrast to the usual international indifference over the reconstruction of other impoverished post-conflict countries, the current level of interest is indicative of the lucrative profits that many are hoping to make out of this war. One is tempted to ask whether it is Iraqi oil, rather than the Iraqi population, that is to be ‘liberated’.

It’s naïve to believe that reconstruction will be subsidised by the US or the UK. Rather, it will be paid for by Iraqi money (in the same way that the controlled sale of Iraqi oil has been used to finance aid, medication and humanitarian assistance over the past 12 years, and Kuwaiti oil money financed reconstruction following the 1991 war). Given this, it is all the more imperative that Iraqi’s are centre-stage in the decision-making concerning the governance and rebuilding of their country, even if initially this entails the installation of little more than a puppet administration. The worst possible scenario would be a neo-colonial administration led by Americans.

The humanitarian issues

It would appear that a key political and military objective has been to give a ‘humanitarian gloss’ to the war; to ensure that public opinion is encouraged to see Western military actions as being motivated by a humanitarian rather than a military objective. There has been a deliberate blurring of the military and humanitarian distinctions, with military personnel involved in high profile, photo-opportunity aid-distribution, which is fraught with risks for professional aid and humanitarian personnel, and which lessens the effectiveness and integrity of such work.

Such approaches fly in the face of the collective wisdom, and decades of experience, of the professional aid and humanitarian agencies. Military personnel are neither neutral nor impartial and there are long-term dangers to the safety and effectiveness of the aid community if the military succeed in hijacking aid as part of a ‘hearts and minds’ campaign designed to serve military objectives. As some of the chaotic scenes of recent aid distribution in Iraq have eloquently illustrated (with healthy able-bodied men walking off with the lion’s share) the experience and expertise of aid agencies makes them much better placed to take the lead in such activities.

Rebuilding Iraqis’ trust in the international community. Whilst it may be true that Saddam Hussein is feared and mistrusted by large swathes of the population, it would be very naïve to assume the corollary of this is that the West and the United Nations are loved and trusted – they aren’t! So, if trust is to be established, the utmost care must be taken to avoid civilian casualties and adhere to the Geneva Conventions.

Trust depends on actions and deeds as well as words. Immediate trust in a former adversary is irrational, and visible acts of confidence building (prisoner exchanges, commemoration etc.) are important. Trust must be mutual, otherwise it is merely faith and hope. It will be important therefore, that processes and mechanisms for building trust are pursued and maintained; this in turn may necessitate a third-party guarantor. Because approaches to trust vary from one society to another, it will also be important to ensure trust-building mechanisms are culturally grounded, if they are to be relevant within the Iraqi context. In the aftermath of conflict, it will also be vital to be seen to be even-handed with all Iraqi social/ethnic groups, so as not to be perceived as taking sides or punishing particular communities.

Building trust within the wider Arab world. Here, for many, an overarching Arab identity transcends the relatively recent geographical boundaries and nation-state identities of the post-colonial era. Whatever the official stance of many Arab governments, the view from the street is overwhelmingly anti-American. A situation that is only entrenched when Colin Powell, flanked by the Israeli-flag, recently issued a bellicose warning to Iran and Syria, while addressing the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the most powerful pro-Israel lobbying group in the United States. When such speeches are accompanied by TV images of US soldiers in Iraqi towns, redolent of Israeli troops in the Occupied Territories, the impact of such a US propaganda own-goal on Arab public opinion is immense.

Sultan Barakat Director, PRDU
Gareth Wardell PRDU Research Fellow
Crisis management in Ghana

The PRDU will be co-operating with the Ghana Armed Forces Command and Staff College, and the Cranfield University Disaster Management Centre, for an ‘Internal Crisis Management Course’, to be conducted in Ghana from 5–23 May 2003. This will bring together key actors in the field so that delegates may gain new skills and knowledge, giving them opportunities to increase efficiency and effectiveness in providing a safe and secure nation. PRDU’s Dr Alpaslan Özerdem and Gareth Wardell will be contributing to the training on issues related to post-war reconstruction and development.

New Vice Chancellor

Last September, Professor Ron Cooke retired as Vice Chancellor of the University of York. We would like to thank him for his continuous support of the PRDU during his time in office. The new VC, Professor Brian Cantor (left), a ‘confirmed internationalist’, has established links with universities in China, Eastern Europe, India, Japan, Korea and the US. Prior to arriving at York he was Head of the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences at Oxford University.

From MA to Minister

Haneef Atmar (PRDU graduate, 1997) is now Afghanistan’s Minister for Rural Rehabilitation and Development. Read his story on page 10.

Permanent post

Roger Mac Ginty, who joined the PRDU on a 4-year lecturership in 2000, has been appointed to a permanent University lecturership. He teaches on the MA in Post-war Recovery Studies and convenes an undergraduate module in the Department of Politics on International Relations after the Cold War. Roger has recently undertaken a major research project on peace initiatives, resulting in the publication of ‘Contemporary Peacemaking: Conflict, violence and peace processes’, which he edited with John Darby of Notre Dame University. The book brings together leading scholars in the field of peace and conflict studies and seeks to identify the essential components of peace processes.

News in Brief
Training Afghanistan’s senior civil servants

As reported in the last edition of Revival, the past months have seen extensive PRDU involvement in Afghanistan. In September 2002, PRDU Research Fellow, Gareth Wardell, presented a paper on the challenges of a post-war recovery at a major international conference on the reconstruction of Kabul, opened by Afghan President, Hamid Karzai.

Gareth also participated in a two-week exploratory mission with a colleague from the International Training Programme for Conflict Management, in Pisa, entailing discussions with a number of key personnel in the Afghan Transitional Administration. They returned in late October to prepare the way for a 10-day capacity building workshop for over 70 of Afghanistan’s most senior civil servants, which was held in early December 2002. Leading the PRDU’s input to this course were Dr Sultan Barakat and Dr Mark Evans. Additional training was given by Dr Peter Middlebrook from the office of the European Commission in Kabul, and personnel from a variety of other UN, bi-lateral and non-governmental organisations, including Fahim Hakim, former PRDU student and now Vice Chair of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and Director of the NGO ‘Cooperation for Peace and Unity’.

Further training seminars were held in Kabul in late January 2003, to help equip those senior civil servants and Deputy Ministers due to be involved in the all-important task of preparing Afghanistan’s National Development Budget for the coming financial year. Initial feedback from participants has been very positive.

War of words

Since the outbreak of war in Iraq, the PRDU has faced an unprecedented level of media interest. In the past month Sultan Barakat and Gareth Wardell have, between them, given interviews for the Today Programme on Radio 4, Newsnight on BBC 2, the American ABC network, BBC Breakfast TV, BBC World TV, BBC News 24, the BBC World Service, Radio Five Live, BBC Radio Wales, Radio Newcastle, Radio Humberside, and Radio York and Swedish National Radio.

In addition print-interviews/articles have appeared in various newspapers, including The Yorkshire Post, The Times Higher Education Supplement, The Northern Echo, York Evening Press, and The Church Times. Sultan Barakat was also asked to participate in an important forum at BBC Television Centre, on post-war Iraq, chaired by the BBC’s Diplomatic Correspondent, Bridget Kendal, which included a number of Middle East experts and the US Ambassador to the UK.

Each week on BBC Radio Four’s Thinking Allowed, Laurie Taylor leads a discussion on topical issues relating to academic institutions and research bodies. On 5 February 2003 he conducted an interview with Dr Sultan Barakat, details of which you can view at: www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/factual/thinkingallowed
Jogien BAKKER  
Netherlands  
Background in humanitarian aid

Following a PhD based on fieldwork in Morocco among Berber healers, I worked for UNICEF (Nairobi) and ILO (Addis Ababa), where I developed an interest in war-affected countries. Later I worked for a Dutch NGO in Bosnia on reconstruction projects, and, most recently, on an ILO project for employment services in Sierra Leone. I hope that through my year in the PRDU I can catch up on the academic gap and specialise on one or two subjects to guide my future employment choices.

Marie BARROW  
Switzerland  
(Altajir Scholar)  
Background in international relations and political studies

I used to be involved in voluntary teaching of French as a foreign language to facilitate the integration of foreigners into the Swiss community. This allowed me to meet a number of people who had fled war-torn societies and were having to rebuild their lives in a new country. This teaching experience, along with my recent studies in international relations and International Humanitarian Law, have further developed my interests in studying how violent conflict affects human society.

Kenji KAWAKTASU  
Japan  
Background in politics

In March 2002 I graduated from the Faculty of Law at Doshisha University, Japan, where I studied various areas of politics and conducted research into several aspects of the European Union – Common Foreign and Security Policy, the European Union Rapid Reaction Force, and European Integration. I would like to focus my postgraduate research at the PRDU on how each specific post-conflict reconstruction project is planned and implemented in the field.

Kwan Ho LAM  
Hong Kong  
Background in engineering and education

I graduated from the Department of Manufacturing Engineering at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2001. Since then I have worked as an assistant in a local secondary school. I believe we all have a responsibility to serve those who live lives without dignity and respect, but understand that simply possessing passion and enthusiasm does not help. What I need is the knowledge and skills to enable me to work in war-torn countries. It is with this aim that I chose to study at the PRDU.

Kjell BJORK  
Sweden  
Background in the Swedish military and International Mine Action Operations

After 10 years as an army officer I retired from active service to provide humanitarian mine clearance assistance. In 1996 I moved to Bosnia and Herzegovina where I worked with an international NGO, first training and leading mine clearance teams in the field, then as Program Manager for one of the country’s largest mine action programmes. I have joined the PRDU to develop my knowledge of the socio-economic impacts of mine action programmes, and the related assistance efforts, on the affected communities.

Noriko KOMINAMI  
Japan  
Background in International Relations

After graduating in 2001, I worked for the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), researching how development agencies could assist post-war countries, specifically in the field of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants. This inspired me to study in the UK, first at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and now at the PRDU. My main interest is in the reintegration of ex-combatants as well as refugees/IDPs.

Lucy LIVINGS  
United Kingdom  
Background in history

Working for a year (1998–9) with Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories provided an insight into post-conflict society and enhanced my interest in this area. I have spent the last three years studying history at Durham University. During this time I built upon my knowledge of the Middle East – learning Arabic, and taking modules in Middle East politics in my final year. Studying with the PRDU will enable me to further develop these interests on both a theoretical and practical level.

Emmanuel DAVID  
France  
Background in politics and humanitarian aid

Since graduating I’ve been coordinating relief aid programmes for NGOs: *Première Urgence* in Montenegro during the Kosovo crisis (1999–2000) working on emergency response programmes; *Médecins Sans Frontières* in DRC (2000–01) working on primary health care, and managing an Angolan refugee camp in Bas-Congo province and an IDP camp in Kinshasa; *International Medical Corps* in Burundi (2001–02) as a Site Manager dealing with malnutrition and primary health care programmes.

Abdullah NASHARUDDIN  
Indonesia  
Background in community development and humanitarian aid

My first experience working with an international NGO was in 2000 when Oxfam-GB resumed its operations in Aceh, Indonesia. My main task was to coordinate with other international and local NGOs in distributing humanitarian aid. This was a wonderful opportunity to experience and observe other Oxfam-GB programmes – Fair Trade, Food Security and Natural Disaster Management – and the emergency response for the victims of landslides and the volcanic eruptions in Central Java.
My professional curriculum spans from a UN Peacekeeper, to development planning and humanitarian work. My affiliation with the Danish UN Association paved the way for a major interest in development studies and humanitarian issues. I have worked for several agencies. Most recently I worked as a trainer, preparing a pilot project for UNDP, Georgia, which aimed to direct employment through physical reconstruction as part of the national poverty reduction strategy.

For seven years I worked with the International Committee of the Red Cross delegation in Nairobi (Kenya) for its humanitarian operations in Somalia. Here I assisted the victims of armed civil war, who were also suffering from droughts, famine and disease. Armed with this experience in coping with and addressing humanitarian crises, I have come to the PRDU to look for new solutions and better skills for the recovery and the reconstruction of war-torn countries after conflict.

As part of an eight-week field placement working with a local NGO on a United Nations Poverty Alleviation Project in Ghana, I saw at first hand basic social problems that some individuals have to encounter every day of their lives. It became clear to me that society has failed these people. Thus my main interest in coming to York to do the PRDU MA programme is to gain the knowledge and skills which will enable me to contribute to African societies in the area of humanitarian intervention.

Since 1998 I have been working as a volunteer in Angola (for an NGO called ADPP) and Kenya (for JICA – a Japanese governmental organisation).Posted to a small, local NGO, I worked as a community development officer with the people of a slum area. Through my work I realised that assistance could also produce dependency and corruption, and that I needed to learn more about development, and how to work with people in difficult situations, in order to become a specialist.

I have been working with the Ugandan ministry of Local Government in Moyo District. In June 1998, after gaining a post-graduate Diploma in Public Administration, I was seconded to act as the chief executive of the District. My primary role was to ensure that the population received adequate services. In the decentralised local government system that Uganda practices, this was an enormous task. It was this challenge which led me to seek fresh ideas in the form of the PRDU’s MA course.

During the war in former Yugoslavia I worked as a logistician for an NGO. I then moved to the United Nations World Food Programme in BiH and, later, Montenegro. In March 2001 I joined the Transport and Food Handling Observation Unit of UNWFP in Iraq. A main objective of the Unit is to observe equipment, vehicles, and materials imported into the country through the Programme as per the ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ between the UN and the Government of Iraq.

I had been a research assistant for a Japanese NGO (JANIC) when the outbreak of the Kosovo conflict, in 1999, led me to become International Programme Officer for the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) Japan, the Japanese chapter of a US-based International NGO. During three years in Kosovo, I implemented a number of projects, from emergency to development phases, funded by the Japanese Government through different UN agencies.

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For the past 11 years I worked at Radio Television Hong Kong, producing programmes which focused mainly on politics and the media. This is a precious year for me to enrich myself by taking the Post-war Recovery Studies course. With international and national conflicts growing in numbers, I think it will be meaningful to further my knowledge of peace, reconciliation, humanitarian intervention, and recovery, before joining the media again.
Sir Martin Garrod sets the scene at PRDU Open Day

Before embarking on their Field Study to Bosnia-Herzegovina, the MA students had received a helpful introduction to the region from Sir Martin Garrod, who was the special guest at the 2002 PRDU Open Day. Former administrator of the City of Mostar, Sir Martin spent over five years in BiH from June 1993. His presentation provided a fascinating insight into the country and, in particular, some of the work in which he was involved.

The PRDU Open Day is an annual celebration of United Nations Day (the day on which the United Nations Charter was ratified). With more than 70 delegates (from over 15 countries) last year’s event proved a stimulating international event. Details of this year’s Open Day will be published on our website in due course, but remember to keep Friday 24 October, 2003 free.

Last December, 18 MA students plus two PRDU staff travelled to Mostar to conduct field research into a range of post-war reconstruction issues and projects. Research processes and techniques included:

- visits to projects implemented by the Danish and Dutch NGOs, DRC and UMCOR;
- a visit to a privatised textile factory;
- meetings with municipality officials in small towns and villages in the Mostar region;
- visits to various reconstruction projects implemented by the international community;
- meetings with the Mostar joint Police Force and with several officials of the City Administration;
- visits to municipality and city officials to conduct a number of semi-structured interviews, participate in group discussions, and to observe and photograph various projects.

Four key topics were addressed:

(1) The issue of minority returns in relation to the sustainability of long-term peace-building processes.

In Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH), the international community chose to enforce integration rather than partition. Supporting minority returns was part of that agenda. However, such an agenda requires time, resources, long-term insight and a close understanding of the situation. It is apparent that the international community has been unwilling and unable to come to terms with the level of its commitment to the Dayton agreement. As a result, there has been a failure to address security needs and a range of social, political and economic issues. Today, Bosnians must face the challenging consequences of a choice made by the international community on their behalf seven years ago, without the requisite support to respond to these challenges. It is clear that while Dayton may have stopped the fighting, it has failed to win the peace. A lot has been achieved in terms of material progress but the minority returns issue is far from being solved, since there remains a high degree of political obstruction. The levels of minority returns have remained very low, and fear of a hostile reception remains high. Nevertheless, since 1999, BiH has been registering an increasing number of minority returns.

The return of displaced minority groups can become a component of the long-term sustainability of peace-building processes in BiH if the Bosnians and the international community respond to the above-mentioned challenges.

(2) Participatory approaches to dealing with refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in project implementation.

Students also looked at the issue of participation of local communities in the post war reconstruction process run by the international community – at the political, social and individual level – as one of the aims and tools of post-war reconstruction. Academic literature and experience in the field strongly suggest that local participation at an early stage can increase the sustain-ability of post-war reconstruction.

After the war, Mostar was a divided city, with Bosniacs in favour of re-unification, Croats against. The international community found it very challenging to integrate ‘recipients’ into policy making. Inevitably, such circumstances have led to low levels of co-operation. Nevertheless, the city administration and police forces are re-unified today. There is a unified water supply system, an intra-city public transport, and some bridges have been re-built. The telecommunication system, however, is still divided.
... Field Study to Bosnia-Herzegovina

Some participation was observed in ‘small scale rehabilitation projects’, in particular income generation. These projects are designed along with house rebuilding in order to ensure the livelihoods of returnees. Participation of ‘beneficiaries’ was observed in the very early stage of project design. UMCOR, for instance, runs a credit line where potential beneficiaries are required to submit their own business plan which is then either supported or rejected by UMCOR as a donor. By doing so, they actually involve the local people and respond to their needs. This project has been proved to be quite successful.

Another type of ‘participatory’ project is the so called ‘self-help project’. In this case, a returnee family is given construction materials to rebuild their house by themselves. Such (self-help) projects may be seen as positive because they involve people, but capacity of recipients to provide such participation needs to be borne in mind. Students visited an elderly couple who were struggling to rebuild their house. They lived alone, had very little and irregular income, and were literally doing the re-construction work themselves. By contrast, the house next door to them had already been rebuilt through the same project, but in this case the owner lived abroad, came during the summer, paid a labourer and had his house rebuilt in less than two months.

(3) Problems arising between host and displaced communities, with the specific issue of minority-displaced communities living alongside a host majority community.

Students visited locations around the city where majority returns had taken place. This revealed that aid agencies in Mostar had succeeded in physical reconstruction (housing, bridges, streets, public facilities, cultural heritage buildings) and also in aspects of non-physical reconstruction (education, democratization, sustainable livelihoods, security) which forms a good starting point for the reintegration process.

However, findings in the surrounding villages, particularly in the mountainous areas, illustrate a rather different situation. The agencies point out that many constraints, such as lack of donor interest to assist mono-ethnic community groups, lack of funding to reconstruct houses and a lack of community will to return due to fear and concerns about provision for their children’s education, all inhibit the process of reconstruction.

It is generally believed that responding to the needs of minority and majority communities together can reduce potential conflict between the two groups and promote and accelerate the process of sustainable reconciliation. If the reintegration process is the main objective of agencies then they must address the needs of both communities equally and encourage their participation, if they wish to avoid potential conflict.

(4) Linking reconstruction and peace-rebuilding processes in a war-divided city.

There is a symbiotic connection between reconstruction and peacebuilding. Sustainable development cannot take place without lasting peace and peace can never be maintained without successful reconstruction and long-term development.

The field trip to BiH gave students the opportunity to examine this symbiotic relationship as an ideal, and to see how it works in practice. They identified four key areas to demonstrate how, in Mostar, reconstruction has both acted, and at times failed to act, as a peace building mechanism. These are: Socio-Economic Projects, Governance, Education Reforms, and Cultural Heritage. At present the ideal cannot be fulfilled, but peace-building is a gradual process and the role that reconstruction can play should not be underestimated.

The field trip also gave students a valuable opportunity to put into practice the theories they had studied in the classroom, to ‘test-drive’ various field research methodologies, and to compare and reflect on past professional experience from a more academic perspective. The choice of BiH was judicious as it allowed many students to compare the different standards of post-war recovery aid. Although the mandate for aid and recovery is the same, there is a different approach to aid in a European state recovering from war when compared to many developing countries.

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Afghanistan has known little but war for almost three decades. I stepped into its aid community as a fairly inexperienced employee of Norwegian Church Aid, and soon discovered that it required more than enthusiasm and commitment to make a meaningful contribution. The importance of learning lessons from farther afield became apparent, so when the NCA nominated me for a place on the post-war recovery studies MA at York, I was eager to go.

When international assistance is given in the context of violent conflict or its aftermath, it becomes part of that context. Ill-conceived aid programmes can reinforce, exacerbate, prolong or rekindle conflict; we have seen this in Afghanistan time and again. But when aid is delivered effectively it can reduce tension and strengthen the capacity of local people to disengage from conflict. So it is vital that humanitarian actors and policy-makers are made aware of these issues and encouraged to apply learning gleaned from other post-war scenarios.

Growing up in the midst of war can be a very isolating experience. There is little exposure to new ideas and approaches. So the opportunity to look in depth at these and other issues was a real eye-opener for me. I was struck by the many similarities in Afghanistan and countries elsewhere, and was excited by the enormous potential for learning from the successes and mistakes of others. I learnt the importance of understanding the root causes of a conflict in order to deal effectively and appropriately with reconstruction and recovery. Frequently, this means placing much more emphasis on local knowledge and expertise and on the developmental aspects of ameliorative strategies, rather than on the perceived expertise of outsiders.

One of the great bonuses of my time at York was the opportunity to study with people from a wide range of conflict-affected countries. All contributed in different ways to my understanding. Some in my class had experience of fieldwork in various parts of the world, others came from a more academic background. Considerable time and energy was invested in building trust and understanding between us. This is especially important when there are students from either side of a particular conflict in the same class.

Every student is encouraged to feel that their insights are of value, which can lead to an intensely personal and cathartic experience. In my case, I lost a leg in a rocket attack in Kabul two years before coming to York. Discussions about security and risk management, landmines, disability policies, civilian vulnerability and so on take on a different complexion when academic rigour is informed by personal and practical realities. A great deal of learning took place during our debates, and I am still in contact with five of my nine classmates, one of whom, Drew Gilmour, is often my counterpart in the United Nations Development Programme in Afghanistan.

A highlight of the course was a field visit to Iran, which included a comprehensive tour along the border with Iraq to look at eight years of post-war reconstruction. A key lesson for me was that you need a State to support such efforts – in those days the government in Afghanistan wasn’t interested in reconstruction. I also had a chance to meet with Afghan refugees who longed to return to their country. That left a deep impression on me.

In June last year, I became minister in Hamid Karzai’s government. It is difficult to explain my feelings about this. I was extremely honoured to serve my nation and to be appointed by a man who was, for the first time in many years, a legitimate leader. But I had only worked for non-governmental agencies and was quite concerned about whether I could be effective in this role. Looking at the Ministry’s payroll, I noticed that I had over 1,700 colleagues. I realised that perhaps the most important challenge would be to mobilise this community of professionals. This was a unique opportunity for us Afghans to rebuild our nation. That first day, I set about getting some running water into the building I was to work from, and finding desks and chairs for my colleagues.

I now work 18 to 20 hours a day and have no time to think of my family and friends. I justify this when I talk to my people. Last week, a group from Badakhshan, one of the most remote areas of Afghanistan, visited me. There, more than half a million people are cut off from the rest of the world for eight months a year. Only a footpath through the cliffs on the banks of the Oxus River links them to the outside world. The group told me that the route had been blocked by avalanches and that a number of people had lost their lives. They couldn’t get back home and needed help. They wanted me to reopen the footpath and perhaps expand it into a dirt road. What modest expectations our people have.

A few weeks ago 250 children living in another district that used this path died from a preventable disease known as black cough. My only option was to fly medicine to them, at a cost of £6,250. The government is too poor to fund such drastic measures to be sustainable, but my initial estimate of the cost of a road is about £7.5 million, and I obviously don’t have that money. I hope to have £330,000 to help reopen the footpath. Then I will try to involve the people of Badakhshan in building their road.

I will always acknowledge what I learnt in York, and I owe a great deal of my knowledge and experience to the faculty and my colleagues. I justify this when I talk to my people. Last week, a group from Badakhshan, one of the most remote areas of Afghanistan, visited me. There, more than half a million people are cut off from the rest of the world for eight months a year. Only a footpath through the cliffs on the banks of the Oxus River links them to the outside world. The group told me that the route had been blocked by avalanches and that a number of people had lost their lives. They couldn’t get back home and needed help. They wanted me to reopen the footpath and perhaps expand it into a dirt road. What modest expectations our people have.

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I will always acknowledge what I learnt in York, and I owe a great deal to Sultan Barakat, my tutor and good friend, as well as to the faculty and my classmates. The challenge is formidable. The key problems that Afghans face are poverty, insecurity, accountability and good governance. But we have no option but to be optimistic. We have a united cabinet, a popular leader, and the support of the Afghan public and the international community.
Prior to York’s MA in Post-war Recovery Studies, I had no formal exposure to the theoretical perspectives of international relief. Rather, my views had been singularly shaped through the hands-on experience I gained while implementing a variety of emergency relief activities in the field. The confluence of my practical experience – from countries such as Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Iraq and Liberia – and the independent nature of the PRDU’s coursework, inspired me to select, as my thesis topic, the changing nature of impartiality and neutrality.

With the guidance of PRDU lectures and lecturers – as well as my placement in the Early Warning and Preparedness Unit of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in New York – I gained a better understanding of the history of humanitarian activities and a deeper understanding of the humanitarian imperatives and competing agenda that drive the process.

One of my key functions at the American Red Cross is to establish and maintain lines of communication during a disaster response. As we are a member of the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement, a significant amount of dialogue is required between the National Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies during a disaster response to mitigate duplication of efforts and minimize gaps that may emerge in beneficiary coverage. As was learned during and after such emergencies as Hurricane Mitch, the Kosovo Crisis and the Gujarat earthquake – to name but a few – coherent coordination of well-intended relief providers is among the principle challenges and concerns. Emergency responses to man-made disasters must also increasingly contemplate the role of the military in the provision of humanitarian assistance. Given the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement’s strict adherence to the Fundamental Principles, especially regarding neutrality and impartiality, the military’s desire to engage in ‘humanitarian activities’ and promote military interventions as ‘humanitarian intervention’ has produced a number of operational obstacles that must continuously be assessed.

During my short time with the American Red Cross, I have dealt with a number of natural disasters, including: floods in China, India, Central and Eastern Europe; earthquakes in China and Mexico; and Typhoons in the Republic of Korea and the Pacific. More recently my energies have been focused on the potential for a new humanitarian crisis in Iraq and the surrounding countries.

While no amount of academic preparation can prepare relief workers for the unique realities of each disaster, those who have studied the theoretical elements underpinning their work will be better able to serve the most vulnerable. It is not a question of how or when I will apply what I learned while studying at the PRDU; rather it is a question of how well I apply these tools and to what degree I honour my responsibilities to those in need.

A new one-year MA course Conflict, Governance and Development will be launched at the Department of Politics in 2004, integrating the two key areas of expertise in development studies at the University of York – Conflict and Governance – which, hitherto, have been taught by separate teams of experts.

In recognition of growing academic demand in these areas, York has decided to put together this course, which will provide an ideal springboard for those who wish to go into the policy area, and those who want to continue research.

Through the PRDU, the University has continued to expand its expertise in these areas in recent years, with the acquisition of new experts in the fields of the international governance of conflict, conflict resolution and the dynamics of post-war recovery. York also has a long tradition in Governance, covering the theoretical study of the Politics of Development, Public Policy, Poverty Alleviation, Labour Studies and Women’s Studies.

The Department has won major research contracts and fellowships in the field of post-war reconstruction, as well as funding for academic research on Governance covering a wide range of topics and geographical areas.

Students taking the new MA – under the directorship of Dr Louise Haagh – will opt for two of three core modules in addition to a module of their choice. They will also be required to write a 20,000 word research-based dissertation, having first received thorough training in research methodology. The course is also offered on a part-time basis, and as a pathway to the ESRC-sponsored ‘one-plus-two’ PhD-track programme. The new MA will run parallel to our over-subscribed MA in Post-war Recovery, which will continue to focus on the development of practical and analytical skills in addition to the theoretical and research grounding which it offers.

Initial inquiries should be directed to the Department’s Postgraduate Secretary, Caroline Moore e-mail: cm9@york.ac.uk phone: +(44) 1904 433561.

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MA in Post-war Recovery Studies – facts at a glance

Since 1996, 116 students have taken part in the MA in Post-war Recovery Studies.

For the academic year beginning October 2003 we have already received over 50 applications.

The graphs below show various data relating to the intake of students who have passed through the PRDU.