
NATO's Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan

Lessons Learned Workshop Report

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“NATO’s Counterterrorism & Counterinsurgency Experience in Afghanistan”

NATO COE-DAT Lessons Learned Workshop Report

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABP	Afghan Border Police
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AOO	Area of Operations
AUP	Afghan Uniform Police
CA	Cultural Awareness
CIMIC	Civil Military Cooperation
CJPOTF	Combined Joint Psychological Operations Task Force
COE	Centre of Excellence
COIN	Counterinsurgency
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
CT	Counterterrorism
CTPT	Counter Terrorism Pursuit Team
CTSC-A	Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan
DAT	Defence Against Terrorism
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ICJ	International Court of Justice
IO	Information Operations
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JANIB	Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board
KFOR	Kosovo Force
KMNB	Kabul Multi-National Brigade
LI	Lessons Identified
LL	Lessons Learned
LTV	Light Tactical Vehicle
NA5CRO	Non Article-5 Crisis Response Operations
NAC	North Atlantic Council
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OCC	Operation Coordination Centre
PAO	Public Affairs Officer
PAP-T	Partnership Action Plan Against Terrorism
PR	Public Relations
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team

PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PsyOps	Psychological Operations
RC	Regional Commands
SOF	Special Operations Forces
StratCom	Strategic Communications
UN	United Nations
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Regulation

DEFINITIONS

Lessons Learned

“The establishment of a lessons learned capability aims at enabling continuous improvement across the Alliance. The effectiveness of a JF will be enhanced by such a capability. Quality control of the way military forces operate is difficult to achieve but one of the most reliable measures must be their performance on operations. The identification of lessons for a multinational force can be difficult when some lessons will be a national responsibility and others will be for the Alliance to address. Commanders must recognize from the outset that provision must be made for monitoring and recording force performance in all its aspects for subsequent analysis and critical review.”

“The purpose of a Lessons Learned procedure is to learn efficiently from experience and to provide validated justifications for amending the existing way of doing things, in order to improve performance, both during the course of an operation and for subsequent operations. This requires lessons to be meaningful and for them to be brought to the attention of the appropriate authority able and responsible for dealing with them. It also requires the chain of command to have a clear understanding of how to prioritize lessons and how to staff them.”¹

Lesson Identified

A Lesson Identified is “a mature observation with a determined root cause of the observed issue and a recommended remedial action and action body, which has been developed and proposed to the appropriate authority.”²

Observation

An Observation is “a comment based on something someone has heard, seen or noticed that has been identified and documented as an issue for improvement or a potential best practice.”³

Terrorism

The unlawful use or threatened use of force or violence against individuals or property in an attempt to coerce or intimidate governments or societies to achieve political, religious or ideological objectives.⁴

Counterterrorism

All offensive measures taken to neutralize terrorism before and after hostile acts are carried out. Note: Such measures include those counterforce activities justified

¹ Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations, AJP-3(B), March 2011, Paragraph 0454.

² Bi-SC Command Directive (Bi-SCD) 80-6 Lessons Learned, 06 July 2011, NATO Unclassified

³ Ibid

⁴ AAP-6 NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (Edition 2014)

for the defence of individuals as well as containment measures implemented by military forces or civilian organizations.⁵

Insurgency

Actions of an organized, often ideologically motivated, group or movement that seeks to effect or prevent political change or to overthrow a governing authority within a country or a region, focused on persuading or coercing the population through the use of violence and subversion.⁶

Counterinsurgency

Comprehensive civilian and military efforts made to defeat an insurgency and to address any core grievances.⁷

⁵ AAP-6 NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (Edition 2014).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

MAPS

1. Administrative Divisions



Source : http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/afghanistan_admin-2009.jpg

PART-I
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout NATO's existence, the first and only invocation of the "Article-5 Collective Defence" clause was originated by a terrorist attack. Since 20th of December 2001, the date which marked the authorization of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist the Afghan government, it is for sure that many lessons on NATO's Afghanistan observations and experience have been captured in NATO community. So far, when reviewing the existing literature in the level of the decision making, planning and the conduct of operations, however, one may assert that these "lessons identified" about NATO's Afghanistan experience in the field of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency have not been studied as a whole, as part of a NATO-Lessons Learned Process at a strategic and operational level.

In Afghanistan, although terrorism has been used as a tactic by certain groups/actors, NATO has chosen not to conduct counterterrorism (CT) Operations. That is, ISAF's mandate, omitting the CT operations, and conducting stability and security operations in coordination with the Afghan National Security Forces since 2002. The U.S. Military has been conducting CT in Afghanistan, in bilateral cooperation with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and other individual nations under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). It is, however, a fact that the borders of counterinsurgency (COIN), CT, stability and security operations are blurred and frequently overlapping.

Within this context, the COE-DAT hosted a workshop entitled "NATO's CT and COIN Experience in Afghanistan" over the period 18-20 November 2014.

The Workshop was intended to discover some additional observations, best practices and lessons identified to contribute to NATO with a holistic approach.

The purpose of lessons learned procedure and processes is "to learn efficiently from experience and to provide validated justifications for amending the existing way of doing things, in order to improve performance, both during the course of an operation and for subsequent operations".⁸ It is obvious that at the tactical level, lessons are easily and quickly learned and applied, since the units on the ground pay the highest and most immediate price for failure.⁹ However, at an institutional level, it may take decades to detect any failure, to apply corrective action, and to understand if things will go better in the future.

⁸ NATO Lessons Learned Policy.

⁹ NATO's Transformation Gaps, Farrel, Rynning, P.688.

Subject Workshop covered purely CT and COIN efforts in Afghanistan, to show the lessons to be learned at an institutional level. COE-DAT's Lessons Learned team, along with experts on Afghanistan and NATO, collected observations, best practices, and lessons identified from NATO's Afghanistan experience in the context of NATO's Lessons Learned Process. Unlike traditional workshops, no presentations were delivered during the event. Instead, based on the "6 months long observation collection and analysis period", the participants focused on discussing observations, doing some quick assessments and analysis with contribution of academicians and trying to open the way for further Lessons Identified based on discussion points.

As the Workshop was comprised of 2.5 days of round table discussions, most apparent and significant topics were analyzed in order to limit the vast areas of focus. The intention during the preparation phase was to get comments from our participants and relevant parties for each observation, in order to produce some strategic level recommendations.

The Workshop was intended to chase "what can be done in the future" rather than "what has been done in Afghanistan". In the spirit of NATO Lessons Learned process, "what has been done" was generally put as a starting point, and then showed the way ahead with some future recommendations.

In light of afore mentioned assumptions and setup, the aims of the workshop were set as follows:

- Collect observations and identify lessons for NATO at the strategic-political level in terms of CT and COIN operations.
- Search for a framework to turn these identified lessons into lessons learned to be used for potential future NATO missions.
- Identify basic requirements and principles for NATO's future operations in a region where terrorism and insurgency exists.

The desired end-state for the workshop was set as **"With regard to insurgent and terrorist activities in troubled regions of the world, what does NATO's experience in Afghanistan mean for future Non-Article 5 Crises Response Operations (NA5CRO)?"**

The new NATO Policy Guidelines on CT clearly reiterate that "Terrorism poses a direct threat to the security of the citizens of NATO countries, and to international stability and prosperity more broadly and will remain a threat for the foreseeable future".¹⁰

¹⁰ NATO's policy guidelines on counter-terrorism: Aware, Capable and Engaged for a Safer Future, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_87905.htm?selectedLocale=en.

Recent developments in the wider Middle East and North Africa underline once again the importance of defence against terrorism for NATO and give us hints of potential COIN operations with counterterrorism scenarios involved.

While certainly not sufficient, the study may also provide hints of new outlines for NATO's role in order to "deter and defend against emerging security challenges where they threaten the fundamental security of individual Allies or the Alliance as a whole". Furthermore, taking the key functions of recently launched Resolute Support mission into account, the information covered in this report may also be used to support any ongoing campaign in Afghanistan and neighboring regions.

2. OVERVIEW OF NATO AND AFGHANISTAN MISSION

Of NATO and Afghanistan: From ISAF to Resolute Support

The 9/11 attacks in 2001 triggered a string of dramatic changes in global security both for individual countries and international organizations. Only one day after the devastating attacks, even when the smoke caused by the collapse was still on the ground zero, United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1368¹¹, which refers to the inherent right of individual and collective self defence recognized by Article 51 of the UN Charter. The said resolution asked all countries “to co-operate in bringing the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors of the attacks to justice and that those responsible for supporting or harboring the perpetrators, organizers and sponsors would be held accountable”.¹²

As a very quick response to show the solidarity and determination of NATO, the North Atlantic Council made a timely decision on 12 September 2001: “If it is determined that the attack against the United States was directed from abroad, it shall be regarded as an action covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty”¹³. It marked another milestone for NATO, as for the first time in the Alliance's history, Article 5 - the principle of collective defence- has been invoked. On 20 September 2001, “War on Terror” was declared by President Bush at the address to Joint Session of Congress. The goal, the campaign plan and the end state of the campaign was set forth briefly but decisively:

“Our war on terror begins with al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated”.

“How will we fight and win this war? We will direct every resource at our command—every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument

¹¹ United Nations Security Council issued Resolution 1368, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4370th meeting, on 12 September 2001, available at: <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/Documents/1368.pdf>, accessed on 16 January 2015.

¹² "Members of Security Council condemn 'horrifying' terror attacks on US", United Nations News Centre, 11 September 2001.

¹³ NATO Press Release on Statement by the North Atlantic Council, 12 September 2001, available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2001/p01-124e.htm>, accessed on 16 January 2015.

of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war—to the disruption and to the defeat of the global terror network.”¹⁴

The ambition in the rhetoric of “War on Terror” was extremely high. Among several other troubled spots in the wider region, Afghanistan was selected as the main playground for NATO in this mission. NATO was becoming part of a global campaign of unprecedented scale and complexity.

On 5 December 2001 at a meeting convened in Bonn, Germany, UN officials came together with Afghan leaders and members of the international community to discuss the country’s future. They decided to establish and train national security forces with international help and called on a UN mandated force to assist in the maintenance of security for Kabul and its surrounding areas in what became known as the Bonn Agreement. As a response to this request, on 20 December 2001, UN Security Council Resolution 1386¹⁵ provided for the creation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and its deployment to Kabul and the surrounding area. In doing so, the Security Council determined that the situation in Afghanistan constituted a threat to international peace and security.¹⁶

After becoming fully operational on 12 January 2002, NATO assumed the command of ISAF in 2003. Being the first out of area deployment in this scale, ISAF received a new mandate in October 2003, based on UNSCR 1510, that gradually expanded its area of responsibility to the entire Afghanistan. NATO’s primary objective in Afghanistan has been “to enable the Afghan authorities to provide effective security across the country and ensure that the country can never again be a safe haven for terrorists”.¹⁷ Success would confirm NATO’s unity and capability to act “out of area” but failure could undermine NATO’s claim to a broader global mission.¹⁸ From this point on, NATO had to face a very basic contradiction throughout its mission: although terrorism was one of the main drivers for the security aspects in Afghanistan, NATO forces never had a proper mandate on countering terrorism. The political-military posture of NATO was all about “assisting legitimate Afghan authorities” to create a safe, secure and stabilized country. This mission however, was strongly connected with some other essential state building mechanisms, such as infrastructure, economy, health care,

¹⁴ Selected Speeches of President George W. Bush, Whitehouse Archives, P.68-69, available at: http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/bushrecord/documents/Selected_Speeches_George_W_Bush.pdf.

¹⁵ UN Security Council issued Resolution 1386, Adopted by the Security Council at its 4443rd meeting, on 20 December 2001, available at: http://www.nato.int/isaf/topics/mandate/unsr/resolution_1386.pdf.

¹⁶ Gungor, U, Ogun M.N., Erzurum K., (2011), “Will International Community Fail in Afghanistan”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Year 9, Issue 17, P.11-41.

¹⁷ NATO and Afghanistan, available at http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm.

¹⁸ Nevers, Renée de (2007), “NATO’s International Security Role in the Terrorist Era”, *International Security*, Vol.32, No. 4., p.66.

community policing and public security. Corruption, terrorism, organized crime, drug trade, insurgency were some of the emerging challenges, which would affect the overall strategy.

“Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT)” concept has been used as part of the state building methodology. Although PRT was not a new invention, it was new for NATO to use reconstruction teams as a tool for security in such a vast country. PRTs were basically secured areas in the region, which also supported local population in governance and in the development of the infrastructure. It was seen as a remedy to provide gradually increased regional security to entire Afghanistan. The expansion of ISAF started with the takeover of command of the German-led PRT in Kunduz. The other eight PRTs operating in Afghanistan in 2003 remained under the command of Operation Enduring Freedom, the continuing U.S.-led military operation.

2003 was also the year when the Taliban launched insurgency campaigns against the Afghan government and ISAF. Like many other insurgent and terrorist movements, the outnumbered and outgunned Taliban assumed almost all instruments of asymmetric warfare. As the security situation escalated, NATO forces had to encounter ambushes, suicide attacks, insider attacks and raids both on their forces and civilians.

From 2003 onwards, the situation started to become more and more complicated every year. After being heavily hit and damaged by coalition forces from 2001 to 2003, the insurgent movement was able to reorganize and to receive increasing support both from Afghani locals and other neighboring countries. At the beginning, smaller Taliban groups started to launch attacks on remote forces. Other means of indirect attacks, such as improvised explosive devices and rocket attacks were also frequently used. ISAF was trying to assist in establishing a secure environment, but the struggle was spreading to all required pillars of democratic peace-building mechanism, as it was set out by Bonn Agreement. The said full scale insurgency the alliance was facing initiated political disagreements among the allies over burden sharing and methodology of COIN.¹⁹

The aftershocks of 9/11 Attacks were not confined to Afghanistan and the Middle East. After a relatively quiet period in Western domain, another brutal wave of bombings came to life starting with Istanbul bombings on 15 November 2003. The desire to expand ISAF's mission was returning some warnings on the Allies. The series of the brutal bombings continued with Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005. The videotape broadcast by Al Jazeera released the motivation of Mohammad Sidique Khan, one of the London Suicide Bombers: “*What have you*

¹⁹ Alexander Mattelaer, “How Afghanistan Has Strengthened NATO”, *Survival*, Vol.53, No:6 (December 2011/January 2012), P.128.

witnessed now is only the beginning of a string of attacks that will continue and become stronger until you pull your forces out of Afghanistan and Iraq". The bombings did not prevent Allies from expanding ISAF and its mission; however, they may have influenced individual countries to put caveats for refraining from active involvement in armed conflicts. Caveats would remain an emerging discussion throughout the mission, which also might have affected the operational tempo.

At the Summit Meeting of the NATO Heads of State and Government in Istanbul on 28 June 2004, NATO announced that it decided to expand the ISAF, including adding several more PRTs. It was clearly emphasized that "contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan had been NATO's key priority and the methodology to expand the mission throughout Afghanistan through establishment of additional PRTs".²⁰ On 10 February 2005, at the Informal Meeting of NATO Defence Ministers, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop SCHEFFER announced that "NATO would proceed to further expand the ISAF into the West of Afghanistan". The intention was to establish a permanent ISAF presence in the form of four PRTs and one Forward Support Base (FSB), and to provide security assistance in 50% of Afghanistan's territory. It was further stated that "the expansion of ISAF into the four western provinces of Afghanistan underscored NATO's long-term commitment to helping Afghanistan build a stable, prosperous and democratic future".²¹

Another stage of expansion was announced on 8 December 2005. The Allied Foreign Ministers endorsed a set of measures to expand ISAF role and presence in Afghanistan. The endorsement also included the expansion of ISAF to the south in 2006. The implementation of the plan came into effect on 31 July 2006, when ISAF assumed command of the southern region of Afghanistan from U.S.-led Coalition forces, expanding its area of operations to cover an additional six provinces, and taking command of four additional PRTs.

The final declaration regarding the expansion of ISAF came on 5 October 2006 and ISAF has expanded its operations to include the East of Afghanistan. NATO started to carry out its mission throughout the whole country, building on the efforts of the U.S.-led Coalition. With this, in almost two years period, ISAF consisting of 5,000 troops in 2003 expanded its mission from Kabul to the entire

²⁰ Istanbul summit Declaration issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of North Atlantic Council, 28 June 2004.

²¹ NATO Press Release, Statement by NATO Secretary General, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, 15 February 2005, available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2005/p05-014e.htm>.

652,230 sq km country²², without properly having faced the truth about the number of required additional troops and resources.

On 29 November 2006, Riga Summit Declaration highlighted that “NATO reaffirms the strong solidarity of the Alliance, and pledge to ensure that ISAF has the forces, resources, and flexibility needed to ensure the mission’s continued success.”²³ However in the long run, the resources to fulfill what is expected from NATO were beyond the capacity of the Alliance. It was declared once again that “contributing to peace and stability in Afghanistan had been NATO’s key priority”, however this time the declaration gave hints of some concerns about ISAF’s mission and its future. The emerging problems based on insufficient number of troops and inadequate defence spending was brought to table with the expectation of getting more partners involved in the mission. At the same time, in order to refrain from the entire burden, NATO started to develop interoperable communication systems and attract the attention of other international organizations to get some support.

The ongoing expansion process changed the order of battle very dramatically. By 2007, the number of NATO troops reached to 35,000 from a humble 5,000 in 2003. On completion of the final stage of expansion, 37 nations were contributing to ISAF²⁴. The initial structure for NATO forces to support Afghanistan in establishing a safe and secure environment was not able to cope with the emerging requirements of such an enormous force. An updated strategic guidance was necessary to align growing ISAF structure. In 2008, NATO’s attempts to re-route the ISAF campaign returned some results and ISAF’s Strategic Vision was released. Although the Allies were able to agree on ISAF’s mission, they continued to differ on how to accomplish it.

In 2009, the appointment of Gen. McChrystal as the new commander of ISAF opened another era for ISAF. He provided a comprehensive review which covered the assessment of the overall situation in Afghanistan, existing plans and ongoing efforts as well as the identification of revisions to tactical, operational and strategic guidance. The result was a drastic change in strategies. For the first time, ISAF Commander explicitly warned that the war in Afghanistan might be lost if more troops were not sent.

²² CIA The World Factbook.

²³ NATO Press Release on Riga Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Riga on 29 November 2006, available at: <http://www.nato.int/docu/pr/2006/p06-150e.htm>, accessed on 16 January 2015.

²⁴ NATO and Afghanistan ISAF Placemats Archive, available at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/107995.htm>.

The 2009 Strasbourg–Kehl NATO Summit also showed hints of pessimism about the Afghanistan campaign. The summit declaration addressed insecurity, persistent corruption and the uneven provision of good governance.²⁵ After almost 6 years, Afghan Police appeared as an important factor in fragile security, and the requirement for better training and mentoring of Afghan Police was also addressed. By the end of 2009, the total numbers of ISAF troops jumped to an enormous figure of 85,000. The European Allies were being repeatedly asked for increased levels of funds and troops. The discussions at various NATO levels involved developing comprehensive strategies to proceed in short and long term. The declaration addressed warnings to the Afghan government and international organizations as well, but it was not only the increasing figures of deployed troops and the budget of the mission that bothered the decision makers in Allied capitals. The casualties of the U.S., largest contributor and driver of the mission, jumped from 45 in 2003, to an unbearable number of 499 in 2010²⁶. The annual casualties of the coalition exceeded 700 in 2010.²⁷ The armed conflict in Afghanistan also took a heavy toll on civilians throughout the mission, with civilian deaths increasing each year. Of the total number of 2,777 civilians killed in 2010, 2,080 deaths were attributed to insurgents. Afghan national security and international military forces were linked to 440 deaths or 16 per cent of total civilian deaths²⁸, which was not helping with the “winning hearts and minds of Afghan people”.

Most of the ISAF and civilian casualties were taking place in Helmand and Kandahar provinces: the Taliban’s heartland. After the beginning of the surge of additional troops, the largest military operation, namely “Operation Moshtarak”, took place with the aim of “overwhelming the insurgents who do not accept the government’s offer to reintegrate and join the political process”.²⁹ Military operations in central Helmand and particularly in Marjah would be followed by the swift establishment of an Afghan government presence in cleared areas.³⁰ Marjah was a centre for bomb-making and narcotics production which had also been fuelling the insurgency in other regions. After the operation, the Afghan government has been able to establish an Afghan Uniformed Police force, and

²⁵ Strasbourg–Kehl NATO Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Strasbourg / Kehl, available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_52837.htm, accessed on: 16 January 2015.

²⁶ Afghanistan Casualties: Military Forces and Civilians (CRS Report for Congress), Susan G. Chesser, 6 December 2012.

²⁷ NATO Parliamentary Assembly Document Afghanistan: Towards 2014 and Beyond, Sven MIKSER, November 2012.

²⁸ Afghanistan Annual Report 2010, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan), March 2011 available at: <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=13941&language=en-US>.

²⁹ News Release, Operation Moshtarak, KABUL, Afghanistan (Feb. 13), available at: http://www.nato.int/nato_static/assets/pdf/pdf_2010_02/20110310_100201-media-background-operation-moshtarak.pdf, accessed on 16 January 2015.

³⁰ ISAF News Release, 2010-02-CA-059, 13 February 2010.

more schools and medical clinics have been set up in Marjah.³¹ Consequently, Taliban withdrew from the more densely populated, flat areas near the watercourses, but maintained a presence in all of Helmand's districts.³² However, even if the rhetoric of "bringing security to the region" was partly gaining pace, the "winning hearts and minds of Afghan people" portion did not entirely match the reality on the ground. At the end of year 2010, local Afghans felt more negative about NATO forces than before, and as a result rising numbers of young Afghans started to join Taliban³³.

With this taking place, the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, addressed the NATO Summit in Lisbon on Saturday 20 November 2010, and said that he wanted NATO to return control of the country by the end of 2014.³⁴ This was the entrance of a new phase in Afghanistan, and a long expected exit strategy for troop contributing nations. With this declaration, "the irreversible transition to full Afghan security responsibility and leadership to begin in early 2011 and to be finalized by the end of 2014" was initiated.³⁵

At the NATO Lisbon Summit, ISAF Heads of States and Governments agreed to a list of principles which would guide ISAF's gradual shift from a combat to an increasingly supporting role. Further strengthening Afghan National Security Forces capacity was one of the emerging principles.³⁶

By this time, the ANSF had made steady improvements in their capacity to take the security responsibilities. The training and capacity building of the ANSF were notably increased through the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A). In 2010, the ANSF grew by 79,000 to a total of 270,000 (ANA 152,000 and ANP 118,000). In Regional Command-Capital, since 28 August 2008, the ANSF gradually took over the lead responsibility for security in Kabul province³⁷. However, as the number of ANSF approached 300.000, Afghan Security forces still had ways to counter growing insurgency and provide security and stability on their own. COIN was adopted as official policy as a result of the Bratislava Foreign Minister Meeting in 2009, and COIN policy relied on solving a number of political problems related to

³¹ NATO Media Backgrounder, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), Marjah-1 year on, March 2011.

³² The Taliban at War: inside the Helmand Insurgency, 2004-2012, Theo Farrel and Antonio Giustozzi, *International Affairs* 89:4 (2013) 845-871.

³³ Operation Moshtarak: Lessons Learned, ICOS, March 2010.

³⁴ Lisbon Summit Declaration, Issued by the Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Lisbon, available at:

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/official_texts_68828.htm, accessed on: 16 January 2015.

³⁵ Declaration by the Heads of State and Government of the Nations Contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led ISAF in Afghanistan, 20 November 2010, available at:

http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68722.htm.

³⁶ *Ibid* .

³⁷ NATO Media Backgrounder, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), Transition to Afghan Lead: Inteqal, March 2011.

good governance. Afghanistan was still ranked 176 out of 178 on corruption perception index in 2010³⁸, which had a negative effect in provision of good governance. Corruption was pervasive in ANSF, and hindered all attempts to provide effective security and persistent stability. With the emerging security mandate for Afghanistan, ANSF was being questioned whether it was up to the task.

The total number of ANSF would have to be doubled in less than 5 years before the security responsibility was totally left to ANSF. Even if the ANSF would reach these numbers and appropriate training to provide security, the sustainability of the growing security forces would remain dependent on international funds. The existing expenditure of ANSF spending would drain the entire Afghan budget, and without significant financial assistance from the international community, the foreseen ANSF force strength and capabilities were not sustainable.

Training of both ANA and ANP drew the immediate attention of the external players as an emerging requirement and most of the resources were directed to get some imminent enhancement in their capabilities. These efforts have preceded the need for improving the judicial system as a whole. The fact was, ANSF could not perform as desired in the absence of the other essential parts of the criminal justice system, such as courts and prisons³⁹.

On 22 March 2011, President Karzai announced the first set of Afghan provinces and districts to start the transition. This decision was based upon operational, political and economic considerations, drawing on the assessment and recommendations of the Afghan Government and NATO/ISAF through the Joint Afghan-NATO Inteqal Board (JANIB).⁴⁰ The second tranche of the transition was announced in November 2011 and included several districts in Helmand.

President Karzai announced the third tranche of transition in May 2012, and shortly after that the Chicago Summit in May 2012 highlighted once again that the irreversible transition of full security responsibility from the ISAF to ANSF was on track for completion by the end of 2014. The Allies and ISAF Countries confirmed their readiness to work towards establishing a new post-2014 mission of a different nature in Afghanistan, to train, advise and assist the ANSF. This support included NATO to play its part in funding the sustainability of ANSF after 2014.⁴¹ At

³⁸-Transparency International Corruption Perception Index, 2010.

³⁹ U.S. Institute of Peace, *Afghanistan's Police*, Perito, P.14.

⁴⁰ NATO Media Backgrounder, *Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), Transition to Afghan Lead: Inteqal*, December 2011.

⁴¹ Chicago Summit Declaration issued by the heads of state and government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Chicago on 20 May 2012.

this point, ANSF had already taken the lead for security in the areas where 75% of the Afghan population lived.

With the NATO Chicago Summit having concluded, governments, international organisations and other stakeholders re-convened at the Tokyo Conference in July 2012, and presented a roadmap for Afghanistan to move towards achieving economic self-reliance by 2024. The International Community committed to providing over 16 billion U.S. dollars through 2015, and sustaining support, through 2017, at or near levels of the past decade to respond to the fiscal gap as estimated by the World Bank and the Afghan Government.⁴² The existing improvements were presented by the GIROA explicitly;

“Afghanistan has seen remarkable improvements in health, education, and infrastructure, its economy and in the delivery of other essential services. With the support and partnership of the international community, Afghanistan’s estimated per capita Gross Domestic Product of \$591 in 2011 became five times higher than the \$123 per capita GDP of 10 years ago.”⁴³

Despite these promising figures, 36% of Afghans still had to survive below the poverty line⁴⁴, and in addition to security concerns, the population still continued to experience high rates of malnutrition and food insecurity.

In June 2013, President Karzai announced the fifth and final tranche of transition. Although ISAF forces were still continuing to provide enabling capability in support of ANSF operations, the ANSF in the lead demonstrated their competence to support political transition events in the near future.⁴⁵ However, the uncertainty concerning the International Community’s commitment in 2015 and beyond, pervasive corruption and decrease in counter-narcotics efforts still continued to undermine the effectiveness, cohesion and legitimacy of GIROA.⁴⁶

Maybe the final and most significant test for ANSF before ISAF ended its Afghanistan mission was the presidential elections, which would end the tour of Hamid Karzai. NATO’s declaration was to remain in Afghanistan with some limited force after 31 December 2014 and provide training support to ANSF. This posture however, was hindered when the Afghan President Hamid Karzai refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement with the USA. The problematic points have been foreign forces entering Afghan homes and immunity of U.S. forces remaining in

⁴² The Tokyo Declaration Partnership for Self-Reliance in Afghanistan from Transition to Transformation, 8 July 2012.

⁴³ Tokyo Conference Main Paper "Towards Self Reliance", 8 July 2012.

⁴⁴ World Bank; Afghanistan Economic Update, October 2011.

⁴⁵ Commander ISAF’s Afghanistan Update: Fall 2013, available at <http://www.rs.nato.int/from-the-commander/from-the-commander/commander-isaf-s-afghanistan-update.html>.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Afghanistan from Afghan law. The Bilateral Security Agreement was also a precondition for a separate, NATO status-of-forces agreement. NATO Defence Ministers and counterparts from ISAF partner nations were in search of certainty and predictability to launch the new mission to train, advise and assist the Afghan forces after 2014.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, the Taliban was still launching large-scale attacks in numerous provinces and giving heavy losses to the ANSF at a rate of about 100 a month.

After the political stalemate for months, the country's two presidential candidates, Ashraf GHANI and Abdullah ABDULLAH, signed a power-sharing agreement. As one of the most significant results of the elections, the new Afghan government concluded crucial security pacts with the U.S. and NATO, paving the way for about 12,000 foreign troops to remain in the country after 31 December 2014 end and ensuring that aid money keeps flowing to Kabul. The crucial Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) to provide the legal framework for follow-on mission was signed in Kabul on 30 September 2014 by the newly inaugurated Afghan President and NATO's Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan, and later ratified by the Afghan Parliament on 27 November 2014. One of the most significant obstacles in transition plan was finally removed at the last minute.

Meanwhile, the Heads of State and Government of Allies and their ISAF troop contributing partners issued Wales Summit Declaration on Afghanistan, on 04 September 2014. With the end of ISAF, the engagement with Afghanistan would continue under three different strands:

- In the short term, the Resolute Support Mission;
- In the medium term, our contribution to the financial sustainment of the ANSF;
- In the long term, NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership.⁴⁸

Finally, the ISAF mission was completed at the end of 2014, and as planned, the ANSF assumed full security responsibility throughout Afghanistan. "Resolute Support" began to train, advise and assist the ANSF and replaced ISAF on 1 January 2015. According to the initial mandate, the key functions of Resolute Support included:

- Supporting planning, programming and budgeting;
- Assuring transparency, accountability and oversight;

⁴⁷ NATO Newsroom, 27 February 2014, available at : http://www.nato.int/cps/eu/natohq/news_107519.htm.

⁴⁸ Wales Summit Declaration on Afghanistan issued by the heads of state and Government of Allies and their ISAF troop contributing partners in Wales on 04 September 2014.

- Supporting the adherence to the principles of rule of law and good governance;
- Supporting the establishment and sustainment of such processes as force generation, recruiting, training, managing and development of personnel.⁴⁹

NATO's experience in Afghanistan has already been a rich source for lessons learned in shaping Alliance's future operations. NATO's Strategic Concept has been modified with the lessons derived from the Afghanistan mission. The most significant ones include the requirement for Alliance cohesion, the desirability of unified command, the value of effective planning and public diplomacy, the aptness of a comprehensive civilian/military approach, and the need to deploy forces at a strategic distance for an extended period of time.⁵⁰ The campaign also holds valuable lessons in the field of COIN and CT, which are hidden in the sequence of the events and waiting for relevant stakeholders to be brought to light.

⁴⁹ NATO Media Backgrounder, Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), NATO's commitment to Afghanistan after 2014, December 2014.

⁵⁰ NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement, Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO, 17 May 2010.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the methodology of the research and present a detailed research plan. This chapter involves methodology, research questions, data collection and discussions.

3.1. Methodology

In preparation of the workshop, several research methodologies were examined. First, detailed literature review was studied to outline NATO's mission in Afghanistan. Later, the workshop was conducted in order to find the answers to the questions presented in the research. Although the workshop was limited to 2,5 days, the preparations and the analysis were beyond that time frame. The collection of NATO capabilities, future requirements, observations, lessons and other ideas in any form and shape took approximately 6 months.

The main idea for the workshop was to produce inputs for existing and future NATO policies. In line with the initial starting point, relevant NATO doctrines and policies were examined in detail, well before the workshop.

3.2. Research Questions

3.2.1. Establishing a Secure Environment

The first session of the workshop actually covered a very broad area, as anything happening in Afghanistan was connected with the security in a way. As a result, this session was scheduled for the longest amount of time.

The discussions about "Establishing a Secure Environment (CT and COIN in Afghanistan)" were focused on the following discussion points:

- *How did NATO manage to conduct its security and stability operations without possessing conventional CT mandates in a region where terrorism prevails?*

- *What was the relationship between ISAF, ANSF and Operation Enduring Freedom in terms of conducting CT and COIN operations? How effective was CT and COIN in this regard?*
- *Does NATO need to modify and expand policy and guidance to include the employment of counterterrorism or counterinsurgency forces for future missions?*

The discussions for the session were based on around 60 globally accepted strategic-political level observations. In order to confine the discussion within CT-COIN, all the observations were divided under relevant subtopics such as governance, tactics, policy and cooperation.

3.2.2. Assisting to Build Sustainable and Functional Government

The ISAF campaign intended to focus on the protection of Afghan people and provision of a functional government. To accomplish this challenging task, full scale understanding of the local population and building good relations with locals were taken as the key steps.

In order to put the outcomes of ISAF in terms of “Assisting to Build Functional Government”, the following discussion points were taken as the starting point.

- *To what extent was NATO successful in increasing cultural and social awareness of ISAF troops? Did this affect CT-COIN operations?*
- *What measures should be taken in terms of public perception to accomplish potential NATO operations in the future with success?*
- *How effective was NATO's StratCom efforts in terms of reducing local's support to terrorist groups/insurgents?*
- *What message and in what manner did NATO deliver to insurgent/terrorist groups? How effective were these efforts against insurgent/terrorist groups?*

3.2.3. Reconstruction and Sustainable Government

One of the most important pillars for the provision of a functional government has been reconstruction of the country. The main method used for reconstruction and development of Afghanistan was the PRT concept. Thus, this concept has been studied to understand the negative and positive effects to CT and COIN facet of the campaign.

The following discussion points are studied:

- *How did PRTs help the success of ISAF mission concerning lessen insurgency?*
- *How should PRT efforts be coordinated for NATO's potential future operations?*

3.2.4. Afghan National Security Forces

As stated in ISAF's mission, ISAF was tasked to support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces. To understand the process, the following discussion points were put on the table:

- *Was the improvement of Afghan Security Forces in terms of planning and conducting complex operations against insurgent groups at the desired level?*
- *What measures can be taken to increase the level of effectiveness of local forces with the pace of NATO's potential future missions?*

3.3. Data Collection

There is already an expansive source of lessons and observations in the field of ISAF and Afghanistan, available both in NATO and global sources. The challenge, however, has been to separate the content which was directly related with the CT-COIN facet of the campaign.

The data piled in various databases does not consist of observations only; there are remarkable lessons identified and some lessons learned as well, however, only strategic level and globally accepted observations were put in focus when selecting the data to feed the discussions. Tactical level observations are only discussed to create foundation for strategic level lessons.

Having this approach as a starting point, nearly 200 strategic level observations were piled under four main topics in line with the structure of the workshop. The observations were based mainly on:

- NATO reports,
- Academic articles and studies,
- Assessments from experts and practitioners with Afghanistan experience.

3.4. Discussions

All the collected observations were recorded in a spreadsheet called "Observation Matrix", and transferred to the participants for further analysis well ahead of the workshop. The participants from different fields provided their initial assessments for each observation, in accordance with their areas of expertise. Before starting the discussions, more than 150 observations were already studied by the participants. All the inputs from participants were circulated among the discussants.

The moderators of each session put forth their best efforts to keep the discussions within the limits of CT-COIN, Afghanistan and Lessons Learned concept. Although the duration of the workshop was limited to 2,5 days, the preliminary study formed the basis of effective, focused and productive roundtable discussions.

The moderators collected all the information discussed in each session, and circulated their draft overview in the form of an initial report. Even after the workshop, the participants were able to provide their inputs and assessments to what had been studied, discussed and reported.

PART-II
OBSERVATIONS, DISCUSSIONS & ANALYSIS INTO
“LESSONS”

In line with NATO's vision to be a learning organization, the Afghanistan mission returned a mixture of thousands of observations, best practices, lessons identified and lessons learned. ISAF managed to establish a swift mechanism for a tactical level lessons learned process, which resulted in various changes both in military level policies and tactical level documentation.

No matter how many mistakes were made throughout the ISAF deployment and how many poor practices still remain, one thing is granted: NATO is far more experienced in conducting complex out of area operations than it was before the Afghanistan mission. Moreover, the experience that NATO gained in training indigenous security forces may also provide a valuable asset in other contingencies.

⁵¹

As part of its future plans, NATO will enhance the capacity to detect and defend against international terrorism, including through enhanced analysis of the threat, more consultations with our partners, and the development of appropriate military capabilities, including helping train local forces to fight terrorism themselves.⁵² The starting point of the workshop was the desire to provide tangible inputs on "how to enhance this capacity within NATO".

Before each section, an overview of the session may be found, to understand in which field the observations are concentrated.

⁵¹ NATO ten years after: learning the lessons, Michael Rühle, NATO Review Magazine 2011.

⁵² Strategic Concept for the Defence and Security of the Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation adopted by Heads of State and Government in Lisbon.

4. ESTABLISHING A SECURE ENVIRONMENT: CT AND COIN IN AFGHANISTAN

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4.1. Introduction

The primary concern of this first part of the workshop was to explore how NATO facilitated the goal of security in Afghanistan and to identify policy recommendations for the employment of NATO forces in future military interventions provoked by insurgent/terrorist activity in fragile states. There are three general points I would like to make before listing the main recommendations made during this session.

First, translating complex strategic lessons learned from any war requires us to recognise that there are general lessons that can be applied to future scenarios and then there are those lessons which are peculiar to that conflict and have less relevance to the future. Knowing the difference is vital but extremely difficult to achieve. I have, however, tried to do this and in so doing reduced the number of observations set out. The aim remains to explore NATO's recent experience in Afghanistan and identify lessons which can be applied to Non Article 5 Crisis Response Operations which are insurgent/terrorist based conflicts.

Second, it is not entirely clear how one goes about translating some of these strategic lessons into concrete policy recommendations and courses of action for NATO. In certain cases the cause of strategic failure lay with national governments rather than NATO and a number of references were made to the way in which U.S. decisions impacted on the conduct of the campaign.

Finally, the impression I gained from the workshop was that NATO will never again become involved in something like Afghanistan. However, it is important to note that wars within states continue to breakout more frequently than wars between states and these conflicts will sometimes compel us to intervene, even when member states of NATO would prefer not to. Whilst this might not require a full blown counterinsurgency campaign as happened in Afghanistan, the strategic logic of establishing a fragile state might still force NATO down this path. To quote Max Boot: "Since Washington doesn't have the luxury of simply avoiding insurgencies, the best strategy would be to fight them better"⁵⁴. That, I believe, is a comment which is also pertinent to NATO and serves to justify this study.

⁵⁴ M. Boot, *Foreign Affairs* April 2015, 6.

Although the study draws heavily on the experience of Afghanistan it is important to recognize that the political context and rationale for counterinsurgency in future operations will be very different and a diverse range of scenarios requiring different approaches are likely to emerge. These could range from providing minimal support to a host nation government which is sufficiently resilient to fight an insurgency largely on its own to something closer to the Afghan model.

Which Strategic Challenges faced in Afghanistan will have longevity beyond this campaign?

There were five big strategic challenges facing the U.S. and NATO in Afghanistan all of which could conceivably happen in a future intervention operation. The first is that the strategic setting and operational environment surrounding these interventions will probably happen in post-colonial states whose formation was due to the security logic of the imperial powers of nineteenth century Europe rather than the normal processes that facilitate state formation. As such, these states are frequently plagued by internal security problems as rival groups compete for power employing all means fair or foul. The political problem of governing such states is compounded by a weak and fragile economy which cannot produce the wealth required to support rapidly growing populations. Certainly Afghanistan falls into this category but so do many states in the contemporary international system.⁵⁵

The second common strategic factor was poor governance and in particular the illegitimacy of the host government under president Karzai. Karzai's legitimacy was challenged by the corruption and nepotism within the government. Of particular importance here was his reliance on powerful warlords whose loyalty to the regime was questionable. The perceived failure of the government was demonstrated by the outcome of the presidential election in 2009, which many believed had been fixed. In addition, Karzai's family's connections with the opium trade remained strong and this too brought into question his motives politically and militarily. Because of these problems the government was unable to provide even the most basic services to its population and relied heavily on the international community to address this shortfall.⁵⁶

The third strategic problem was that the defeat of the Taliban was all but impossible if they continued to have access to sanctuary in Pakistan. Related to this were concerns over the intentions of the Pakistan government. Again this is a

⁵⁵ See H. Munkler, *New Wars* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005). and M. Kaldor, *New and Wars*, (Cambridge, Polity, 2006).

⁵⁶ See A. Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: How the War against Islamic Extremism being lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York: Allen Lane, 2008),171-264.

common and persistent feature of insurgency and apparently one of the preconditions for insurgent success.

Fourth, the intervening force faced a significant challenge in terms of sustaining legitimacy in the eyes of the local population. Kilcullen calls this 'the 'accidental guerrilla' syndrome. This concept captures a cycle which begins with the infiltration of Al Qaeda into a region. Then, via a combination of persuasion and coercion, the group integrates into the community, but few in that community support the religious/political ideology espoused by Al Qaeda. What changes and causes them to support Al Qaeda is intervention by external powers, which is precipitated by the activities of Al Qaeda. This then transforms the conflict from an ideological struggle between 'Enlightenment' and 'Religion' to the emergence of local resistance to an occupation. Under these circumstances, the local population ally's with the insurgent against the outsider. Afghanistan offers the clearest illustration of this cycle and was triggered by the Soviet intervention. In the case of Iraq, the catalyst was the occupation of the country followed by the emergence of a local resistance, which then provided the opportunity for Al Qaeda to intervene in the hope of creating another front in the war on terror. Thus, accidental guerrillas are fighting to remove an occupying power from their country or region, rather than showing support for a particular religious/political ideology. But the important point is that intervention will eventually trigger resistance from the local population and this could then mutate into terrorist/insurgent action.⁵⁷

Finally, an external strategic consideration, but no less important in terms of future operations, was the importance of the electoral cycle, especially in the U.S., and how this impacted on operations in Afghanistan. Thus, the Bush Administration was unwilling to take any decisive action in Afghanistan in the dying days of his last term in office because he believed it important to provide the next President with the freedom to choose his or her own strategy. Thus, even though Gen. McKiernan, NATO ISAF Commander in 2008, requested an additional 30,000 troops to defeat the Taliban the decision to commit this force was left to President Obama. Moreover, although he was prepared to sanction an increase in force levels, their deployment was also time limited and the aim was to ensure they started returning to the U.S. before the presidential elections in 2012. This pattern also influenced UK operations in Iraq and the decision to withdraw British forces in 2009 was driven by the need to ensure they were home before the general election in 2010⁵⁸.

⁵⁷ David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. (London: Hurst and Company, 2009).

⁵⁸ D. Bowen, 'The Political Military Relationship in Operations', in *British Generals in Blair's Wars* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

4.2. ISAF as a Conventional Force to Counter Insurgency and Terrorism

The discussions were mainly based on two observations:

- *ISAF was a conventional force that is poorly configured for COIN, inexperienced in local languages and culture, and struggled with challenges inherent to coalition warfare⁵⁹.*
- *The conventional structure of ISAF forces preoccupied with force protection isolated the coalition forces from the Afghan population, which was not helping the population-centric nature of the campaign⁶⁰.*

These observations capture McChrystal's comments in his Commanders Initial Assessment in 2009.⁶¹ In that commentary he believed that NATO ISAF forces were too concerned with their own force protection. This manifested itself in terms of practices such as the emergence of fortified bases which limited contact between the people and NATO forces. When engaged with the enemy there was also a tendency to rely on the indiscriminate use of firepower which protected NATO forces but caused numerous civilian casualties. This served to increase the distance between the people and NATO. There is nothing new or profound in this and it is part of the orthodoxy that surrounds counterinsurgency (COIN).

This then brings us onto the subject of cultural understanding. A great deal was done to promote this aspect of the war in Afghanistan in an attempt to reduce cultural frictions between occupying forces and local populations and this continues to be an important part of COIN practice.⁶²

Perhaps not surprisingly then there was a strong agreement amongst the participants that if following a COIN strategy in an intervention that it was important to take these factors into consideration when deploying NATO forces. However, there are a number of problems in operationalizing this aspiration. First, it is difficult for NATO populations to understand why a member state's forces should be put in harm's way in an effort to win the support of the local population within the warring country. It is interesting to note that an U.S. Army General, Daniel Bolger, recently condemned the actions of a British General, Nick Carter, for failing to authorize the use of close air support in defence of American forces in Helmand in 2009. This decision was taken specifically because Carter was trying to prevent civilian casualties and because it was the declared goal of his boss

⁵⁹ COMISAF Initial Assessment (Unclassified), WP September 21, 2009.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² See US Government, FM 3-24 and MCWP 3-33.5 *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* May 2014.

McChrystal. Given that an American General failed to comprehend this how much more difficult will it be for domestic electorates in NATO countries to comprehend why every weapon was not used to defend their soldiers. In essence, this is noble aspiration but it is also politically naive. Second, it has been argued that modern conventional forces are less likely to engage with the local population in a COIN campaign because, in contrast to previous small wars, mechanized armies do not forage and so have little need to engage with the people beyond the acquisition of intelligence.⁶³ Finally, it is logistically simpler to supply forces deployed in a remote part of the world in large super bases rather than scattered garrisons.

In addition, the forces required to conduct COIN properly, based on the ratio of 1 soldier or policeman per 50 civilians, requires a force which is simply enormous and beyond the means of most NATO states.⁶⁴ In the case of Afghanistan, which in 2009 had a population of 28.4 million, this required a NATO ISAF force of 568,000 this is in contrast to the 110,000 Coalition forces deployed at that time. If you also included the Afghan police and army in this total the result was another 200,000 security personnel, which was still significantly short of the ideal and failed to recognize the high level of desertion and drug addiction which plagued the effectiveness of local forces.⁶⁵

In looking at the issue of cultural understanding there was also strong support for this in COIN. But this practice has also provoked criticism. It is argued that the level of understanding required to ensure smooth social relations between the occupying force and the occupied is beyond any training that can be given. Indeed, even the political officers and civil administrators who ran Britain's empire failed to achieve the kind of cultural understanding COIN doctrine demands today.⁶⁶ Others have been even less generous in their comments regarding the use of anthropology to support COIN and have argued that really the aim is not achieving a better cultural understanding, but providing a means to obtain intelligence to kill insurgents, something which makes the local population wary.⁶⁷

Significant criticism was also levelled at the notion that you could have something like population centric counterinsurgency. Historians point out that this notion is based on a sterilized interpretation of European and American colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. This most important failure in the

⁶³ J Lyall and I Wilson, 'Rage Against the Machines: Exploring Outcomes in Counterinsurgency Wars' *International Organization* Vol. 63, No.1 Winter 2009 67-106.

⁶⁴ S.M. Goode, 'A Historical Basis for Force Requirements in Counterinsurgency', *Parameters*, December 2009/10, 45-57.

⁶⁵ M Hassan, Two sides of the Coin' *New Statesman* November 2009.

⁶⁶ See D. French, *The British Way in Counter-Insurgency*, (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁶⁷ D. Porch, *CounterInsurgency Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

reinvention of colonial counterinsurgency today is the belief that there was ever such a thing as a hearts and minds programme embedded in British, French or American conquest of non-European worlds. This was no more than propaganda which was designed to win the support of domestic audiences for such expeditions. The reality was something far more brutal and nasty. However, a failure to understand this reality has resulted in the promulgation of a strategic and operational doctrine which is fundamentally wrong and because of this will always fail.⁶⁸

Recommendation

Given how resource intensive classic counterinsurgency as applied in Afghanistan was and the time that is required to generate success, such a strategy seems to expose the critical vulnerabilities of democratic states in terms of their fears over casualties, the dictates of the electoral cycle and sensitivities concerning national sovereignty and the employment of national forces in a coalition. This does not mean that such an approach should be abandoned, but that we should recognise that its employment will occur only under exceptional circumstances. Most important here is the recognition by all NATO members involved in a future intervention that there are clear vital national interests at stake which makes an investment in such an operation worthwhile. It is interesting to note that even the Obama Administration's studies on Afghanistan revealed a lack of consensus on how Afghanistan represented a security threat to the U.S.

Although it is recognised that cultural and language skills are difficult to create, a deep understanding of the future enemy requires action on this front. Both the Americans and the British have sought to address this problem in similar ways. They have divided the world into regions and allocated brigades responsibility for acquiring the cultural and language skills needed to operate in these regions should intervention be required.

In looking at ideal force ratios it might be a good idea for NATO to sponsor research on this topic looking at small wars where security and stability were established without this minimum requirement. This is important because it is unlikely NATO will ever generate the force ratios recommended and Afghanistan proves this point because for the duration of the war we only achieved this goal at the end when NATO was withdrawing. The British Army addressed this problem in their COIN doctrine published in 2009 and it is recommended that we examine their proposed solution and see if it can be applied as a way of addressing this problem in a future intervention.

⁶⁸ G. Gentile, *Wrong Turn: America's Deadly Embrace of COIN* (New York: New York Press, 2013).

4.3. The Need for a Strategic Plan and a Campaign Plan to drive the Operational Plan

An important omission in this war, but one that is likely to be repeated, as the recent Libyan campaign demonstrates, is the problem of creating a clear strategy and operational plan for a military coalition. In the case of Afghanistan it was not until late in the war that the U.S. began focusing on this problem. As the one senior U.S. commander put it in 2008, 'in Iraq we do what we must and in Afghanistan we do what we can.'⁶⁹ One of the first actions of the new Obama Presidency in 2009 was to address this deficiency. Of critical importance was the role played by Gen. McChrystal who was appointed commander NATO ISAF in 2009. Although he held this post for barely a year he set in place a strategic plan and a command structure which brought about greater unity of effort within the ISAF coalition.

In 2009 ISAF was composed of 42 nations which together deployed 61,000 troops within five regional commands. In addition, there were a further 57,000 U.S. troops fighting under a different chain of command within OEF. All of these elements were fighting their own separate wars and consequently one of the basic maxims of war was not followed, i.e. the need to link tactical actions to achieve strategic effect. The absence of a higher authority above the regional commands allowed national political considerations to prevail over NATO's military operations. Almost half the forces in NATO ISAF (42 in total) had national caveats of one kind or another. Some nations refused to allow their forces to operate in the south, others were not allowed to participate in combat operations. Canada, the UK and the Netherlands attempted to have national caveats removed at the Riga Summit in 2006 so that their forces could be reinforced in the south. This appeal was repeated at the Bucharest Summit in 2008. British forces participated in all major combat operations in the south.⁷⁰ This patchwork quilt of various nations continued to be given the freedom to do their own thing because there was no real higher tactical command and no operational plan. The senior officer in charge of regional commands could advise but not direct other national contingents.

In an attempt to address this deficiency, McChrystal created the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) which was empowered to coordinate the five Afghan regional commands⁷¹. In addition, he also addressed the startling lack of an operational plan which set out how NATO was going to use military power to achieve its

⁶⁹ Admiral Mike Mullen *The Washington Post* 'Pentagon Critical of NATO Allies', 12 December 2007, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/12/11/AR2007121102428.html>.

⁷⁰ V. Morelli and P. Belkin, *NATO in Afghanistan: A Test of the Trans Atlantic Alliance* Crs, December 2009.

⁷¹ This increased to six with the creation of RC South West.

political objectives in Afghanistan. According to one senior NATO ISAF commander, NATO had no operational plan until McCrystal took command in Afghanistan. That plan represented a full blown counterinsurgency campaign to be unrolled across Afghanistan in the hope that it would revive the flagging fortunes of NATO ISAF. But the important lesson here is why did it take nearly eight years for an operational plan and command system to emerge which allowed military actions at the tactical level to be translated into strategic success. Equally important how do we prevent this from happening in the future.

These problems fed down into the conduct of the intervention in Afghanistan and I believe will also play an important role in shaping the behaviour and outcome of future NATO interventions. Below are the strategic and operational challenges which emerged in direct response to the higher level problems set out above.

Recommendation

- Create an operational plan that links tactical action to the strategic object of the war.
- Create an Operational Level HQ which can impose the theatre commander's vision of how military assets can be used in time and space to produce the right tactical effects.
- Impose unity of command rather than command by consent as a way of reducing the autonomy of contributing nations.

4.4. The Need for Realistic Goals Consistent with Commitments of Time, Personnel, Resources and Political Will

The discussions were mainly based on the observation, that the goal of the campaign has to be realistic and consistent with available time, personnel, resources, and the political will. This observation gets to the heart of one of the most important criticisms of the war on terror and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. In essence, this question focuses on the problem of how do you balance ends, ways and means in making a successful strategy. In exploring this subject we need to begin by asking what do we mean by the term strategy and most important what level of strategy are we focusing on? Actually, many of the questions posed by this workshop also strayed heavily into the operational domain and so we need to define this as well. According to Clausewitz, "tactics teaches the use of armed forces in the engagement; strategy is the use of engagements

for the object of the war”.⁷² In today's parlance this amounts to ensuring that all military activity is focused on the achievement of the political goal rather than concentrating on each tactical action in isolation and recognising that tactical actions have no utility in and of themselves unless they help in achieving the object of the war. Operations provide a gearing mechanism between strategy and tactics and provide a commander with the conceptual tools to ensure tactical actions follow the path set out by strategy.⁷³ In general, both areas fall under the domain of the military. Above this sits grand or national strategy. This is a political rather than military activity and addresses the key questions upon which the successful use of force relies. These questions can be distilled into three broad areas: why governments opt to use force, the resources they allocate to achieve this mission and the way in which force is used. Considerable criticism has been levelled at the failure of national governments to think sufficiently about the strategic challenges posed by NATO's recent intervention in Afghanistan and indeed the whole construct of the war on terror.⁷⁴ These problems stemmed from a failure to set out clearly defined political objectives, insufficient resources to achieve the mission and an appropriate strategic construct through which to use force to achieve the political aim of the intervention. Inevitably, these problems were replicated at the NATO level. This happened even though NATO did have a clear political aim, at least on paper. As such the declared goal was to create a:

- “A self-sustaining, moderate and democratic Afghan government able to exercise its sovereign authority, independently, throughout Afghanistan”⁷⁵
- “We (ISAF) will remain until the people of Afghanistan have developed government structures and security forces that are sustainable and capable of ensuring security of all Afghans without outside support”.⁷⁶

Although this is a clear political objective it proved problematic in implementing it within NATO. The first and most basic problem was that a number of NATO states joined the coalition for reasons that had little to do with achieving the mission set out above. Their interest stemmed entirely from their efforts to cultivate their alliance with the United States. This observation applied to states like Estonia and even Germany and France were accused of using Afghanistan as a way of repairing the damage to the trans-Atlantic relationship caused by the deep

⁷² C. von Clausewitz, *On War* translated by M. Howard and P. Paret, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

⁷³ A.A. Svechin, *Strategy* (Minneapolis: East View, 1991), 107.

⁷⁴ H Strachan, *The Direction of War Contemporary Strategy in Historical Perspective* (Oxford:Oxford University Press, 2013),

⁷⁵ ISAF OPLAN 2006:1.

⁷⁶ www.2hq.nato.int/ISAF/mission_role.htm

divisions which had emerged over the legality of the U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003. It is difficult to know how to deal with this problem but it needs to be managed.

If future interventions continue to take place within the context of failed and failing states some might argue that the pursuit of stabilisation and reconstruction within this environment was at best naive and that rebuilding a failed state was all but impossible, i.e. it is simply too ambitious.⁷⁷ The perceived success of U.S. efforts to secure and stabilise Iraq led to the belief that the strategic framework employed there could be made to work in Afghanistan.⁷⁸ However, this was contested a debate which has taken on greater salience since 2014 and the rise of ISIS/DAESH in Iraq.

Recommendation

Again make sure you are pursuing vital national interests as opposed to the pursuit of an ideological struggle. This makes it easier to set out an end state and to know when you have fulfilled your mission militarily and politically.

The military must be more assertive in airing their concerns when presented with a government proposal to use force. (Does NATO have the capacity to provide its own critical assessment so that plans are based on more than wishful thinking?)

National militaries will do their own analysis of ends, ways and means, but NATO also needs to look at this problem from the perspective of an alliance/coalition. Education and training of both civilian and military staff which looks at planning at the strategic and operational level in an alliance context within a COIN CT environment might ensure a more realistic recognition of what can be achieved when deciding to use force.

A fully resourced Phase IV Plan is also vital before the operation begins so that there is no danger that events following on from the war result in the victor snatching defeat from the jaws of victory as the defeated state falls into chaos creating the conditions in which insurgency thrives. We failed to do this in Afghanistan, Iraq and most recently Libya and in all cases the successful use of force was followed by chaos. Strategic planning needs to pay attention to this area of activity. This will ensure we create a better plan. The regular training of civilian and military staff in this area will also help reduce frictions between military and civilian staff and help promote greater integration and delivery of a

⁷⁷ J. Dobbins, *NATO's Big Mission: The US Europe and the Challenge of Afghanistan*, Brookings' Institute, November 2007, 11.

⁷⁸ See B. Woodward, *Obama's War* Kindle Edition (London: Simon and Shuster, 2010).

comprehensive approach in NATO. This recognises the importance of organisations, processes and people in helping to achieve a more cohesive delivery of strategic effect.

There was also a strong belief that we need to limit our liabilities in these conflicts. Most important here was the view that we should not become entangled in 'state/nation-building'. NATO's function is to use force to provide security. Political and economic developments are better tasked to the UN or regional economic forums like the EU. An important sub question is the links NATO forces have with these other organizations.

If you do have to intervene do so in a way that does not result in a long protracted campaign. This means using force less frequently and more decisively. The key to success here is to deploy sufficient force, something NATO failed to do in Kosovo 1999 and more recently Afghanistan.

4.5. Different Forces in “Area of Operations” with Different Missions and Different Rules of Engagement

This problem reflects a deeper issue which affects Coalitions generally and focuses on the extent to which conflicting political objectives lead to conflicting military activities. The most obvious manifestation of this problem in Afghanistan was the conflict between OEF and ISAF. Although the Bonn process set out the wider strategic goals of the campaign in Afghanistan, which highlighted the importance of political and economic development, it is important to remember the U.S.' primary mission was to eliminate Al Qaeda and the Taliban, and prevent the former from returning to Afghanistan in the future. As such, its focus for at least the first four years of the intervention was on counterterrorism; in essence, this amounted to a policy of find and kill Al Qaeda and Taliban fighters. This mission was de-conflicted from NATO ISAF's wider remit to stabilize and develop governance by limiting ISAF's area of activity. Initially this meant confining ISAF to the area of Kabul in 2002 when the force was initially set up. This happened even though the British, who played a key role in the formation of ISAF, created plans to ensure it had a presence in all the key cities. However, this proposal was rejected by the U.S. government because they realized ISAF would conflict with OEF operations. This became a problem when in 2003 it was decided to expand NATO ISAF so that it covered all of Afghanistan this then led to a very real conflict between OEF and NATO ISAF operations in that the first was primarily concerned with killing insurgents and the latter was concerned about promoting governance. This at least was the experience of the British in their area of operations in Helmand and in 2007 they requested the removal of all OEF forces in their area because of the impact of OEF attacks on their campaign objectives. In addition, the CIA also maintained a local force of some 3,000 Afghan soldiers which it

employed to do CT in what were called Counter Terrorism Pursuit Teams (CTPTs). This force was trained and equipped by the CIA which took its orders from the President of the United States.⁷⁹

Recommendation

You need unity of command in Coalition operations so that all coalition forces are working towards a common set of military and political objectives. In this case OEF activities undermined the wider strategic plan which is why the NATO ISAF Commander demanded these forces should be placed under his command in 2009.

4.6. The Need for a Multifaceted Approach rather than the Military Means Alone

It was agreed the Comprehensive Approach (the integration of civil and military activities in a COIN campaign) was the single best way of ensuring that all the levers of power are brought to bear on the insurgency. This reflects the fact that, in contrast to regular conventional war, COIN is 80% political and 20% military. The British have enshrined this approach within the national bureaucratic infrastructure from the National Security Council downwards to the PRT in Helmand.

At the level of NATO we need to ensure that the military and other government agencies coordinate their approach from the start of the planning process to the delivery of security and development on the ground. This means that civil agencies need to accept greater risk when deploying so that the military are not left alone in achieving the goals of the campaign. Similarly, the military need to accept greater input from the civilian element in the planning process. It is also recommended that the military should be placed under a civilian commander in theatre and he or she should bear full overall responsibility for the successful prosecution of the campaign.

Recommendation

National governments need to institutionalize the principle of the Comprehensive Approach so that all the levers of national power can be concentrated to produce the right political effect. This principle should also be elevated to the level of NATO and its institutional architecture should allow a cross government approach to be facilitated in all NATO operations.

⁷⁹ B. Woodward, *Obama's War* Kindle Edition (London: Simon and Shuster, 2010).

4.7. Respecting the Traditional Indigenous Ways of Selecting Who Rules in an Effort to Increase Legitimacy of the Host Nation Government

In the case of Afghanistan it was the general view that the campaign was doomed because of the illegitimacy of the host nation government in the eyes of the people, and NATO ISAF was compromised by its association with the Afghan Government. The lack of legitimacy was caused by a variety of factors but it was recognized that the international community played a critical role in causing this problem starting with the Bonn Agreement in 2001 and the constitutional and political settlement created by the Transitional Authority. The United States also selected Hamid Karzai to become President and played an instrumental role in preventing the return of the monarchy. Such interference was resented by most Afghans and damaged Karzai, many compared him to former royal puppets imposed by Britain in the nineteenth century.

Recommendation

According to Richard Betts, military intervention to support a fragile or unstable regime will only work if it reinforces the development of a stable political system. Fundamental in achieving this goal is recognizing we cannot impose a political settlement or system of governance, which is what we did in Afghanistan. Of critical importance is that local solutions be found to deal with local problems. From NATO's perspective it is important that the political brokers ask and listen to what it is the people in theatre want. This requirement trickles down to all levels of interaction between NATO and the host government, especially in the training of its security forces.

4.8. The Relation between the Ability of the Insurgent Group to Gain External Support and the Success of the Insurgency

According to Mao Tse Tung, a vital ingredient in determining the success of an insurgency was access to a safe base area where insurgents could rest and recover before going back into action.⁸⁰ In the case of China's vast land space this was relatively easy to achieve, but in other campaigns, where geography constrained the ability of insurgents to create safe bases, they have relied on safe bases in neighboring states. Sometimes this is done with the support of the government of that country (Pakistan and Afghanistan) and sometimes this has been opposed (Laos and South Vietnam, 1960-73) There is strong statistical evidence, based on a study done by RAND, which shows a strong correlation between insurgent success and access to external support. This support takes on a

⁸⁰ Mao Tse Tung, 'Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War' in *Selected Writings of Mao Tse Tung* (Peking: Peking Foreign Relations Press, 1967, 167).

number of forms. This includes money, intelligence, training and access to safe base areas in the supporting country's territory. This problem was recognized early in NATO's expansion in the southern region of Afghanistan in 2006, but the problem of stopping the infiltration of Taliban insurgents into Afghanistan was never resolved. This failure was caused partly by the length of the border and the nature of the terrain.

Recommendation

In some cases where the terrain allows the use of aerial and electronic surveillance or where it is possible to erect physical barriers to prevent the movement of forces across a border then every effort should be made to deny the insurgent access via these means. Indeed there are many examples of where these techniques have been used and succeeded (Algeria, Borneo, Oman, Northern Ireland). However, in the case of a future Afghan scenario, where closure of the border is all but impossible, then it will be necessary to find a way to disrupt, dismantle and destroy insurgent safe base areas. In such cases the best way to do this is to obtain the support of the national government whose territory is being used by the insurgents and employ their forces to clear the insurgents out. This will require a significant diplomatic effort and the provision of material support to help the government achieve this goal. If it is believed impossible to achieve the mission in this way then perhaps it might be best for NATO not to intervene.

4.9. Separating the Threat from the Local Population

The need to separate the insurgent from the population is a basic principle in COIN. This can be done in a variety of ways, but one of the best ways is to ensure that the host nation government maintains a permanent garrison in villages, towns and cities. This will mean breaking one of the principles of war: concentration of force, but by providing physical security to the people we deny the insurgents the chance to coerce and threaten the people. People need to know that if they are going to cooperate with the government that they will not suffer reprisals at the hands of the insurgents. Additional action which can be taken to limit the insurgent's freedom of movement amongst the population can include the use of curfews and food control programmes which limit how much food each family has and prevents any surpluses being given to feed insurgents.

Recommendation

The key to success in separating insurgents from the wider population requires the following:

- The erection of physical barriers around population centres or border from where insurgents infiltrate.
- The establishment of local security forces which reside with the population. This can be a local militia or another military formation but the protection they provide must be both day and night.
- The exploitation of electronic surveillance to monitor the movement of suspects.

Most important, the creation of an effective police force who can generate good human intelligence on the insurgency.

4.10. Understanding the Motives of Local Insurgents and their Local Sources of Support

Insurgency is essentially a political act. As such understanding why people support an insurgency allows the government to identify solutions which address the cause of this violence and provides a political manifesto for change. In general COIN doctrine assumes that insurgency is a product of economic and political grievances caused by a failure of government to provide basic services to its population. Groups can exploit these grievances by linking them to a particular narrative or ideology which explains their plight in terms of exploitation and injustice. It is important for security forces to challenge this narrative and address the grievances of the wider population. This means killing the insurgent is secondary to the goal of political action.

Recommendation

- The host government must address the social and economic grievances which create fertile conditions for revolution.
- It is vital that the host government creates a counter narrative which challenges the insurgent ideology.

4.11. Diplomacy and Frontline Soldiers in Counterinsurgency

Training in cultural awareness and some proficiency in languages should facilitate the ability of the soldier to act as a diplomat. It was also recommended that soldiers be screened to determine their suitability to act as the principal interlocutor between their military and the local population or its armed forces. One solution which was proposed was the use of emotional intelligence to assess a person's suitability and identify areas of their interpersonal skills which might be

improved. However, it is best if interaction with the local population is conducted by local people rather than foreign soldiers, if possible. This is also more cost effective. It is estimated that it cost \$12,500 to train and Afghan soldier but \$250,000 to deploy an American soldier to Afghanistan.

Recommendation

NATO personnel should only be used to train local security forces and only a small element of that training team should then go out on operations with the unit they have trained. This achieves the best of all worlds in that it means security is provided by the indigenous population, which reduces the problems of cultural friction, but expertise is retained in the field, which means these formations will cope better when they come under fire. Once they have sufficient experience to operate on their own as battalion, brigade and divisional formations then the trainers can be removed. The importance of keeping trainers embedded with the formations they trained was demonstrated by the experiences of the American trained Iraqi forces during Charge of the Knights in 2008, which were largely positive. As a result, the British quickly adopted this practice.

4.12. The Effects of National Caveats to Counterinsurgency

This resulted in a long and heated debate, but it was recognized that the use of caveats was the price NATO had to pay if allies were going to deploy their forces in a war zone. From the perspective of the U.S. the operational and tactical problems created by the use of national caveats was tolerated because of the political legitimacy allied contributions generated for intervention in Afghanistan. This is likely to remain an important consideration for both the U.S. and NATO in future intervention operations at the political and strategic level. National caveats symbolize the efforts member states of NATO made in an effort to limit their exposure to the costs and risks associated with the intervention in Afghanistan compared to the interests at stake for them. As has already been said, few member states involved in NATO deployed forces because they saw a clear link between their own security and Afghanistan's stability. Consequently the pain threshold and resilience of member states to any setback in Afghanistan was actually very low. If we look first at the cost of deploying forces to Afghanistan a good way of illustrating the economic stress induced by these interventions is to compare U.S. and Taliban costs incurred in Afghanistan. In 2012, the U.S. deployed 90,000 soldiers and supported the training and employment of over 300,000 Afghan soldiers. In total the U.S. was spending \$100 billion annually in support of this war. In contrast, the Taliban sustained its war with between 20,000 and 40,000 fighters and had revenues \$100-\$200 million (Jones 2013, p.1).

In addition to the cost one also needs to think about the risks involved in such a campaign, especially in terms of the casualties likely to be caused by such conflicts. In the case of Afghanistan an aversion to casualties made the provision of security extremely difficult as a number of states were unwilling to put their forces in harm's way. In some cases this need rather than the NATO goal became the driving force underlying a national government's strategy. The impact of this cannot be overstated and as Cimbala explains the problem of how to ensure a just distribution of cost and risk within NATO has become an acute problem in NATO Operations more generally (Cimbala, 2007, 16). In the case of Afghanistan, confusion over the mission caused some states to assume their forces were deploying into a semi permissive environment in which peace support rather than counterinsurgency was the military mission. This assumption proved wrong, but having sold the deployment of their national forces on this basis to their electorates it became impossible for them to reverse the declared mission. The question then is not "can NATO stop the use of national caveats", but how it can mitigate and reduce the worst effects of this practice. The key here is to devise ways of reducing the political and military risk states face when NATO deploys and uses national contingents. One answer is to use only those forms of military power which create a low risk, for example air and sea power or the employment of special forces. The most problematic is the deployment of a large land component in theatre.

Recommendation

- Be clear and honest about the nature of the mission so that all national governments know what they are getting involved in and the likely risks facing their forces.
- Ensure all those involved have vital national interests at stake and as such are resilient to any escalation in cost and or risk experienced in this conflict.
- Where possible impose unity of command and reduce the ability of national contingents to deflect orders given by the operational HQ back to their national capitals.

4.13. The Provision of Services in Support of the Campaign to Win the Hearts and Minds

One of the big criticisms made of the Afghan campaign was the way in which NATO nations presumed they knew best and failed to ask what it was the Afghans wanted. Any future NATO doctrine should make clear the need to empower the people to determine what kind of support they need and facilitate the provision of

economic and social assistance through Afghan rather than international agencies. This will also help legitimise the government in the eyes of the people. The disadvantage of this approach is that if international community accepts that this may lead to an increase in the level of corruption which could have a negative impact on the campaign. But in essence, we come back to the principle of asking the right questions and being willing to respect the choices made by the host government and the people.

4.14. The Role of Warlords and Tribal Militias

In Afghanistan we seemed to face a dilemma. You could have democracy or stability and security, but we could not have both. Sadly we failed to achieve either and our pursuit of both caused a contradiction in NATO ISAF strategy. Unfortunately, this problem was exacerbated because the U.S. used the warlords to help them hunt Al Qaeda and the Taliban and it is rumored this extended to ignoring their involvement in the production and sale of opium. It has also been claimed that Karzai relied heavily on Afghan warlords to extend Kabul's governance. It is also interesting to note that the current Afghan vice President is an Uzbek Warlord.

One of our groups raised an important question: are all warlords bad? He offered the example of Ismail Khan who is a warlord but brought stability to the Hazara population in western Afghanistan. It has also been suggested that British insistence on the removal of the existing Warlord/ Governor in Helmand in 2006, because of his close connections with opium, caused a power vacuum which was rapidly filled by the Taliban. Had he remained in post his political connections and his militia might have deterred a Taliban offensive in Helmand and allowed the British to conduct their stabilization mission rather than the war that consumed most of their energies. This suggests that Warlords and militias are not always inimical to good governance, and in some instances NATO may have no choice to tolerate such groups.

Recommendation

Whether or not NATO engages with Warlords should depend on the following:

- If NATO has been asked by a legitimate government to support its counterinsurgency campaign then it should work with the government to achieve its aims, this will probably include the elimination of warlords.
- In the case of a failed state where there is no government, but a NATO intervention becomes imperative, then NATO should work with the UN to

establish a government and help them to consolidate political power over any armed groups.

- In those circumstances where the establishment of good governance is not a strategic imperative it might be expedient to use warlords and their militias to pursue NATO interests.

Given what has been discussed above, it might be easier to work with warlords and their militias rather than trying to impose a new political order at the regional and local level. Influence and control of warlords might be exerted through financial payments and through this influence achieve good enough governance which focused on the provision of stability and security for the people.

This pragmatic approach is consistent with the recommendations already made and permits limited engagement politically, economically and militarily by NATO. In addition, it also allows the local population and their existing leadership to decide what is best for them. This may not result in a just political settlement, but it might allow NATO to achieve its strategic aims at a reduced cost to its member states which will make future interventions more palatable.

4.15. The Drug Trade and the Dependence of the Afghan Economy on Poppy Cultivation

Given the dependence of the local population on poppy cultivation to survive it is difficult to see what NATO could do to address this problem without alienating the people and a large part of the existing political leadership in Afghanistan. The Senlis Council recommended legalising opium farming in Afghanistan and placing it under the control of the Afghan government, but it was feared this would not end the continued existence of a black market in opium - in fact it might make it worse. No answer emerged from our discussions on this matter. However, it is important to recognize that of the three principal insurgent groups in Afghanistan the Haqqani network's revenue came from charities operating in the Gulf rather than via opium. Consequently, action against the drug trade was unlikely to bring the insurgency to an end.

Recommendation

One solution is to tackle this problem at the demand rather than supply end of the chain. This will require governments in the U.S. and Europe to reduce and stop the consumption of this commodity by their citizens which will serve to depress prices and make opium less appealing. It also means the resourcing of this activity can be channelled via national governments in their own countries rather than Afghanistan. Most importantly, this ceases to be a NATO concern except in

terms of interdiction and destruction of insurgent networks and supply chains, which is a military mission and fits in with what NATO does.

4.16. The Failure to Establish a Robust and Effective Criminal Justice System in Afghanistan and its Effect on Security and Stability

One of the principal ways the Taliban were able to attack and undermine the Afghan Government was their ability to deliver justice quickly and effectively and it became an important way in which to win the support of the people. In simple terms our aspirations and ambitions were too ambitious and failed to recognize how important the provision of this basic facility was to people -they needed justice today not in five or ten years. It was also feared that the presence of so many Taliban and Al Qaeda prisoners in the Afghan prison system was causing the radicalization of large elements of the rest of the Afghan population and as a result the insurgency was winning the hearts and minds of the prisoners

There is another dimension to this issue and it relates to the detention facilities set up by the U.S. and the UK as a way of holding captured insurgents in detention. The secrecy surrounding these facilities caused Afghans to be suspicious of both U.S. and UK motives which did little to win the hearts and minds of the people. However, the only viable solution to this problem was to help the Afghans create their own criminal justice system.

Recommendation

Assuming NATO is forced to play the role of an occupying power again in a future operation it will need to address this deficiency. This could include the following:

- A deployable paramilitary or military police force capable of surviving in hostile environments and able to impose law and order in NATO's orbit, which takes us back to need for careful Phase IV planning.
- The capacity to resurrect the existing criminal justice system in the occupied country.
- A willingness to look at sanctions and punishments that do not involve expensive solutions like courts which require professional legal experts and prison and rehabilitation facilities, but something more rough and ready that fulfils the people's expectations.

5. ASSISTING TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE AND FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT: PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND CULTURAL AWARENESS

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5.1. Introduction

This chapter reflects the discussion of the ISAF Strategic Communications (StratCom) effort in Afghanistan from December 2001 – December 2014. Furthermore, given the nature of the Afghanistan Lessons Learned Workshop, it also reflects some of the discussions on the periphery of the main, roundtable discussion. While the author was not originally tasked to produce this chapter, every effort has been made to accurately reflect the discussion that took place and this forms Part One (Workshop Discussions and Deductions) of this chapter. It does not, however, reflect the tangential but necessary discussion of Counter Narcotics activity that took place within the StratCom session.

In addition, there is also some discussion of the wider issues in strategic communications that are of relevance to future NATO operations. These are given in Part Two and reflect the author's own opinions and not the views of the workshops attendees.

There have already been a number of useful studies of StratComs in Afghanistan: the May 2012 study by RAND, 'The Effectiveness of U.S. Military Information Operations in Afghanistan 2001-2010' along with Major General (Ret'd) Andrew Mackay, Commander Steve Tatham PhD & Dr Lee Rowland's response to that report, the provocatively titled, 'Why RAND Missed The Point' and Dr. Arturo G. Munoz's response in turn, 'Response To "Why Rand Missed The Point"' (in other words, 'Why "Why Rand Missed the Point" Missed the Point'); Chief StratCom SHAPE, Mark Laity's 'Perception Becomes Reality: The Afghan Strategic Communication Challenge' (2013); and 'NATO Strategic Communication: More to be Done?' by Cdr. Dr. Steve Tatham & Lt Col Rita Le Page (2014). A number of themes run throughout, notably doctrinal definitions, effective target audience analysis, measurement, the training of personnel.

For the purposes of this chapter we use the following, NAC-approved definition of Strategic Communications:

'The Coordinated and appropriate use of NATO communications activities and capabilities - Public Diplomacy, Public Affairs, Military Public Affairs, Information

*Operations (IO) and Psychological Operations as appropriate in support of alliance policies, operations and activities and in order to advance NATO's aims.*⁸²

5.2. Workshop Discussions and Deductions

The questions discussed were:

- To what extent was NATO successful in increasing cultural and social awareness of ISAF troops? Did this affect CT/COIN operations?
- What measures should be taken in terms of public perception to accomplish potential NATO operations in the future?
- How effective was NATO's strategic communication efforts in terms of reducing local support to terrorist groups/insurgents?
- What message and in what manner did NATO deliver to insurgent/terrorist groups? How effective were these efforts against insurgent/terrorist groups?

5.2.1. Definitions & Doctrine

There is an identified requirement to revisit doctrine and definitions, particularly of fundamental terms like 'Strategic Communications', 'Information Operations' ('IO') and 'Psychological Operations' (Psyops), as well as the myriad other associated terms ('influence activities', 'media ops', 'public information', 'public affairs' and so on). It is interesting to note that core definitions had to be provided during the discussion in Ankara, which is in no way a slur on the participants, but an indicator of the continuing confusion regarding StratCom.

Compounding this, individual nations have developed their own particular understanding of the various terms and associated doctrines for their employment. The considerable variation between nations inevitably resulted in inconsistencies in the application of StratCom at the tactical and operational level. This was very clearly demonstrated in ISAF's primary Psyops unit, the Combined Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (CJPOTF) as it transitioned through various national commands (German, U.S. and Romanian).

Another critical area for discussion at the doctrinal level is that of attribution: the current policy of only using attributed messaging is overly influenced by PAO doctrine ('always tell the truth') and is not suited to the wider spectrum of

⁸² PO (2009) 0141, NATO StratCom Policy, 29 September 2009

StratCom activities in the Information Age. This is not to say that NATO should consider adopting 'black psyops' (falsely attributed messaging), but 'grey' messaging, where the output is unattributed was routinely used by both NATO and USFOR-A as well as by individual nations to avoid the 'taint' of ISAF/western branding (which would have then negatively influenced the way the message was perceived). Messaging through local interlocutors also proved effective and should be considered routine in future operations.

It is worth noting that currently there is a doctrinal battle between three approaches to StratCom activities: one based on the academic approach that favours a social sciences model of sociological and anthropological analysis that prizes, quite rightly, behavioural shifts as the outcome; one based on political campaigning that prizes shorter term behavioural shifts in response to; and one based on a commercial advertising/marketing model that treats the Target Audiences as consumers, to be segmented and targeted with the aim of them 'buying' the proposition on offer. The three are diametrically opposed to each other with strong arguments coming from the academic approach to the detriment of the other two: but the reality is that all three approaches have their merits. Despite a strong argument, the problem with the academic approach is that it neglects the critical element of operationalisation, something that political and advertising/marketing approaches are, by their nature, very focused upon, which is why they have been adopted as models for StratCom activities (they deliver something and that something is specific and easily quantifiable). A reasonable consideration of the positives of each approach should happen and an operating doctrine developed as a result. (It is worth noting that the doctrinal battle might well be the root of the confusion reference at the start of this section.)

Recommendation

- Standardising understanding of those terms across NATO nations (or whenever they are operating within a NATO framework at least) will prove a useful common understanding for future NATO operations.
- Default attribution of outputs is outmoded and should be reconsidered.
- Revised doctrine required for NATO StratCom.

5.2.2. StratCom in the Planning Process

It was noted by fellow participant, Heidi Meyer, that the Russian military, when planning, begin with the StratCom Effect and then construct their plan around it. This was discussed and clarified as being the placing of the StratCom Effect at the centre of operational planning, not the activity of StratCom per se.

This does not mean, for instance, that Information Operations can be conducted in isolation from actions: they cannot and they should not.

For example, maintaining Home Nation support for the Troop Contributing Nations's participation in the mission might be one of the StratCom Effects which would in turn influence Presence, Posture & Profile ('Triple P') in terms of use of armoured vehicles, personal protective equipment (PPE) etc to protect troops physically from injury – the home population need to feel that their boys (and girls) are being given the best protection possible against the hazards they face.

Balancing that against the effect these protective measures have on interactions with the population in the operational area is a separate discussion. If the StratCom Effect was focused on increasing local population support for the continued presence of NATO troops, then PPP might be completely different and focused not on protection of the troops but on making them accessible to the local population. In the case of the Afghanistan mission, the former was the case.

It was noted that lip service is often paid to StratCom as being at the core of planning and operations, when it is in fact usually an after-thought.

These observations are not new: David Kilcullen made same observation some time ago:

'We typically design physical operations first then craft Information Operations to explain our actions. This is reverse of Al-Qaeda's approach.' For them the main effort is information, for us it is a supporting effort' called that more effective approach "armed propaganda".

As the Prophet Mohammed observed, perhaps we should use our enemies' strengths in weaponry and tactics against them.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the position of StratCom in the planning process be reassessed and, if necessary, re-emphasised.

5.2.3. Training

There were consistent gaps in the training of ISAF StratCom personnel. Firstly, there were never enough trained personnel to fill all the StratCom posts and, secondly, even when personnel were trained, there were major inconsistencies between national training courses. At a deeper level, StratCom continued to be populated with 'talented amateurs', a reflection of a lack of a consistent StratCom

career path in many nations. It was noted that no 'fast streamer' in the military deliberately pursues the StratCom route.

All of these factors contributed to patchy performance in StratCom and constant 're-learning' of the same lessons of what worked and what didn't as well as the ever-present 'good ideas' (which were, in fact, old ideas that had been disproved some time ago – but which a lack of institutional knowledge allowed to go unchecked). There were some attempts to mitigate these factors through programmes such as 'Afghan Hands' (tying some personnel into a series of operational tours to build up institutional knowledge in key area) and the use of civilian consultants or contracted services in the field of StratCom.

Recommendation

- Centralised NATO training courses in StratCom disciplines to ensure consistency (in line with doctrinal review mentioned before).
- Standardisation of NATO courses with national courses across StratCom disciplines to ensure inter-operability in a future multi-national environment. (It is recognised that this is a challenge given the diverse nature of NATO member states and likelihood of additional participating nations from outwith NATO: but that does not mean it should be attempted.)
- Increased frequency of NATO courses to generate the required numbers of trained personnel for likely future operational requirements.
- Clear career progression in StratCom (although not necessarily a branch or trade) to be encouraged at the national level.

5.2.3. Media Sector Development

One of the great successes of the ISAF period was the development of a vibrant, self-sufficient Afghan media sector. ISAF and other entities contributed both directly (through dedicated funding and training) and indirectly (through product placement and the direct employment of media professionals) to this achievement. Much focus is given to the Moby Group, an Australian-Afghan owned media network, but there were other successes too: Pahjwok, an Afghan newswire, and countless local radio stations that began their lives as ISAF Radio in a Box (RIAB) stations.

There are still major gaps, though. Access to media, especially TV and internet, remains inconsistent, particularly in rural areas. Despite a myriad number

of military, government and NGO media training courses, Afghanistan still lacks a truly independent journalist profession based around a spirit of investigative journalism and freedom of the press and which plays a fundamental role in politics and society.

However, Media Sector Development, which would be a core activity in similar post-conflict operations if administered by the UN, is not currently a discipline within NATO StratCom and is only informally covered under Civil Affairs/Stabilisation activities. This misses a major opportunity to develop the necessary conduits to inform and influence the population, a critical capacity in both counterterrorism and counterinsurgency.

One rejoinder: assisting in the establishment of a healthy media sector in a post-conflict environment is not equal to setting up propaganda channels. The healthy media sector should feel confident that it can criticise with impunity (but at the same time in security) the government, violent non-state actors – and intervening foreign entities such as NATO. That is the price of establishing a healthy media sector.

Recommendation

Media Sector Development should be added to StratCom disciplines and a doctrine developed that focuses on achieving military effects in the CT/COIN environment.

5.2.4. ANSF StratCom Training

Communications training for the ANSF was offered at all levels but suffered from three factors: the constant turnover of staff, linked to higher commanders coming and going with an 'entourage' (which would include their StratCom staff); a lack of aptitude in many candidates who were placed in StratCom roles (the 'bums on seats' policy); and the limitations that were placed upon the training the ANSF were given in StratCom (essentially PAO training).

While the first two points are cultural and require a deeper cultural shift within the ANSF (and Afghan society), the final point can be addressed. If the capacity building of local forces is recognised as a likely future element of NATO operations, then training needs to move away from basic Public Affairs Officer training (how to write a press release; how to run a press conference) and become focused on the wider realm of StratCom: outreach/ engagement, using new media (Twitter, Facebook and local equivalents), operating in the digital space, the effective use of Presence, Posture & Profile as well as Deception and Physical Destruction operations. While there are understandable qualms about giving

capabilities to local forces that could be subsequently misused, those capabilities are now openly available and the risk is more than offset by the potential reward of delivering effective StratCom effects through trusted local voices.

Recommendation

Review StratCom training for local forces to provide a more relevant syllabus for the Information Age.

5.2.5. Measures of Effectiveness (MoE)

Public perception polling was used as the default method of measuring the effectiveness of StratCom activities but there are significant questions about the effectiveness of polling as a measurement tool. However, at this point, there is little of substance being provided as an alternative and polling continues to be the primary means for MoE.

Recommendation

NATO should review tools for the MoE and provide guidance for future operations.

5.2.6. Tactical Communications vs Strategic Communications

The issue of different approaches being successful at the tactical and strategic levels was raised but time did not allow for a full discussion of the subject. However, there is considerable evidence that highlights the need to delegate some capacity to communicate to tactical level commanders to achieve localised effects (within the overall strategy).

5.2.7. Contractors

Extensive use was made of contracted capabilities during the ISAF mission. However, time did not allow for a full discussion of this critical issue for future operations during the COE-DAT workshop. Issues such as which capabilities should be contracted out and which should not, how contracts should be designed, awarded and managed as well as the use of local contractors (as opposed to home nation) are all deserving of serious discussion.

5.3. Wider Issues in Strategic Communications of Relevance to Future NATO Operations

Beyond the bounds of the workshop discussion, there are other issues within strategic communications, the discussion of which should be integrated into future NATO operational planning.

5.3.1. The Dangers of Doctrine and Delineation

The doctrinal discussion is, while inevitable with a military-political organisation such as NATO, in many ways unhelpful and distracts from effective operational delivery. Strategic communications expert James P. Farwell uses two examples from the realm of Public Affairs, the twin obsessions with facts and with delineation of StratCom disciplines.

Farwell notes that the rigid enforcement of only factual outputs at the most basic level slows engagement in an ever-quickening environment, allowing other actors to seize and hold developing narratives. This clearly has to change to adapt to the reality of the Information Age. But at a more fundamental level, he notes the fallacy of 'facts', because effective strategic communications is about the selection of resonant facts. In truth, perception is more important than reality.

He also notes the absurdity of delineation between disciplines within StratCom, most notably between Media Ops/PAO and 'the rest'. As Farwell rightly points out, the military is unique in this delineation: nowhere in politics, commerce or government does this segregation occur.

The media and an increasingly aware and connected populace do not recognise this delineation either. They instead prioritise the credibility and integrity of the messenger as the key factors in establishing the trustworthiness of a message. As a result, there is a fundamental requirement for institutions such as NATO to adjust to the realities of modern communication. Strategic communications should be viewed as something that everyone does all the time, with all the implicit risks that brings.

To draw an analogy, everyone in the military carries and knows how to use a rifle: some are more expert than others and there are elements that make it their career to focus purely on the art of marksmanship or the trade of the armourer. But everyone in uniform is trained and therefore to be expected to know how to competently use a rifle. This should underlie the future positioning of strategic communications within NATO operations: something that everyone should be expected to do with confidence based on the appropriate training and support.

5.3.2. Operationalising the Intent

But in many ways the doctrinal discussion is academic and is as irrelevant to actual delivery as an academic would be in battle. The focus needs to be on operationalising the intent and there are clear lessons that can be learned from ISAF's Afghanistan experience in this area. The damaging effect of unclear and constantly shifting objectives in Afghanistan was referred to on numerous occasions during the workshop and does not require repetition. However, this was compounded in Afghanistan by a lack of proper understanding of the target audiences from a sociological, anthropological and psychological viewpoint. Without clear objectives and an understanding of the Target Audience, success in Afghanistan was always going to be limited.

This is not to say that Afghanistan did not have successes. At the tactical level the communication of the deed proved highly successful, just as it had done in Iraq. A populace will not make the attitudinal and behavioural changes that are fundamental to the societal shift that was sought in Afghanistan if it is not comfortable in one of the most fundamentals of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, security. Where ISAF forces demonstrated their commitment and guaranteed that security, through village stability operations that challenged the enemy's counter narratives, then the population did feel confident in taking up arms against the Taliban and they subsequently felt confident in sending their children to school and voting. But where security lasted until the dust cloud from the departing armoured vehicles had settled, they did not. This is a fundamental lesson for future NATO operations: action is the critical component of effective strategic communications. It is tactical actions that combine to achieve the operational and strategic effect, re-emphasising Cdr. Steve Tatham's 'Strategic Corporal'.

That said, even the most adaptive elements of the ISAF, Special Operations Forces, lacked the core skills required to outmanoeuvre the enemy in the communications space. This prompts a question for discussion: can institutions such as the military (and maybe even government) ever be effective at strategic communications as their adversaries?

Once again, James Farwell provides food for thought: that the military, given its inherent role in future conflict and post-conflict engagements by NATO, has to find a way to meet the requirements of the Information Age. He puts forward the concept of new, tailored, eclectic organisations in the spirit of World War II's U.S. Office of Strategic Services (OSS) or UK Special Operations Executive (SOE). Special Operations Forces may well provide the hub for these new entities, and developing them, and staffing them with cyber-skilled, politically savvy, and creative personnel would enhance their traditional strengths. Consideration of what skillsets are required in StratCom for future operations is essential.

5.3.3. To Entertain

This brings me to my final point about how NATO might improve its future operational strategic communications. To achieve societal change using StratCom (as one of an array of tools for influence) takes time and requires consistent engagement from both sides. The constant rotation of personnel and the detrimental effect this has, not just on institutional knowledge but also on the successful delivery of complex effects was made repeatedly during the workshop. This is just as relevant to StratCom as it is to every other military activity. But at a more basic level, the lack of either usefulness or just plain entertainment value on the part of many of the StratCom outputs in Afghanistan (and this is not exclusive to Afghanistan) has meant that resources have been squandered. In future operations, at levels higher than the tactical, long form engagements such as drama serials, discussion programmes or game shows, products that follow a set format that build up multiple narrative streams, are more likely to reinforce long term societal change than short bursts of plain messages delivered primarily through news conduits. If there is an absence of accessible media, NATO should create and protect that access just as it should create and protect the security of the population.

There are good examples: RC(SE)'s 'Crops & the Farmer' radio edu-drama and Combined Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (CJPOTF)'s 'Khaana' TV soap. Neither were overtly messaging the population but instead created a sense of value on the part of the audience by being, respectively, economically useful (to farmers who might otherwise choose to grow narcotics) and just plain entertaining (although this was not always apparent to its ISAF sponsors). The need for quality, useful, entertaining outputs is strongly recommended as a core element of future NATO operational StratCom.

Recommendation

It is recommended that, as part of the review of doctrine, specific attention should be paid to operationalising the intent and, in particular, the quality and the format of mass media outputs as tools for prompting societal change and the skill sets required for effective strategic communications in future operations.

6. RECONSTRUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT

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6.1. Introduction

In February 2015, the former Afghan President Hamid Karzai looked back on ISAF and brought the mission to account. He announced that he was very grateful for the civilian help his country had received from the International Community since 2001. The U.S. and NATO, however, had missed their objective to fight terrorism, extremism, and radicalism in Afghanistan, so had Karzai. The military mission Karzai assessed to have been a failure.⁸⁴

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were meant to combine civilian and military stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Between 2002 and 2014, they became a synonym for the attempts to build up the country after the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the U.S.-supported victory of the Northern Alliance and the breakdown of the Taliban Regime. PRTs were a central tool to support the government of a new, democratic Afghanistan as outlined during the conference on the Petersberg near Bonn, starting on 27 November 2001. Originally established as part of the U.S.-led anti-terror Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), the PRTs were handed over successively to ISAF control. In 2011, 28 installations covered almost all Afghan Provinces.⁸⁵

In this chapter the PRTs are dealt with from different perspectives. Firstly, we follow the genesis of PRTs in Afghanistan and describe different models developed by the U.S. and European troop contributors. The second part deals with the question which understanding of stabilization stood behind the manifold western approaches, and how the PRTs' role developed with the changing character of operations against the spreading Taliban movement. Thirdly, western deficits and misperceptions are analyzed which hampered and handicapped the stabilization experiment in Afghanistan. Special attention is given to the U.S. and European militaries thereby, whereas the civilian contributions are dealt with more generally. Finally, we ask fourthly which lessons learned can be taken from the

⁸⁴ See Karzai: Amerika und Nato haben ihr Ziel verfehlt, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 23 February 2015, <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/politik/ausland/nahe-osten/karzai-wertet-nato-kampfeinsatz-in-afghanistan-als-misserfolg-13444082.html>.

⁸⁵ This article is based on a recent research project which has dealt with the PRT topic especially from a European perspective: B. Chiari (ed.), *From Venus to Mars? Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the European Military Experience in Afghanistan, 2001-2014*, Rombach, Freiburg, 2014. Single passages follow my introduction in this volume, Searching for the right audience: The military's ISAF experience, *ibid.*, 11-30. Citations in this chapter are kept to a minimum. For an overview of the existing literature on the PRT-topic see also *From Venus to Mars?*.

Afghan PRT experience for the role of the military in future stabilization missions, where counterinsurgency and counterterrorism is involved.

6.2. PRT Models and Their Implementation

Although the PRTs sometimes included a variety of multinational contributions and partners, they were organized and run as a national responsibility. Different approaches were based on the respective national conceptions of how to support the Afghan administration in building up a functioning central state. Reflecting experiences gained in Iraq, each PRT was manned with up to several hundred military and civilian personnel. Functioning as a kind of Western bridgehead, the ultimate goal of the installations was to enhance the popular legitimacy of the Afghan government by developing Afghan capacities to conduct reconstruction, and to support the provision of security and good governance.⁸⁶

At the diplomatic-political level, for some countries PRTs worked as investments (or repayments) in alliance politics. At a bureaucratic level, they served as experiments in inter-agency collaboration, with often frustrating but occasionally very productive results. These two levels are impossible to generalize across PRTs and lead nations, because they rely on vastly different country-specific expectations of success.⁸⁷

In close coordination with the Afghan government, the PRTs, designed as interdepartmental teams, coordinated, developed, and funded local projects. This included construction work to improve the local infrastructure, the distribution of school and medical supplies, as well as police training, programs to support the Afghan law enforcement authorities and the funding of education projects. In practice, however, the overwhelming majority of PRT personnel were military, including civil and public affairs, information operations, engineers, medical staff, logistics, and for security and force protection. Different existing PRT models will be listed here to show how difficult it is to give an overview on the structures of the respective installations.⁸⁸

In the American case, a PRT was led by a military commander. The initial OEF type of a U.S. PRT consisted of not more than about 80 military and civilian personnel. Organizational matters and coordination with several civilian

⁸⁶ N. Abbaszadeh et al., *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: Lessons and Recommendations*, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ, 2008.

⁸⁷ N. Hynek and P. Marton (eds.), *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction*, Routledge, London, 2012.

⁸⁸ P. Burton, Developing disorder: Divergent PRT models in Afghanistan, *Jane's Intelligence Review* 20, no. 10 (2008), 30-33.

representatives were discussed and coordinated within the Command Group. In contrast to many European installations, American-led PRTs supported reconstruction by launching own projects with own money and engaging in USAID activities.⁸⁹

As a second example, United Kingdom established its first PRT in the summer of 2003 in Mazar-e Sharif as an element of OEF. The British concept, which had been presented to the House of Commons in May, made use of experiences and lessons learned within the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF) 180. The mission of the British PRT was focused on the reform of the security architecture (Security Sector Reform – SSR) and partly based on U.S. resources from the State Department and USAID. Originally, the British PRTs were led by a Troika of three representatives each of the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Department for International Development (DfID). The approximately 200-strong British PRT in Lashkar Gah, as an example, reported to the regional representative of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in Kandahar and employed a total of 28 civilian experts in matters of politics, governance, development, civilian police, correctional facilities and counter narcotics. In United Kingdom itself, a Conflict Prevention Pool and an interministerial Stabilization Unit (SU) were created, where representatives of the three main areas of responsibility successfully cooperated with each other.⁹⁰

The first German PRT in Kunduz consisted of some 300 soldiers by 2003. According to the German PRT concept, the Federal Foreign Office (FFO), the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Federal Ministry of the Interior were supposed to dispatch personnel in a joint effort. The “Kunduz ISAF Island” approach was intended to support civilian reconstruction in northern Afghanistan, secured by military personnel. The “flagship concept” focused on the four provinces of Kunduz, Takhar, Baghlan and Badakhshan, an area with 3.2 million inhabitants and about 85,000 square kilometres. In view of the budgetary constraints of the federal ministries involved, combined security and reconstruction cells were seen as a solution for the lack of resources as well as a way to achieve a unified stabilisation network. While the German contingent was still building up the infrastructure in Kunduz, the PRT was already involved in setting up further ISAF facilities, including two more PRTs, one under German in Fayzabad (Badakhshan Province) and one under Dutch and later Hungarian lead, situated in Pul-e Khumri (Baghlan Province). By 2011, Kunduz PRT grew to more than 1,000 mostly military personnel. The number of civilian experts in the German PRTs never exceeded 20, including German and international experts in political

⁸⁹ P. Dreist, Provincial Reconstruction Teams as elements of OEF and ISAF: The development of an operational tool to stabilize Afghanistan, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 31-50.

⁹⁰ G. Harrison, The time before Helmand: British engagement in northern Afghanistan until 2006, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 123-134.

affairs and development aid as well as matters of training and advising the police forces. A special feature of the German variant was the principle of dual leadership. The PRT was jointly headed by a military and a civilian leader (Foreign Office).⁹¹

The Nordic PRTs were led by a military commander. The civilian component was an integral part of the Command Group. Civilian experts were not integrated in the PRTs to the same extent as they were in the German model. Rather, their degree of integration was similar to that of the U.S. model. In contrast to Britain, the Nordic capitals did not initiate a development resulting in the establishment of a conflict prevention pool and a stabilization unit. Stockholm and Oslo decided to channel the funds for the respective areas of responsibility exclusively through the NGOs and multinational development programs.⁹²

Due to historical ties into the region, but also as a result of concrete requirements of Turkish foreign policy, Turkey developed a completely independent PRT model. The civilian-led PRTs (first in Wardak since 2006) focused on providing assistance for governance and development. The director, a diplomat, was supported by civilian experts who carried out projects in the fields of education, infrastructure, health care and agriculture and provided training and guidance for the local administration. Police advisors trained local police forces and provided support for the renovation of office buildings. Turkish soldiers (not more than 70) were primarily occupied with matters of logistics, communications, and protection of the civilian experts, but did never launch military operations in their Area of Responsibility.⁹³

The list of stabilization approaches in Afghanistan is as long as the number of PRT-contributing nations. Structures and procedures varied, in addition, according to specific regional and local necessities. What ISAF and its PRTs, national ministries, interdepartmental entities, Governmental and Non-Governmental organizations achieved in Afghanistan is highly respectable, but nevertheless the western intervention showed only limited results. After 2006, a deteriorating security situation in many parts of the country and escalating battles against a growing guerrilla brought the purely military aspects of the mission to the public attention. Until the Afghanistan conference in London (2006), optimistic observers and analysts announced that *failed states* in the *Third World* could be cured with *state building* on the one hand and *surgical interventions* on the other. Afghanistan proved this an illusion. Western stakeholders in the country failed

⁹¹ See in detail B. Chiari, A New Model Army: The Bundeswehr in Kunduz, 2003-2012, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 135-156.

⁹² J.W. Honig and I. Käihkö, The likely lads: The Joint Swedish-Finnish PRT in Mazar-e Sharif; L. Ekhaugen and I.M. Oma, Norwegians in Maymanah: Between on-the-ground developments and domestic politics, both in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 209-220, 221-232.

⁹³ H. Yalçinkaya, Turkey in Sheberghan: Special solutions due to special relations?, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 233-244.

because they tried to change the Afghan society, its culture and mentality and established parallel institutions instead of bringing indigenous structures to function and to hand over responsibility to the local authorities as quickly as possible.⁹⁴

The PRTs, meant as a primarily civilian instrument for reconstruction, got pulled into a more and more military operation. Their structures adopted changing requirements. Moreover, the ISAF mission took part in 34 Afghan Provinces, in regions and environments sometimes as diverse as separate countries, reaching from the comparably calm northern and western Provinces to Helmand and Kandahar, Kunar, Khost or Paktika in the South and East, where western forces had to conduct large scale combat operations even to have access to certain districts. ISAF followed different agendas on the different operational levels of the PRTs, Regional Commands, or ISAF HQs. Despite the existence of comprehensive, interdepartmental, and civil-military conceptions, ISAF and the PRTs were in fact at least partly driven by individual actors and their specific logics, being they national, civilian, military, political, or economic. The co-ordination of military and civilian, governmental and non-governmental stakeholders depended very much on personal relationships and personalities. Sometimes it lacked prepared and functioning standard operational, decision making and prioritization structures and procedures. As catalyzers of diverging national philosophies and understandings, the PRTs worked as parts of national bureaucracies and inter-agency collaborations.⁹⁵

Within the Afghan populace, the intervention forces were sometimes not seen as saviors but as part of the threat. Over the years of the ISAF mission, the perceptions of foreign troops changed dramatically. Initially, when the activities of insurgent groups were still on a low level, most Afghans understood that western soldiers were deployed to pacify the country. The PRTs tried to scale down the show of military presence in favor of a more civilian demeanour as long as possible. When in 2004, forces of the Kabul Multi-National Brigade (KMNB) wanted to carry out a reconnaissance operation with 22 protected and armored vehicles in Kunduz, the PRT Commander asked them to display a less martial bearing and to conduct patrols together with soldiers of the local FP Company only. A convoy made up of

⁹⁴ F.S. Hansen (ed.), *The Comprehensive Approach: Challenges and Prospects*, Royal Danish Defense College, Copenhagen, 2009.

⁹⁵ See J.R. Böhnke, J. Koehler and C. Zürcher, *Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan: Approaches and Methods*, SFB 700 Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood, Berlin, 2013; A. Suhrke, *When More Is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan*, Hurst & Company, London, 2011.

heavy vehicles, unknown to the local population, might be misinterpreted as indication of an aggravated security situation.⁹⁶

Even during the first years of the foreign intervention, parts of the populace felt offended by disrespect of western militaries towards the local religious and cultural values. When the Taliban movement regained ground in all parts of Afghanistan, ISAF was forced to change its appearance into a more and more military and less *human* image. By a steadily growing number of attacks and TTPs which were always quickly adapted to ISAF's countermeasures, the insurgents forced the western militaries to shift from a population centered friendly forces approach to force protection. Within the populace, who felt themselves trapped between the menacing demands of inhuman extremists and the inability of ISAF and GIROA to protect them sustainably, fear increased and ascribed positive security effects dropped. When even European forces started to counter the growing insurgency by offensive combat operations, positive security perceptions collapsed in some parts of the country. COIN with all its measures to win the war in Afghanistan by putting the population's needs and perceptions in the focus of NATO's intervention couldn't reverse this development. Almost tragically, the Afghans' perception of Westerners as a threat for indigenous culture and values increased significantly at a time, when the retrograde and ISAF's end were already clearly visible on the horizon.⁹⁷

6.3 Stabilization: Cultures and backgrounds

The PRTs were designed for a more or less peaceful environment after the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001. At that time, organizing elections, physical reconstruction and the disarmament of militias seemed to be the main challenges in Afghanistan. To stabilize a war-shaken country with the help of diplomats and civilian specialists seemed to fit perfectly into the self-ascription of peaceful European democracies.⁹⁸

In Afghanistan, the PRT tool obviously enabled a nation to determine what was needed most in the country. The presence of PRTs would, the public expected, create a functioning, more stable society, willing and capable to resist extremist attacks. Therefore, the civilian portion of the PRT was increasingly strengthened, at least in the underlying conceptions and regulations. In the first years of

⁹⁶ Colonel (ret.) Udo Meyer, 2004 Com DEUCON ISAF and German National Commander in theatre, interview with author, 29 October 2013, and official Bundeswehr documents; see *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 144.

⁹⁷ See Thematic Dossier I: Looking back at transition. AAN Thematic Dossiers, 12 August 2013, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/publication/aan-thematic-dossier/thematic-dossier-i-looking-back-at-transition-2/>, with several linked articles on special topics.

⁹⁸ L. Thompson and M. Brown, *Security on the Cheap: PRTs in Afghanistan*, American Council for Voluntary International Action, Washington, DC, 2003.

spreading ISAF from Kabul to other parts of Afghanistan, even small NATO members like Lithuania literally competed – due to limited resources to a substantial part depending on support from the U.S. - to become part of the PRT initiative. In Europe, the PRT system was seen as an opportunity to prove national capabilities and – sometimes in a quite naïve way – to transport cultural and political values to the underdeveloped and suffering Afghan society. For most of the European troop contributors the Afghanistan mission was a new experience and therefore had substantial implications on their military and political systems.⁹⁹

Italy, the Nordic troop contributors, Hungary, Lithuania or Spain belonged to the group of nations characterized by Robert Kagan in 2002 as “Coming from Venus and not from Mars.” In the post-historical paradise of Europe, Kagan argued, these states counted on trans-, inter- and supranational cooperation to secure peace and wealth. In Germany, ISAF was discussed as “Trial by Fire for a whole Nation.” Now, for the first time after World War Two – at least this was the perception of Germany’s public – the Bundeswehr became part of a *real* mission on the ground.¹⁰⁰

A closer look clarifies, however, that the U.S. or countries like the UK perceived the mission in Afghanistan from a different perspective. They had different backgrounds and historical experiences available when OEF and ISAF started. The U.S. had always been arguing that only military power would enable a nation to hold its ground, and used the tool of the Afghan PRTs in a very pragmatic way as an instrument to calm the population of a country where a war was led – be it in an OEF or ISAF environment.¹⁰¹

The Afghanistan mission developed momentum to challenge the Venus-Mars-dichotomy. In the years after 2001, the spreading PRT-net on the one hand and OEF on the other seemed to perfectly represent these two diverging philosophies. ISAF PRTs in the north and west were explicitly designed to contribute to the Afghan state-building project in a good humanitarian understanding. The PRT concept was ground laying in broadening the scope of peace support and stabilization-type effort. But when the security situation deteriorated more and more in the South and East of the country, the Europeans from Venus were confronted with an insurgency described as *Taliban* and not foreseen in the

⁹⁹ S. Collmer (ed.), *From Fragile State to Functioning State: Pathways to Democratic Transformation in Georgia, Kosovo, Moldova, and Afghanistan*, LIT, Berlin, 2009.

¹⁰⁰ For a comparison between the UK and Germany see E. Sangar, *Historical Experience. Burden or Bonus in Today's Wars? The British Army and the Bundeswehr in Afghanistan*, Rombach, Freiburg i.Br., 2014.

¹⁰¹ D.W. Barno, »Fighting the Other War« – Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003-2005, *Military Review* (September/October 2007), 32-44, or R.J. Bebbler, The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Counterinsurgency Operations: Khost Province, Afghanistan, *Small Wars Journal* (November, 2008), 6-7.

stabilization concepts. In reaction to the existing threat, the U.S. sent enormous troop reinforcements, with the effect of a progressive militarization of the ISAF mission. Most if not all PRTs with military components brought a positive effect on the local perception of security as long as their territory had not become directly contested by the insurgency. As the presence of Taliban groups spread, the threshold for an effective security contribution became higher and higher.¹⁰²

In an increasingly difficult and rapidly changing security situation, all troop contributors experimented with varying national approaches for stabilization and reconstruction. The PRT operators were put into a laboratory situation. In the Italian and German cases, two deeply unmilitary and pacifist European societies were faced with a growing military engagement in northern and western Afghanistan, including intense fighting in several districts on an almost daily basis starting in 2006 and reaching its highest intensity in 2010. The ISAF engagement caused a fundamental debate within the various political and intellectual communities and think tanks on how to proceed in Afghanistan. As the level of violence mounted, at least for a short time even the public took part in a discussion on how peace-enforcement, peace-keeping, or various stabilization efforts in failed states should be dealt with in the Afghan case as well as in comparable future missions, and which role the military should play.¹⁰³

In 2009, ISAF militaries progressively introduced the so-called COIN strategy as panacea to change the course of history in Afghanistan. After eight years of the running mission it picked up many elements from early PRT concepts and adopted them to a more and more hostile environment. In practice, COIN meant to evaluate an area and clear it of the enemy with kinetic military means. The area would then be secured for the Afghan government with the help of permanently deploying ANSF and economic measures, flanked and supported by the so-called key-leader-engagement (getting the support of local leaders), info operations etc. COIN was meant to “win the hearts and minds” of the populace and legitimize the ISAF cause.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² See A. Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: How the War Against Islamic Extremism Is Being Lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*, Penguin, London, 2008. As an example for the challenges to European countries see K. Berg Harpviken, *A Peace Nation Takes Up Arms: The Norwegian Engagement in Afghanistan*, Peace Research Institute Oslo, Oslo, 2011.

¹⁰³ R. Paris and T. Sisk (eds.), *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding. Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, Routledge, London, New York, 2008.

¹⁰⁴ S.G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, CA, 2008; D. Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010; D. Maston and C. Malkasian (eds.), *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*, Osprey, Oxford, New York, 2008; T. Rid and T. Keaney (eds.), *Understanding Counterinsurgency. Doctrine, Operations, and Challenges*, Routledge, London, New York, 2010.

For the U.S. or the UK, COIN was a steadily further developed doctrine, based on experiences made with guerrilla warfare in the 20th century and, in the British case, linked with the colonial past of the Empire. As the mission to support the Afghan government met with increasing armed opposition, countries like Germany or Italy participated de facto in COIN operations. For a very long time, however, they did not develop national COIN doctrines or strategies themselves. As an example, Germany continued to emphasize the primacy of the reconstruction element of its mission for a long time and tried very much to stay clear of combat operations against an insurgency. The reasons for this lay in the almost exclusively negative perceptions of experiences during the short period of German colonial history before 1918. This applied even more to the anti-partisan warfare (Bandenkrieg) the Wehrmacht and SS conducted as part of Hitler's war of extermination in the occupied parts of the Soviet Union between 1941 and 1944.¹⁰⁵

From the military's perspective and on the practical level, the COIN strategy in Afghanistan here and there turned out to be an operational directive born out of necessity for engaging insurgents. As a German PRT commander bitterly remarked in his after-action report in 2010, COIN frequently ended up with unclear operational execution, vague definitions, and strategic statements, even at the sub-tactical level, which made the doctrine an inept means of orientation for the units and single soldiers.¹⁰⁶

Operational planning of the ISAF Regional Commands and the PRTs included the whole spectrum of COIN measures as CIMIC or PsyOps contributions, establishment of permanent GIRoA presence in the area, economic or development projects as well as immediate support for the populace. Rather often, however, other than purely military contributions were not available or didn't work in practice. Resources were sometimes not coordinated well enough to have lasting effects. Promises made by GIRoA were neglected, capacities lacked, Afghan units didn't appear on the scene or left the area after end of operations. Money from Western governments was not available in time and development projects not authorized due to bureaucratic reasons. ISAF commanders experienced some of the COIN operations as purely military, without producing an effect at all. The populace was frustrated because after several days or weeks ISAF and GIRoA left, leaving the area again to insurgent groups who had been informed about the forthcoming activities, avoided direct confrontation and soon returned

¹⁰⁵ T. Noetzel, The German Politics of War: Kunduz and the War in Afghanistan, *International Affairs* 87, no. 2 (2011), 397-417; T. Noetzel, Germany's Small War in Afghanistan: Military Learning Amid Politico-strategic Inertia, *Contemporary Security Policy* 31, no. 3 (December 2010), 493-494; T. Noetzel and B. Schreer, Missing Links: The Evolution of German Counter-Insurgency Thinking, *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 1 (2009), 16-22.

¹⁰⁶ Mission collection of the Bundeswehr Center of Military History and Social Sciences, Mission Report 21. DEU Contingent ISAF, 26 March 2010, Annex B, Part C, cited after *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 15.

from safe havens in neighbouring districts just to punish local inhabitants who had "collaborated" with GIROA and western troops.

In 2010, Norwegian and German forces in Faryab, Kunduz, and Baghlan Provinces faced severe fighting on an almost daily basis. ISAF reached its strength peak with about 135,000. More and more troops were tasked to train the ANSF and to support Afghan military operations, in order to pass the lead to the Afghan government. Parallel to the intensified military efforts starting in 2009 and 2010, most countries reinforced their financial engagement. But even with increasing military and civilian capacities, the PRTs failed to stabilize Afghanistan as a state.¹⁰⁷

The Afghan President announced in 2010 that Afghan forces would take over the responsibility for security in all parts of the country as soon as possible. Civilian Afghan losses, a demanding Afghan government, and exploding costs of the ISAF mission led to a new and public discussion about the future of the international engagement in Afghanistan. Growing doubts among the voters and tax payers in the U.S. and Europe with regard to the success of ISAF contributed to the planning for a withdrawal in 2014. In November 2013, a Loya Jirga in Kabul accepted a treaty with the United States. The document laid the groundwork for a continuing western military presence in Afghanistan with the NATO-led training mission Resolute Support, starting in January 2015. A continuous international military presence was based on a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), signed in Kabul on 30 September 2014 by the newly inaugurated Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and NATO's Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan, and ratified by the Afghan Parliament on 27 November 2014.¹⁰⁸

In retrospect, the military in Afghanistan had to fulfill a rather difficult task: Originally, all PRT concepts designated the role of armed bystanders to the armed forces. Soldiers would enable other actors to do the real reconstruction and stabilization work. In the cause of an ongoing war, however, as the only considerable party in a province, the military would sometimes get into a precarious position between the order to establish the secure conditions for the political build-up of Afghanistan, and the need to directly pursue political objectives itself. In an unfamiliar Afghan society, marked by decades of war and armed to the teeth since the Soviet invasion in 1979, NATO and ISAF found themselves in a position hard to tackle. ISAF commanders were expected no less than to influence and change the Afghan political system and – as a precondition –

¹⁰⁷ A. Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud: Wars and Warlords in Afghanistan*, Oxford University Press, London, 2009; A. Strick van Linschoten and F. Kuehn, *A Knock on the Door: 22 Months of ISAF Press Releases*, AAN Thematic Report 10/2011; A. Giustozzi and C. Reuter, *The Insurgents of the Afghan North. The Rise of the Taliban, the Self-abandonment of the Afghan Government and the Effects of ISAF's »Capture-and-kill-campaign«*, AAN Thematic Report 04/2011.

¹⁰⁸ See J. Koehler, *The Afghan perspective on ISAF: Changes and trends in northeast Afghanistan*, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 65-86.

mentalities and local cultures. Often they lacked the necessary knowledge and skills, not to mention the material means to create predictable, lasting changes within a traditional, war-torn society.¹⁰⁹

6.4. Deficits and Misperceptions

In February 2011, Afghan President Hamid Karzai fundamentally criticized the PRT concept when he accused the PRTs of undermining efforts to build up the state's institutions by creating parallel structures.¹¹⁰ Karzai's statement was triggered by civilian Afghan losses caused by the coalition's military operations. It was also part of Karzai's strategy to advertise himself as independent, self-confident leader to the Afghan people and to rivals in the country's political landscape. The presidential announcement, however, brought up the painful subject that NATO was not always doing the right things in Afghanistan, partly due to structural and mental deficits.

To start with, the international community pursued a centre-oriented state-building approach, especially until 2007. This strategy was stimulated by the idea of rebuilding the Afghan state from scratch and modernizing Afghan society in a cascade way, starting in the capital of Kabul and spreading to the rural periphery. The international community assumed that the rest of the country would successively come under the Afghan state once the politics of the central government in the capital was heading in the right direction and the centre became powerful enough.¹¹¹ The western disregard of the local government was caused by a biased division between the *good, legitimated state*, which had to be rebuilt and protected, and the *troublesome local governance*, which should step by step be dominated and governed by the rebuilt Afghan state. However, this approach underestimated the fact that a clear distinction between a separated state on the one hand and the local elites on the other was a Western concept which did not find analogies in Afghan realities.¹¹²

Secondly, the PRTs were designed to set the groundwork for a swift takeover of responsibility by the Afghan government. But the capabilities of the Afghan state were notoriously overestimated in the west for a long time. In reality, the PRTs were trying to support a state that existed only in a rudimentary form. In

¹⁰⁹ *The Afghan Conundrum. Intervention, Statebuilding and Resistance*. Central Asian Survey, Special Issue: 32, no. 3 (2013).

¹¹⁰ Speech during the Security Conference in Munich, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/06/AR2011020601205.html>.

¹¹¹ M. Barnett and C. Zürcher, *The Peacebuilder's Contract. How External Statebuilding Reinforces Weak Statehood*, in: R. Paris and T. Sisk (eds.), *In The Dilemmas of Statebuilding. Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations*, Routledge, London, New York, 2008, 23-52.

¹¹² C. Schetter (ed.), *Local Politics in Afghanistan: A Century of Intervention in the Social Order*, C. Hurst & Company, London, 2013.

order to give it legitimacy, the western interventionists had to rely on historical, political, and societal references. These were barely congruent with the western canon of values, advertised to the Afghan populace like a mantra. The PRTs were faced with the Afghan state's perceived illegitimacy at a grassroots level and were forced to deal with this fundamental deficit. The higher echelons in both civilian and military infrastructures took much longer to realize that Afghan state power was worth little without local acceptance.¹¹³

In the course of the ISAF mission, thirdly, western militaries as well as civilian agencies became aware of how limited their understanding of Afghanistan was. Every single nation tried, in parallel to relying on the NATO and ISAF tools and capabilities in theatre, to build analysis, training and intelligence infrastructure and capacities on its own. With every rotation of the military, a high percentage of newcomers in the Afghan environment arrived in theatre. Although presumably trained at home, they had to acquaint themselves with the basic functionalities of the Afghan culture, as well as with regional and local conditions and power structures. On a national level, expertise, experience, system knowledge as well as personal relationships with Afghan key personalities were lost in the change of command phases between contingents in theatre or parent units at home. Many European countries decided to send their personnel to Afghanistan not for longer than four months. Comprehensible from a social standpoint in order to take weight from the concerned soldiers' families, short durations made it difficult to build functioning relationships with Afghan partners and to achieve long-lasting effects in the country.¹¹⁴

Expertise and knowledge were lost, fourthly, when the responsibility of a PRT was passed from one country to another. In 2003, Germany took over an OEF installation from the U.S. in Kunduz city as location for the first German PRT in northern Afghanistan. Although the handover theoretically left enough time to make U.S. experiences and local relationships in the area available for the newcomers, the German PRT in Kunduz was practically built up from scratch because structures, IT-systems and mentalities of U.S. OEF forces and the German soldiers were not compatible in any case.¹¹⁵ Between 2004 and 2006, the Dutch Armed Forces operated a PRT in Pul-e Khumri, Baghlan Province. When the Dutch centre of gravity was shifted to the south, the base in Baghlan was handed over to Hungary. In a hardly existing HOTO phase, the Dutch troops took what they had learned and achieved in northern Afghanistan with them to Uruzgan, without

¹¹³ P. Rotmann and L. Harrison, *Critical voices: Did the PRTs perform well in Afghanistan?*, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 51-64.

¹¹⁴ From the perspective of one of the smallest PRT contributors see J. S. Corum, *Serving NATO. The Lithuanian engagement in Ghor Province*, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 267-280.

¹¹⁵ B. Chiari, *A New Model Army: The Bundeswehr in Kunduz, 2003-2012*, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 135-156.

passing on their lessons learned to the Hungarians who then had to basically start from scratch in Pul-e Khumri. The Dutch experiences in Baghlan contributed to a national political discourse and learning process in the Netherlands, which was also fuelled by Dutch experiences in Iraq. But these lessons were largely missing where they were needed most: in Baghlan Province.¹¹⁶

Especially during the first years of the mission, when the beaten Taliban were almost not present in Afghanistan, the lack of civilian capabilities turned out to be a fifth substantial handicap. Particularly in the non-U.S. PRTs, the military found itself in a difficult situation. Only the full, civil-military supply of services would create an atmosphere where the local populace could trust the efforts of the international community. In many cases, however, the necessary civilian capabilities and strategies still had to be developed when the PRTs were already operating. When only a small part of the pledged civilian personnel was deployed to Afghanistan, the military, sometimes the only organization present, had to assume responsibility. In matters such as police training or rule of law-initiatives, ISAF and the military took the lead for the respective tasks from overstressed European governments or non-military entities. Over several years, military operations and military engagement dominated the activities, whereas the civilian part dragged behind and lacked sufficient means to do substantial reconstruction. Very often, the military was blamed for the shortage of projects although this kind of work was never part of its original mission.¹¹⁷

ISAF command and control structures and differing understandings between the military and the NGOs posed a sixth obstacle. For a long time, ISAF HQ controlled only the military activities, not the reconstruction efforts and other activities of the PRTs. Consequently, Afghan authorities at all levels were facing communication problems with regard to the role of the PRTs throughout the country. Moreover, the PRTs and their military components, including military capabilities in Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC), were criticized by civilian relief organizations for duplicating the activities of the NGOs while at the same time lacking the necessary knowledge for humanitarian reconstruction projects. Many NGOs perceived the military's presence even as counterproductive as the combination of military and humanitarian activities put the staff of the NGOs and their impartiality at risk. Further they complained that the trusting relationship with the populace might be negatively affected by military show of force. The co-

¹¹⁶ E. van Loo, Dutch Forces in Pul-e Khumri, 2004-2006: Learning on the job in Baghlan Province; P. Wagner, Unable to adapt: The Hungarian PRT in Baghlan, both in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 177-194, 195-208.

¹¹⁷ As an example see J.R. Böhnke, J. Koehler and C. Zürcher, *Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan: Approaches and Methods*, SFB 700 Working Papers 43, Berlin 2013.

existence of civilian and military assistance, finally, was not appropriately communicated to the people.¹¹⁸

ISAF – seventhly - tried to strengthen the Afghan administration, but had ambivalent effects with regard to the (re)construction of a central state. In the course of time PRTs clearly shifted the international interest on areas outside Kabul, thereby reducing the exclusive focus of assistance – including from many non-governmental organizations – on the capital. Directly or indirectly, ISAF brought money, jobs, training and healthcare to Provincial capitals, district centers and to the countryside. Some local and provincial officials, supported by PRTs strongly, were oriented towards Kabul and used the allocated resources to strengthen state control while others understood the PRT support primarily as a means to secure and broaden their own power base. The disproportional presence of PRTs in the hard-fought provinces of the south and southeast, by the way, was ironically criticized as “insurgency reward”.¹¹⁹

Finally, PRTs were accused of creating structures and local networks parallel to GIRoA, because they directed international funds directly to single projects instead of fuelling the Afghan ministries. The PRT commanders wouldn't even - due to their own position in the military hierarchy - have looked for counterparts on government level. Not without reason they were rather skeptical about the effectiveness of Afghan bureaucratic mechanisms to strengthen local environments. Money given to the Afghan authorities via central, governmental channels very often did not reach the levels where it was really needed but stayed in the pockets of corrupt officials. Critics of the PRTs' decentralized approach, however, complained of the missed chance to make the state apparatus more effective by bypassing the authorities in Kabul, such relieving the Afghan government of their duties.¹²⁰

6.5. What to take away from the PRT-experience in Afghanistan?

One key takeaway from Afghanistan is that strategic objectives of the PRTs should be more clearly defined and controlled by NATO. Neither state building, in naïve western understanding, nor purely military solutions in fighting insurgencies, proved to be promising options. With regard to stabilization and (re)construction, a clearly defined, limited end-state of an international intervention, including a

¹¹⁸ J. Koehler, The Afghan perspective on ISAF: Changes and trends in northeast Afghanistan, in: *From Venus to Mars?* (Fn 2), 65-86.

¹¹⁹ D. Derksen and T. Ruttig, Reluctant Interventionists: ISAF's influence on local power structures in Kunduz and Badakhshan, AAN, 12 November 2013, <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/reluctant-interventionists-isafs-influence-on-local-power-structures-in-kunduz-and-badakhshan/>, lists several case studies dealing with Provinces in the AOR of RC North.

¹²⁰ See N. Hynek and P. Marton (eds.), *Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Multinational Contributions to Reconstruction*, Routledge, London, 2012, 65-87.

given time-frame, seem crucial for the success. As early as possible, responsibility must be handed over to local authorities. This might make necessary the acceptance of local standards of governance and decision-making which are not in every respect compatible with western norms.

Local power structures should carefully be assessed in their functionality to make a community working and not only as counterpoint to liberal concepts such as democracy, good governance or development. The way a community is traditionally run has to be understood before a mission is started and not only in the course of ongoing operations.

With regard to the national ownership of PRTs, ISAF lessons learned are mixed. On the one hand, the Afghan example demonstrated how effective PRTs in national responsibility can link an international mission to the political, diplomatic and bureaucratic structures of the contributing countries. They provide a connection much more direct and effective than the big, abstract NATO body or another supranational framework is able to. The tool of PRTs turned out to be a productive and flexible instrument to include individual national capabilities in an international mission. It roused national responsibilities and mobilized financial resources within the contributing countries. On the other hand, just the co-ordination of interdepartmental assets on the national level was one of the main challenges for a comprehensive PRT approach, not speaking of conducting the orchestration of PRTs Afghanistan-wide. Not all contributing nations were able to find satisfying structures and procedures in the cause of the mission.

COIN operations without the full spectrum of sustainable means and capacities have to be avoided as they cause more uncertainty and frustration among the populace than positive effects with regard to stability and security. As a promising alternative to control by insurgent groups, the population within an area will accept only the permanent, sustainable presence of their own government or international forces.

Afghanistan proved that the sustainable development projects were the ones that had been discussed with local authorities and village elders and were supported by the local communities by money or labor etc. Sometimes local representatives even discussed projects with local representatives of the insurgency and had them "approved," whereas projects ordered by the central government or planned by ISAF without including the local populace produced significantly worse results and did not contribute to a lasting stability. Local representatives are the key to success - be it in a more or less calm post-conflict environment or in a COIN-scenario. Even if a government should not support this population-centric approach, local representatives must be included in the planning and prioritizing process.

With regard to the appropriate level for international financial means in general, the Afghan experience likewise does not indicate a simple solution. On the one hand, *on budget* funding allows a country to absorb the funds, stops leakage and at the same time builds government ownership and capacity. A strict control how the money is spent without bypassing the state authorities, however, forms one of the main challenges for international interventions. The Afghan example shows that this dilemma cannot be solved and that a certain loss of money has to be accepted in order to avoid the establishment of parallel structures to the state authorities. On the other hand, project-bound funding must be the responsibility of civil or military leaders and is a necessity as far as the functionalities and the effects of the PRTs are concerned. Without money to spend directly and locally, representatives of a western intervention force will always be perceived as powerless, not trustworthy and useless to talk to from the side of their local counterparts.

NATO will face the challenging need to make use of national resources while simultaneously trying to play a coordinating role in future operations. The necessary regional and country expertise should be available on NATO level beginning in the starting phase of operational planning. Contributing nations must be offered further developed, central structures, procedures and installations to prepare military and civil personnel for a mission abroad. The respective capacities and procedures are expensive to provide but would have saved a lot of misspent money during the ISAF mission.

To make the performance of PRTs more effective in the future, a further improvement of training audiences with the respective contents and procedures seems essential. NATO should set explicit training standards for civil-military PRT-staffs and provide training structures and installations which allow mixed teams to work together. NATO must be given the authority to certify and pool national contributions so that only those nations will take part, which have developed the capabilities and procedures to deploy functioning teams.

Military PRT commanders were not fully trained to co-ordinate the civil-military (re)construction efforts in their areas of responsibility. As this was foreseen in most of the original national PRT conceptions, their role should be limited to strictly military tasks whereas lead and co-ordination should be given to a civilian agency. Without setting the preconditions for an effective, civil-military task fulfilment, a national PRT contribution must not be accepted by NATO.

Handing over a PRT from one nation to another, however carefully planned, leads to a substantial loss of knowledge and local expertise. A change during a mission must be avoided. Therefore, the role of NATO in the overall planning process has to be strengthened.

If a general assessment and recommendation with regard to a complex approach like the PRT concept are possible at all, it might be the following: Afghanistan showed that PRTs can link the countryside with the capital and regional centers as well as with the central structures of an international mission. The concept of civil-military “security islands” which function as starting points for the stabilization in more and more parts of a country might again serve in similar future missions. In a deteriorating security situation, however, PRTs lose their positive effect. The acceptance strategy of and for international intervention forces only works for a peacekeeping presence but hardly for a fighting counterinsurgency force. The transition of security responsibility to the government causes a much higher acceptance whereas the foreign forces should depart as early as possible. In Afghanistan, NATO got sucked into a violent, dynamic conflict which was only partly understood and definitely couldn't be fully controlled or purposefully influenced by the western interventionists. To avoid a likewise mistake in a comparable scenario might be the biggest challenge if the alliance wants to make future use of the PRT tool.

7. AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES

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7.1. Introduction

Afghan Minister of Interior Zarar Moqbil dug into his pocket and answered the incessantly ringing cell phone. His composed expression changed to shock and his staccato answers had a noticeable tremor at the end. Whatever was happening on the other end of the phone was a matter of life and death.

Minister Moqbil¹²² had been the deputy Afghan Ministry of Interior for two years when I called on him. In 2006 he took over as Acting Interior Minister until 2008 when under pressure from the International Community he stepped down. Moqbil's Ministry, responsible for law enforcement in Afghanistan, had deep problems of corruption and gross mismanagement and the international community was working with him to try to find solutions to the problems that threatened to undermine the entire population-focused NATO counterinsurgency campaign – a campaign where protection of the Afghan people and connecting them to their government was the core tenant.

Later a Ministerial aid told me that the call to the Minister had been from a Police Chief in a remote police station in the troubled east of the country somewhere very close to the Pakistan border: The police headquarters was overrun by armed locals who had seized the place and then after a short fight the police ran out of ammunition and lost their fight. The assailants had beheaded all of the policemen including the police chief, who was on his cell phone to call for help to the only person he thought able to muster the resources to save them in their final hour– the Minister of Interior in Kabul. The police chief's phone lay tossed on the floor still transmitting even as his head was severed, the Minister of

¹²² The Embassy of Afghanistan to Norway posted this biography of Minister Moqbil on their website in 2011. *“Zarar Ahmad Moqbel briefly served as the Interior Minister under President Karzai. During his tenure the ministry became infamous for selling senior police positions. Provincial police chiefs would then make a return on their investments by extorting bribes from civilians and protecting narcotics and kidnap gangs. Moqbel was sacked and replaced with Mohammad Hanif Atmar. President Karzai tried to appoint Moqbel instead as the Minister of Refugees after a cabinet shuffle on October 11, 2008. Moqbel did not show up to his confirmation by the Parliament. He is seen by many outside observers and Afghans as an incompetent and corrupt civil servant.”*

Interior listening helplessly on the other end as his police chief begged for his life.

On face value this appears to be an appalling act of brutality and disregard for the law – the most senior police official listening in by cell phone as his policemen were slaughtered on the other end. But as ever in Afghanistan the back-story is more complex and multi layered with nothing as it seems: Where was the Afghan National Army to help rescue and support the inadequately prepared policeman who were on the front line defending Afghanistan against violent attackers; why did the terrified police chief call the Minister in Kabul and not his chain of command; why in such a remote outpost in dangerous territory were the police so desperately ill prepared and low on ammunition; what was the Minister's involvement in this; and finally why did armed men attack a lonely police outpost?

The assailants who beheaded the policemen were never found, and in fact for many months no policemen could be enticed to go back to that vulnerable outpost on the Pakistan border. The rumor mill said that this attack had nothing to do with insurgents or terrorists: The likely reason was that the policemen were illicitly benefitting from smuggling across the border forced to because they had not received pay in months. The local criminal networks were not happy about their primary source of income being syphoned off by police and so they attacked them. But there was nothing conclusive and certainly no investigative process or judicial system to follow this accusation up. The final losers in this were the local people who, with no police protection, were vulnerable to extortion and bullying from local warlords and criminals. Their only option was to turn to the Taliban for protection and their brand of harsh justice – which was better than no justice – and several months after the policemen were beheaded that is exactly what the local villagers did. Why the police had such scant training, were low on ammunition and had not been paid had everything to do with weak institutional capacity and corruption at the Ministerial level; why the police did not look to help from the ANA had a lot to do with failings of institutional cooperation and synergy; and why the police chief in a remote outpost called his Minister of Interior is anyone's guess. In this story the Afghan government and the Ministry of Interior had failed the police and their people. The NATO counterinsurgency campaign based on protection of the people was no winner either.

At a fundamental level the story of the Afghan security forces or ANSF, both police and army, is one of strategic miscalculations, a lack of understanding of the local culture, motivations and power dynamics of Afghanistan - and at best naiveté and at worst arrogance. There are a myriad of lessons learned that come from our Coalition and NATO experiences in the nearly fifteen years of waging a counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaign in Afghanistan but none is more important than trying to understand the challenges in building up effective security forces whose primary task was to protect the Afghan people and their

sovereign territory. At the heart of a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign based on connecting the people to their government the primary task is to first and foremost create a safe and stable environment where ordinary people can rebuild their lives and government officials can do their job in delivering basic services. Delivering that one important element would have allowed the Afghan people to pick up their lives mostly by themselves without international assistance. It was for this reason that it was so crucial from the outset to build a competent, functioning, and capable Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police that could control its borders, suppress an ideological insurgency, police a lawless nation that was vulnerable to burgeoning criminality, counter a growing drugs trade and protect the people in their far flung villages and valleys from both Taliban, violent extremists, terrorists – and corrupt government officials. We can say with all sincerity that this was the intent of all international stakeholders and certainly at the Bonn Conference¹²³ the International Community committed resources through framework nations to take up these responsibilities and help the Afghan Government to deliver a safe and secure environment and protect their borders. The resources and commitment by the international community to do the right thing was massive but the end result did not mirror the effort. The question is why not? The answer is complex but in order to extract some valuable Lessons Learned from this vast problem set there are five strategic areas proposed as to where most of the lessons learned with regard to our support to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) lie. These are:

- Understanding the nature of the changing threat and building the army (ANA) and police (ANP) at the right levels from the outset to respond effectively to that changing threat,
- Preventing corruption in the security forces as a core strategic requirement,
- Understanding the inextricable element of policing is the judicial process,
- Building on local systems and solutions with strategic patience rather than imposing imported systems that do not fit and are unsustainable, and
- Promoting and supporting a comprehensive approach between local security (army and police) and host nation governance as one of the most critical elements of a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign.

These five categories are not exhaustive but they do generally represent the areas that we miscalculated in the early development of the ISAF Campaign plan. The question is this – if we had paid more attention to these five strategic factors in our planning early on would things have been different and would the

¹²³ The Bonn Agreement was passed in 2001 to re-create the State of Afghanistan following the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Since no nationally agreed-upon government had existed in Afghanistan since 1979, it was felt necessary to have a transition period before a permanent government was established.

International mission have brought stability more quickly to the people of Afghanistan? Analysis of many lessons learned and countless studies and inquires would argue in favor that early recognition and implementation of these five approaches would have improved the end results of the international contribution and effort to deliver security in Afghanistan. Thus the five strategic lessons outlined below present general commentary as to how we could improve upon our support to local security forces in a population-centric counterinsurgency in the future. The lessons learned are not exclusive to Afghanistan but have a generic quality that NATO could consider in future counterinsurgency or counter terrorist operations.

7.2. Building the Army and Police to Effectively Address the Threat Together

When asked to give the number one lesson learned from Afghanistan on international support to Afghan security, Catherine Royle, Deputy Head of the UK Mission in Kabul in 2012 and Head of the Secretariat of the International Police Coordination Board said unequivocally that it was the need to support the immediate stand up of a competent police force in 2002 and to understand the critically important role of the police in a population- centric counterinsurgency. But regrettably in Afghanistan this did not happen. From the outset the Afghan National Army (ANA) was given huge resources and support to enable them to fight the insurgent threat and the police were not. The U.S. agreed to lead the effort to build an ANA at the Bonn Conference¹²⁴ and began the task of building an Afghan army that could eventually stand alone and defend their homeland against an insurgent and terrorist threat – or for that matter any future threat that violated Afghan sovereign territory. But regrettably at the Bonn Conference far less emphasis was put on building the Afghan National Police and in fact there is no specific language on the essential need to build a law enforcement capability in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Germany took on the responsibility of leading the development of a police force in Afghanistan and opted to produce traditional community policemen in far lower numbers than the ANA through a prolonged training process rather than to develop a rapidly trained para-military police. Arguably it was more important in the early days to have both – traditional and para-military police. Certainly in the early days the effort to build the police in either category did not have the same urgency in the Afghan campaign as the

¹²⁴ In Bonn on the 5 December 2001, the delegations participating in the United Nations talks on Afghanistan signed the "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions." The declaration spoke specifically of the need to create a new Afghan security force but there was no specific provision to commit resources to a new Afghan police force.

build up of the Afghan Army. Neither was the criticality of the police as a central element of the campaign understood.

In 2002 as the U.S. and Germany began their tasks, the threat in Afghanistan was perceived to be an insurgent threat from ideological radicals and terrorists that were intent on undermining the Afghan government and terrorizing the international community. The plan was that the ANA, as they gained strength, would together with ISAF forces defeat the threat. What was little understood - except perhaps by a few experts who were not in positions to influence their government foreign policies at the time - was the nature of the local culture and power dynamics. In time the insurgent threat would be matched - if not overtaken - by the destructive nature of a burgeoning element of Afghan criminality driven by large amounts of money derived from the opium trade, a lawless environment and indeed the billions of dollars of available cash that the international community brought with it.¹²⁵ In many ways it was inevitable that this rampant criminality should grow exponentially in an environment where power brokers and war lords dominated, the highly centralized government was weak with little concept of public service, where thirty years of war had all but destroyed licit economic opportunity, where policing and rule of law was almost non-existent and the accountability of international fund disbursement haphazard at best. And so at a certain point between 2002 and 2006, with the absence of a mature police and justice system, the threat to the security and stability of Afghanistan switched unperceptively, at least to the international community, from being primarily an insurgent threat to a threat from organized crime, narco-terrorism, and extortion.

By 2007 Afghanistan's security was being systemically undermined by a murky underworld of rampant criminality where it was difficult to distinguish between government officials complicit in this criminality and the insurgents and drug lords. The one thing that was clear, however, was that the international community had not predicted the change in the threat as they built the initial counterinsurgency campaign plans. In 2007 by the time it was acknowledged that narco-terrorism, corruption and mafia-style networks were as much a part of the threat than Taliban ideologues and terrorists, the campaign plans were in place and being executed and it was very difficult to turn the clock back. Most important is the fact that Armies do not fight criminality - that is a task for the police and the justice system. In 2007 the Afghanistan police force was small, underpaid, undermanaged, co-opted by criminals and highly vulnerable to corruption. The justice system was in the same shape. Neither could take on the overwhelming levels of criminal activity or highly organized Afghan criminal networks. And

¹²⁵ These billions of dollars would be injected into the licit and illicit economies bypassing the Afghan public financial management systems and Ministries and thereby denying the international community an extraordinary opportunity to do capacity building of local institutions.

neither could an Army that was not trained or organized to deal with criminality. No democracy, even a fledgling one, expects that an Army will deal long term with criminal elements within a sovereign state.

All in all the calculation had been that the threat to safety and security would come from radical insurgent elements: the truth certainly as early as 2005 was that the greatest threat to Afghan stability came from criminals – many of whom were also the highest ranking government officials that the international community had partnered with. The only way to mitigate this threat was with a competent police force and trusted rule of law officials. Afghanistan had neither. Worse still the international community had built a plan to partner with a good faith partner – the Afghan government overloaded as it was with corrupt and self-serving officials who were far more interested in ensuring a constant stream of illicit revenue than they were in connecting to their people.

One solution to this dilemma was to create parallel government structures in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). In reality, arguably PRTs only exacerbated the growing disconnect between the central government and the population by alienating the very government officials the International Community held accountable for delivering good governance and basic services. This was the shaky foundation that a population-centric counterinsurgency campaign was built upon and the notion of connecting the people to such a government seemed in such a world to be a far-fetched goal.

Recommendation

The lesson learned is to first fully understand the evolving threat especially if the threat has a potential to grow into criminal activity – which is invariably the case in lawless, post conflict or uncontrolled environments. It is imperative at this stage to expend equal effort, if not more effort, to build a police force that can manage the criminal threat. Calibrate how much of the police force should be trained as para-military and empower them to work in concert with land forces but never compromise on a States' ability to police and enforce rule of law in its own territory. And never assume that an army alone should handle an insurgent or terrorist threat because at some point in the post-conflict phase the threat will inevitably transition to police action. This is a fundamental requirement especially if the nation aspires to be a democracy with functioning democratic institutions.

7.3. The Corrosive Effect of Corruption on a Counterinsurgent Campaign

Preventing corruption in the security forces must be a core strategic requirement in any counterinsurgency campaign. It is not a case of waiting till corruption happens and then dealing with it but more of acting pre-emptively to

actively shape an environment so corruption cannot take root and settle in. Corruption within the Afghan police force was one of the single biggest factors as to why the police between 2002 and 2013 were ineffective, feared, mismanaged and arguably contributed more overall as an institution to the instability in Afghanistan than they did to its stability. There was corruption in the Afghan Army but nothing that compared to the levels within the police force.

In 2006 U.S. Army Maj. Gen. Robert Durbin, who headed the Office of Security Cooperation in Afghanistan responsible for capacity building the Afghan security forces, said publically that the Afghan police not only faced the problem of establishing security for the nation, but also the internal problem of rampant corruption. Durbin said corrupt practices undermined public confidence and must be targeted for elimination. Worse than this the ISAF mission itself had inadvertently strengthened the forces of corruption that undermined legitimate government institutions. In 2010 Carl Forsberg, Institute for the Study of War testified before the U.S. sub-committee on National Security and Foreign Affairs and said it was clear that ISAF understood that it too must take responsibility for a role in the rampant corruption within the government and security institutions of Afghanistan and was taking serious steps to address it.¹²⁶

In good faith by 2010 ISAF was committed to better understanding and tracking the means by which informal Afghan power structures co-opted and undermined the development of government institutions for their own gains. ISAF was also reforming their contracting practices and developing a comprehensive intelligence picture of the interests and relationships of local powerbrokers and had made a commitment to ensure that ISAF actions through contracting and ISAF funding of projects did not undermine local government or create fertile ground for exacerbating corruption. It was a valiant and noble effort that accepted swift reform was needed by ISAF. But the fundamental lesson learned is not to have created such conditions in the first place that would allow corruption to grow on such a large scale. Corruption was certainly corrosive within the police and in many cases especially in the southern Provinces of Afghanistan it was the cause of the police being deliberately kept weak by local powerbrokers.¹²⁷

By 2010 ISAF realized that the levels of corruption in Afghanistan, especially within the security forces, was stifling the nascent efforts at Afghan governance that was fundamental to the COIN strategy in Afghanistan. At the highest political

¹²⁶ In 2010 General Petraeus, the US CENTCOM Commander informed the Senate Armed Forces Committee that he was creating a task force to examine the impact of US contracting on corruption and overall the counterinsurgency effort.

¹²⁷ Ahmed Wali Karzai built a powerful empire in Kandahar and kept the provincial police intentionally weak by bribes and intimidation so as to ensure they could be manipulated for his own ends.

levels, especially in the U.S. Department of Defence where most of the funding for security transformation came, most officials had been dismissive of the effects of corruption until it became too corrosive to ignore – and by then almost ten years after the mission in Afghanistan had begun, it was too late.

Recommendation

A counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is built on fundamental principles of credibility and legitimacy. Invariably unstable and post-conflict zones offer up a breeding ground for corruption and the strategy in these situations should be based on prevention rather than mitigation. For ISAF to have inadvertently created conditions that added to the rampant corruption especially amongst government officials in the security forces, almost immediately imposed an almost insurmountable challenge to the ability of ISAF to succeed in the central pillars of its counterinsurgency campaign – creating a safe environment and connecting the people to their government.

The lesson learned is to take steps to prevent corruption from the outset and ensure that security forces – especially the police - are as corruption free as possible is a critical element of this prevention strategy. While this is no easy task it is central to the success of a counterinsurgency and without it there is no obvious path to success. It can make a difference if this is the dominant mindset at the outset of a counterinsurgency campaign. Some practical steps can be taken to demonstrate this mindset: Intelligence gathering is set to report and gather indicators and warnings of corruption; all training and capacity building is designed to promote robust anti-corruption measures in daily work; and the effects of international development and security aid dollars on the levels of local corruption must be at the center of any metrics on counterinsurgency campaign performance.

At the political level the lesson learned is that all efforts should be made to deter and condemn corruption as soon as it becomes evident and to develop political leverage to that effect. The effect of corruption within the security forces on the mission has to be a strategically important campaign element early on – if it is left until corruption has taken hold it is too late and too difficult to mitigate retroactively and will seriously erode a counterinsurgency campaigns potential for success.

7.4. Police and the Judicial Process: Two Sides of the Same Coin

Policing is not effective without a judicial process and vice versa. The Bonn Conference declaration was explicit in the need to rebuild the Afghan Justice

system¹²⁸ with consideration given to a system that included international, Islamic and traditional justice systems. But the tensions between all three proved to be enough of a challenge that it was years before any substantial progress on developing a viable dispute resolution and law enforcement system was made. Added to which the Justice Institutions were as notoriously corrupt as the Ministry of Interior with little desire or political will by the Karzai administration to remedy the situation.

While ISAF had little control over these central government failings there were strategies that could have been employed early on to help improve and implement rule of law. Fundamentally rule of law should have been given prominence as a key element of success early on in the counterinsurgency campaign. Once again just like building a police force, and preventing corruption, rule of law was given less prominence as a development goal until at least 2009 when the realization dawned that criminality had undermined the ISAF campaign and there was precious little in the Afghan justice system to prosecute or enforce the law enough to stop it.

Italy had taken the lead in developing an Afghan justice system after Bonn but had seen very few supporters or contributions from other nations. Additionally Italy spent time on developing the academic and international aspects of rule of law rather than integrating international law with traditional local law and implementing a practical and usable legal system on the ground. Through much of the first decade of the ISAF counterinsurgency campaign, Afghans would give up on timely, fair justice disbursed by their government officials and resort to the harsh justice dealt by the Taliban. Once again the Afghan government had failed and left the door wide open for parallel governance by the Taliban who gladly took the initiative.

The ISAF counterinsurgency campaign was no winner either and the notion of protecting the people and providing a safe and secure environment was something that regrettably the Taliban seemed more capable of delivering. Germany led the effort to build a traditional police force but handed it over to EUPOL in 2008 and the emphasis switched from training traditional community policemen to building a paramilitary police force. While a paramilitary police force can protect against terrorism and insurgents it does not necessarily develop skills that gather evidence and build a case for prosecution of criminals. And it does not do community policing.

¹²⁸ The Bonn declaration said "The judicial power of Afghanistan shall be independent and shall be vested in a Supreme Court of Afghanistan, and such other courts as may be established by the Interim Administration. The Interim Administration shall establish, with the assistance of the United Nations, a Judicial Commission to rebuild the domestic justice system in accordance with Islamic principles, international standards, the rule of law and Afghan legal traditions."

Ironically by 2008 as the threat changed the greater need was for police who could do traditional community policing to catch criminals rather than to hunt insurgents. That need extended to a requirement for a police force that could work with justice officials and understand due process of law. In the end poor policing that focused on catching insurgents and terrorists rather than protecting the people against criminals, and ineffective, corrupted rule of law systems left an Afghan society vulnerable and afraid. There was nothing to stop a farmer from having his land snatched, or a family having their children kidnapped or a powerbroker from inflicting untold brutality on local communities. There was nothing to reign in corrupt government officials from extorting money from local villagers or police chiefs from stealing. And there was very little that could be held up in the way of solidly connecting a people to their government.

All in all the lack of upfront, international commitment to support Afghan rule of law and policing as two sides of one coin eroded the central tenets of the counterinsurgency campaign undermining and hindering its success in profound ways. This was compounded by the lack of political will early on in the campaign to leverage the Afghan government to implement a system of rule of law that worked for Afghans.

Recommendation

A counterinsurgency campaign must put predictable and fair justice as a central element of success ensuring that it is linked in its development to a capable effective police force made up of traditional, para-military and border police. The lesson learned is that the insurgent or terrorist threat does shift and merge with criminality and organized crime, but the fundamental challenge in a population centric counterinsurgency to provide a safe and secure environment does not change. The emphasis and resourcing to build a police force from the beginning must be on rule of law and traditional policing as two inextricable elements of an indispensable pillar of a counterinsurgency strategy. This cannot be short changed by assuming that paramilitary police designed to catch insurgents rather than protect people will be able to fulfil all requirements of policing - and it certainly cannot be filled by an army.

7.5. Local Solutions; Local Ownership

In international development the core mantra is “local sustainable solutions for local problems” but the reality of truly incorporating this approach into a counterinsurgency strategy is hard to achieve. There are language barriers, resourcing and funding barriers, security clearances, cultural blind spots, leadership arrogance, fear, mistrust, national caveats and urgent foreign policy requirements that all contrive to prevent counterinsurgency campaigns from

weaving local knowledge, systems and approaches into their campaign plans. Despite the challenges, ignoring local solutions is a great missed opportunity and a short-sighted approach.

We have already examined under the previous discussion on corruption how lack of knowledge, naiveté about local power networks, lack of intelligence on corruption indicators and warnings all contributed to us being unaware of the dangerous buildup of corruption in the Afghan police force, Army and government institutions. As the international community supported security capacity building it missed crucial opportunities for a local approach and bypassed or disregarded local Afghan systems and procedures already in place. In 2006 Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), responsible for security sector reform in Afghanistan, employed over 300 U.S. defence contractors working primarily on security sector reform for the Ministry of Defence. The defence contractors were almost all retired U.S. military who defaulted to the ways things were done in the U.S. military rather than Afghan solutions because that is what they knew. These systems inevitably cost vast amounts of money and because of that were highly susceptible to corruption. They would also prove in the long run to be unsustainable.

The arguments made generally by international security sector reformers is that local systems do not exist or are too antiquated for quick results but often that is an excuse for not wanting to put in the effort to find or revive local solutions or systems. Local capacity building is not easy and requires strategic patience. Sometimes local systems are ignored because the international community or individuals within that community have more to gain by using their own imported systems. Sometimes it is because of an urgent perceived need to act quickly to fight insurgents and it is deemed easier to build new and import rather than revive a local system or solution. Sometimes it is just an arrogant attitude that a Western system is better than a local system. In the end Afghanistan demonstrated that imposed western solutions that came with vast amounts of cash contributed hugely to the corruption that was endemic in the security forces and wholly undermined the campaign strategy. To illustrate this, we can examine the Army and Police administration, financial, procurement and logistics resupply systems. Ironically these were local solutions that could have been an easy win if they had been used and the right technical support applied upfront.

Afghanistan was reborn out of the ashes of a Taliban era that had none of the trappings of modern statecraft. It was a clean slate in 2001 – no government officials to speak of, no interim government, no civil servants, no governance structures, no national economic plan and no budgets for the Defence and Interior Ministries. But there were rudimentary system of Public Financial Management

and Administration that the Soviet era had ushered in – very rusty in spots after forty years - but a system that worked with Afghan civil servants who understood how it worked. It was a basic system that could deliver public funds in a relatively accountable way – all the financial forms for cash disbursement, budget requests and procurement existed. Even in 2001 the forms and financial mechanisms to request and disburse budgets, and procure goods and services were there and ready to be “modernized” and computerized over time once they were dusted off and reinstated. But international organizations working to support the defence and interior ministries did not use these systems widely except to pay wages. The local systems were largely abandoned and replaced by parallel foreign procurement, logistical resupply and administration systems. Large amounts of foreign cash was injected bilaterally¹²⁹ primarily by the U.S. defence capacity building organization CSTC-A to pay for these foreign systems.

The basic Afghan budgetary, procurement, administration with their own systems of accountability in the Ministry of Finance and Defence and Interior Ministries were all but ignored. Not only that, far more energy was expended on teaching the army and police tactical fighting than on how to sustain their own institutional logistic resupply systems, procurement and budgetary processes. Certainly up until 2008, the international security sector reformers generally performed these critical institutional functions of logistical and operational sustainment. On any given day in CSTC-A in 2007 any number of military personnel could be found at their computers at Camp Eggers running the parallel institutions that were the Ministry of Defence and Interior. It was a low point for the concept of local ownership and local solutions.

Understandably the international community wanted to inject cash into the security sector as quickly as possible to pay salaries to soldiers and police on the front line and help them buy weapons and ammunition in the defence against terrorism. They also believed that bilateral cash injects that bypassed local systems were more transparent and accountable. And even though in the short term this may have seemed like a credible argument, the longer-term result of this decision had far reaching and damaging effects on the counterinsurgency effort. Bypassing local systems, ignoring the central role of the Afghan Ministry of Finance and security Ministries in financial management, logistics resupply and administration meant creating systems whereby Afghan officials had no personal responsibility or ownership. The parallel systems developed an entrenched general mindset amongst Afghan defence and security officials of a never ending money supply where equipment was expendable and accountability non-existent. International money and equipment with very loose accountability measures was ripe for the taking.

¹²⁹ Bilateral funding is used to describe the practice of injecting international donor resources directly into a development program and by passing host nation Public Financial Management Systems.

The result was that millions and millions of dollars of equipment and funding that poured into the security sector went unaccounted for, syphoned off and over ten years contributed to the unprecedented growth of illicit power networks and corruption.

In 2006 one of the biggest problems for CSTC-A to solve was ammunition resupply. Ammunition was sent to the Provinces and then would simply disappear without trace and as there was no Afghan official held accountable there was no recourse or person to hold responsible. In 2007 two hundred LTVs destined for police in far-flung and insecure Provinces went missing without a trace and were later found in a Governors compound awaiting sale to private owners. Stories like this of the waste and abuse of international funding, contracting and procurement abound in the ANA and ANP. But when millions of dollars of cash and equipment is so easily come by without having to expend effort to account for or operationally budget for it, then it is no surprise that such abuses took place. The millions of international dollars that were intended to quickly build security forces did not in the end achieve this goal. Instead because of lack of accountability and local ownership the unending stream of money quickly fuelled corruption and in the aggregate negatively impacted the counterinsurgency campaign by creating criminality and insecurity. At this stage the international community made the case to increase the size of the ANSF to tackle the increasing threat.

And it did not stop there: The massive ISAF resupply network that grew from the 2009 military surge had to be protected by Private Security Companies instead of police because they were in short supply. As we have learnt¹³⁰ it was the rapid growth of Private Security Companies that contributed immeasurably to the instability and corruption in Afghanistan. And of course the question still remains as to how Afghanistan can sustain into the future the \$3.6 BN a year bill for a police force and army that has been built based on western systems and equipment. Currently international donations cover 80% of the costs to sustain the ANSF.

Recommendation

In supporting local security forces and their development, use local systems and solutions. Defence capacity building for any security force is built on the central premise of local ownership and sustainable, local solutions. The argument goes that in peacetime there is the luxury of time to support this premise while in war there is a sense of urgency to get things done and there is not the same

¹³⁰ "Corruption, Contractors, and Warlords in Afghanistan", Jacob E. Jankowski Editor, Nova Science Publishers, Inc.

indulgence in time to develop local approaches. But Afghanistan proved that this is a false logic.

The counter intuitive lesson learned is that in both war and peace the same premise holds true and that for sustainable capacity local ownership and solutions delivers more sustainable and successful results all round. The international elements of a counterinsurgency campaign should not introduce foreign parallel administration or financial management or procurement systems into defence institutions. But instead should build on what is locally in place even if requires upfront technical support and patience. Additionally technical support should be given to train local security forces to run their financial, administrative and resupply systems and not to do it for them. What good is a soldier if he knows how to fire a weapon and defend a position but cannot be resupplied with ammunition or food? The mantra is to keep it simple and local.

In order to support this approach, the lesson learned is that from the very beginning provision should be made for technical expertise – not generalists- to help discover and rebuild or develop local systems. To impose a foreign system is generally counter-productive because it encourages local ownership lethargy, disinterest in accountability, corruption and misses a valuable opportunity to build organizational management capacity for security officials that is sustainable.

7.6. Promoting a Comprehensive Approach between Security Institutions and Host Nation Governance as Primary Elements of a Population Centric Counterinsurgency Campaign

There is no doubt that the ISAF COIN Campaign Plan of 2009 captured fully the need for a comprehensive approach between security, development and governance. But it did not capture the need for a similar campaign strategy within Afghan institutions. In every ISAF meeting the need for a comprehensive approach to the three pillars of the counterinsurgency plan – security, governance and development – was reaffirmed over and over again. Of course the reality of achieving complete synergy between the three pillars was another matter and the daily challenges of trying to harmonize the working of the ISAF NATO mission in security and international civilian organizations in governance and development was ever present and quite time consuming. More challenging but with far less time allocated was the idea of supporting coordination between the Afghan security Ministries and their governance and development counterparts within the Afghan government. In a counterinsurgency military and civilian have to work together and not just amongst internationals. It was arguably more important for cooperation and collaboration to happen between Afghan institutions. But the international community spent more time on documenting, understanding, measuring and interacting with each other than they did trying to support Afghan

interaction. Coordination that took place between Afghan Ministries was generally opaque to international military and civilian staff and this is well illustrated by Operation Hamkari, 2010. Operation Hamkari was the plan by international and Afghan security forces to clear and stabilize Kandahar city and its environs. How closely the Afghan security Ministries coordinated with the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) to make this plan work was key yet there was little visibility or support by the international community to ensure or place primacy on such coordination. We assume that the coordination between Afghan institutions probably did happen in some form but do not know the exact depth of interaction, collaboration and coordination between Afghan security and governance organizations. We do know that in the end there were significant problems for the Afghans in their ability to install government officials in Kandahar District Centers after the enemy had been cleared and there was a palpable lack of trust between Afghan government officials and the military on the issue of freedom of movement in the Districts of Kandahar. Clearly the pre coordination between Afghan civilians and the military had not produced the right results to get a quick win in the stabilization phase of Operation Hamkari. In general we know also that from the early days of 2002 coordination and trust between the ANA and the ANP was not easy to come by or build. In a counterinsurgency and counterterrorism mission this relationship and codependence is crucial. But even up to the Afghan Presidential election in 2009 there were still enormous challenges in getting the police and army to work collaboratively. The situation on police and Army coordination improved with the implementation of the Operations Coordination Centers (OCCs) but even to this day one of the great persistent challenges is to build trust between the police and the army so that they can work collaboratively in the fight against insurgents, terrorists and criminals.

So how did we end up in this situation whereby the international community spent more time worrying about their own civilian and military collaboration and much less time supporting Afghan civilian and military collaboration? There are a myriad answers to this question and anyone who has been in Afghanistan will have an opinion. Certainly there are some common themes to explain this that include culture and patronage, corruption, our arrogance, freedom of movement restraints, and national agendas. Understanding Afghan culture and patronage was a bridge too far for most foreigners who worked in Afghanistan, so to try to read and understand the complexity of relationships and patronage between Afghanistan institutions was beyond our capacity. If we didn't understand the relationships how could we legitimately actively support building trust and coordination between different Afghan institutions? The need for cultural analysis and insights was a capability that we did not recognize we needed until well in the COIN campaign and even then we focused more on tactical level knowledge rather than on relationships and patronage between Ministries and strategic level offices

and top officials. Not understanding Afghan relationships meant we looked inward for our own solutions instead to fix things. And then there is corruption - the hidden motivator that decided the course of many events and deals between Afghans. As we have discussed in an earlier section, our mistake was to allow corruption to take root and flourish at the levels it did. It undermined and distorted all relationship building between Afghan government officials - especially between the Army and police - and certainly got in the way of trying to build Afghan capacity to collaborate. In our frustration and lack of ability to deal with corruption we looked inward to our systems again to try to fix things. Thirdly, arrogantly we simply believed that we could fix things better through our own civil-military collaboration. In development the common mantra is to develop systems that are sustainable and have local ownership. Many times the international community was guilty of developing our approach to the problem rather than spending time with Afghan institutions to develop their collaborative approach. The International Community generally simply did not ask their Afghan counterparts if they agreed to a particular program or activity, or if it was even viable given the constraints of time and human capital (ironically, money never was in short supply). To put emphasis on Afghan collaboration implies there is freedom of movement. Many times in Afghanistan the security situation meant we could not even gather district and provincial officials in the same place. This hampered and derailed many international efforts to bring Afghans officials together to collaborate. And finally on national agendas: There were over forty nations involved in the counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan each with direction from their own Ministry of Foreign Affairs. A comprehensive approach to build Afghan civil-military cooperation before our own would require a universal commitment from all nations. There were nations that committed to this concept and approach and nations who did not. Overall the Afghans were never sure what plan to follow: Was it their solution to a problem that would be implemented or were the internationals leading with their plan? In the end because of the confusion and a myriad of agendas the Afghans likely defaulted most of the time to agreeing to the international way while quietly pursuing their own way and thereby we undercut their ability to develop an upfront Afghan collaborative process.

Recommendation

Primacy should be on supporting local national collaboration and local civ-mil understanding especially between security forces and governance institutions. Future counterinsurgency Campaign Plans should put the emphasis on supporting local civ-mil cooperation as a primary objective and put our own civ-mil cooperation as secondary. Supporting local civil-military collaboration as the centrepiece of a strategy will require capabilities to make it work and this includes

cultural analysts, humility, patience, language skills, and preventative measures on corruption.

7.7. Conclusion

The story of policemen slaughtered in a far off outpost on the Afghan Pakistan border might not have happened if we had implemented early on the five strategic lessons outlined here. If we had put emphasis on building a viable police force and understanding the threat early on then maybe the police would have been trained and manned well enough to fend off an attack. If we had prevented endemic corruption in the security services then the reason for the attack might have been eradicated. If we had built local solutions then the police might have had been resupplied with ammunition and paid on time. If we had spent more time on Afghan cooperation and collaboration rather than our own, the ANA might have been there to reinforce the police. And if the justice system had been developed in concert with the police there may have been a process to gather evidence and prosecute the perpetrators who attacked the police station and committed the crime. A prosecution and conviction of criminals is a strong deterrence message to other would be attackers. Certainly these five lessons are not the silver bullet. There were other factors that confounded the ability of ISAF to wage a counterinsurgency successfully. One such factor was the inability of ISAF to deny insurgents safe haven across the border in Pakistan. Another was at the political level where the political will by nations to exert leverage in unison on key issues was often needed but rarely realised. And the biggest lesson of all in a population centric counterinsurgency was not to partner with a government that does not operate in good faith.

The lessons learned for Afghanistan are many and at many levels all worthy of being collected and studied. What we cannot allow is for the key lessons to be locked away and forgotten the next time we undertake counterinsurgency operations. David Kilcullen, author of *The Accidental Guerrilla*, Oxford University Press, 2009 and expert advisor on counterinsurgency operations, made a presentation listing all of the reasons why the Afghan counterinsurgency campaign was not going well. It listed many of the things discussed here – a government that was not a good faith partner, insurgents with safe havens in Pakistan, endemic corruption, underdeveloped police force, imposed international solutions – all seemed to fit the bill well to describe what was going wrong with the Afghan campaign. Except the list Kilcullen provided was from Vietnam. His point was that we had not learned the lessons from Vietnam and were repeating the same mistakes in Afghanistan. The intent of this chapter is to provide five simple lessons that are not forgotten and can be implemented for future counterinsurgencies and counter terrorist missions. The five lessons are to develop the police early, prevent corruption early, develop police and rule of law

together as two sides of the same coin, use local solutions for security sector development, and spend more time on supporting local security – governance (civil-military) cooperation than on our own.

8. CONCLUSION AND KEY FINDINGS

8.1 Key Findings

Even after a relatively long preparation period, the ideas from the participants of the workshop had still some conflicting areas, as expected. The discussions covered pretty much the entire scope of Afghanistan mission; however COIN and CT remained as the starting point for all related analysis.

8.1.1 Shaping the Conflict

It is important to note that wars within states continue to breakout more frequently than wars between states and these conflicts will sometimes compel us to intervene, even when member states of NATO would prefer not to. We need to recognize that the political context and rationale for counterinsurgency in future operations will be very different and a diverse range of scenarios requiring different approaches are likely to emerge.

8.1.2. Common Understanding

One of the most significant outcomes of the workshop was the requirement for a common understanding of global actors. Anyone would agree that all the complexity of the situation caused by local rivalries among the different tribal groups in Afghanistan is doubled with conflicting interests of external actors. The participants tried to find a way to lessen the negative effect of local and external conflicts. In any future conflict, neighboring and global stakeholders that share a common interest with relevant UNSC resolutions and NATO shall be included more densely in the planning and engagement phases. This may cover the countries that have deeper understanding in the local culture and traditions. The experience and expertise of other global stakeholders shall also be taken into consideration, depending the depth and complexity of the conflict.

Global partnership program of the NATO may provide the basis to engage with other nations. The Emerging Security Challenges Division and Terrorism Task Force within NATO Headquarters may be seen as necessary initial steps to foster cooperation with international stakeholders. Also the 2002 Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism (PAP-T) provides a framework for multinational practical cooperation. However, NATO still needs to further strengthen its relations and

communication with existing communities of interest working on specific counterinsurgency and counterterrorism initiatives.

NATO has also to strengthen relevant interfaces to communicate with the existing communities of interest working on global counterterrorism initiatives. NATO Centres of Excellence may be used to reach subject communities such as study groups, research institutes and global cooperation forums. COEs are already encouraged to develop relationship with external entities such as international organizations, industry, private companies, universities and research institutes.¹³¹ The existing mechanism may be used more effectively during peace time and initial phases of the conflict for future operations.

8.1.3. Strategy

Successful COIN campaigns may need more than 10 years, which requires some patience on the political side of the allies. In the time between, political leaders along with their policies may change drastically. It is obvious that the intention in 2001 was not to leave Afghanistan without provision of a secure state and a functional government. As the use of force in the latest operations in other regions was followed by chaos, the operation should not be initiated without shouldering the burden of post conflict reconstruction. To support this approach, a clear strategy and operational plan for military coalition has to be created at an early stage. The operational plan has to link tactical actions to the strategic object of the campaign.

Future counterinsurgency campaign plans should also put the emphasis on supporting local civil-military cooperation as a primary objective and put our own civil-military cooperation as secondary.

8.1.4. Comprehensive Approach

There is a consensus coming from different COIN operations in the history that "an insurgency cannot be defeated by military means alone". Even if for CT it might be arguable, military means on its own will not be able to cope with complex scenarios found in terrorist and insurgent environments.

The hard measures of military intervention may deliver short term success but the long term peace may lie on a multi-faceted approach. The policy to plan the intervention shall include a broad application and enhancement in security, political, social, economic, administrative, governance and other factors relevant to the specific unrest. Taking these requirements into account, it may easily be

¹³¹ MC Concept for NATO Centres of Excellence.

acknowledged that there must be a competent authority to harmonize all these different disciplines to achieve the goal. The efforts may be divided in two categories: civilian and military. A balance shall be maintained both on the field and in the command level between civilian and military actions, and reflected in relevant political-strategic guidance.

It is already stated that NATO military forces do not own the comprehensive approach.¹³² NATO's military heavy structure in its nature may easily create a tendency in applying military solutions rather than favoring a multi-faceted approach. In addition to the military heavy tendency, NATO itself may not be the most appropriate body to harmonize all aspects of CT and COIN. As indicated in AJP 3.4.4., NATO can seek to have a civilian command to oversee its mission but civil wars, insurgencies and terrorist campaigns will require different ways and means to tackle them, and this will require the advice of the military commanders in theatre and in their respective capitals. The Headquarters of the Mission should therefore consist of an executive body in theatre which is both civil and military, with a single line of reporting/chain of command to NATO headquarters and from thence out to the respective member states' governments.

The responsibility falls on the national governments, which need to institutionalize the principle of the Comprehensive Approach so that all the levers of national power can be concentrated to produce the right political effect.

8.1.5. Force Structure

The forces required to conduct COIN properly in a region like Afghanistan requires an enormous force which is beyond the means of most NATO states. In Afghanistan campaign, NATO only achieved target force ratios at the end when NATO was withdrawing. In looking at ideal force ratios, it might be a good idea for NATO to sponsor research on this topic looking at small wars where security and stability were established without this minimum requirement.

To establish smooth coordination between police and military, militarized police forces (such as Carabinieri and Gendarmerie) may be used as leverage.

8.1.6. Realistic End-States

Afghanistan campaign once again proved that in a failed state, it is not easy to have democracy and stability at the same time and in a timely manner. When deciding on the end-state, this dilemma shall be considered.

¹³² AJP 3.4.4 Allied Joint Doctrine for Counterinsurgency.

National militaries will do their own analysis of ends, ways and means, but NATO also needs to look at this problem from the perspective of an alliance/coalition. The military must be more assertive in airing their concerns when presented with a government proposal to use force. The aspiration of local population shall also be taken into account, when deciding to the end-state.

8.1.7. Local Support and Economic Development

As expected, the intervening force faced a significant challenge in terms of sustaining legitimacy in the eyes of the local population.

The fastest and maybe the most economical way to gain the local support is to boost the economic conditions of the local population. There are reports that show the local support to the insurgents is inverse proportion to the increasing standards of the living (ICOS field research believes that young men who are often unemployed, unmarried and disenfranchised make the majority of recruits, because they are the most susceptible to recruitment by insurgent groups). The cost of the entire Afghan mission exceeds \$ 1 trillion to the Allies.¹³³ If we would be able to reflect this budget to the living of an average Afghan more effectively, the scene might be different than it is today (there are examples how the insurgents successfully used their economic powers to recruit locals).

With the assumption that the future troubled nations will have similar characteristics (poor governance, weak economy, corrupted officials etc), international efforts to promote economic development might be taken as a priority. These efforts should include provision of immediate economic gains to the local population. Although this assumption is highly dependent on the varying cultural perceptions, some studies regarding the economics of counterinsurgency in Iraq supports that improved service provision reduces insurgent violence¹³⁴.

NATO may not have effective remedies in providing economic development; however the allies that form NATO may always have both resources and required set of solutions. It is clear that the allies may not be able to provide what is needed to boost the economy of the failed state on their own. Assuming the NATO mandate will be based on a UN Security Council Resolution, the attention of the global stakeholders could be drawn to the need of economic development during the early preparations of the campaign.

¹³³ "\$1tn Cost of Longest US War Hastens Retreat From Military Intervention", Financial Times, 15 Dec 2014.

¹³⁴ Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought? Berman, Shapiro, Felter-2011.

8.1.8. Respecting the Local Traditions

When designing the Afghanistan campaign, NATO along with allied nations presumed they knew best and failed to ask what it was the Afghans wanted. Imposing our own political solutions did not return success in Afghanistan. For sustainable capacity local ownership and solutions delivers more sustainable and successful results. Any future COIN campaign should allow the locals to determine what kind of support is needed. This procedure shall apply in the training of its security forces. As such, the practical ways to facilitate the provision of economic and social assistance through local rather than international agencies should be the priority.

The international elements of a counterinsurgency campaign should avoid introducing foreign parallel administration or financial management or procurement systems into defence institutions.

8.1.9. External Support

In the case of a future COIN campaign, where closure of the border is impossible, it will be necessary to find a way to disrupt, dismantle and destroy insurgent safe base areas to cut the external support. This will require support of the neighboring governments; hence a significant diplomatic effort and the provision of material support to help the government achieve this goal.

Failure in cutting the external support will negatively affect the entire COIN and CT campaign and the level of involvement shall be assessed accordingly.

8.1.10. National Caveats

During the operational tempo of the operations, some efforts have been put to remove the problems created by the national caveats in Afghanistan mission. Some steps have been taken to lift them, but the problem remained to hamper the entire ISAF mission.

Afghanistan has been a significant test for national caveats. Many of the nations in the mission, whether NATO or not, have attached national caveat restrictions on their forces. The problems caused by national caveats created opportunities for the insurgents, but the most prominent problem probably was the friction between the Allies. A common belief that some troop contributing nations are bearing a greater burden than the others was spread among the allies.

Actually, the problem created by the National Caveats was already identified during the KFOR mission, and the ISAF mission was to show this problem still

exists and will remain for future operations. As the caveats rise from political variations the allies possess, dramatically changes in policy for future operations should not be expected. Throughout the lifespan of the campaign, putting pressure to those countries that apply caveats had returned minor success.

In essence, the caveats are safety valves of the Alliance, which ensures speed and unity in political decision making progress at the NAC level and giving the strong political signal of solidarity. Allies rely on the card of national caveats to align their level of contribution and commitments afterwards, thus giving political decisions faster than any other consensus based organization. The most concrete example is that the Allies invoked Article 5 only one day after the 9/11 attacks.

Understanding the political structure and sensitivities of each ally and to shape the contribution for future operations in the light of this study might be more realistic. The snapshot taken from the initial mission of NATO forces in Afghanistan in 2003 would look drastically different than the snapshots in 2006, 2010 and 2012. As the mission advances, the level of expectations and the political approaches of the Allies would normally be differing by applying caveats to the forces they provided. To reduce the negative effect created by national caveats, clearer responsibilities for required task force shall be depicted before the Allies go to the Force Generation Conference and start the negotiations.

As NATO has to live with national caveats in potential future operations, the basics, roots and nature of national caveats need to be studied and understood in advance (such as political and juristic boundaries of the specific allies) . To reduce the negative impact of national caveats to ground forces at tactical level, the military capabilities and expected requirements of the forces shall be put in advance (some time before force generation conferences).

8.1.11. Local Security

NATO's primary objective in Afghanistan was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan will ever again become a safe haven for terrorists. This mission is strongly connected with the proper development of local security system.

Local security shall be taken as the primary objective for any COIN mission. This requirement may be explained with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. All the activities in the field of law enforcement building mechanism need to be coordinated with relevant law enforcement agencies in order to ensure the basic security requirements of local community are met. As repeatedly discussed before, long term security may not be established by military forces alone. As it was very

apparent from the outset, what Afghan locals needed was security, and the local police should be providing local security in the first place. Unfortunately, the required attention has not been paid to the development of the ANP at the beginning of the campaign.

To establish long term security and to enable smooth transition from military led security operations to law-enforcement driven security, the basic training package for national law enforcement needs to contain required basic community policing skills. Follow on training and mentoring has to be ensured to establish effective law enforcement. The paradigm of quality vs quantity has to be taken into consideration during the recruitment process.

In line with its nature, local law enforcement agencies such as police forces, intelligence services and border security play a critical role to counter terrorism and insurgencies. Some analysis done by RAND show that the “success or failure of counterinsurgency efforts can be linked with the capability of indigenous security forces”.¹³⁵ Although there is a general consensus on the pivotal role of police forces against terrorism and insurgents, the local law enforcement agencies in Afghanistan were far from being successful. For many years, ANA was in focus of external actors, and as a result, ANA played a key role in a number of offensive campaigns to kill or capture insurgents.¹³⁶ The preoccupation for the short term results of fighting with insurgency in Afghanistan did not permit the timely establishment of community police structure, which actually would bring security to the region.

When helping a failed state in providing effective security against insurgency and terrorism, the law enforcement system might be put at the center and all the remaining efforts might be built around it. The initial situation may require military and paramilitary intervention, but in the long term local law enforcement system has to be established and all the external and local military efforts need to deliver the stage to the local law enforcement mechanism. In the long term, the failed states will mostly require effective law enforcement mechanisms rather than military forces to fight against insurgency and terrorism.

The insurgent or terrorist threat does shift and merge with criminality and organized crime, but the fundamental challenge in a population centric counterinsurgency to provide a safe and secure environment does not change.

¹³⁵ Counter insurgency in Afghanistan, Seth, P.14.

¹³⁶ Ibid, P.74.

8.1.12. Training of Local Security Forces

As it is accepted broadly, each terrorist case might show unique behavior and counterterrorism strategies should be implemented accordingly. This also applies to specific training requirements of the police forces. In any operation carried out by a coalition with broad participation, differences in training methodology may appear. The negative effect of such differences may only be reduced by promulgating agreed overall strategic objectives and by ensuring proper coordination between security stake holders. The agreed upon overall objective shall include a timeline and a feasible end-state.

The precise definition of missions and roles ensures an effective and professional police force. "Afghan Uniform Police Training Needs Analysis (June 2013, Final Report)" reveals that there was no standard of a basic training program among training activities delivered both from local and external stakeholders. More than 500 courses given by different institutions lacked unit of required basic standards. This also hindered the creation of basic operating procedures and job descriptions that the uniformed law enforcement agencies should have in the first place.

Before starting with creation of a new model law enforcement agency, the requirements need to be analyzed properly and overall strategic objectives have to be clearly defined. These objectives need to be turned into basic definitions of what is the foreseen law enforcement agency shall do. Further on, training models need to be defined accordingly.

Regarding the training program, we would recommend to:

- Agree on overall strategic objectives, before starting with the creation of the local mechanisms and launching the reconstruction and training program.
- Create the basic definitions of what is needed and what is aimed for each echelon in the law enforcement system; plan the reconstruction and training accordingly.
- Establish coordination between local and international stakeholders, so that they align to the same level of the training program, to produce a standardized law enforcement system (establish one single applicable law enforcement training).

Before deciding on the training program of national security forces, we need to understand the evolving threat, especially if the threat has a potential to grow into criminal activity.

8.1.13. Justice System

One of the principal ways the Taliban were able to attack and undermine the Afghan Government was their ability to deliver justice quickly and effectively and it became an important way to win the support of the people. Assuming NATO is forced to play the role of an occupying power again in a future operation, it will need to address this deficiency. A deployable paramilitary or military police force capable of surviving in hostile environments and able to impose law and order in NATO's orbit may be used as a remedy.

8.1.14. Cultural Awareness and Frontline Diplomacy

The level of understanding required to ensure smooth social relations between the occupying force and the occupied is beyond any training that can be given.

It is clear that the frontline soldiers cannot be expected to be used as leverage in diplomacy. However, it is very likely for any frontline soldier to ruin all the population centric nature of a costly campaign by a simple mistake. Population-centric campaigns, as is in the nature of any COIN campaign, aim to protect people and separate the enemy from the population. The implementations of population-centric campaigns heavily depend on the application of strategic level goals strictly on the field. Locals being hurt for the purpose of protecting a service provided to support the population create a dilemma and negatively affect the heart winning process. The deficiency in the level of implementation of strategic goals in the field lies mostly on insufficient training and short rotation periods of coalition forces. Frontline soldiers need to develop a better understanding of the nature of the population-centric campaign during their induction training.

Even if it would be costly and extremely hard, local population may still be convinced to understand the root causes of a devastating results from collateral damage. However the images of alliance troops disrespecting local corpses are almost impossible to erase from the memories of the local population. The war may not be won with the successful diplomacy provided by frontline soldiers, but its tempo can be easily hindered with a single image as such.

Ensuring minimum contact with local population by military forces shall be the ultimate goal. NATO personnel should only be used to train local security forces and only a small element of that training team should then go out on operations with the unit they have trained.

8.1.15. Strategic Communications

One of the criticisms was that empathetic thinking was not part of the COIN campaign and ISAF mission. As explained in the relevant chapter in detail, the importation of western assumptions at odds with Afghan culture and social norms was abundant.

The importance of women, children and other disadvantaged groups was understood too late throughout the campaign. In any COIN and CT campaign, these groups should be involved as much and as often as possible in StratCom efforts.

Within the 'relatively' complex command structure and sophisticated StratCom mechanism of NATO, it was not possible to counter insurgent propaganda with equally effective counter-messaging. In many cases, NATO's response came too late, when the insurgent interpretation of events is already in the public and difficult to alter.

The damaging effect of unclear and constantly shifting objectives in Afghanistan also negatively affected strategic communication efforts.

It is recommended that, as part of the review of doctrine, specific attention should be paid to operationalising the intent and, in particular, the quality and the format of mass media outputs as tools for prompting societal change and the skill sets required for effective strategic communications in future operations.

Messaging through local interlocutors also proved effective and should be considered routine in future operations.

It is recommended that the position of StratCom in the planning process be reassessed and, if necessary, re-emphasised. Putting the StratCom at the centre of any COIN campaign shall be considered in the planning phase.

One of the great successes of the ISAF period was the development of a vibrant, self-sufficient Afghan media sector. The healthy media sector should feel confident that it can criticise with impunity (but at the same time in security) the government, violent non-state actors – and intervening foreign entities such as NATO. Media Sector Development should be added to StratCom disciplines and a doctrine developed that focuses on achieving military effects in the CT/COIN environment.

8.1.16. Provision of Services (PRT Concept)

Based on the PRT experience in Afghanistan, PRTs may provide a connection much more direct and effective than the big, abstract NATO body or another supranational framework is able to. The tool of PRTs turned out to be a productive and flexible instrument to include individual national capabilities into an international mission.

But co-ordination of interdepartmental assets on the national level was one of the main challenges for a comprehensive PRT approach. The contribution of PRT initiative to overall strategy of the campaign remained limited. Another main disadvantage remained the disconnection between the local government and PRTs. When planning any future PRTs, it has to be kept in mind that this useful tool also may be seen as alternative government structures. A population-centric counterinsurgency campaign is normally built upon the notion of connecting the people to the backed government. During the Afghanistan campaign, PRTs exacerbated the growing disconnect between the central government and the population.

One key takeaway from Afghanistan is that strategic objectives of the PRTs should be more clearly defined and controlled by NATO than was the case in this ISAF environment. As described in the military facet of the campaign, reconstruction efforts also need a clearly defined, limited end-state. As early as possible, responsibility must be handed over to local authorities.

Local power structures should carefully be assessed in their functionality to make a working community and not only as counterpoint to liberal concepts such as democracy, good governance or development. The way a community is traditionally run has to be understood before a mission is started and not only in the course of ongoing operations.

The coalition promised schools, wells and roads that they could not sustain or manage - and the Afghans did not have the budget to maintain and sustain either -so it was a short lived promise. COIN operations without the full spectrum of sustainable means and capacities have to be avoided as they cause more uncertainty and frustration among the populace than positive effects with regard to stability and security. As a promising alternative to control by insurgent groups, the population within an area will accept only the permanent, sustainable presence of their own government or international forces.

NATO will face the challenging need to make use of national resources while simultaneously trying to play a coordinating role in future operations. The

necessary regional and country expertise should be available on NATO level already in the starting phase of operational planning.

To improve the performance of PRTs in the future, enhanced training of audiences with the respective contents and procedures seems essential. NATO should set explicit training standards for civil-military PRT staffs and provide training structures and installations which allow mixed teams to work together. NATO must be given the authority to certify and pool national contributions so that only those nations which have developed the capabilities and procedures to deploy functioning teams will take part.

The role of the military PRT commanders should be limited to strictly military tasks whereas lead and co-ordination should be given to a civilian agency. Without setting the preconditions for an effective, civil-military task fulfilment, a national PRT contribution must not be accepted by NATO.

Handing over a PRT from one nation to another, no matter how carefully planned, leads to a substantial loss of knowledge and local expertise. A change during a mission must be avoided. Therefore, the role of NATO in the overall planning process has to be strengthened.

8.1.17. Addressing the Corruption

A counterinsurgency or counterterrorism campaign is built on fundamental principles of credibility and legitimacy.

In order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the locals, the intervention force has to take necessary steps to prevent corruption from the outset and has to ensure that corruption free security is a critical element of this prevention strategy. While this is no easy task it is central to the success of a counterinsurgency and without it there is no obvious path to success. The effect of corruption within the security forces on the mission has to be a strategically important campaign element early on – if it is left until corruption has taken hold it is too late and too difficult to mitigate retroactively and will seriously erode a counterinsurgency campaign's potential for success.

8.2 Conclusion

Although there is a strong belief that NATO is not likely to engage in another intervention like Afghanistan, the unrest in various places still continues to threaten the security of the Alliance. Even if the political will and the consent of the populations for such a campaign will remain limited, NATO may be forced to intervene in another civil war or a failed state in the future. If NATO is going to stick with its current mandate, it should be kept in mind that counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations may be part of any potential peacekeeping mission. Although the Allies will be more selective and cautious with the conditions, NATO may not have the luxury of being able to select missions or prevent “launching a COIN campaign in a country where the government is too weak to do the job itself”. Indeed, such a scenario makes the deployment of NATO more likely as a more stable, stronger government is hardly likely to need a military intervention.

Since any future intervention has a potential to contain counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations, the best way to prepare NATO for such an incident would be to understand the dynamics of insurgency and terrorism, and to influence the overall strategy as appropriate and from the outset.

The power of insurgency and terrorism mostly relies on its adaptive dynamics; as such NATO has to improve its capabilities in analyzing and adapting unfamiliar situations in a practical and efficient manner. Tomorrow's threat is being forged today, and it will quickly evolve and unrealistic strategies of yesterday will not help to protect Allies' interests. Defence against terrorism and counterinsurgency operations may become more complex than they appear, and the required precautions need to continue to be improved with updates in strategies and tactics. In line with the comprehensive approach strategy, the involvement will not be limited to NATO bodies, and requires broader concern and interest of global civil society. NATO shall not be expected to lead all the processes, but as a longstanding defender of global security, it has to do its best to increase awareness and continuously establish relevant interfaces for better communication and coordination.

One of the most imminent challenges in a failed state is the public perception of security. Many other factors in state building such as intelligence, local support, justice and the provision of infrastructure rely on the public perception of security; hence the local policing functions have to be established in a timely manner. This also requires tailored training programs for local security forces, in particular police forces, which can deliver imminent, although limited, results.

During the discussions, another requirement for better countering future CT-COIN related interventions was identified as “understanding the dynamics of local environment”. The third party solutions do not perfectly fit in the area of operations, where the culture and understanding is completely different. Any future intervention shall respect local’s decisions and give them a chance to govern themselves as they think appropriate. This freedom of choices shall apply to governance, justice and provision of infrastructure.

Although the ISAF mission is already completed, the aim of the workshop was to reflect on NATO’s Afghanistan experience in order to shape the policies of ongoing operations as well as present the lessons learned for future operations. NATO still has a foot in Afghanistan and these lessons and observations may be used as a basis for future training programs for other missions such as Operation Resolute Support. We strongly believe that there is a danger of losing some important observations and lessons from previous missions, and there is still a value to study each operation in the scope of counterinsurgency and counterterrorism.

