

## BUREAUCRACIES AT WAR: ORGANIZING FOR STRATEGIC SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

BY

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**BUREAUCRACIES AT WAR: ORGANIZING FOR STRATEGIC SUCCESS IN  
AFGHANISTAN**

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The collapse of the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan in 2001 led to the challenges of creating and then maintaining a stable, safe, and secure environment for the people of that nation. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) and the International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) failure to organize and establish the unity of command and unity of purpose needed to implement under an effective counterinsurgency (COIN) strategy has resulted in the ISAFs inability to gain and maintain security, prevent a resurgence of the Taliban, and develop an effective infrastructure development plan. This strategy research paper (SRP) examines how poor administration and organization of the political and military effort in Afghanistan has resulted in a lack of unity of command and unity of purpose, which has created an unstable political and military environment and an ineffective Afghan government. This SRP concludes with eleven recommendations to better organize NATO's political and military effort in order for the NATO mission to succeed in Afghanistan.



## BUREAUCRACIES AT WAR: ORGANIZING FOR STRATEGIC SUCCESS IN AFGHANISTAN

The war against terrorism will only be won if we have the people with us.  
There is no other way<sup>1</sup>

—Hamid Karzai

### Background

The U.S. invasion of Afghanistan was a post 9/11 response to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.<sup>2</sup> The United States identified Osama bin Laden and his al Qaeda network as being responsible for the attacks. Since bin Laden and his collaborators had established a significant presence in Afghanistan and had developed close ties to the Taliban leadership, the United States sought their extradition.<sup>3</sup> The Taliban ignored international calls to hand over Osama bin Laden, and this refusal led to the October 2001, invasion of Afghanistan by a US-led Coalition (Operation Enduring Freedom/OEF) against the Taliban and al Qaeda.<sup>4</sup>

To support the invasion, Central Command (CENTCOM) deployed a Combined Forces Land Component Command (CFLCC), a Combined Forces Air Component Command (CFACC), and a Combined Maritime Component Command (CFMCC) to the Arabian Gulf. A Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) then invaded Afghanistan.<sup>5</sup> By the end of December 2001, the Northern Alliance and Afghan indigenous forces, backed by Coalition airpower and Special Forces, had removed the Taliban and its al-Qaeda allies from power and driven them into the hinterlands.

The success of these units is notable but, unifying the operational efforts of these multiple service components and their coalition partners was very difficult, as evidenced

in Operation ANACONDA in March 2002.<sup>6</sup> To improve command and control USCENTCOM established the Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan (CFC-A) as the joint operational level headquarters for Afghanistan, commanded by a three star U.S. general.<sup>7</sup>

As an outcome of the 2001 United Nations-led Bonn Conference, the Afghan tribal parties reached agreement on an interim governing structure for the country in December 2001, pending the establishment of a permanent, broad-based, representative, and democratically elected government.<sup>8</sup> The Bonn agreement also set up the process for determining structure of the Afghan government, drafting a new constitution, and holding presidential and parliamentary elections.<sup>9</sup>

Anticipating that considerable international support would be required to assist with reconstruction and maintaining stability, the United Nations Security Council passed a series of resolutions to promote international support for the development of the Afghan government.<sup>10</sup> The United Nations then developed an Afghanistan Compact to support the Afghan Provisional Government. The Afghanistan Compact focused on creating a central Afghan government under the Government of Afghanistan (GOA) and later the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA).<sup>11</sup> The United Nations also established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to conduct operations to secure Kabul and other critical areas.

In August 2003, the U.N. Security Council authorized NATO to assume authority of the ISAF mission and organized a rotational standing headquarters in Kabul.<sup>12</sup> Five months later, in January 2004, the Afghan constitution passed; then in October 2004, the Afghan people elected Hamid Karzai President of Afghanistan. Parliamentary

elections in September 2005 and the creation of an Afghan parliament marked the formal end of the Bonn process.

In October 2004, the United Nations expanded ISAF's authority into the Northern Provinces and, in January 2005, into Western Afghanistan. Two years later, ISAF's authority fully expanded into Eastern and Southern Afghanistan. This terminated CFC-A's authority in Afghanistan and finalized NATO's authority over ISAF and operations throughout Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup>

NATO appointed a Senior Civilian Representative (SCR) in Kabul to represent the Alliance's political and military objectives. The SCR works closely with NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and provides a direct channel of communication among the theater combatant commanders, NATO HQ in Brussels, Belgium, the North Atlantic Council, (the Alliance's principal decision-making body), and the Allied Joint Command in Brunssum, Netherlands. The SCR provides the Council with advice on the most effective means of ensuring the overall coherence of the Alliance's relations with senior members of the Afghan Government, representatives of the international community at large, the various international organizations engaged in Afghanistan, particularly the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and the European Union. The SCR also maintains contacts with representatives of neighboring countries, as well as with various political actors, representatives of Afghan civil society, and representatives of international NGOs.<sup>14</sup>

NATO employs ISAF in support of the Afghan government to create stable security conditions and to support reconstruction efforts. ISAF consists of approximately 53,000 troops from 40 contributing nations; it serves as an alliance of

multinational partners committed to assisting Afghans in developing a stable, safe, secure country.<sup>15</sup> The United States contributes about 33,000 service members to the mission in Afghanistan; 14,000 serve as part of ISAF and the balance serve as part of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF-A).

ISAF maintains subordinate Regional Commands (RC) in the provinces of the North, South, East, West, and Kabul. The RCs are responsible for the execution of all operations, intelligence activities, logistical support, and command and control within their areas of responsibility. Each RC operates differently because of the operational environment, the contributing nation assigned command of the RC, and the capacity of the Afghan government within the province.<sup>16</sup>

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are small teams of civilian and military personnel working in Afghanistan's provinces to assist in reconstruction work. They are a key component of a three-part U.N. strategy for Afghanistan to establish security, governance, and development to help stabilize the entire country. PRTs are operating in each of the RCs. ISAF currently maintains 26 PRTs throughout Afghanistan at the provincial and district levels. The United States staffs 12 of the 26 PRTs. PRTs are executing a top-down approach to reconstruction and development; they can function only in a secure environment. The PRT commander and staff work directly with representatives from the Afghan government, United Nations, and representatives from various international and nongovernmental organizations to identify reconstruction and development projects.

NATO has assigned lead-nation responsibilities to its member states for police and military training, development of the Afghan justice system, and the Afghan

government. Specifically, the Germans had oversight responsibility for developing the Afghan police and have since transitioned that authority to the United States. The Italians are responsible for assisting in the standardization of the Afghan justice system; the Japanese are responsible for infrastructure development; and the Americans are responsible for the development of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which were under the authority of Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A) and are now under the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A).<sup>17</sup>

### The Problem of Unity of Command and Unity of Purpose

NATO is a key component of the international community's engagement in Afghanistan. It is assisting the Afghan authorities in providing security and stability to promote reconstruction and effective governance.<sup>18</sup> There is no question that NATO is committed to its goals in Afghanistan, but NATO has failed to orchestrate and synchronize political and military efforts for success in Afghanistan. This is evident in the desperate security situation in the provinces across Afghanistan. NATO's political and military effort has not led to a permanent improvement in security; therefore, infrastructure development remains a daunting challenge. If NATO is going to succeed it cannot focus on operational and tactical adjustments as a method to compensate for strategic deficiencies in organization, direction, and continuity of effort in Afghanistan.

Four deficiencies are germane. NATO's "senior representative" has not adequately provided the necessary strategic direction, unity of command, or unity of effort to build a stable Afghanistan. NATO has not sufficiently resolved the competing requirements of policy and strategy, and as a result has not properly organized its limited military and civilian assets under an effective strategy. Additionally, NATO has

not correctly identified the threat, did not adequately assess the operational environment, or take the appropriate steps needed to gain the initiative and shape the political environment and military battlefield. Lastly, NATO has not effectively countered the external support for al Qaeda and the Taliban from Pakistan and Iran and has not developed a sound regional approach to stabilize the political environment.

Even so, NATO has made progress in Afghanistan. But its lack of strategic direction and control has left the Afghans as dependent on external support in 2008 as they were in 2001. NATO has not developed an effective, holistic program that achieves reconstruction, civil and defense reform, and sound defense institutions including security sector reform. Consequently, NATO has not effectively assisted Afghan authorities in extending and exercising their authority and influence across the country to create the conditions for stabilization and reconstruction.

ISAF has tremendous capability and sufficient capacity, but it is hampered by NATO's lack of political leadership, by contributing nations' caveats, and by divergent chains of command.<sup>19</sup> As a result, ISAF's military operations have worked at cross-purposes with its use of a conventional approach in an unconventional environment. Despite the number of small operations and military support to nation-building, the occurrence of large-scale military operations and the increased use of close air support challenge the idea that ISAF is conducting effective counterinsurgency (COIN) operations.

Currently, an American four-star general commands ISAF and reports through NATO channels. However, the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, and the Commander of U.S. Central Command share control of the Afghan theater and its battle

space.<sup>20</sup> They each direct separate forces in Afghanistan and these forces report separately to their two chains of command. Since December 2001, the U.S. has divided its forces between OEF and the NATO/ISAF mission. U.S. operations in Afghanistan have labored beneath five different chiefs of mission and six different military commanders—not counting those who served less than 60 days. Successive military and civilian leaders have held differing views on how to operate in Afghanistan; their differences have adversely affected the development of a cogent counterinsurgency COIN strategy, which is essential to creating a secure and stable Afghanistan.<sup>21</sup> Further, the established command relationship and the division of U.S. forces between two different operations are not conducive to a functional unity of command and unity of purpose.

Since there is no effective COIN strategy to guide NATO's international effort to stabilize Afghanistan and fight the Taliban, unity of purpose has suffered; unity of command is fragmented; tactics in some areas have reverted to earlier practices, such as the aggressive use of airpower, sweep and clear operations, and an enemy-targeted strategy.<sup>22</sup> As General Barry R. McCaffrey (USA Ret.) underscored in an after action report, "a sensible coordination of all political and military elements of the Afghan theater of operations does not exist."<sup>23</sup>

In summary, there is no single military headquarters commanding all forces operating in Afghanistan. All NATO military forces do not fully respond to the ISAF Commander because of extensive national operational restrictions and caveats.<sup>24</sup> Essentially, NATO military forces operate under divergent chains of command following different agendas. The military operations excessively focus on attrition, and on quick

quantifiable successes. They are not protecting urban and rural population centers, and they have an ineffective provincial reconstruction plan.<sup>25</sup>

### The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan

An inevitable outcome of the ineffective NATO-led coalition, an inadequate organizational structure and an ineffective strategy is the Taliban's resurgence. The 2001 Taliban consisted of large units organized under a tribal military chain of command driven by a religious ideology. In 2002 and 2003, the Taliban remained haphazardly assembled in numerous independent groups that shared the same fanatical Islamic extremist ideology. By 2004, the Taliban began organizing themselves into an insurgent force by co-opting village elders and soliciting and gaining the support of the populace. During this time, the Taliban took advantage of the opportunity to organize a government in exile based in Pakistan, but it still fought inside Afghanistan in separate and independent groups.<sup>26</sup>

Recognizing the inadequacy of this approach, the Taliban united many of the formerly independent groups of fighters under a common cause with the objective of driving "the infidels" out of Afghanistan. The Taliban's more effective organization has restored confidence in its ability to rise again to power and rule the country.<sup>27</sup> Their renewed unity of effort also enabled the group to intimidate the populace effectively. The Taliban use night letters (letters delivered at night to intimidate village elders, government officials, and Afghan citizens) mullahs, radio, television and the internet to spread their messages. During their rule of Afghanistan, they outlawed television. But now they use this technology adeptly to disseminate videos of their be-heading of Afghans who work with ISAF or the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA).<sup>28</sup>

Another objective of an insurgency is to decrease international support for the government. The Taliban is organized effectively to conduct “information warfare” against ISAF and the wider international community.<sup>29</sup> They use propaganda, contact with local leaders, and visible local assistance to the local population to influence the populace.<sup>30</sup> Their messages support its objectives and are effective in countering ISAF and IRoA messages.<sup>31</sup> Taliban actions are also aimed at influencing, national and international audiences as well as national and international media.<sup>32</sup> The Taliban broadcast their messages in the media within 60 minutes of a major event. This is considerably faster than ISAF can counter the Taliban’s messages, because ISAF leaders are required to investigate, confirm, and gain approval for their messages through the chain of command before they can release press statements.

In 2006, the Taliban staged a dramatic comeback by relying on the insurgent tactics that have been perfected with deadly efficiency in Iraq.<sup>33</sup> The Taliban was responsible for more than 80 suicide bombings in 2006, a 400 percent jump over 2005. Improvised Explosive Devices (IED), once a rarity in Afghanistan, are now commonplace. They are effectively used against Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), ISAF, and other Coalition Forces (CF).<sup>34</sup>

Additionally, a United Nations report in September 2007, revealed that a bumper poppy crop produced 6,100 metric tons of opium, a 50 percent increase over the previous year.<sup>35</sup> The funds derived from the drug trade have enabled the Taliban to attract fighters who are paid three times as much as the IRoA pays a member of the ANSF. Drug money is also being used to pay suicide bomber’s families approximately \$9,000 USD, so an increasing number of people are willing to martyr themselves.<sup>36</sup>

With little improvement in the economy, a high unemployment rate, and continuing pressure from Pakistan and Iran on the refugee camps, the incentive for a potential suicide bomber to take money for a suicide attack in order to feed his family is greater than ever.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, the Taliban have shown the flexibility to adapt and change their ways and means to win. They appeal to the fundamental Islamic beliefs when it enables them to inspire their uneducated fighters, but the key factor in their recent success has been their adaptation to ISAFs tactics.<sup>38</sup> The Taliban has transformed from operating as guerilla fighters in the mountains to establishing safe havens, controlling lines of communication, occupying villages, and conducting assassinations and suicide attacks in the population centers.

Time has also been a significant factor in the Taliban's resurgence by providing them the opportunity to reorganize and adapt to NATO and ISAF operations.<sup>39</sup> The longer the conflict drags on, the more chance they have to "sell" their message or ideology, and the greater possibility it will have of succeed. The Taliban say, "ISAF has got the watch, but we have got the time."<sup>40</sup>

Perhaps their greatest asymmetric advantage, and the technique most at odds with our own war fighting principles, is the Taliban's ability to withdraw and blend into the populace.<sup>41</sup> Unlike its host nation forces and her allies, the enemy wears no uniform, has no standard equipment, and does not require any personal accountability. Hidden in plain sight, they rely on their greatest ally, time, and waits for the next opportunity to take up arms. Thus these insurgent fighters can be best described as combatant civilians.<sup>42</sup>

Further, Taliban fighters truly believe in their cause. Their strength of commitment compensates for their lack of military capability. They are waging total war, not the limited war of their enemy. Coalition soldiers await the end of their tours; Taliban tours only end in death, which the Taliban believe is an entry into paradise.<sup>43</sup> Thus the enemy's use of extremist religious ideology offers another advantage. Its impact on an uneducated populace is significant and can prevent legitimizing the Afghan government.<sup>44</sup>

#### Threats to Afghanistan that Effect Security and Stability

If NATO's current theater strategy is effective, then the threats to Afghanistan's government would be decreasing, not increasing. A balanced strategy would support development of the Afghan government and blunt the Taliban's ability to influence the populace. To succeed in Afghanistan, NATO needs a strategy to mitigate the threats to the Afghan government and the Afghan people.

Today, the Taliban and associated groups are as strong as they have been since 10 September, 2001.<sup>45</sup> Major General Jeffery J. Schloesser, the senior U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, acknowledged in June 2008 that Afghanistan has seen a 40% increase in attacks in 2008.<sup>46</sup> In his July 2008 assessment, General Barry R. McCaffery (USA Ret.) stated, "The year 2009 will be the year of decision. The Taliban and a greatly enhanced foreign fighter presence will: strike decisive blows against NATO units; will operate effectively between Afghanistan and Pakistan; will try to sever the road networks and stop the construction of new roads (Route # 1 Ring Road from Kabul to Kandahar is frequently now interdicted); and will try to strangle and isolate the capital."<sup>47</sup>

Afghanistan currently faces three major threats: threats to reconstruction; threats to governance and justice; and threats to a safe, secure, and stable political and social environment. The threats to reconstruction range from the tangible disruption to the construction of bridges, roads, schools, and clinics to intangible threats against enlightened cultural education and the ongoing influence of the Taliban's religious ideology.<sup>48</sup> Threats to governance and justice include tangible and prejudicial actions sustain Islamic law and prevent a legal system based on due process and individual rights consistent with Afghan cultural traditions. Threats to a stable, safe, and secure political and social environment include direct action by insurgents to security of the Afghan people.<sup>49</sup>

Further, these three major threats are carried out by different groups. The groups are typically categorized as the Taliban (TB), al-Qaeda (AQ), and Hezbi-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) are responsible for the threats to a safe, secure, and stable political and social environment. The groups associated with threats to development of good governance are those involved in the drug trade and organized crime (smugglers and corrupt village elders conducting illegal checkpoints, hijacking, etc.).<sup>50</sup> The threat to reconstruction is a result of the lack of stability and a poor economy reeling from the violence that exists among various tribes, families, and ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

An additional threat that cannot be overlooked as contributing to the deteriorating security situation comes from the growing numbers of well-trained foreign fighters from Pakistan and materiel support coming from Iran into Afghanistan. "Al Qaeda and Taliban leadership inside Pakistan remains [sic] a very significant problem," LTG

Eikenberry testified before the Armed House Services Committee. Eikenberry then warned of the “growing threat of Talibanization in Pakistan.”<sup>51</sup>

### Recommendations

The following eleven recommendations should be pursued to improve NATO’s political and military effort. They seek ways to improve organization, unity of command, and unity of purpose in NATO’s efforts to build a stable Afghan nation. These changes will enable NATO to achieve a balance in its indirect and direct approaches that will neutralize and control the insurgent threat, develop effective and efficient Afghan National Security Forces, and conduct nation-building that supports the populace, reduces corruption, and counters external support. All of these considerations should be implemented together as part of a COIN strategy to maximize NATO’s effects against the Taliban insurgents, to counter the three main threats to Afghanistan, and to gain the support of the populace.

### NATO Must Provide Political Leadership

NATO must mandate that all military operations are subordinate to political considerations. It should establish a more robust political and military presence in Afghanistan and start fighting this war from Afghanistan and not from Belgium and the Netherlands. The first step is for NATO to launch a major diplomatic commitment to strengthen the capabilities of the contributing countries in Afghanistan. It is time for NATO to take an operational pause and accurately assess the operational environment in Afghanistan for all participating countries and organize those countries forces in Afghanistan based on their capability and capacity to conduct COIN operations.<sup>52</sup> Afghanistan is not exclusively a peacekeeping operation or a nation-building operation.

NATO is facing an active insurgency that requires a balanced direct and indirect approach to neutralize the insurgents and conduct nation building.

Further, many contributing nations deployed in Afghanistan are insufficiently led, equipped, and prepared to accomplish their assigned tasks. They have serious restrictive caveats to their military employment and are risk and casualty averse. In many cases these countries lack the force enablers to conduct effective COIN operations.<sup>53</sup> In addition, contributing nations are not familiar with or prepared to conduct security force training. And this lack of internal defense is inhibiting the development of the Afghan government infrastructure. NATO must take the lead in preparing an Afghan defense force and ensuring that effective partnerships are established with the Afghan government.

NATO must also convince the contributing countries that the top priority in conducting operations in Afghanistan is to establish security and develop the ANSF, followed seamlessly by focused village and district development programs that join the village to the province and legitimize the national government. Each contributing country must be organized and integrated into the COIN strategy consistent with their capability. No country should be placed in a situation where their capacity does not match their capability. There is a place for every contributing nation to act effectively within the COIN strategy and NATO must find it.

#### NATO Must Establish Unity of Command and Unity of Purpose

To be effective, the ISAF commander must command all forces in Afghanistan. All contributing countries must recognize this authority and adhere to one established chain of command. Units in Afghanistan must operate under a single mandate.

Operation Enduring Freedom should be dissolved and all units conducting operations in Afghanistan should function under the NATO mandate. NATO must also integrate counterterrorism operations and counterinsurgency operations under one strategy in order to maximize their complementary effects.

Simplification of command relationships and building unity of purpose must be a priority to facilitate an effective COIN strategy.<sup>54</sup> The United States must work with NATO to simplify the command structure in Afghanistan. NATO will not be able to operate effectively in Afghanistan without U.S. funding and its military and civilian assets. USCENTCOM and USEUCOM should provide personnel and resources under the command and control of the ISAF commander. Combining the functions currently split between USCENTCOM and USEUCOM would solve the issue of a fractured U.S. command in Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup>

Inside Afghanistan, the regional commands should be reconfigured and reduced to RC North and East and RC South and West. Command tours must be lengthened to one year and the command responsibility should remain within one country. There must be a continuity of operations plan for incoming rotations to ensure continuity, and pre-mission training must be focused on one strategy and oriented to the incoming units' area of responsibility. It is critical that incoming units understand their mission, where they will be located and that their pre-mission training supports a single strategy.

#### NATO must Conduct COIN Operations

When NATO took over strategic coordination of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in October 2003, the Alliance made a long-term political commitment to assisting the Afghan government and its people. NATO's engagement

was visible evidence of an Alliance prepared and willing to fight terrorism and to extend international security efforts beyond the Euro-Atlantic area.

Despite this unprecedented NATO commitment, it is not an exaggeration to state that the Taliban are more effective than it was in 2001. Poppy production continues to dominate the economy and contribute to instability, and the populace remains alienated from its government. The Karzai government has little control or influence beyond Kabul, the Afghan Army is not effective, and the police forces are corrupt. Nowhere in any NATO document does the organization acknowledge the insurgency or the requirement to operate in a counterinsurgency environment.<sup>56</sup> NATO's failure to assess properly the operational environment accurately has contributed to its ineffectiveness to organize and administer the political and military effort in Afghanistan. This has resulted in a dysfunctional Afghan government, military and police.

NATO must recognize that it is fighting a rural insurgency in Afghanistan and that the Taliban are winning the allegiance of the Afghan people. The Taliban are effectively operating at the village level while NATO tries to defeat them from Kabul and the provincial capitals. NATO must also understand the nature of the operations in Afghanistan. It must acknowledge that in order to achieve its nation-building goals, it must to keep the insurgents off balance militarily to gain and maintain the support of the populace and to legitimize the Afghan government.

#### NATO must ensure that ISAF Develops a Comprehensive COIN Strategy

NATO must ensure that ISAF balances an enemy-centric and population-centric COIN strategy. Military operations should focus on gaining and maintaining security (sweep, clear, hold, secure, develop) followed quickly with development projects

designed to gain popular support. The centralization of training in Kabul is too expensive, resource intensive, and logistically challenging. A decentralized police and military training plan must be developed to equip, maintain and sustain operations at the village, district, and provincial levels.

A successful political-military strategy will establish a COIN force design and COIN force location; it will specify needed resources to conduct counterinsurgency operations. The strategy must neutralize and control the insurgents by separating them from the populace. The reconstruction and development plan should be a bottom-up village to district plan that strengthens the social structure. This approach will connect the PRT and the provincial Afghan provincial civil leadership with the village civil leadership. With increased security in the village and districts, the economy will improve, thereby making more resources available for reconstruction and more money in local Afghan hands.

#### NATO Must Develop Efficient and Effective Afghan Security Forces

One of NATO's imperatives is to ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is properly organized, trained, equipped, and capable of conducting operations. Although NATO has developed ANSF, its effectiveness is limited due to lack of funding, equipment, pay problems, retention problems, and corruption. The poor security situation is directly related to the poor quality of ANSF. According to ISAF Commander General David McKiernan, the violence in Afghanistan was at least 30% higher in September 2008 than in September 2007.<sup>57</sup> The Afghan populace is less secure today than it was in 2005. This is due largely to the violence surrounding the insurgency and counterinsurgency campaigns and to the inability of security forces to restrain the

Taliban. The Afghan security institutions have increased their operational capacity and have trained more personnel, but they have also had problems with retention, staff effectiveness, corruption, and general oversight.<sup>58</sup>

The lack of effective and efficient security forces has a serious impact on the legitimacy of the Afghan government. Afghans are losing trust in their government because of an escalation in violence. Public expectations are not being met and conditions in Afghanistan have deteriorated in all key areas targeted for development. Traditional, informal judicial structures continue to fill the gap for many Afghans. Meanwhile, the formal justice sector remains inaccessible and corrupt. It is unable to confront religious extremism, adjudicate land disputes, unravel criminal networks, or protect the rights of citizens.<sup>59</sup>

The Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) are in desperate need of more personnel, weapons, vehicles, artillery, and air assets. Second-hand donated military equipment sits in Europe because NATO cannot find \$7 million dollars to pay for its transportation to Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup> ISAF units are doing an excellent job training the ANSF, but its lack of funding has a negative effect on its overall quality and long-term effectiveness. Further, due to national caveats, many allied trainers cannot accompany their Afghan units in the field to provide advice, assistance, and support.<sup>61</sup>

Another problem results from centralization of training and ineffective police and military organization. NATO should decentralize its military and police training programs. By recruiting, training, organizing, employing the military and police locally, NATO will develop effective police and military relationships, improve the economy,

capitalize on local vested interests, and improve accountability. The military and police structure should be designed around an organizational model that has the capability and capacity to operate effectively and efficiently in a COIN environment.

The military units should be small, consisting of security forces, field artillery, engineers, medical personnel, psychological operators, civil affairs officers, communications specialists, intelligence specialists, and logistical specialists. These units should be based in areas where they can have the most effect on the insurgency and the populace. Additionally, NATO must resist the idea to develop special military units that pull leadership and quality from the existing military and police organizations. There is no need to create the tiers and specialization in the Afghan military and police as found in western military and police organizations.

The police structure should have a law enforcement and paramilitary security force capability. The police should be augmented by a civil defense force and auxiliary police at the village level to facilitate security. The police at the village level should operate permanent and roving check points to ensure the security of the roads, which will contribute to an improved Afghan government presence in the countryside. The police at the district level should conduct security patrols beyond the village to ensure security is maintained between villages and to prevent the Taliban from operating from their safe havens. The police should also maintain its law enforcement role to deal with crime to prevent corrupt village elders from supplanting the legitimacy of the Afghan government.

Lastly, inadequate Afghan government systems at the provincial, district, and village level must be fixed. In their place, militia commanders and corrupt village elders

have filled the void, undermining governance and basic rights.<sup>62</sup> To remedy this problem, civil servants require training in public administration and should be recruited from the local population. Elected officials must also be advised, assisted, and trained in public administration.

#### NATO Must Commit to Interagency Team-Building

NATO's leadership in political-military team building will have significant effect on the success of ISAF and its ability to conduct effective COIN operations. Leaders from top to bottom need to break down barriers among organizations and collaborate. NATO must function as a political leader, team-builder, and capacity-builder. Synchronizing the host nation's interagency assets as well as the contributing countries' interagency assets to improve law enforcement, military operations, and diplomatic enterprises is essential to ensuring all activities are coordinated and mutually supporting.

An effective strategy that achieves unity of command and unity of purpose will overcome many of the planning and communications challenges arising from organizations that come from different agencies, nations, and missions. NATO must ensure that the potential capability and capacity that exists in its diverse interagency team is not lost because of clashes of cultures, societal or organizational.<sup>63</sup>

#### NATO Must Reorganize Their Force into Small Security and Development Teams

Closely related to building effective interagency teams is the distribution of civil and military personnel throughout Afghanistan. People bring order in a COIN environment, technology facilitates and enhances the mission, but proper organization puts the right people in the right place at the right time. NATO must ensure that their

forces are distributed appropriately to have the desired effects on the insurgent force and the populace.

NATO must organize Afghan forces, Afghan government agencies, non-governmental agencies, interagency partners, special operations forces, and conventional forces to conduct operations. In a rural insurgency, there should be adequate forces in the urban areas to protect critical infrastructure but firebases must be located in key areas to influence the populace and negatively affect the enemy's influence in the villages and districts. Check points must be established in key areas to keep roads open and safe. A small, effective and efficient combined, interagency, counterinsurgent force must occupy the villages. This type of COIN force (in addition to the host nation forces and assets) may consist of NATO personnel, U.S. State Department or counterpart personnel, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) personnel, personnel from other agencies (e.g., doctors, civil engineers, irrigation, experts, energy experts, agricultural experts, and veterinarians that support socioeconomic development), U.N. personnel, special operations forces, conventional forces, and measures of effectiveness assessment teams.<sup>64</sup>

This tailored COIN force will advise, assist, and support the Afghan government and forces to gain and maintain the security needed to conduct nation-building operations and thereby, support the populace. Security also facilitates good governance and justice; it enhances the development of infrastructure and economic growth. Once security is established, the counterinsurgent force can then advise and support the local village elders to stabilize the social infrastructure, sustain newly

established security, mitigate the amount of corruption, and bring quality-of-life improvements to the populace.

This versatile counterinsurgent force can also focus on the enemy by operating from a secure base and expand security outwardly, the so-called oil spot approach. The populace then perceives the base as a place of support. More importantly, it is a place from which the Afghan government can launch efforts and leverage resources to implement its reconstruction and development plan that connects villages to district and provincial centers, that legitimizes the Afghan government, and that helps set the conditions for on-going security and stability.

#### NATO Must Improve Its Strategic Communications

Recognizing that people are the strategic center of gravity in a COIN environment and the insurgents' critical vulnerability, it is important that an aggressive information operations and public affairs plan is developed to influence all strata of society. Achieving this starts with something as simple as base location, force placement, and task organization. Getting these fundamentals right, the first time (and being prepared to adjust when a miscalculation occurs) is critical for achieving the desired effect on the enemy, for positively influencing the populace, and for legitimizing the government.

The Taliban is more effective at information warfare than NATO and ISAF because they are decentralized and are in the villages to influence the populace.<sup>65</sup> NATO must develop an information operations system that assists the Afghans in being more effective in influencing the populace. NATO must provide the support

required to disseminate the messages through all types of media to counter this insurgent strength.

### NATO Must Control External Support

Pakistan's and Iran's external support to the Taliban is contributing to the declining security situation in Afghanistan. No surge or additional amount of troops will fix this external support problem. The border between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran is too vast and too rugged to seal off. The solution is primarily diplomatic. It will be solved by old-fashioned, hard-nosed diplomacy based on a sound regional strategy that supports the security interests of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, and India, which differ tremendously.

This is one region in the world where terrorism, extremist Islamic ideology, traditional nation-state conflicts, and confirmed weapons of mass destruction all come together. Given the overriding imperative to keep dangerous weapons out of the hands of terrorists, NATO and the United States must identify their common strategic interests with these regional players and then craft the necessary bargains to protect those interests. NATO and U.S. leaders must understand that stability in Afghanistan runs through Tehran, Islamabad, Delhi, and Kabul.<sup>66</sup>

The increase of well-trained foreign fighters in Afghanistan from Pakistan is strengthening the Taliban insurgency and gravely threatening for the Afghan government. Both Afghanistan and Pakistan are embroiled in an insurgency that crosses their common border. The Pakistani government's negotiations with the Taliban, al Qaeda, and HIG are ineffective, so NATO must work closely with President Karzai and the international community to exert more pressure on Pakistan to impede

the insurgents' freedom of movement, disrupt their training camps, and eliminate their sanctuaries.

Lastly, Iran is a key factor. It seeks to defy U.S. influence by supporting the Taliban with weapons and bomb-making materials.<sup>67</sup> Iran's dominance in western Afghanistan is due to a lack of an Afghan political identity in western Afghanistan. Instead, its alienated citizens view Iran's society as free, its infrastructure as stable, and its opportunities as attractive. Iran's materiel support to the Taliban must be stopped.

#### Afghans Must Win the Fight against the Taliban and the Drug Trade

NATO can support the Afghans efforts, but the Afghans must win the counterinsurgency war themselves. NATO must build this Afghan capability to win so NATO can relinquish the role of leader and become advisor and supporter.<sup>68</sup> President Karzai told NATO that more than anything else the Afghans need to rebuild their human capital and their institutions, their army, their police force, their administrative structure, and their judiciary.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, NATO has not sufficiently developed these Afghan capabilities and in 2008 the Afghan government does not have the capability and capacity to govern and provide security to the Afghan people.

There is a right way and a wrong way to approach the gaining of security and reconstruction of the Afghan social culture and institutional structures. In the process of rebuilding the Afghan government NATO must be careful not to return to the days of armed warlords and militias. NATO must avoid getting tied down to the tribal systems. They are too complicated and too numerous and risk creating tribal and ethnic rivalries that could result in civil war.<sup>70</sup> Historically, warlords and strongmen have been an obstacle to good governance and justice in Afghanistan. To avoid the fragmentation of

authority and a weak central government, NATO must ensure the gaining of security is done in the context of an Afghan government constructed by balancing the roles and missions of the police and military with civilian leaders.<sup>71</sup>

As discussed earlier, the development of a bottom-up civil defense plan that trains, organizes, and equips the security forces is the most viable option. Working in conjunction with village elders, young men would be hired to work as auxiliary police at the village level and national police at district and provincial level. The connecting of village elders, district and provincial leaders, and the layering of police security and law enforcement duties will facilitate security within the vast territory that constitutes a province. NATO must not create Afghan security forces along western constructs, but instead, must allow the Afghans to use the strength of its tribal system to create Afghan security forces that serve the needs of the people, work towards the common good, and promote nationalism over tribalism.

Another area NATO must provide oversight and work closely with the Afghan government at all levels is the Afghan reconciliation plan. This plan is called “The Program Takhim-E Solh,” which translates to “Strengthening Peace Program.” The Afghan reconciliation program has produced mixed results due to the fluctuating security environment, coalition forces misrepresenting the reconciliation program, not letting the Afghans take the lead, and NATO confusing reconciliation with bargaining and negotiations.<sup>72</sup>

All counterinsurgency strategies have a reconciliation program. These programs are prudent, demonstrate a democratic process to resolving security issues, and can serve as an effective political tool in gaining the support of the populace. The intent of

the program is to offer insurgents, former insurgents and other supporters the opportunity to renounce violence and peacefully join with the government.

Reconciliation programs are not designed to be a “get out of jail free card” or to bargain or negotiate with the insurgents. Reconciliation requires capitulation, assimilation, and denouncing insurgent ideology. Bargaining and negotiating, however, does not require capitulation, assimilation, and denouncing of insurgent ideology, and is a dangerous approach with serious stability repercussions.<sup>73</sup>

To have an effective reconciliation program, NATO must ensure the following conditions are met. First, reconciliation is an issue the Afghan government leads. Second, there must be an effective civil government and Afghan National Security Forces at the village, district, and provincial level to administer the program. Third, there must be an effective reconciliation program strategic communications plan. Fourth, reconciliation must be part of a balanced COIN strategy that has created an environment that has the support of the populace and is inhospitable to the insurgent. Fifth, the reconciliation plan must be coordinated with Pakistan to influence cross border insurgents. NATO cannot navigate the maze of Afghanistan’s ethnic politics. Only the Afghans can do this effectively, but even they are limited due to a lack of security and a government that is perceived as weaker than the Taliban. NATO must not allow a reconciliation program to diverge into bargaining and negotiating with the Taliban. The reconciliation program must be closely monitored and judiciously administered until the conditions mentioned above are met.<sup>74</sup>

Poppy production is one of the most pressing domestic issues in Afghanistan. Afghan government officials recognize that the drug trade finances the Taliban

insurgency, which then hinders the stability and security of many provinces.

Afghanistan's enormous poppy production also casts the country as narco-state.<sup>75</sup>

Directly destroying the sprawling poppy crop seems to be an obvious solution.

Successful poppy eradication, however, must be executed in secure locations with a sound security situation. Additionally, replacement crops and financial compensation are crucial components of the eradication process. Farmers rely on their crops to earn a living and feed their families and tribes; destruction of poppy without compensating the farmers for their loss will enable the Taliban to recruit many of these farmers to become fighters.<sup>76</sup> The Taliban have successfully organized resistance towards Afghan government and coalition poppy eradication in areas where they have a strong presence and freedom of movement. This resistance has caused Afghan casualties, and provided a public relations victory for the enemy thereby boosting their recruiting in the area.<sup>77</sup>

Poppy eradication also must be applied fairly and uniformly. Otherwise the Taliban will exploit perceptions of tribal favoritism. Poppy eradication should be conducted exclusively by the Afghan government. Poppy eradication, however, must be a lower priority than gaining security, and neutralizing and controlling the insurgency. It cannot be accomplished until the Afghan government promotes an alternative crop or develops an economic compensation plan for the farmers.<sup>78</sup> NATO's role in poppy eradication should be one of sharing alternative crop technology and resources, providing intelligence, providing logistical support to Afghan counter-narcotics teams, and assisting with an effective counter-narcotics information campaign.

NATO must let the Afghans do as much of the security and nation-building work as possible. Where they are weak, NATO should supplement and build capability and capacity. Where they are strong, NATO should advise and assist. ISAF security and nation-building activities must immediately be conducted by, with, and through the host nation's military, government, police, and citizenry. Afghans must stabilize their social structure and build their own government, military, and police. The Afghans know their own people. So to establish legitimacy in the eyes of the populace, the Afghan government must be seen as leading the political and military effort.<sup>79</sup>

#### NATO Must Develop a Sensible Measures of Effectiveness Assessment Tool (MEAT)

NATO must develop a standard assessment tool to determine progress. It is very difficult to develop a mathematical formula to determine success in a COIN environment.<sup>80</sup> Measuring effectiveness in a COIN environment requires conditions- and event-based assessments that determine whether an area has a permissive or non-permissive security environment. The assessment tool combines standard questions with personal judgments and intuition; it should be based on the perspectives of the assessment team members that have had long-term presence in the area and contact with the populace.<sup>81</sup>

The assessment tool must be a NATO approved report to standardize data on the status of security and nation-building in every province, district, and village. All ISAF units should have an imbedded assessment team that uses the same assessment tool and follows the same reporting procedures. An assessment team composed of a Special Forces officer and noncommissioned officer as the team leaders, Psychological Operations advisor, Civil Affairs advisor, a U.S. State Department representative, and a

USAID representative, must be permanently located at each base and augmented by Afghan civil authorities, Afghan military and police representatives, Mullahs, village elders, and NGO representatives operating in the area. The assessment team would use a checklist and questionnaire to determine the political, social, educational, and demographic structure; the local economy, the attitude of the populace, the strengths and effectiveness of the insurgents as well as the strength and effectiveness of the civilian leaders, military units, and police units. NATO must be able to correlate the assessment data on the security situation and the effectiveness of the nation-building effort within each province to determine where the Afghan government is being effective or ineffective in relation to the insurgent and the populace.<sup>82</sup>

### Conclusion

Afghanistan is important because it could once again become a safe haven for al Qaeda, remains at the intersection of global energy and trade crossroads, and is situated in a strategically important area in Southwest Asia. To the east lies Pakistan, the second largest Islamic nation in the world armed with nuclear weapons. To the west is Iran, a potential nuclear threat. This “neighborhood” is definitely a strategic interest to the West. NATO can ill afford any other outcome than success in Afghanistan.<sup>83</sup> To achieve success NATO must mandate a new approach in Afghanistan and link operations directly to the strategic goal of building a viable government.

The Taliban is adapting to the post-invasion environment and changing its organization and tactics while NATO remains bounded by an ineffective command construct that lacks strategic direction and unity of command and unity of purpose. To correct this situation, NATO must have full authority over all operations in Afghanistan

and put together a strategy that enables the Afghan government to win.<sup>84</sup> If NATO is politically weak, its military effort is ineffective and its actions create an alliance between the Taliban and the populace; NATO will lose.<sup>85</sup>

To date, it is NATO's lack of a comprehensive strategy in Afghanistan has prevented the nation's stability. NATO has not conducted successful security operations and nation-building. Indeed, the Taliban has had a resurgence in Afghanistan. Countering these negative trends requires a more focused effort. NATO inherited a less than ideal situation in Afghanistan from the United States, but NATO is now in charge. NATO must fix the problems associated with a lack of unity of command and a lack of unity of purpose. Clearly, the United States and other nations are contributing to the fracture in unity of command and unity purpose. So it must work with NATO to correct this problem before all fail in Afghanistan.

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