Reconciliation and Reintegration in Afghanistan

Authors:
Dr. Lawrence A. Kuznar
Dr. John A. Stevenson
Dr. Sabrina Pagano

Team Lead:
Dr. Sabrina Pagano

Project Team:

Ali Jafri	Eric Kuznar	Dr. Larry A. Kuznar
Dr. Sabrina Pagano		Dr. John A. Stevenson

Please direct inquiries to Dr. Sabrina Pagano, at spagano@nsiteam.com

Prepared for: US Department of Defense (DOD) Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) Office J-39

NSI ★

Deeper Analyses.
Clarifying Insights.
Better Decisions.

www.NSIteam.com

Executive Summary

This report provides an analysis of the compatibility of reconciliation and reintegration processes, an assessment of the potential for achieving successful reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan, and an examination of which US government capabilities can best be leveraged in support of these processes.

Reconciliation involves creating an overarching framework for peace. **Reintegration** establishes the underlying framework for the end of conflict and describes the processes by which fighters re-join society and armed groups cease using violence without government authorization.

Adaptation and application of the NSI Pathways™ Model approach enabled identification of a set of drivers of—and barriers to—reconciliation and reintegration through "top-down" theoretical work and "bottom-up" empirical case studies. This initial set gave rise to a generic model of reconciliation and reintegration, the components of which could then be classified as being affective, cognitive, or behavioral, as well as social, economic, or political in nature. The generic model was then applied to the case of Afghanistan, revealing three major insights about reconciliation and reintegration:

- There is complete overlap between reconciliation and reintegration objectives in Afghanistan, suggesting that reintegration can be pursued in Afghanistan without undermining or prohibiting reconciliation.
- Afghanistan is characterized by a marked *lack* of drivers of, and an abundance of barriers to, reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan.[1] This is true both overall and compared with four historical cases. Moreover, virtually all of the required social, political, and economic components (as well as affective, cognitive, and behavioral) required for reconciliation and reintegration are absent.
- Despite a bleak prognosis, the USG is not powerless to influence reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan. Additional consultation of the DIMEFIL framework and doctrinal sources[2] suggests actions that can mitigate barriers and support drivers, including: information operations, key leader engagement, and aiding the host nation (e.g., through intel, air, and ground support; military police; etc.). Key partnerships might include those with the host nation, local civil organizations, UN peacekeeping forces, NATO allies, NGOs, and a variety of organizations, departments, and offices within the USG. The latter include the Departments of State and Justice, USAID, the intelligence community, the Drug Enforcement Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and Health and Human Services.

---

[1] Case study analysis indicated that successful reconciliation and reintegration *requires* a greater number of drivers than barriers.
[2] These include: FM 3-24 COIN, FM 3-05 Civil Affairs, the Political-Military Analysis Handbook, and JP 3-13 Information Operations.

Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the compatibility of reconciliation and reintegration processes, an assessment of the potential for achieving successful reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan, and an examination of which US government capabilities can best be leveraged in support of these processes. **Reconciliation** involves creating an overarching framework for peace. **Reintegration** establishes the underlying framework for the end of conflict and describes the processes by which fighters re-join society and armed groups cease using violence without government authorization (Lamb, 2008).

The present research was driven by three guiding questions:

1. What is the relationship between reintegration and reconciliation?
2. What are the barriers to, and drivers of, reintegration and reconciliation in Afghanistan?
3. How can the USG best influence reintegration and reconciliation processes in Afghanistan, and which US government capabilities are best suited to this pursuit?

To answer these questions, we adapted and applied the NSI Pathways™ Model approach to identify a set of drivers of—and barriers to—reconciliation and reintegration[3] through "top-down" theoretical work and "bottom-up" comparative case studies of Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Columbia, and Pakistan. Thirty-six model components were identified in total and categorized as either drivers of or barriers to reconciliation and reintegration. The comparative distribution of these components across the case studies was also assessed in order to determine how essential each component was to reconciliation or reintegration. Components present in all cases were considered *Tier One* or most essential, those present in three case studies were considered *Tier Two* or important, and those present in only one or two case studies were considered *Tier Three* or unique to a particular context. The presence or absence of these components in Afghanistan was then assessed by examining relevant literature describing the current situation in the country.

We report these 36 components, their Tier assignments, their directionality (e.g., driver or barrier), and whether they are components of reconciliation or reintegration processes, or both, in Appendix A. We report the results of the case studies in **Figure 2**.

---

[3] Barriers make reconciliation and reintegration more difficult to initiate and sustain; drivers push reconciliation and reintegration processes further along that pathway.

What is the Relationship between Reconciliation & Reintegration?

Our NSI Pathways analysis revealed that reconciliation is a process characterized in part by members of groups[4] in conflict voluntarily leveraging emotional (e.g., trust), cognitive (e.g., superordinate identity), behavioral (e.g., cooperation), structural (e.g., leader support), and external (e.g., foreign neighbors and powers) resources to **redefine and rebuild relationships** frayed by the conflict and negotiate the practical aspects and newly shared vision for an **inclusive**, **interdependent**, and **fair socio-political reality** (Agoglia et al., 2010; Bar-Tal, 2000; Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004; Hamber & Kelly, 2004; McCandless, 2001; Noor et al., 2008; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005; see also Lederach, n.d.). The fully realized product of **reconciliation** is the achievement of a sustainable **peace,** including the **cessation of violence**.

> **Our NSI Pathways™ analysis indicates that there is no conflict between reconciliation and reintegration in terms of objectives in Afghanistan.**

Reintegration is, at its most basic, a process by which rebel combatants voluntarily become ex-rebel combatants. The reintegration process can occur *either* through **demobilization**, **disarmament** and **(re-) beginning a civilian life** *or* through induction into state-sanctioned organs of violence that allow for **professionalization and lawful production of violence**. The fully realized product of reintegration is state control over violence and non-combatant sources of identity for former combatants (Schulhofer-Whol & Sambanis, 2010).

Reintegration is most typically executed by the military, whereas reconciliation involves a larger, whole of government effort. If these two processes conflict, there is a risk that military and other organs of government may work at cross-purposes. However, in the current analysis, both the case studies and the application to Afghanistan indicate that there is significant overlap between the components of reconciliation and reintegration.

In the case of Afghanistan, adaptation and application of the NSI Pathways approach revealed that reintegration is in fact a complete subset of reconciliation,
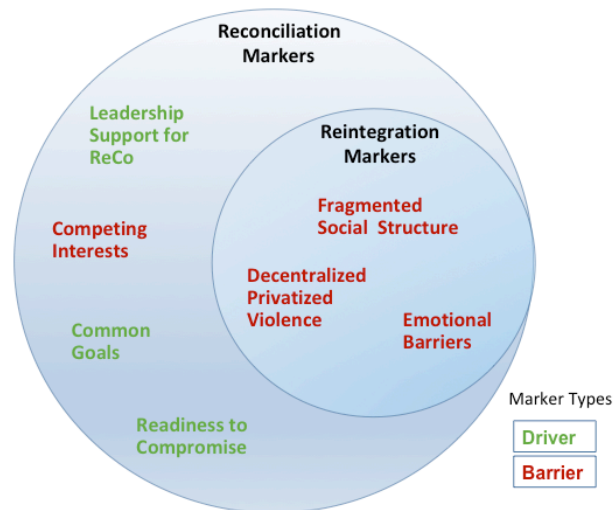

Figure 1. Overlap in Reconciliation and Reintegration Components in Afghanistan

---

[4] These can be organized around political, economic, ethnic, racial, religious, geographic, or other lines.

and thus can be pursued without undermining or prohibiting reintegration.[5] **Figure 1** provides an illustration of this conceptual overlap, including some of the more important components of these processes. With respect to the components of reconciliation, individual group interests that compete with those of reconciliation remain a key barrier. The drivers that can help overcome competing interests and other barriers present include (but are not limited to) forging common goals between the groups, gaining leadership support for reconciliation, and encouraging a readiness to compromise among negotiators. Several key barriers also exist to reintegration—and thus to reconciliation as well. The fragmentation of Afghanistan along ethnic and tribal lines and the corresponding arming of these groups creates a decentralized and privatized system of violence that challenges central state authority (Sidky, 2007). The decades of war have created deep emotional scars among Afghans, which prevent the willingness to forgive, sustain distrust, and fuel the desire for vengeance.

In addition to sharing conceptual components, the end-goals of these two processes are consistent with one another, and as such, reintegration efforts in the context of Afghanistan can be seen as a supporting element for longer-term reconciliation goals. This means that certain actions in support of reconciliation processes will also further reintegration processes, and vice versa. Actions that drive both reintegration and reconciliation would be those actions that enable ex-combatants to have new identities as productive members of a less violent society. Specific examples of these actions include: removing impediments to ex-combatant social reintegration, such as low post-conflict marriage rates; reducing the incentives for ex-combatants to join/recruit for criminal networks and access to small arms; and lowering emotional barriers. Emotional barriers, such as readiness to compromise or a felt need for reconciliation, are hard to measure, yet essential emotive/cognitive factors for self-sustaining reintegration and reconciliation processes.

What do we know about reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan?

In Figure 2. Presence/Absence of Reconciliation and Reintegration Components

below, we provide an overview of the combined Tier 1 and Tier 2 reconciliation and reintegration components. In the case of Afghanistan, we observed a significant number of barriers, and fewer than a quarter of the total drivers were partially (or wholly) present.

---

[5] The Afghanistan case is very similar to the case study baselines. However, in the four other cases (Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Columbia, and Pakistan), the conceptual overlap between reconciliation and reintegration, while substantial, is not complete.

Presence of (R&R) components*

Barriers	N. Ireland	Rwanda	Colombia	Pakistan	Afghanistan
Reputation of faction during conflict					
Fragmented social structure					
Emotional barriers to reconciliation and reintegration					
Actors with competing interests					
Decentralization and privatization of violence					
Crime policy					
Censorship					

Drivers	N. Ireland	Rwanda	Colombia	Pakistan	Afghanistan
Readiness to compromise					
Common goals among actors					
Leadership support for reconciliation					
Societal support (public opinion)					
Popular support for demobilization					
Accountability of government institutions, civil organizations, and factions					
Acknowledgement of suffering and restorative justice					
Popularly supported grievance, truth-telling; conflict redress procedures					
Formal processes for institutional diversity and inclusion					
Economic development and consistent social services					
Support for leadership					
Participation in voluntary civic associations & formal political institutions					
Peaceful and supportive international climate					

Legend:
- Barrier Present
- Barrier Absent
- Driver Present
- Driver Partially Present
- Driver Absent
- Insufficient Data

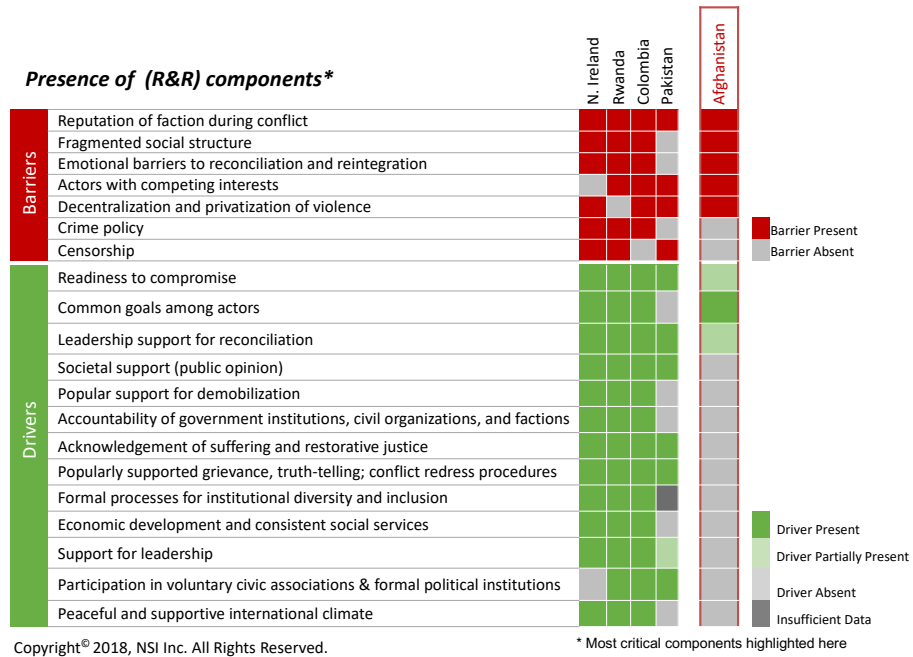* Most critical components highlighted here

Figure 2. Presence/Absence of Reconciliation and Reintegration Components

An examination of the case study results indicates that the key to successful reconciliation and reintegration is establishing a sufficient number of drivers to enable a society to overcome its accompanying barriers. While all of the specific Tier One and Tier Two barriers present for Afghanistan are detailed below, removal of one barrier in particular may make reconciliation and reintegration much easier to achieve: the decentralization and privatization of violence. The levels of violence in Afghanistan are unlikely to decrease as long as so many ex-combatants have easy access to light weapons and small arms (Ozerdem & Knight, 2004).

Reducing this barrier will have its challenges: Disarmament programs often create large black and gray markets for small arms, which undermine both reconciliation and reintegration processes (Solomon & Ginifer, 2008). The Afghanistan National Disarmament Commission (NDC), like many disarmament programs, seems focused on the goal of fewer guns in Afghanistan, citing a goal of a million weapons (Ozerdem & Knight, 2004). Yet, the problem is not with light arms per se, but their use in maintaining a climate in which disputes are solved and money/resources are accumulated using private violence. Breaking this cycle of privatized violence may go far in helping make progress in reducing other barriers.

Many reconciliation and reintegration drivers are missing in Afghanistan, but barriers exist aplenty.

Perhaps the most important finding related to this guiding question is that **many of the drivers to reconciliation and reintegration are missing in Afghanistan, but barriers exist aplenty.** At present, it is not clear if there are enough drivers to overcome the extant barriers. The bright spot in Afghanistan,

however, is that the drivers that do exist reinforce both reconciliation *and* reintegration. Most key actors share some common goals in Afghanistan, and external powers may be willing to act as external brokers toward a stable peace under certain conditions.[6] The National Unity Government (NUG) is committed to political reconciliation with the Taliban, and the Taliban—while generally distrusting the NUG—actively supports the NUG in energy infrastructure development, as well as functioning state services. Despite these bright spots, however, some candidates for successfully brokering a peace process in Afghanistan do not seem committed to this goal; Pakistan does not necessarily want to see a peaceful and strengthened Afghanistan, and China does not appear to be motivated to actually engage in brokering a peace deal in Afghanistan.[7]

Potential US Government Capabilities to Aid Reconciliation and Reintegration

Appreciation of the complexity of the mission in Afghanistan has heightened awareness of the "value of increased harmonization between military and civilian activities, which delivers tangible benefits for both" (Blannin, 2018). In order to determine how traditional military activities can support the complex processes that underlie successful reconciliation and reintegration, we re-examined the reconciliation and reintegration components through a DIMEFIL (Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic, Financial, Intelligence and Law enforcement) lens and consulted relevant doctrinal sources. Together, these suggested several actions that can mitigate barriers and support drivers, including: information operations, key leader engagement, and aiding the host nation (e.g., through intelligence, air, and ground support; military police; etc.).[8] Moreover, key military partnerships might include those with the host nation, local civil organizations, UN peacekeeping forces, NATO allies, NGOs, and a variety of organizations, departments, and offices within the USG. The latter include *the Departments of State* and *Justice*, *the US Agency for International Development (USAID)*, the intelligence community, the *Drug Enforcement Agency*, the *Federal Bureau of Investigations*, and *Health and Human Services*.

However, military elements of power seem *best* suited for removing barriers rather than helping bring about drivers. For example, US military support in combatting militias may decrease the decentralization and privatization of violence, as well as deny terrorist groups safe-havens in any part of Afghanistan. In addition, interagency partnerships

> **Military elements of power seem *best* suited for removing barriers rather than helping bring about drivers, as almost all drivers involve issues under civilian control. Even here, however, the military can play a vital supportive role.**

---

[6] Canna, S. and Stevenson, J. A. (2018). Interest-Resolve-Capability Afghanistan Analysis: Outcomes. Report for the Joint Staff/J39 Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA), Arlington, Virginia.

[7] Pagano, S. (2018). Q7.1 ViTTA Report. *Taliban-GIRoA reconciliation: How likely is settlement and what would it look like?* Report for the Joint Staff/J39 Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA), Arlington, Virginia.

[8] Military support of these activities is detailed in government publications such as FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, FM 3-05 Civil Affairs, Joint Publication JP 3-13 Information Operations and the Political – Military Analysis Handbook, among others.

can amplify the effectiveness of military elements of power. For example, findings from NSI's US Discoverable Government Information Assets™ (US-DiGIA) work suggest that the *Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement* in the *State Department* might be an effective partner in tracking small arms and light weapons trafficking.[9] Similarly, *State*, *USAID*, and specific offices within both *Justice* and *Health and Human Services* assist other countries in developing an increased counter-terrorism capacity and social services capacity, respectively.[10] Civil affairs support to truth telling and grievance commissions can address emotional barriers to reconciliation and reintegration, and key leader engagements with stakeholders can mitigate social fragmentation and competing interests. US military support to policing is also essential for the protection of civil elements engaged in reconciliation and reintegration.

Almost all reconciliation and reintegration components contained diplomatic or informational elements of national power, and these are especially important for supporting the drivers toward reconciliation and reintegration. Military elements of power can also serve a critical support role in addressing these drivers (e.g., through information operations, key leader engagement, force protection, and military police functions). Information operations have the potential to influence social support for reconciliation, reintegration demobilization, and public participation in civil organizations. Civil affairs operators can play an important role though key leader engagement to support the different levels of leadership required for successful reconciliation and reintegration. Truth-telling and grievance commissions can benefit from civil affairs on-the-ground experience, contacts and expertise with groups who were former enemies. Also, civil affairs' extensive experience in managing communities can be an indispensible support for successful economic aid and development projects.

Conclusion

This NSI Pathways analysis addresses the following key questions:

- What are the components relevant to reconciliation and reintegration?
    - Which of these are barriers that prevent reconciliation and reintegration?
    - Which of these enable or drive reconciliation and reintegration to occur?
- Do reconciliation and reintegration efforts conflict?

---

[9] The NSI team developed a methodology to catalog and analyze all discoverable (unclassified, published, and referenced or held online) information assets relevant to national security and foreign policy held across the non-DoD and non-ODNI USG organizations. The product of this effort is housed in NSI's Directory of Discoverable US Government Information Assets™ (US-DiGIA). US-DiGIA is a tool that enables users to search for and locate open source USG information assets, and possible points of contact for interagency collaboration. Present suggestions were derived with reference to that work. The US-DiGIA Directory and User's Guide are available, if desired, upon request from Dr. Belinda Bragg: bbragg@nsiteam.com.

[10] If planners were to leverage these existing sources of information, data, and expertise (i.e., *information assets*) held by the USG through focused partnerships, the cost and time savings from avoiding duplication of effort would be potentially immense, as one Special Inspector General's testimony to a Senate oversight committee recently observed (Sopko, 2018). More directly, doing so would provide one potential inroad to effectively influence the challenging situation for reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan.

- How can the USG best influence reintegration and reconciliation processes in Afghanistan, and which US government capabilities can be leveraged toward these outcomes?

The present analysis identified a number of barriers that inhibit, and drivers that enable, reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan through a comparison to case studies conducted for Northern Ireland, Rwanda, Columbia, and Pakistan. Generally speaking, barriers to reconciliation and reintegration are common and typically present in any society that has been torn apart by civil strife. The key to successful reconciliation and reintegration in the case studies thus was establishing drivers that overcome the ever-present barriers.

Comparing Afghanistan to the case studies revealed two key findings. First, the set of reintegration components present in Afghanistan is entirely a subset of the reconciliation components; reintegration efforts are wholly supportive of larger reconciliation efforts and goals and no conflict between the two should exist. Second, Afghanistan exhibits many barriers to reconciliation and reintegration, just as do other societies that have experienced social upheaval. However, there is an almost total lack of drivers present for Afghanistan. Therefore, the components necessary for driving reconciliation and reintegration forward, as well as overcoming existing barriers, are almost entirely absent. The prognosis for Afghanistan is bleak.

The NSI Pathways analysis identifies the barriers that need to be countered, and most importantly, the drivers that need to be supported to put Afghanistan on a pathway to successful reconciliation and reintegration. The US military is in a position to actively counter barriers and to support drivers, by virtue of its 17 years of experience on the ground in Afghanistan, during which time it has had to apply skills both in traditional kinetic and in less traditional civil affairs domains. The present analysis has identified a number of ways in which the military can further leverage these capabilities to influence reconciliation and reintegration, including through counterterrorism and counterinsurgency, support to law enforcement and policing, a variety of civil affairs functions, and information operations. Successful pursuit of these activities will assist in the creation of a more permissive environment for reconciliation and reintegration in Afghanistan.

Appendix A: Complete list of reconciliation and reintegration components and associated Tier, directionality, and process coding

Component	Tier	Directionality	Process
Reputation of Faction During Conflict	1	Barrier	Reintegration Only
Leadership Support for Reconciliation	1	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Readiness to compromise	1	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Societal Support (Public Opinion)	1	Driver	Both
Ex-Combatant Networks and Expertise (as Violence Specialists)	1	Neutral	Both
Need for reconciliation and reintegration	2	Driver (A)[11]	Both
Crime Policy and Prevalence	2	Barrier	Reintegration Only
Actors with Competing Interests	2	Barrier	Reconciliation Only
Censorship	2	Barrier	Reconciliation Only
Decentralization and privatization of violence	2	Barrier	Both
Emotional Barriers to Reconciliation and Reintegration	2	Barrier	Both
Fragmented social structure	2	Barrier	Both
Accountability	2	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Acknowledgement of suffering and Restorative Justice	2	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Common Goal among Actors	2	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Economic Development and Consistent Social Services	2	Driver	Reintegration Only
Formal Processes for Institutional Diversity and Inclusion	2	Driver	Both
Leader Support (Politician and Commander Commitment to Peace From Trust in Opponents)	2	Driver	Both
Participation in Voluntary Civic Associations and Formal Political Institutions	2	Driver	Both
Peaceful and Supportive Int'l Climate	2	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Popular Support for Demobilization	2	Driver	Reintegration Only
Popularly and societally supported grievance, truth-telling, and conflict redress mechanisms and procedures	2	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Int'l Media Coverage	2	Neutral	Reconciliation Only
Readiness to Compromise and Communicate	3	Driver (A)[11]	Both
Dehumanization	3	Barrier	Both
Collaboration and building positive relationships	3	Driver	Both
External Mediators	3	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Positive affect toward out-group members	3	Driver	Both
Shared identity, national vision, and interests	3	Driver	Both
Shared Identity	3	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Shared national vision	3	Driver	Reconciliation Only
Consideration of mutual needs & interests	3	Driver	Both
Assessment of Truth /Narrative agreement about conflict	3	Neutral	Reconciliation Only

---

[11] The "(A)" designation is to indicate that this component could operate as an antecedent.

Social Integration and Civilian Acceptance of Ex-Combatants	3	Neutral	Both
Use of Child Soldiers	3	Neutral	Both
Shared vision of history	3	Driver	Reconciliation Only

References Cited

Agoglia, J., Dziedzic, M., & Sotirin, B. (2010). Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments (MPICE): a metrics framework. United States Institute of Peace Press.

Bar-Tal, D. (2000). From Intractable Conflict Through Conflict Resolution To Reconciliation: Psychological Analysis. *Political Psychology*, *21*(2), 351–365. https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00192

Bar-Tal, D., & Bennink, G. H. (2004). The nature of reconciliation as an outcome and as a process. *From Conflict Resolution to Reconciliation*, *6*.

Blannin, P. (2018). The good operation: notes on a whole-of-government approach to national security. *Modern War Institute*. Retrieved from https://mwi.usma.edu/good-operation-notes-whole-government-approach-national-security/

Hamber, B., & Kelly, G. (2004). A Working Definition of Reconciliation.

Kriesberg, L. (2001). Changing forms of coexistence. *Reconciliation, Justice, and Coexistence: Theory and Practice*, 47–64.

Lederach, J. P. (n.d.). Sustainable reconciliation in divided societies, 12.

McCandless, E. (2001). The Case of Land in Zimbabwe: Cause of Conflict, Foun-dation for Sustained Peace. *Reconciliation, Justice and Coexistence, Edited by Mohammed Abu-Nimer*, 209–234.

Noor, M., Brown, R., Gonzalez, R., Manzi, J., & Lewis, C. A. (2008). On Positive Psychological Outcomes: What Helps Groups With a History of Conflict to Forgive and Reconcile With Each Other? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *34*(6), 819–832. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208315555

Ozerdem, A., & Knight, M. (2004). Disarmament and demobilisation of former combatants

during the war-to-peace transition: guns, camps and cash. *Journal of Peace Research*,

41(4), 499–516.

Sidky, H. (2007). War, changing patterns of warfare, state collapse, and transnational violence in

Afghanistan: 1978-2001. *Modern Asian Studies*, *41*(4), 849–888.

Solomon, C., & Ginifer, J. (2008). *Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration in Sierra

Leone*. University of Bradford. Retrieved from

http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4024~v~Disarmament_Demobilisati

on_and_Reintegration_in_Sierra_Leone.pdf

Wohl, M. J. A., & Branscombe, N. R. (2005). Forgiveness and Collective Guilt Assignment to

Historical Perpetrator Groups Depend on Level of Social Category Inclusiveness. *Journal

of Personality and Social Psychology*, *88*(2), 288–303. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-

3514.88.2.288