

Afghanistan: The Old-New Geopolitical Blackhole



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Future Directions International (FDI) has two roles: to ensure that Australians recognise they are part of a two-ocean continent and that West Australians see themselves belonging to a dynamic, national entity in a developing region of the world.

Much of Australia's external focus has centred on the Pacific, Southeast and Eastern Asia. With its developing wealth, increasing population, evolving trade and shipping capabilities and expanding geographic, political and security significance, however, the Indian Ocean and its littoral states will play an increasingly important role in Australia's future.

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As a Perth-based independent research institute for the strategic analysis of Australia's global interests, FDI has proven itself to be a centre of ongoing influence in shaping public discussion and government policy.

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Introduction

In late October 2010, Curtin University and Future Directions International (FDI) jointly conducted a conference-style strategy workshop in Fremantle, Western Australia, which sought to develop an understanding of the complexities of the continuous counter-insurgency campaign in Afghanistan and how these might evolve. This was timed in part to mirror the parliamentary debate that was about to take place.

The Workshop had four major themes:

- a. Understanding the campaign's complexities.
- b. Sustaining the campaign.
- c. Broader Strategic Considerations.
- d. Australia's possible Exit Strategies.

Nearly 90 participants took part from a range of government, private enterprise and academic areas.

There were eight speakers from various backgrounds. Their biographical details are contained at the back of this publication. Curtin University and FDI wish to thank and acknowledge the contributions of speakers and those who took part in the subsequent discussions.

Since the workshop, there has been considerable debate, both nationally and internationally, on the allied involvement and likelihood of success, or otherwise, in Afghanistan. Chapter 9 attempts to capture the main elements of this debate.



International Security Assistance Force
Regional Commands, Major Units, Provincial Reconstruction Teams



April 2011

Afghanistan: A Time for Review



**Presenter: Major General John Hartley AO (Retd)
CEO, Future Directions International**

Nine years ago, the United States worked with Afghanistan's Northern Alliance to overthrow the Taliban government in Kabul. The cause for war was clear. President George W Bush enjoyed widespread national and international support. But all that seems like a long time ago.

Today, the war is a controversial conflict. Fewer than half the American population supports it, despite the fact that about 100,000 of their service people are in harm's way.

Although some 47 countries contribute troops to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), fewer than 10 of these countries have troops deployed in the turbulent and dangerous south and east. A major contributor, the Netherlands, has recently withdrawn, and Canada remains committed to do so next year.

Local polls also suggest that Afghan support for the coalition has declined to less than 50 percent, from a high of 80 to 90 percent earlier in the decade.

In Australia, we have had a predictable parliamentary debate, in which both major parties support a commitment at least until the US begins a major drawdown in troop strength. Having made this declaration, however, there is still considerable debate over the efficacy of our commitment, especially in academia, the media, the Greens and amongst former senior officials.

So what caused this change?

There is little doubt, at least in the public eye, that the mission has lost its clarity of purpose. While few would oppose the idea of denying al-Qaeda a safe sanctuary in Afghanistan, many are convinced that al-Qaeda is a spent force or that a return of the Taliban would not necessarily result in an al-Qaeda revival. Others point to the use of new tactics, such as the widespread use of drones or UAVs that do not need the presence of large numbers of troops on the ground. And others stress that the rebuilding of Afghan military and security forces, and the generally held belief that many Afghans dislike the religiously fundamentalist Taliban, are indications that the ISAF mission is coming to a close. All this also suggests that the government of President Hamid Karzai is up to the challenge of governing his divided and fractious country.

To add to the confusion, President Obama's policies appear to lack clarity. While his decision to deploy an additional 30,000 troops led some to believe that his determination to defeat the Taliban had hardened, the deliberate and protracted nature of the debate leading to this decision caused others to see uncertainty. The situation was not helped when media leaks suggested significant disagreement among senior advisers.

Others saw Obama's decision to begin to withdraw US forces in July 2011 as a case of having his cake and eating it as well. Was he attempting to promote the idea that a short, sharp upsurge would win the war? Or was this designed to appease the war's critics?

His message also had an impact on the Afghan people and Pakistan.

While the imminent withdrawal of American troops might motivate the build-up and lead to an improvement in the performance of Afghan security forces, it may also lead many Afghans to hedge their bets. Equally, it would not be unreasonable for some Pakistani leaders to consider the Afghan Taliban to be their best defence against the consequences of a premature US withdrawal.

Perhaps more significantly, the withdrawal statement could only embolden the Taliban and al-Qaeda, giving them a propaganda victory that had no positive effect for the Karzai government or its allies.

Of course we know that many of these fears may be incorrect or exaggerated. Obama's statements are open to interpretation and any withdrawal is likely to be gradual.

But there is no doubt that the allied strategy lacks clarity, at least in the public domain. Exactly what we are attempting to do and how we will achieve this objective, are yet to be clearly defined. Nor is this being helped by a perception that there has been little progress in the last nine years.

Nor is the civil situation improving. Most people in Kabul, for instance, do not have a reliable, continuous source of power. More significantly, the food security outlook has worsened and the number of displaced people has risen from 235, 000 in 2008 to 328,000 today. HIV is said to be on the rise, there are more children out of school than in school, and one in eight women still dies in childbirth.

There is little doubt, at least from the American perspective, that the initial deployment was to destroy al-Qaeda and to prevent another September 11. This would require al-Qaeda's hardcore to be destroyed and the establishment of a governing regime in Kabul that would prevent the emergence of another force like al-Qaeda.

But the Taliban were not defeated. Indeed, from 2005 they began an impressive comeback. As a result, in early 2009, more than 30,000 additional troops were deployed and a few months later military commanders were again asking for tens of thousands more troops.

A major factor to emerge from the subsequent debate was that Afghanistan was a poor prospect for counter-insurgency tactics. The goals of protecting the populace, establishing effective governance and developing the Afghan security forces, were inconsistent with the tribal society and weak traditions of loyalty to the state.

Nor was this situation helped by the apparent sanctuaries offered in remote tribal areas of Pakistan that were subject to minimal government control.

The Taliban had also become more effective. By late 2009, the Taliban were thought to have at least 25,000 fighters, which is nearly as many as they had before 9/11 and many more than they had in 2005. They had also developed a shadow government in much of southern Afghanistan and especially in the rural areas. This allowed them to provide an alternate system of justice. The Taliban also sought to develop a kinder, gentler face than it had before 2001. But it conducted enough violence to be feared. It rarely targeted civilians with widespread, indiscriminate bombings. But it made life dangerous for ISAF soldiers and for Afghan security forces and government officials.

In 2009, for instance, 500 ISAF soldiers were killed. This was nearly half the number killed in total during the previous seven years. Nearly 1000 Afghan security personnel, most of whom were police, were also killed. Assassinations of political, business, civic and tribal leaders also increased.



I think it would also be useful to consider the nature of guerrilla warfare. Little has changed with this form of warfare over the decades and yet we continue to relearn its lessons.

A guerrilla lives in the country. He isn't going anywhere, as he has nowhere to go. By contrast, the foreigner has a place to which he can return. This is the core weakness of the occupier and the strength of the guerrilla. The former can leave and, in all likelihood, his nation will survive. The guerrilla can't. And having alternatives undermines the foreigner's will to fight, regardless of

the importance of the war to him.

The strategy of the guerrilla is to make the occupiers' withdrawal option as attractive as possible. A further strategic goal is simply to survive and fight at whatever level he can. Tactically, the guerrilla survives by being elusive. He operates in a small group in hostile terrain. He denies his enemy intelligence on his location and capabilities. He forms political alliances with civilians, who provide him with recruits, supplies and intelligence and mislead the occupiers about his own location. The guerrilla uses this intelligence network to decline combat on the enemy's terms and to strike the enemy when he is least prepared. The guerrilla's goal is not to seize and hold ground but to survive, evade and strike, imposing casualties on the occupier. He thus actively avoids anything that could be construed as a decisive contact.

Those of us who are Vietnam veterans are well aware of these issues. And so too, increasingly, are those who currently serve in Afghanistan.

But the occupation force is normally a more conventional one. Its strength is in its superior firepower, resources and organisation. If it knows where the guerrilla force is, and can strike before it can disperse, the occupying force will defeat the guerrillas. One of the major problems the occupier faces, however, is that his intelligence is normally inferior to that of the guerrillas, who rarely mass in ways that result in decisive combat. But their tactical capabilities allow them to impose a constant low rate of casualties on the occupier. The occupation force, of course, will always win engagements, but that is never the measure of victory. While the occupiers are not winning decisively, even if suffering only light casualties, they are losing. While the guerrilla force is not losing decisively, even if it is suffering significant casualties, it is winning. Since the guerrillas are not going anywhere, they can afford far higher casualties than the occupiers, who ultimately have the alternative of withdrawal.

Of course, we are somewhat taken with the idea that we will train an Afghan army to replace the coalition and that it will deal effectively with the Taliban. This is happening in Oruzgan Province, where the Australian Army is training the 4th Afghan Army Brigade. When we finally do withdraw, will the 4th Brigade be capable of dealing with the Taliban threat? Will the threat have been reduced to the extent that it can? Or will the Taliban have withdrawn into a neighbouring province, where it will recover its strength and over time reduce the effectiveness of the Brigade? And all of this assumes that the increasingly beleaguered Karzai government will be prepared to leave the relatively well trained and equipped 4th Brigade in Oruzgan Province.

This situation is not helped if the strategic value of the war to the occupiers is ambiguous, or if the occupiers do not possess sufficient force and patience to systematically overwhelm the guerrillas. The outcome is further confused if the occupier has either political or military constraints that prevent operations against sanctuaries, such as exist in Pakistan. Indeed, to my knowledge, no occupier has ever defeated a guerrilla force that had sanctuary in a neighbouring country.

Nor is it helpful that the Taliban is anything but a homogenous force. While most of the hierarchy share a common doctrine, this cannot be said for the rank and file. Although largely Pushtan, regional and tribal influences prevail. Radicalised foreigners are in their ranks. Local warlords, tribal chiefs and even criminal elements play their part. Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate supports and possibly directs certain elements.

There are also many millions of Pushtan living on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border and recruiting does not seem to be a problem for the Taliban.



A further issue that requires consideration is the idea that the Taliban and al-Qaeda do not share common views on all issues. Indeed, some analysts claim they have fallen out. Certainly, the Taliban is regionally based, while al-Qaeda has a global reach.

But there is evidence to suggest that al-Qaeda is also promoting the unification of factions that until recently opposed each other. This is certainly happening in Pakistan, where various separatists are being encouraged to adopt an anti-Western attitude. It may be possible that Islamist terror is growing more united and is increasingly motivated to confront Western attitudes and ideals.

This also brings me to the different ways of thinking between the military and the government. In some ways, I think this is more pronounced in the United States than it is here. And the differences are most understandable. The military, after all, is involved in a war. It is institutionally and emotionally committed to winning the campaign. It will demand resources. For a soldier who has bled in that war, questioning the importance of the war is obscene. A war must be fought relentlessly and with all available means.

But while the military's senior generals and the civilian heads of the Defence Department should be responsible for providing the government with sound, clearheaded advice on all military matters, including the highest levels of grand strategy, they are ultimately responsible for the pursuit of objectives that support government policy. Generals must think about how to win the war they are fighting. Prime Ministers must think about whether the war is worth fighting.

A Prime Minister probably must take a more dispassionate view than the generals. After all, he or she must calculate not only whether victory is possible but also the value of the victory relative to its cost.

A Prime Minister must also consider at least four other issues, three of which are strategic and one that relates to raw politics.

The first is whether a revived Taliban poses a threat to Australia, either directly or through proxies similar to Jemah Islamiah. Will a Taliban victory assure a return of al-Qaeda? This is not clear, although a number of commentators have suggested that the idea is far-fetched.

The second of the strategic issues is what the international impact might be of terminating the war in Afghanistan over and above the immediate consequences in that country. Will this result in a major upsurge in jihadist regimes elsewhere? Will there be a perception that the allied forces no longer have a willingness to intervene where necessary? Will these jihadist forces perceive that the allies have lost and will their movements increase in confidence and numbers? What might this mean for a number of Middle East, North African and South Asian governments?

The third strategic issue is what an Australian withdrawal would mean in terms of our relationship with the United States. On the surface at least, a total withdrawal before a significant American draw down in troop numbers seems most unlikely.

The political problem is, of course, domestic. We have a government that has no margin for error. This means that our government is politically weak. It cannot be perceived to be anti-war or even pro-war. It would seem to me that regardless of strategic analysis, the government is not going to withdraw forces, at least in any significant number, until the US does. Nor is it likely to increase the number deployed, certainly not in significant terms.

Another important consideration is the approach being taken by the US.

The official White House position appears to be that the troop surge, which has just been completed, needs to be given time to work. There is little sign that the White House position will change before the mid-term elections on 2 November, or even the December review of the progress of the current strategy. But there are significant challenges to the current counterinsurgency-focused strategy. The senior Taliban leader, Mullah Muhammad Omar, has gone so far as to declare that victory is close, although clearly he has ulterior motives for such a statement.

The bottom line is that the timetable dictated by U.S. political realities is incompatible with the counterinsurgency strategy currently being pursued. Since the counterinsurgency strategy cannot be pursued to its end, political accommodation must be of central importance to U.S. success in Afghanistan. But the Taliban are not being compelled to negotiate.

It is also quite likely that the claims that al Qaeda and the Taliban are increasingly seen to be ideologically and geographically separate are either incorrect or exaggerated. The former remains, and will remain, a focus of U.S. counterterrorism efforts. This need not be the case with the Taliban. U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and U.S. national interests in terms of geopolitics and grand strategy may have diverged.

A recent report by a non-partisan Washington-based think tank, the New American Foundation, makes the following five recommendations for a new strategy that allows for a relatively rapid, though not a complete, U.S. drawdown:

- Emphasise power-sharing and political inclusion.
- Downsize, and eventually end, military operations in southern Afghanistan, and reduce the U.S. military footprint.
- Keep the focus on al-Qaeda and domestic security.
- Encourage economic development.
- Engage global and regional stakeholders.

These are not revolutionary new ideas or proposals. But they cogently open for discussion the broad outlines of a potential alternative strategy in Afghanistan. These broad outlines are likely to be consistent with any shift in U.S. strategy, and they reflect what appears to be an emerging consensus on what an alternative strategy might be. No matter how connected or unconnected the report is with the administration and the Pentagon, both are likely to pay close attention to its public reception and criticisms of it, to gauge the best way to present an actual alternative strategy to the U.S. public.

There is also the cost to consider. Much effort is taking place to improve the effectiveness and strength of the security forces. There has been a dramatic improvement in the training, equipping and deployment of such forces in the last two years. ISAF and Afghan units now deploy together. A major challenge remains, however, in ensuring that corruption does not undermine the ability of such forces in the future. And while the military forces are said to be improving, at best the police force is in an early stage of development.

This effort comes with a price. The current cost of Afghan security forces is expected to stabilise at about \$US6 billion per year, far in excess of the Afghan government's entire domestic budget. Foreign military assistance will thus be required to sustain those security forces financially for the foreseeable future, even if one day they become an effective internal security force.

This, of course, leads to the next issue that requires careful consideration. Just how flexible is the Taliban and can it see an opportunity to achieve its objectives other than by militarily wearing down the coalition's will? Perhaps an indication of this was the decision by President Karzai to appoint a former Afghan President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, to chair the new High Peace Council, the main vehicle through which Kabul will pursue peace talks with the Taliban.

Although talks with the Taliban have received media attention in recent weeks, they have been under way for several years. The High Peace Council is intended to provide some measure of transparency. But the critical question that remains is: 'how willing the Taliban leaders are to negotiate when they perceive themselves to be winning?'

This is a complex issue. It involves not just the core Taliban leadership but also the Haqqani network, Pakistan, Iran and al-Qaeda. So while negotiations with Afghan jihadist insurgents involve several different domestic and international stakeholders, the Taliban is in control of the nature and substance of any talks, and currently do not feel the need to engage in any meaningful dialogue.

The Taliban realises, however, that the circumstances in Afghanistan today are very different from the anarchy that existed after the fall of the Moscow-backed Marxist regime in 1992, when it was able to impose a military solution on most of the country. The movement is also not as monolithic as it was when it first emerged in 1994.

Therefore, it may be in the Taliban's interest to avoid a civil war in the aftermath of a Western military exit. To this end, it is trying to maintain channels with the Karzai government, which can be used for talks when the leaders sense that the moment is right. For now, the Taliban is mostly concerned with underscoring its pragmatic credentials. This can be seen in a statement on 23 July by an official Taliban spokesman, offering to facilitate an orderly exit for NATO forces; and in another, a month later, saying that once in power, the Taliban will not pose a threat to Afghanistan's neighbours and will not allow militant forces to use Afghan soil for transnational attacks.

Clearly, some factions of the Taliban might be interested in a negotiated settlement. But the movement as a whole has maintained considerable internal discipline and is not being forced to the negotiating table out of fear of defeat. Indeed, this line sums up their position:

“The Taliban lose little by being at the negotiating table; they can always walk away.”

But negotiation and political accommodation can also stem from opportunity. Some form of political accommodation, sooner rather than later, could reduce the cost to the Taliban in lives and effort; they do not harbor illusions about being able to return to power and control the country to the degree they did at the turn of the century.

So the question is not one of whether talks might take place. They already have and they will no doubt continue. The question is what concessions will be necessary to convince the Taliban to negotiate meaningfully, and in a timely manner, on a political settlement.

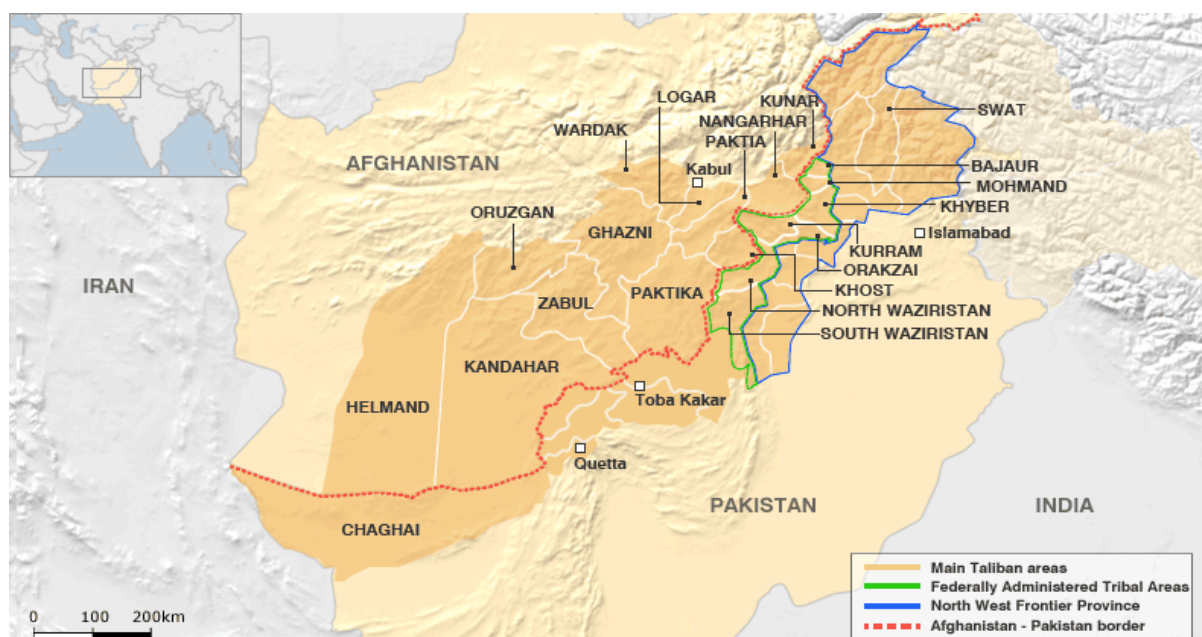
The Taliban may well believe that they are operating from a basis of strength. After all, ISAF is unlikely to expand, and the Karzai government forces are rapidly approaching their final strength. A series of decisive military blows against the Taliban is unlikely to occur, particularly if it refuses major combat. The question then is what price will the Taliban demand and whether that price is one that Kabul and Washington will accept.

So how might we expect the Taliban to negotiate? Several analysts have attempted to explain how they might do this:

- Disavow that the Taliban commanders who were sent to Kabul in fact speak for the Taliban.
- Make totally unacceptable demands in the expectation that Karzai and the Coalition will moderate their own demands.
- Exploit perceived divisions between the Coalition and the Karzai government.

A final thought is that the Taliban will never honour any agreement, because its grievances are pretexts for seeking absolute power.

Certainly the idea that the Coalition might put the Taliban under sufficient pressure so that the movement might fracture and that significant elements might somehow join the Karzai government, seems far-fetched to say the least.



Pakistan also has a major role to play. After all, it has connections with, and leverage over, some parts of the Taliban movement. Pakistani Prime Minister Yousaf Gilani made this explicit on 12 October, when he insisted that there can be no success in talks with the Taliban without Islamabad. "Nothing can happen without us because we are part of the solution," he said. "We are not part of the problem."

Washington also wants much from Islamabad: more intelligence, a greater Pakistani military effort in the border areas, a tolerance for U.S. cross-border operations and help in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. Above all else, it needs acquiescence in allowing supplies for ISAF to flow unimpeded into Afghanistan. Although a northern distribution network is in place and there is a major air bridge, these supply lines are meant to complement those that run through Pakistan, not replace them. It is unlikely, for instance, that the ISAF could sustain operations on the current scale and tempo without Pakistan.

So, a key question is whether the United States and Pakistan can reach a durable accommodation on cross-border operations. This will be necessary not only for current operations, but also for the eventual drawdown of ISAF forces. The movement of these supplies injects a substantial amount of money into the Pakistani economy. There also appears to be a strong constituency for this to continue, but the US may have to give up, or at least reduce, its cross-border operations to meet its logistic requirements.

Now where does all of this take us?

The Coalition aim is at best ambiguous. On the one hand, there is the strategic aim that the Coalition will remain in Afghanistan until the security situation is at a stage where the Karzai government can take the necessary measures to survive a Taliban takeover for at least several years. Of course, there may not be a total withdrawal for some time. Afghan units may retain a mentoring force that might have access to air support and so on. There is also talk of aid and development forces remaining, but these will only be able to operate where and when the security situation allows that to happen.


Certainly, the troop surge will have some immediate positive impact. But it will also be seen as a last ditch effort. Of course, removing the Western presence may also reduce the motivation for ordinary Pushtans to join the Taliban.

But an effective government must also develop. Having capable military forces is of little use if there is not an effective government to direct them.

It seems to me, therefore, that two objectives need to be pursued.

The first is that there must be popular support to prevent al-Qaeda from re-establishing itself. This may, or may not, require the removal of a possible Taliban revival. The second is that there needs to be a form of governance that can influence and mobilise forces and has the means of persuading the populace to confront any attempt by al-Qaeda to regain its former status. But how is this to be achieved in a fractured society, divided by ethnic, tribal and religious differences, with a weak and obviously corrupt central government?

And here is the dilemma. Critical to this outcome is the effectiveness of governance. Is it possible to have a strong, central government? Or should we accept a series of strong regional governments that are prepared to support a weak national entity? Would a Taliban delivered national or regional leadership be acceptable if it was prepared to prevent al-Qaeda returning?



What role does the general population play in all of this? Clearly, many do not want to see a return of the Taliban, let alone al-Qaeda. But can they be assured that they can deal with the Taliban once ISAF withdraws? Can they be convinced that they will be governed in a way that will assure their safety and provide services such as employment, health and education? Can Karzai, or whoever might replace him, develop a legitimate and effective form of government at all levels, with a reconstruction program that supports economic growth and food security? Based on current achievements, I would be most surprised if any of these outcomes were to occur.

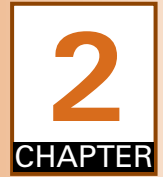
To my mind, none of these questions has a conclusive answer.

The immediate prospects, therefore, are not encouraging. By some accounts, the Afghan government is one of the most corrupt in the world. Piles of cash are said to find their way to Dubai every day. Government positions are routinely sold to the highest bidder. Even the delivery of ISAF logistics attracts bribes.

And here lies the most significant challenge to a situation where the Taliban is prevented from returning to power at least in southern and eastern Afghanistan. ISAF and a newly trained Afghan army may be able to contain the Taliban for a period of time but, unless supported by a strong government, the likelihood of this outcome prevailing is very unlikely.



Geo-Strategic Lessons from the Past: British and Soviet Campaigns



Presenter: Dr. John Bruni
Director, SAGE International

Introduction

In the rush to analyse contemporary conflicts we continually forget what our fathers and forefathers achieved, and so each age has to re-learn the lessons of the past – often at great pain and sacrifice. Hopefully, as I begin to revisit some of the historical aspects of the four Afghan wars that preceded the ISAF mission, you will see continuity between the Afghanistan of today and that of the 19th Century. The weapons and social mores may have changed, but the reasons that drove the wars – motivations fuelled by mistrust, misinformation and misinterpretation – still resonate clearly to this day.

To begin with, I'd like to offer up the closing passage from Rudyard Kipling's *'The Young British Soldier'*, written in 1895, fifteen years after the Second Anglo-Afghan War. No doubt some of the young men and women serving with ISAF today, especially from among the British contingent, will find the words a poignant reminder of the perils of serving in that country...and I quote:

*"When you're wounded and left on Afghanistan's plains,
And the women come out to cut up what remains,
Jest roll to your rifle and blow out your brains
An' go to your Gawd like a soldier".⁽ⁱ⁾*

First Anglo-Afghan War 1839-42

The world of 1839 was one of rapid technological and political change. Britain, with a young Queen Victoria on the throne, was at the zenith of its imperial prowess – making major inroads in Asia and consolidating its power in India.

Tsar Nicolas I of Russia encouraged Russian expansion southeast, into the area of Central Asia. A prime Russian motivation for this expansion was that the independent Khanates, which ruled this inhospitable region, frequently raided southern Russian towns, capturing townspeople and selling them into slavery. A Russian military presence was established to act as a deterrent to this ongoing activity. But, the then unknown concept of 'mission creep' turned an initially 'protective' role into a much wider campaign, to bring these troublesome regions under the imperial banner.

However the closer Russian military incursions moved towards Afghanistan, the more British strategists worried that the Tsarist leadership in St. Petersburg had its eyes firmly fixed on India.

At the time, European thinking on Russia was generally unflattering. It was seen as a primitive and aggressive state, whose rule was considered brutal and the court of St. Petersburg 'semi-civilised' in comparison to the other more genteel and sophisticated imperial realms west of the Carpathian Mountains. Fear of the unpredictable and destructive 'Russian Bear' was ever present in western propaganda. ⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

The Great Game between London and St. Petersburg in Central Asia began not as a clash of imperial titans coveting territory, equally matched and equally motivated, but as a British misinterpretation of Russian intent. The battlefield to be was Afghanistan.

Afghanistan in the early 19th Century was a land-locked, independent kingdom, ruled by Dost Mohammed Khan of the Pashtu Barakzai dynasty. It was a country deeply influenced by the cultures of Mongol and Persian invaders. The state was a crossroads of these cultures and an ethnic patchwork of mutually hostile tribes.

The British considered Afghanistan a buffer state between its Raj in India – then controlled by the British East India Company – and Russian interests further north in Central Asia. London considered Tsarist Russia a competitor to British influence in South Asia and a potential threat to its Indian holdings. The Russians were more interested in suppressing the Central Asian khanates and preventing the rest of their vast and loosely knit empire from declaring independence.

In Afghanistan, Dost Mohammed had seized power from the former Pashtu Durrani dynasty in 1823. The country had fought a number of short wars with the Sikh Empire for dominance of the Hindu Kush, the last one ending in a Sikh victory and their capture of the city of Peshawar in 1837. Dost Mohammed wanted this city back under Afghan control. He considered the British ideal allies in this quest, but the British refused to help.

Dost Mohammed, however, did not give up on finding an external ally to regain Peshawar. He turned to that other European power in relative proximity to Afghanistan – Russia.

In spite of Russia being in a considerably weaker position in Central Asia than Britain was in India, Nicolas I saw some merit in sending an envoy to Afghanistan to net some low-cost diplomatic leverage for his country and a slight rebuke to the British. But the Russian envoy failed to reach an agreeable settlement with Dost Mohammed. Angered by this failure, Nicolas I pressured his Persian allies to launch a punitive military expedition into western Afghanistan, laying siege to the city of Herat. After a 10-month siege of the city, considerable Persian casualties, and the threat of British military intervention, the siege ended in September 1838. For British observers, this was ‘proof positive’ of Russia’s malevolent intention. They slowly but surely drew up their plans to counter any future Russian encroachment.

Back in India, the camp was divided on whether an invasion of Afghanistan should go ahead, if the Russians weren’t even in the country. Lord Auckland, the then Governor-General of India, continued to agitate for military action, in spite of the evidence that the Russians were not interested in consolidating a presence in Afghanistan. Nonetheless a joint British-Indian army crossed into Afghanistan in April 1839.

Not long after the battle of Ghazni, Dost Mohammed fled into exile, paving the way for the former Durrani dynasty’s return to power in Kabul – the British placing Shuja Shah Durrani on the Emir’s throne.

But Shuja Shah was almost totally dependent on the small British military presence, some 5,000-strong, and British East India Company finance. Afghans quickly grew restive under his authority and sensed weakness in the British position. This incendiary situation was further fuelled by one of Dost Mohammed’s sons, Mohammed Akbar Khan, who actively fomented a rebellious atmosphere in Kabul and in the other Afghan cities.

In late 1841, a number of British officers were set upon and killed in Kabul by anti-Shuja Shah Afghans. This act of insurrection was followed by local Afghans storming a British supply depot.

Panicked by this deteriorating situation, Major General Elphinstone, commander of the British garrison in Kabul, ordered a full withdrawal of the British presence (military and civilian) back to India.

Though the British had been promised safe passage out of Afghanistan, the forces of Mohammed Akbar Khan harassed the retreating British, their Indian levees and attendant civilians. When not attacked by tribesmen, the British contingent was assaulted by the fierce Afghan winter.



Elphinstone made a stand at Gandamak. Outnumbered and without hope, the men of the 44th Regiment of Foot, ably supported by units of the Bengali infantry, cavalry and artillery, attempted to turn their fortunes around. Overwhelmed by approximately 30,000 tribesmen, almost the entire British contingent was cut down, including the civilians. Elphinstone was captured by the Afghans and died in captivity in 1842.

The British released Dost Mohammed in late 1841. Also in response to the Gandamak Massacre, the British sent into

Afghanistan an 'Army of Retribution' and laid waste to Kabul. Unlike the first invasion force, this one did not stay. As soon as it had completed its mission, it withdrew back to India.

Dost Mohammed resumed his throne and Afghanistan its independence; and a vengeful and bitter Britain learned a hard lesson about occupying an enigmatic and hostile land. ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾

Second Anglo-Afghan War 1878-80

The Second Anglo-Afghan War was as much an extension of the first, as a continuance of the general 19th Century Anglo-Russian enmity, which flared into war on the Crimean Peninsula in 1854.

Russia, now under the rule of Alexander II, the son of Nicolas I, had seen his country humiliated by the Anglo-French-Ottoman coalition during the Crimean War. It was obvious to him that Imperial Russian forces needed to be improved and the new machinery and tactics of war adopted, if Russia was to be taken seriously as a major European power. Consequently he launched a military modernisation and reform program, which saw strategic railways built, linking the developed west of the country to the underdeveloped southeast. He freed the serfs from their centuries old bondage, and, by doing so, liberated a vast force for industrial labour and national modernisation.

By 1877, the new Tsarist army was ready to exact revenge for Crimea. Russian forces attacked the weak Ottoman Empire, cutting a swath through Turkish military lines. So rapid was the Tsarist onslaught, that only the arrival of the British fleet in the Black Sea deterred the Russians from marching into the Ottoman capital of Constantinople.

The war ended in 1878 with the Treaty of San Stefano and Russia regained its strategic prominence in the Black Sea. With Russian pride restored, its foreign policy could afford to be more adventurous.

Meanwhile in Afghanistan, another of Dost Mohammed's sons, Sher Ali Khan, now ruled the country. His ambition was to hold onto Afghan sovereignty and his country's status as a neutral. But the British were no fans of Afghan neutrality. They believed that this neutrality represented more of a strategic vulnerability to them, especially since it came at the cost of their humiliating defeat at Gandamak.

After the Congress of Berlin, in June 1878, had attempted to tamp-down Anglo-Russian hostility, the following month, in a provocative move, Alexander II sent an unsolicited envoy to the court of Kabul. (iv) The envoy was welcomed by the Emir and negotiations on opening up bilateral relations commenced. However, this was completely unacceptable to London. Accepting the Russian envoy was seen to compromise Afghan neutrality and therefore posed a direct threat to British primacy in South Asia.

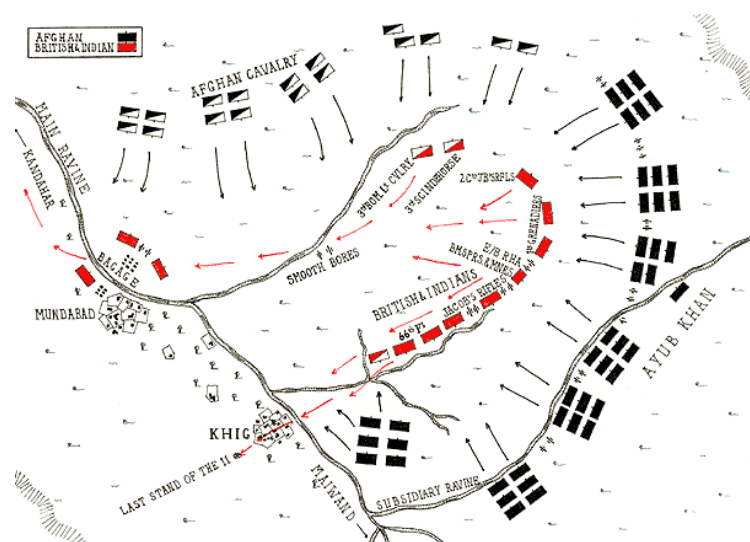
The British Viceroy, Lord Lytton demanded the Afghan Emir accept a British envoy. Sher Ali refused. In fact, in barely veiled language he told the British that any attempt to force a British envoy on him would be rebuffed. Lord Lytton called the Emir's bluff and sent an envoy. True to his word Sher Ali had his border guards turn the envoy and his accompanying entourage back.

In response, Lytton ordered a 40,000-strong British-Indian force into Afghanistan. The Afghan Emir attempted to solicit Russian military assistance but was unable to do so. He retired to the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif, where he died the following year.

Sher Ali's son, Yaqub Khan ascended the throne and, in an act designed to save his country from a full British take-over, he signed the Treaty of Gandamak in May 1879. This Treaty conceded strategically important Afghan territory to the British Raj, including control of the Khyber Pass and the city of Quetta.

By September of 1879, local Afghans tired of the British presence and rebelled. They stormed the British mission and killed its staff. Yaqub Khan was suspected to have had a direct hand in ordering this massacre and, as a consequence, under British pressure, he abdicated and spent the remainder of his life in exile in India. Yaqub Khan's brother, Ayub Khan, was overlooked as his successor; the title of Emir going instead to his cousin Abdur Rahman Khan.

An embittered Ayub Khan, as governor of Herat, rose up in revolt and raised an army that defeated the British at Maiwand in July 1880. But at the battle of Kandahar, the following month, the British decisively defeated Ayub Khan's forces, paving the way for Abdur Rahman to rule Afghanistan unopposed and maintain the Treaty of Gandamak. (v)



Third Anglo-Afghan War 1919

In 1919, Russia was in its third year of civil war (1917-23), after having suffered a revolution, which culminated in the violent demise of the Romanov dynasty; wartime defeat at the hands of the Central Powers (Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire) and the attendant humiliation of the Treaty of Brest Litovsk. Internationally, the Bolsheviks were considered dangerous but containable, so long as the White Army could continue to harass and eventually defeat Lenin's Red Army.

The British Empire in 1919 was territorially at its greatest extent. But from a manpower perspective, questions were raised in London over Britain's capacity to hold on to the new extensive territories absorbed into the realm as a consequence of the defeat of the Central Powers. Furthermore, World War I had culled a generation of young British and colonial men and, as a consequence, the taste for combat for King and empire had waned considerably.

In Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman's eldest son, Habibullah Khan succeeded his father. But, unlike his father, Habibullah had no real interest in pursuing permanent relations with Britain. Indeed, during World War I Habibullah, while technically keeping Afghanistan neutral but 'British orientated', sought and received technical assistance from the Central Powers. Turkish advisers brought into Afghanistan agents who sought to stir up trouble for the British along the unstable and vulnerable North West Frontier. With the bulk of British-Indian forces deployed to the European theatre of combat, the North West Frontier was an open door, through which havoc could be raised.

But Turkish trouble in Afghanistan was fairly contained and small-scale. After the war, Habibullah had dreams of joining the great powers at the Versailles Peace Conference and of regaining Afghan independence as a reward for his 'neutrality'.

But the British Viceroy was not kindly disposed to Habibullah's ambitions. Then, in the midst of his negotiations with the Afghan Emir, the Emir died at the hands of an assassin. In April 1919 Habibullah's third son, Amanullah Khan, seized power after struggling with his uncle for the position of Emir.

The following month, Amanullah, sensing vulnerability in the British position in India, and wanting to revoke the 1879 Gandamak Treaty, decided to take military action. In May, Amanullah mobilised the 50,000-strong Afghan Army, along with some 80,000 tribesmen, and launched a surprise attack on British India.

Russia's Bolsheviks, in spite of their own problems with the White Army, provided military assistance to Amanullah in the form of small arms and ammunition. They also sent up to one million gold roubles to help the Emir.

The British, after initially conceding some ground, counter-attacked, rolling back the invading Afghans, and taking the fight into Afghanistan itself. Airpower proved a decisive element in the British counter attack. Kabul was bombed and retreating Afghan forces were harassed from the air.



The three-month war ended in August 1919. The outcome of this brief war was that the contentious 'Durand Line', that separated Afghanistan from British India, was affirmed as the proper border between the two states. The Afghans received full independence from Britain and could resume the conduct of their own foreign policy. Amanullah continued to serve in the capacity of Emir of Afghanistan until 1929, when

an uprising against his rule in Jalalabad spread to Kabul and most of his army deserted. He abdicated and ended his days in Switzerland, dying in exile in 1960. ^(vi)

Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan 1979-89

In one of those unique turning points in history, the jousting for influence in Afghanistan between the Russians and the British, that started off in the early 19th Century eventually culminated in Russian control of the beleaguered country in the late 20th Century. By this stage Russia, now ruled for 56 years by a Marxist-Leninist dictatorship, was a mature global military power of the first order, armed with the panoply of modern weapons, nuclear and conventional.

After World War II, another great power displaced the British in the West – the United States.

According to the Cold War propaganda at the time, the Americans feared that Russian control of Afghanistan was a step toward their ultimate drive into Pakistan and a warm-water port for the Soviet Navy. The truth of Russia's motivation for the invasion of Afghanistan was, however, more complex.

The Soviet Central Asian republics were Muslim and ethnographically similar to the patchwork of ethnic and sectarian groups inhabiting Afghanistan. Since the 1950s, worried about the security situation within its Central Asian republics, Moscow encouraged warm relations with Kabul, providing the Afghan government with significant amounts of cash and equipment – for civilian and military use.

Meanwhile in early 1979, the US position in the Gulf region changed abruptly due to the Iranian Revolution. Iranian religious leader, Ayatollah Khomeini, threatened to spread Shiite religious fervour into neighbouring countries. Soviet Secretary-General Leonid Brezhnev was alarmed by this turn of events. Should the Iranian Revolution's reach extend over the borders of Iran, the Soviet position in Central Asia would be jeopardised.

Geostrategically, the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty also altered the balance of power against the USSR in the Middle East.

Wedged between what was, at the time, seen as the threat posed by Iran to Central Asia, and an improvement of the American position in the Middle East due to Washington's courting of Sadat's Egypt (a former Soviet client), the Politburo needed a 'strategic win'.

In April 1978, an opportunity presented itself to the USSR. The Saur Revolution, led by local communists, unleashed a wave of political instability in Kabul, ending with the assassination of the Afghan President, Mohammed Daoud Khan. Out of the chaos arose Muhammad Tariki who assumed the country's presidency, the prime ministership and the position of secretary-general of the Marxist PDPA, creating the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan.

Irrespective of their communist credentials, neither Tariki nor his political ally, Hafizullah Amin, were exclusively loyal to Moscow. Their terms in office as Afghan president were cut short by assassination. Followers loyal to Amin killed Tariki. Soviet Special Forces killed Amin prior to Moscow's invasion of the country in December 1979; Amin was replaced by Soviet loyalist, Babrak Karmel.

Anti-communist rebellions broke out all across the country.

The brutality displayed by the Soviets in their attempt to crush the anti-government forces of the Mujahedeen eclipsed anything the British imposed on Afghanistan in their three Afghan wars. Resistance to the Soviet occupation was aided by American support of the anti-communist Mujahedeen. ^(vii) This US support proved critical in furnishing the weaponry necessary to bleed the Soviets. Also critical was the financial and spiritual support provided by Gulf Arabs and the logistical support of the Pakistanis. ^(viii)



After 10 years of heavy fighting, 14,500 Soviets and 18,000 allied Afghan government forces were killed; 53,700 Soviet soldiers were wounded. On the Mujahedeen side, 75,000 were killed and some 150,000 were wounded. One million Afghan civilians lost their lives; millions more fled the country or were internally displaced.

So What Are the Strategic Lessons from the Past?

Each successive invasion (British and Soviet) of Afghanistan pushed the country a little further back from its path to national modernity. The Soviets were quite decisive in this. They conducted a scorched earth policy in many parts of the country, leaving the squabbling Mujahedeen little workable national infrastructure to inherit following the Soviet withdrawal.

Pashtu nationalism has always manipulated, subverted, and ultimately trumped, foreign interests in the country. Pashtu nationalism is fractious, not monolithic, and while all within the leadership group believe innately in their ability to govern, the competitive and sometimes violent nature of Pashtu politics leaves foreign interests few opportunities to find local allies to help pursue their agendas.

There is also the sub-text of Pashtu nationalism that spans Afghanistan and Pakistan. Pashtu tribesmen normally disregard the border separating these two countries and treat their brethren from either side of the Durand Line as Pashtu, not as Pakistani or Afghan. This simple fact complicates Islamabad's relationship with its Pashtu community, especially in areas adjacent to the Afghan border. They are not considered loyal subjects, rather potential insurrectionists, undermining Pakistani sovereignty. To keep this area under control, the Punjabi majority of Pakistan alternates between brutalising its Pashtu population and opportunistically championing Pashtu nationalism, so long as it is at the expense of neighbouring Afghanistan.

The major discontinuity we find in today's Afghanistan is that, unlike the previous invasions (especially during the Anglo-Afghan Wars), where there were only two competitive foreign powers attempting to influence Kabul's direction, i.e. London and St. Petersburg, we now have a kaleidoscope of foreign interests, many of which are working at cross-purposes in Afghanistan.

Pakistan and India, the Central Asian Republics, as well as Iran, are each attempting to coerce, buy influence, or involve themselves at the sub-national level. They exploit kindred ethnic and sectarian groups in Afghanistan, and, in doing so, undermine and weaken the contemporary Afghan national government – itself a foreign imposed construct.

The fact that the Americans and their NATO and non-NATO allies under the ISAF banner want to set a clear timetable for their withdrawal after 9 years of counter-insurgency, means that the countdown to Karzai's hold on power and relative internal stability has begun. Recently there has been talk that the latest round of ISAF attacks on the Taliban has weakened them considerably. It is hoped that this will force the Taliban to consider peace with Karzai and ISAF and bring 'moderate', 'pragmatic' Taliban into the Karzai governing elite.

Considering the complicated and diffuse nature of Afghan power, the many foreign players inside the country, and their mutually competing agendas and claims on Afghanistan's future, it is unlikely that a post-ISAF Afghanistan will see a strong, stable regime under Karzai or any other pretender to the Afghan presidency. National institutions are underdeveloped, in spite of the billions of dollars of foreign aid being ploughed into the country. The ruling elite is corrupt; Taliban sympathizers are still active within the army and national police – neither of these seemingly up to the task of maintaining Afghan sovereignty without heavy foreign assistance.

This war is far from over. Afghanistan was, and will remain, a strategically important country, an imperfect, fragile, stepping-stone on the way to somewhere else. As such, Afghanistan will continue to confound foreign designs, however conceived and forcefully promoted, living up to its reputation as 'the graveyard of empires'.

⁽ⁱ⁾ Kipling R., *The Collected Poems of Rudyard Kipling*, The Wordsworth Poetry Library, Wordsworth Editions Limited, Hertfordshire, UK, 1994, p.x.

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾ Brennan C. and Frame M., *Russia and the Wider World in Historical Perspective*, *English Historical Review*, Vol.115, Issue 464, p.1324.

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Noelle C., *State and Tribe in Nineteenth Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan (1826-1863)*, Curzon Press, London, 1997, pp.1-38.

^(iv) Medicott W.N., *The Congress of Berlin and After: A Diplomatic History of the Near Eastern Settlement 1878-80*, CASS, NY, 1963.

^(v) Ewans M., *Conflict in Afghanistan: Studies in asymmetric warfare*, Routledge NY, 2006, pp.59-78.

^(vi) Clements F.A., *Conflict in Afghanistan: A Historical Encyclopaedia*, ABC-CLIO Inc., California, 2003, p.247.

^(vii) For more information see: (eds.) Saikal A., and Maley W., *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, University of Cambridge Press, Cambridge, UK, 1989.

^(viii) For more information see: Hilali A.Z., *US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan*, Ashgate Publishing Company, UK, 2005.

The Northern Alliance Mk II: Strategic Stability of the Northern Transit Corridor

3 CHAPTER

Presenter: Dr Alexey D Muraviev
Director, Strategic Flashlight Forum, Curtin University

In late 2010 it has become clearer that after nine years of a turbulent presence in Afghanistan, driven by mixed tactical performances and clearly lacking a collegial strategic directive, the United States (US)-led international intervention force – the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) – has set a four year-long deadline to conclude the campaign.

The increase in the US standing force in the Afghan Theatre of War (TOW(A)) of approximately 30,000 combat troops, requires a more intensive logistical operation. This will involve an anticipated demand for an extra 200 to 300 per cent of extra non military supplies for 2010–11, compared with 2008–09 levels. The complex strategic geography of the TOW(A), its physical remoteness from the coalition's main supply bases, rough terrain, complex geopolitical surroundings, combined with a fluid inner-theatre threat environment, all these multipliers have made the logistical analysis of this campaign a matter of strategic importance. The factor of strategic sustainability of the campaign is, and will continue to be, one of the key determinants of either its eventual relative success or its dramatic failure.

There are two principal logistical transit corridors that ensure the continuous sustainability of the TOW(A): the southern route (mainly road dependent) via Pakistan, and the northern route (using mixed modes of delivery) via former Soviet Eurasia. With the growing demand for support to the expanded US contingent and its ISAF partner forces in Afghanistan, including Australia, the use of China and Iran as possible transit states was considered, though the latter may not seem to be a viable option. Since the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom in October 2001, the bulk of the coalition's requirements (about 70 per cent) were met via the southern corridor. However, the increasing power pressure that the Taliban forces have put on this corridor in the past six months, combined with Pakistan's fragile international security situation, does pose questions of its short- and medium-term effectiveness and reliability.

LOGISTICS AND AFGHANISTAN



This increases the importance of the northern transit corridor, also known as the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which currently operates under the legal framework of Status of Forces Agreements (SOFA) between coalition partners and regional states. The NDN's growing relevance to the campaign is highlighted by the fact that, in 2010, the northern transit corridor provided almost 40 per cent of all coalition supplies. This is in sharp contrast to the situation of even a couple of years ago, when NDN supplied only 25 per cent of total coalition requirements.

In considering the northern factor of the Afghan campaign, we must not limit analysis just to NDN. Broader geopolitical considerations must be taken into account; one of them is Russia's growing role in ensuring the strategic sustainability of the TOW(A). In the early 1990s, when the civil war in Afghanistan took another spiral following the emergence of a powerful new political factor – the *Taliban* militancy – its political opposition, the Northern Alliance, was left largely abandoned by the international community. The exceptions were India, Iran and Russia, which have provided the Northern Alliance with much needed logistics and limited arms supplies. It was the support of these three actors that proved decisive in enabling the Northern Alliance to survive after Kabul fell to the advancing *Taliban* forces in 1996, when it controlled no more than five per cent of the country's territory, that is the northern provinces, the northern provinces. The Russia factor was critical, given that nation's long standing involvement in Central Asia and its residual power presence.

There has been an increase in the externally inspired Islamic extremism within former Soviet space, particularly in Tajikistan and the Transcaucasus. The growing threat of a cross-border insurgency, has forced the Russians to recognise the Afghanistan-based terrorist threat as a major security challenge in its southern strategic outer perimeter. The threat became particularly evident following a number of cross-border incidents between the *Talibs* and Russian border guards along the Afghan-Tajik border in 1993. The establishment of allied relations between the Chechen extremists, *Al Qaeda* (AQ) and the *Taliban* gradually transformed the Chechen conflict into yet another theatre of jihad. This accelerated Russia's efforts to find effective ways to counter Afghanistan-based Islamic insurgency. However, Russia's appeal to the United States to join it in combined-arms limited-scale counter-terrorist operations against AQ-*Taliban* forces in Afghanistan in 2000, met a cool response in Washington.

Nevertheless, following the 11 September 2001 attacks, Russia's support to the Northern Alliance intensified, with a total military aid package reaching US\$ 40 million. In particular, in October 2001, Russia supplied the alliance with light firearms and munitions and heavy armaments, including T-55/62 main battle tanks (MBTs), BMP-1/2 tracked infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs), and several Mi-17/24 multi-role helicopters. These supplies, combined with systematic coalition aerial combat support and surgical operations by Special Forces, ensured the Northern Alliance's success in driving the *Taliban* back and securing Kabul.

The coalition successes in finalising SOFAs with a number of key Central Asian states, among them Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, did have Moscow's political backing. In Uzbekistan, ISAF had access to the strategically significant Kharshi-Khanabad (K2) air base, which provided vital support to the coalition's logistical, and even combat, operations during the first phase of *Operation Enduring Freedom*. However, after violent social unrest in Andijon (Fergana Valley) in May 2005, government forces inflicted massive civilian casualties in suppressing disorder. This sparked widespread international condemnation, also coming from ISAF partners, and arrangements under the SOFA were terminated; access to K2 was denied.

Currently, the principal logistical hub for strategic airlift support via NDN is the Manas air base, located on the outskirts of the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek. Manas was opened to ISAF under the SOFA on 11 December 2001. Since then, about 1,500 troops were transferred to and from TOW(A) daily (about 50,000 personnel per month). Altogether, between 2002 and late 2009, a total of 170,000 coalition personnel and some 5,000 tons of cargo, was moved via the Manas hub.

Another important element of the coalition's airlift operations via NDN is the transit through Russian national airspace. The ability to use Russian airspace for airborne transit operations is becoming critical for ISAF European partners. Germany was the first nation to reach a bilateral agreement with Moscow on using that nation's airspace for logistical support. Between 2003, when the two nations signed the agreement, and 2010, the *Bundeswehr* (German Armed Forces) carried out over 1,500 non-combat sorties over Russia. It moved approximately 200,000 armed personnel, and made about 350 airborne shipments of light armaments and heavy non-combat equipment. Similar agreements were reached with France and Spain; allowing them to execute 45 and 22 non-combat sorties respectively, in 2009 alone. In June 2009, the US also signed an agreement with Russia, but to date no intensive traffic has been registered. More recently, Italy and Sweden expressed an interest in signing similar agreements with Russia to support their military contingents in Afghanistan.


The airborne option is not the sole mode of logistical supply via the NDN. Unlike the southern route, the northern transit corridor offers a complete suite of delivery variables: air, road and rail. There are a number of transit alternatives available to the coalition forces: the Transcaucasus-Caspian Sea route (via Georgia and Azerbaijan) to Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the Baltics-Russia route, also via Central Asia to Afghanistan. Over the past two years the Baltics-Russia-Central Asia, railway-based, supply chain, which connects the Baltic Sea ports (primarily Latvia) to Central Asian logistical bases via Russian territory, has grown in its significance. In December 2009, it was used for the transit of about 350 containers a week, up from 108/134 units per week in June/July of that year. In 2010, the chain was scheduled to move between 16,000 and 26,000 containers, one fifth of a total 120,000 designated to reach TOW(A).

Despite the coalition's continuous reliance on the Pakistan-based southern transit corridor as the principal supply link to ISAF forces in Afghanistan, the northern connection, although utilised to less than its full potential, represents a credible addition. It could eventually develop into a leading strategic link that feeds TOW(A), particularly if Pakistan's internal security situation deteriorates rapidly. Both Russia and its residual allied states, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (the later is critical for ISAF's ground logistical effort via the NDN), have vested interests in the coalition's success in Afghanistan. The military and political defeat of the *Taliban*, the denial of Afghanistan to AQ and like-minded regional terrorist networks, and the weakening of the Afghan narco-mafia, would enhance regional security and stability.

There are, however, a number of potential short-term and longer-term challenges that may affect the overall reliability of the northern transit route. They range from internal security issues affecting regional states, to broader geopolitical and geostrategic great power gaming. Local security challenges include: continuous political instability in Kyrgyzstan, following a rapid regime change in April 2010; and intensified AQ-backed cross-border insurgency in Tajikistan. Broader longer-term considerations include Russian and Chinese concerns over the US long-term Central Asian Strategy (CAS). Both great powers are suspicious that US power will remain in Central Asia after the end of the Afghan campaign; in an area that both great powers consider of strategic importance to themselves.

The success of the final stage of the multinational campaign in Afghanistan and the future stability of the Afghan Government in Kabul, will be determined by the effectiveness of the strategic logistical operation, along with other factors. The logistic link will have to continue even after the withdrawal of the majority of ISAF forces after the end of 2014. It can be argued that ensuring the reliability of the northern transit corridor, and linked to that robust and constructive relations with key Eurasian players, would be key determinants of the international effort in Afghanistan. The coalition requires a closer cooperative relationship with regional security frameworks, such as the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) (which in recent years has transformed from being a mere security consultative body to a robust military alliance) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

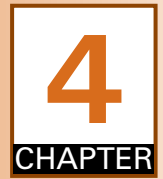
By developing closer ties with these organisations, and separately with Russia and China, the US and its partners will ensure, through effective and constructive diplomatic effort, that both great powers would



not use the 'Afghan card' as a political bargaining chip. This is important given Moscow's current, and Beijing's possible, strategic role in the ISAF's logistical operation. Moscow faces periodic pressure from Kremlin-affiliated hardliners to play the Afghan card to get political dividends on issues such as: the Anti-Ballistic Missile defence, the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) into post-Soviet Eurasia, and other geopolitical questions. However, so far Moscow's overall approach to cooperation on Afghanistan has been constructive. Russia continues assisting the reorganisation of the Afghan National Army by providing military-technical support, education and training; it remitted Afghanistan's debt to the Soviet Union and Russia, a total of US\$12 billion. Finally, during NATO's meeting in November 2010 in Lisbon (Portugal), Russia agreed to allow the transfer of armoured vehicles through its territory.

Moscow makes no secret that it is interested in seeing the ISAF achieving victory in Afghanistan, because should the coalition fail, CSTO and SCO will have to manage any geopolitical and security fallout. At the same time, Russia has no interest in the US and NATO establishing a permanent power presence near its southern underbelly. Subsequently, future close collaboration between Russia, its regional CSTO partners and the US-led coalition in Afghanistan, will depend on the effectiveness of the west's Eurasian policy, particularly CAS.

The Stability of the Southern Corridor to Afghanistan: The Strategic Dilemma of Pakistan



Presenter: Mark Briskey
Charles Sturt University

By any measure, Pakistan is a deeply troubled state. Arguably, it poses a greater threat to global security than Iraq ever did, although for different reasons. It is the most likely candidate to become a nuclear-armed failed state

Professor William Maley [@]

Preamble

In this paper I commence by stating an explicit conclusion on the stability of the southern corridor within Pakistan. Some history, which is all important in providing the context of the strategic imbroglio that Pakistan and Afghanistan find themselves in, is then provided. I then move on to explore the political security terrain of the southern corridor and its strategic dilemmas that impact upon Pakistan, the Afghan Government and its ISAF support, before concluding with a reiteration of the unpredictable and unstable nature of Pakistan's southern corridor.

Introduction: The problem

The southern corridor is an unstable, porous area, which is a threat to the Afghan government and its ISAF support as well as to Pakistan. The sanctuaries of Pakistan's FATA, detailed in Figure (1) ^(iv) below, are not the well victualled and funded sanctuaries of the Soviet occupation era. They are, nevertheless, except for Drone and Special Operations strikes, no go areas, that are effective sanctuaries and staging areas for offensive activities in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Pakistan Army, if it is not to lose its historically exalted position within the fragile union of Pakistan and its ability to promote the continuance of the Pakistan state, will retain its strategic ambivalence to this area, despite criticism and threats from the West.

Why is this so, and why then does the southern corridor remain unstable, in a country with a well organised military of about 650 000 active personnel?

One of the simpler responses to this question is that the Pakistan Army will not fully relinquish its inscrutable strategic ambivalence to placate the West. Doing so would lose the Pakistan Military its option of strategic depth, gained by having influence with those militant forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan, be they Taliban or any future such group that may acquire power in depth in the Pakhtun heartland of Afghanistan adjoining Pakistan.

The current militancy is now firmly entrenched on both sides of the borders containing the majority Pakhtun populations and violence has erupted in close proximity to Islamabad (Swat Valley); as well as the violence perpetrated by the 'Punjabi Taliban'. Pakistan is no stranger to sustained sectarian violence, which the Army has invariably been able to quell. However, the current demands being made by the West are pushing the Army into an intolerable opposition to the sentiments of a large proportion of its population; as well as propagating a war against its own, viewed by many as the result of coercion by its US ally.

Professor Maley's quote in the opening epigraph is provoking and even truer than when he wrote it in 2006. Pakistan is a deeply troubled state that is in the maw of violent acts and confrontations. Though not as specifically ethnically divisive as the 1971 war in East Pakistan, there is a new intensity to the militants' targeting of minorities and their dissent. Further pressure to push Pakistan along a path of near impossible strategic choices, could have more far reaching consequences and problems than the problem of Afghanistan. As Anatol Lieven wrote, the problems: "are so horribly complex that dealing with them would tax the powers of St.Peter, let alone a US government..." ⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾.

Some historical context

Prior to partition in 1947, the astute Mohammed Ali Jinnah (Quaid E-Azam) ^(iv) generously suggested that an autonomous Pakistan would offer strategic depth to India. Such a concept from the Quaid was not outside the fold of some older British thinking, which rested on the theory of the martial vigour of the soldiers recruited from the areas that would make up Pakistan; including, in particular, the Punjabi Muslims and North-West Frontier Pakhtuns. These areas had been fertile recruiting grounds for the British Indian Army. They, together with certain other groups such as Sikhs, Dogras and Ghurkhas, were the 'Sword Arm of the Raj' within the debunked theory of the 'Martial Races' of the Indian Army; a theory greatly expounded by Field Marshal Roberts and one avowed to in military publications of the day ^(v).

The theory was widely accepted, promoted and subsequently indigenised in an ethno-religious sense by the Pakistan Army; where some Pakistani military authors had invoked the special martial abilities of the Punjabi Muslim over that of the Hindu (an issue that of course was rebutted a number of times during the subsequent wars from 1948 onwards). The concept was by no means universally accepted throughout its history by either British or Indian soldiers, with arguments as to its 'invented nature and invented traditions' being persuasively explained by Professor Streets ^(vi) and Pasha ^(vii).

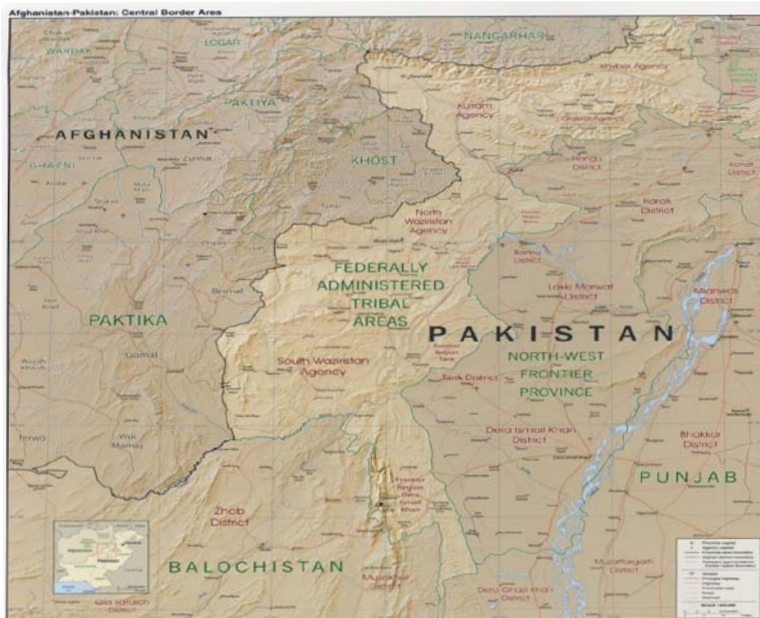


Figure 1 Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)

The idea of Pakistan providing strategic depth to India was all well and good. However, as Pakistan was to find out soon after partition, the question was: who would provide strategic depth for Pakistan? Especially as its enormous neighbour on the East had inherited the majority of military facilities and materiel, let alone personnel. Furthermore West Pakistan was faced with a hostile Afghanistan, where the 'Martial Pakhtun's did not recognize Pakistan and, in fact, claimed territory in Pakistan all the way up to the Cabul River near Attock Fort. This situation was also antagonised by a domestic Pakhtunist movement, wishing to integrate those Pakhtun areas into a united whole. The seeds of this early

security dilemma, i.e. Pakistan being hemmed in by two adversaries, fed the desire for 'strategic depth', against its larger and more existential enemy India. This historic and current desire for strategic depth is why the southern corridor has to remain unstable. That situation serves the interests of Pakistan's future long-term strategy of reacquiring hegemony over a weakened or client Afghan state.

Security of the southern corridor borderlands in Pakistan

The parlous state of security in the borderlands between Pakistan and Afghanistan is not, as has been noted, historically an unknown problem. Though these problems may be qualitatively different in their actors and technology, there are issues that, in principle, would be familiar; with previous attempts by other states to exert their control over the borderlands of these fiercely independent areas. Contemporarily, this is especially the case for areas of the Pakistan and Afghanistan border in that territory now known as the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA). The North-West Frontier, FATA and Baluchistan are, of course, now names familiar to most through the media reporting on the almost daily litany of terrorist activity, cross-border transit of insurgents, and mutual recrimination about infringed sovereignty between Pakistan and the ISAF forces in Afghanistan.

The history of the security of the southern corridor is diverse. The author recalls a long drive from Quetta, to look across the steep ravines towards the border town of Chaman in Baluchistan, nearly two hours from Qandahar. The detritus of previous security concerns, in the form of numerous pillboxes and tank traps built there in anticipation of a German or (during the late 1930's) Russian aggressor, were equally as visible as the tribal levy in Toyota four-wheel drives providing my security escort.

The recognition of the continuity of the special nature of conflict, within this unique geographic and human terrain, was described by Christina Lamb, the author of a number of works on the Frontier. Lamb wrote in 2009 that US officials were 'rushing to the door' to listen to Frank Lesson, the last surviving British officer to have served in Waziristan, and his recollections of how the British addressed the problem of unruly tribesmen prior to World War II ^(viii). The security of these Tribal areas, sitting astride the Durand Line that separated British India from Afghanistan, has a rich history concerning those who would attempt to subjugate them and also Afghanistan. It is no doubt, in large measure, where the description of these areas as the 'graveyard of empires' originated.

In the modern era the British, as per the experiences of Frank Leeson and others like Major Walter Cummings ^(ix), devoted considerable thought to how they might effectively administer and combat the troublesome frontier. One of the most influential works on how to most effectively conduct operations against these tribesmen, and one provided to officers new to the frontier, was contained in the manual written by General Sir Andrew Skeen: 'Instructions for British Infantrymen on the Indian Frontier' ^(x). There were less enlightened thoughts towards securing the tribes behaviour between the World Wars, colloquially known as the policy to 'bomb, burn and banish'. These high technology security tactics for the 1920's and 1930's, are similar in a small way to some of the controversy involved in the current high technology use of 'Predator/Reaper Drone' strikes. Then, as now, these high technology tactics for dealing with the tribesmen generated much discussion. Much ink was spilled, both within and outside the Government, on what was publicly defensible about using such 'modern weapons' against tribesmen who had little, if any, way of response, except further asymmetric strikes against targets they could reach ^(xi).

This was especially the case with the British military practice of warning of non-combatants prior to bombing (usually by dropping of leaflets nominating what was to be destroyed). This issue has also become hotly debated, of course, in the current war in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The use of 'drone technology', though effective in accounting for many 'enemy combatants/terrorists', has also accounted for unacceptable losses of innocent civilian casualties according to some commentators. Some ^(xii) believe that the drone technology is in fact generating more hostility against both the US and Pakistan military ^(xiii).

Modern studies from both Pakistan and the West have dealt with the unique nature of security and warfare in the tribal belt areas. The University of Peshawar's study of Mujahidin movements in the Malakand and Mohmand agencies between 1900 and 1940, is instructive about the fluid transitions between peace and insurrection in these areas ^(xiv). Moreman's work on the hard lessons learned by the British in conducting infantry operations, and the development of a Frontier Warfare method, is also enlightening ^(xv). Without delving too much into this history of warfare and security on the Frontier during the Imperial British period, there is a considerable body of work that may be consulted in memoirs, manuscripts, gazetteers and reports on this region that note consistently the problems in maintaining trans-border security ^(xvi).

These Frontier security issues did not end with partition. Irredentist Afghanistan did not recognise the state of Pakistan, denied the legitimacy of the 'Durand Line' and, furthermore, supported the absorption of those lands containing Pakhtun people into a greater Pakhtunistan.

That Pakistan was able, after the demise of the Soviet occupation and especially after the fall of Kabul in 1996, to mentor the victory of the Taliban in all but some northern areas of Afghanistan, was the fulfilment of a key objective in Pakistan. It gained greater strategic depth as an additional offset to their existential enemy India, at the acceptable cost of a more viable Afghan state. Pakistan had to ostensibly abandon their Taliban client in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and a US ultimatum. This is fundamentally important in understanding the security conundrums and offensive ambivalence of the Pakistan Army in FATA and the instability of the southern corridor. It is also instructive in understanding why a military with nearly 650 000 active duty personnel, cannot apparently, stop their own territory from being a sanctuary for militants actively engaged against ISAF forces in Afghanistan. It also makes clear the reasons for the Pakistan Army's desultory attacks against the militants in the border regions of the southern corridor and why these Pakistani forces have been on the receiving end of defeat from the militants.

Strategic security dilemmas of Pakistan – strategic depth, ambivalent alliances, mistrust of US intentions and institutional survival

"Some of us believe that our nuclear deterrence against India allows us to completely focus on the internal front. This is a fallacy, because nuclear capability does not deter Low Intensity Conflict...Most of the Indian war preparations are Pakistan specific, which does not allow us to lower our guard"
Major General Tariq Nadeem Gilani ^(xvii).

"Failure of US and NATO to block routes on the Pak-Afghan border has enabled the Taliban and Al-Qaeda also to create sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal belt. This partly facilitated Al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives to keep crisscrossing the Pakistan Afghanistan border"
Lieutenant General Talat Masood ^(xviii).

The epigraphs above highlight issues from the perspective of two senior Pakistani Generals. Both of these perspectives concern the security of the Southern Corridor, though both take as their point of concern issues that articulate Pakistani perceptions that may not resonate with Western/ISAF and Afghan government concerns.

The first epigraph, by Major General Gilani, may even seem irrelevant, given ISAF's mission in Afghanistan and its expected support from its ally Pakistan. The second, by Lieutenant General Masood, would seem to fly in the face of common Western perceptions of Pakistani security tardiness, with the General apportioning fault to the ISAF forces' inability to 'block the cross over routes'. The apparent incongruence of these two comments will become clearer later on in this paper, as further exploration of Pakistan's situation reveals its unenviable strategic dilemmas.

Accepted wisdom within public circles in the west is, naturally enough, derived from western media reporting on the growth of extremism in Pakistan ^(xix), and some of the appalling acts of violence committed there against both the public and military. As comment on the security stability of the southern corridor, this reporting is a mix of criticism of Pakistani efforts in preventing militant activities, such as destruction/stymieing of ISAF convoys, and the serious allegations of recidivist Pakistan military involvement in still supporting militant efforts. Possibly the worst instance of this came in the late 2010 WIKILEAK reports on allegations of collusion between Pakistani security and militant elements.

Such revelations, though not as startling overt as the WIKILEAKS documents, are not unknown. One of the first major publications concerning the ISI-Taliban nexus was published in Pakistan, barely two months after the 9/11 attacks, by the well-regarded Pakistani current affairs magazine *The Herald* ^(xx). Since 2002, and apart from general media, the continuing relationship between the Pakistani military, militants and meddling in Afghanistan have also been reported in research of the London School of Economics, via the Dawn Newspaper in Pakistan in 2010 ^(xxi), and by the International Crisis Group (ICG) in two reports in July 2002 and March 2003 ^(xxii). A report by the Kennedy School of Government in June 2010, similarly reports on these continued relationships between Pakistan's ISI and Afghan insurgents ^(xxiii). It would seem from media reporting and analysis from eminent sources, that there is still considerable recidivism in the Pakistani military and sympathy for militant activities in Pakistan, although it is nearly 10 years since Pakistan's famous about face to support the US-led war on terror. How could this be so, and why does the stability of the southern corridor route of supply to ISAF remain unstable? And why does Pakistan not exert decisive force against the militants investing that area?

The statement contained in the first epigraph of this section, provides a succinct insight into what has been an enduring strategic existential dilemma for Pakistan, ever since its partition in 1947. This existential threat fixation is, of course, India; but there are also significant threats from various groups, from the borderlands to the 'Punjabi Taliban'. However, many in Pakistan view these threats as secondary to the threat that will be faced when the US eventually withdraws from Afghanistan. Pakistan will then, yet again, be left with the political detritus of its Alliance, or some would say Compliance, relationship with the US. These Pakistani fears are known in Washington and were explicitly stated by Hathaway in his recent article in the *Wilson Quarterly* ^(xxiv), on the undercurrents of diametrically opposed views between the two allies.

The US and its allies, since 2001, have consistently encouraged Pakistan, by stick and carrot, to make a more robust response to the security situation along its porous Afghan border. Most recently the approach has been one of decidedly more stick than carrot, with the recent visit of US Vice President Joe Biden to Islamabad. Biden informed both the Pakistani Government and the Military that, 'while the US had patience it would not wait indefinitely' ^(xxv). This US dissatisfaction with the Pakistani military response along its borders, fuelled within Pakistan an abiding belief ^(xxvi) by many in Pakistan that the US would increasingly undertake more unilateral 'hot pursuits' of militants into Pakistan territory. Such 'notices' from the US are not new. A 2009 letter warning that the US could no longer tolerate Pakistan's ambiguity in its dealings with such organisations as al-Qaida, Lashka-e-Taiba, Tehrik-e-Taliban (the Haqqani network), Afghan Taliban or others ^(xxvii), also fuelled Pakistani angst. Reactions by Pakistan to these continued warnings has been to further amplify a feeling of the US 'Alliance' being one more or less of coercion, with some carrots for 'good health', such as: the \$US 7.5 billion Kerry-Lugar bill and trade agreements being tied to the notices about Pakistan more vigorously pursuing the terrorist 'bolt-holes' in FATA. Pakistani media, reporting on 13 January 2011, noted that General Kayani gave Biden a document listing Pakistani concerns with Washington, including the impression that the US was indifferent to Pakistan's security concerns about India ^(xxviii). Biden provided a diplomatically 'sugar-coated' response, but the message remained clear; the US was expecting greater action on the part of the Pakistan military to neutralise and stabilise the Waziristan area of the southern corridor ^(xxix).

The US military innovatively gains more appreciation of these 'impossible choices' for the Pakistan Army, through its foreign military student programs. Many of the Pakistan military officers attend such courses as: the Master of Military Art and Science, at the US Army Staff and Command College at Fort Leavenworth and the US Naval Postgraduate School at Monterey. They write theses devoted to Pakistani military culture, strategic thought and regional and internal security threats to Pakistan^(xxx). These theses and reports (unclassified) then become useful documents for US military personnel, as well as being available online for scholars to access.

The Pakistani military having been subject to embarrassing revelations about both institutional and rogue elements being involved in active support of the Taliban, also has great domestic problems in 'selling' the US Alliance. The Pakistan government has had to deal with the distinctly unfavourable western media reports of such seemingly perfidious double-dealing by elements of the Pakistani military. Meanwhile, Western governments do not want to hear how their allies (Pakistan) are still actively supporting those Taliban and militant elements that are actively killing ISAF forces.

The greater conundrum for the Pakistanis though, is that while they must manage the Western perceptions and, in the case of the US, significant pressure, the Pakistani administration becomes extremely unpopular when it appears to be colluding with the US against militants whom many Pakistanis, if not actively supporting, approve of for their anti-American/foreign stance. These issues are not thought of in isolation, as many Pakistanis were sympathetic to the perceived freedom fighters, such as Lashka-e-Taiba, and their actions in Kashmir. They see the progressive acquiescence to the US as an embarrassment and an exhibition of lack of faith towards their co-religionists in Afghanistan and other groups deigned to be oppressed.

Conclusion

Pakistan, since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, has been left with a strategic legacy and conundrum that would beggar solutions from the most gifted statesperson. Given Pakistan's unique history of political instability and its periodic lapses into praetorianism, its disparate ethnic and religious divides, which have themselves had a long history of conflict, are now proving fertile ground for amplifying the divisions within its society. Conflicts exacerbated by anger at Pakistani Government support for the US, have fuelled dangerous divisions between Muslim and minority religions, as well as within the Shia and Sunni sects, and between militants and their erstwhile military mentors.

The Pakistan Army is the most capable state actor to maintain security in Pakistan. However, as has been indicated in this paper, the Pakistan Army is an Institution with a strategic vision not only for Pakistan, but also Afghanistan as well, that is incongruent with western strategic visions of South West Asia. This vision has already put it at odds with its Western allies. They are impatient with what they perceive as the Army's tardiness in applying its full force to secure the southern corridor that would stabilise the border and provide greater scope for more effective ISAF attention to those security problems specifically located in Afghanistan.

If the Army folds due to US pressure or unacceptable infringements of sovereignty by ISAF forces, there could be serious implications beyond the simple stalling of ISAF convoys and terrorist sanctuaries in FATA. As noted in Professor Maley's epigraph at the beginning of this paper, a failed Pakistani state with one of the largest militaries in the world and that also has a nuclear capability, would then become the problem rather than Afghanistan, in a region with a history of interstate, and often religiously motivated, violent conflict.

The southern corridor is an unstable, porous area, which is a threat to the Afghan government and its ISAF support, as well as to Pakistan. The continued political instability of both countries bodes ill for

the future stability of the southern corridor, especially when allied with ambivalent Pakistani military responses, and mistrust of US intentions. Furthermore, the evidence that the Pakistan military has consistently been shown to retain corridors of communication and joint activity with militants, resonates more of keeping future alliance options open, rather than inviting their surrender or complete destruction and denial of militant operations in the southern corridor.

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Letter from the Taliban: The Psychology of Afghanistan's multi-dimensional Insurgency



Presenter: Mr Jason Thomas

Perhaps the best place to start a paper on the conflict in Afghanistan and Australia's role in it, is with what success could look like and how we might improve our chances of getting there. The background to the recommendations must of course involve a profile of the human terrain ⁽¹⁾ in Afghanistan. This is an unconventional war in a deeply tribal society, where foreign forces are attempting something that has never been achieved in Afghanistan. In fact, it is not really a war. Instead the conflict in Afghanistan was described to me by a U.S PRT Commander as "international policing amidst random acts of horrendous violence."

Succeeding in Afghanistan

Succeeding, not winning, is how we should frame our mission in Afghanistan. Success will not be in a form we recognise or agree with. It will involve negotiating with the local Taliban and competing tribes to deny al-Qaeda (AQ) a base in Afghanistan. It will require delivering sustainable security over a wide enough area of the country to allow Afghanistan to come to an Afghan solution. In *Seven Pillars of Wisdom* T.E. Lawrence said that the Arab revolt "was an Arab war waged and led by Arabs for an Arab aim in Arabia."⁽²⁾ Perhaps we would be closer to success if Afghanistan had been seen in this light. Success will also be based on what doesn't happen. For example, Afghanistan cannot be allowed to be a base for trans-national extremists to take control of nuclear armed Pakistan. It is hard to claim credit for what doesn't happen.

There are several key factors that may facilitate this success. They include:

- Turn local Talibs against Pakistan / foreign insurgents
- Afghans understand power
- Zero tolerance on violence and attacks on civilians or military
- Let them know they cannot outlast us
- Look for deals
- Confronting Pakistan

If the international community does not deal with Pakistan once and for all, then Afghanistan will remain a trap-door for trans-national terrorism.

⁽¹⁾Human Terrain: was established to assist Army Brigade and Marine Corps Regiment Commanders and their staffs in Iraq and Afghanistan to better understand local cultures and social structures with the goal of improving their units' operational effectiveness. This is sometimes referred to as 'Human Terrain Mapping' (HTM)

⁽²⁾Lawrence T.E., *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, BN Publishing, 2008. (First published in 1922)

Suggested Policy Options for Australia

Military	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cut deals with local Taliban to turn them against the foreign Taliban, warlords and criminals. • Establish Village Engagement Teams – who move into a village and live, eat sleep with villagers – protection/security. • Arrest and detain warlords – zero tolerance on corruption/violence.
Civilian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase our civilian commitment to tackle corruption and improve connection between government and village communities at the District and Provincial level. • Implement large-scale and long-term cash-for-work projects that focus on restoring the agricultural economy and remove fighting-age men from the battlefield.
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply direct and indirect diplomatic pressure on Pakistan in bi-lateral and multi-lateral forums. • Do not put time-frames on our military or civilian commitments.

Why Success is so damn hard in Afghanistan

Coalition forces and civilian operators are faced with an operational environment encompassing the cultural, sociological, political, and economic factors of the local population, combined with 2,000 years of fighting. This is on top of a xenophobic society hijacked by a warped interpretation of Islam. These are factors beyond our control. Yet, we have complicated the atmospheric by things we have done that are in our control. More specifically the conflict has been made even harder by:

- Continuing to treat the Taliban as a homogenous group of insurgents
- Tolerating violence against the population and ourselves.
- Political leaders stuck in a conventional mind-set.
- A civilian/development industry that lacks the guts and emotional intelligence to engage with the population – too FOB/Kabul-centric.
- Shifting from eradicating AQ to nation building back with poor coordination
- Having only been effectively engaged since 2007-08, and with enough resources only since mid-2010.
- Coalition Forces that are poor implementers of Counterinsurgency COIN.
- Spent too long funding warlords, elites and drug barons.
- Corruption at all levels of government and business.
- Western obsession with time.
- A failure to understand the human terrain.

Profiling the Local Taliban

In the Seven Pillars of Wisdom, T.E. Lawrence ⁽³⁾ wrote “...the dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they act their dreams with open eyes to make it possible.” While Lawrence’s extraordinary WWI mission was in Arabia fighting the Turks, his comment epitomises the mind set you are confronted with in Afghanistan when dealing with the local Taliban.

Meetings with the Taliban were tests of emotional intelligence. Something like that program Lie to Me. They were far more complicated than meetings with Tamil Tiger commanders in Northern Sri Lanka. Every expression, gesture and ability to eat anything put in front of you was carefully watched for signs of weakness. Learning to unravel their logic was vital to beginning any negotiation. Yet so was learning to identify whether you were dealing with the local Taliban, the foreign neo-Taliban, or representatives of the warlords, or thugs who acted on behalf of corrupt Provincial Government officials.

One of the most important concepts in this paper is that the Taliban is a state of mind. It is a state of mind that is unique to that of the foreign fighters who have been pouring across the Pakistan border. The foreign Taliban demand adherence to no ethnicity, no nationality nor necessarily have the same reasons to fight. Some are religiously motivated such as the Madrassah students from across the Pakistan border in the NWFP. Others are “Western home grown” Islamic students or converts to Islam from Europe who were fighting, like many of the foreign elements who entered Iraq, to join the al-Qaeda insurgency to kill Coalition soldiers.

While mainly from the Pashtun belt, being a local Talib is not about being a classic insurgent with revolutionary zeal to replace the government. Local people are fighting for other reasons. We all know the profile: dissatisfied or angry at the Afghan government, deprived of any ability to sustain themselves, and violent, life threatening, intimidation from the foreign Pakistan-based Islamic extremists who infiltrate the villages and communities claiming to be the defenders of tradition.

Most local Talib could easily be picking up an AK-47 to shoot Coalition forces one day and a shovel to clean a karez the next. Yet, and this is the key, both actions are in direct support and protection of their local interests. Neither action is intended to be part of a global jihad or to install a new government in Kabul. Coalition Forces are just as often fighting against foreign, imported extremists who appear to be local Taliban.

Many Afghan friends have said “they are not the real Taliban...the real Taliban have been hijacked by foreigners!” Just like the al-Qaeda aligned Haqqani Network, they have absolutely no interest in the future of Afghanistan.

Abdul Mohammed, a local Talib interviewed by The Telegraph in March 2010, was one of a force of around 160 Taliban fighters who fought in the Nad e’Ali and Marjah areas of central Helmand. As well as local Afghans, his unit was composed of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Arabs, Chechens and Pakistanis, but he was insistent that there were no Britons fighting in his unit. Abdul said the foreign fighters kept themselves apart from the Afghan Taliban, who they regarded as being less committed to the cause of global Jihad.⁽⁴⁾

Violence in Afghanistan is inflicted by several groups. There are the Pakistan foreign insurgents who are funded, fueled and armed by Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI). They are a mixture of foreign radicalised extremists being provided with sanctuary in the border area of Pakistan. Many acts of violence, revenge and intimidation are blamed on the Taliban but are not the work of the local Taliban. Most often the warlords, drug barons and criminals wage horrendous violence on anyone stands in their way to truckloads of cash and local power. They also have zero interest in peace and stability. In fact, their reason for being is dependent mayhem.

⁽³⁾Lawrence T.E Seven Pillars of Wisdom BN Publishing 2008. (First published in 1922)

⁽⁴⁾Rayment Sean; Defence Correspondent; The Telegraph.co.uk: Taliban fighters are conditioned to die in battle, claims former insurgent. 27 March 2010

ISAF commanders have neglected to understand this aspect of the human terrain. This has led to keeping bad people in positions of power and entrenched deep-seated xenophobic suspicion within the villages of the international security forces and representatives of the Afghan Government. Here is a suggested profile (no doubt this has already been done or could be improved). Key descriptors of the Local Taliban state of mind:

- Member of local tribes and resident of village
- Disgruntled, abused, death of family member from ISAF or warlord
- Has experienced abused or violence from ANP/ANA or government representative
- Muslim but not Islamic fundamentalist or in support of global jihad
- May have gone to Pakistan but this has been for employment or during the period of Soviet occupation or the civil war that followed
- A belief that traditional way of life will be taken away by foreigners.
- Could be turned against the foreign insurgents from Pakistan and the warlords.

Afghanistan’s Competing Spheres of Influence within a Tribal Based Culture

As Alexander the Great found, this complex, byzantine land is a society of constantly shifting tactical alliances of convenience. It is a land where competing elites seek to mobilise a population base, to prevail in a violent, internally focused, struggle for formal and informal political power.

The presence of international security forces and the fractured nature of the Taliban and foreign insurgents have increased the complexity of the sociological ecosystem. The diagram below illustrates the broad relationships. It is easy to see how dislodging one element has consequences for another, much like interdependent species in any environment.

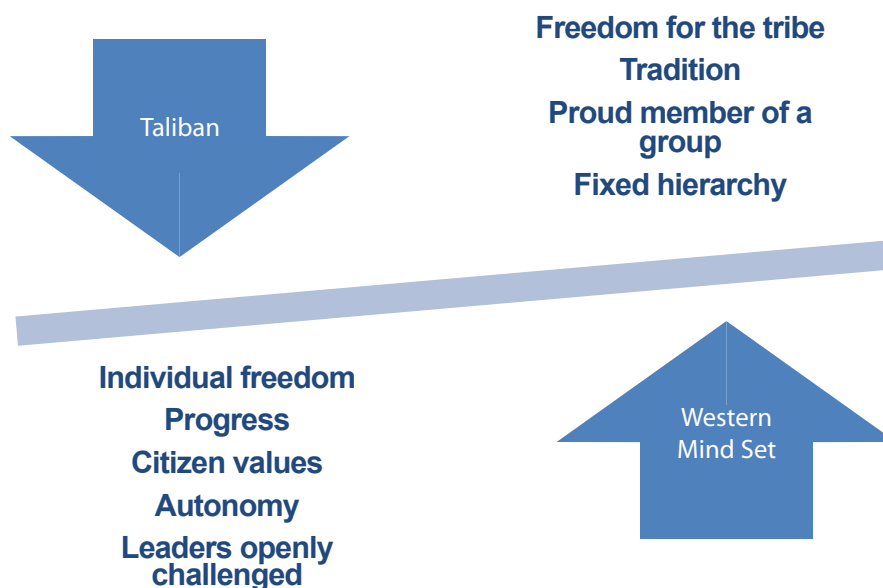


One thread throughout this human tapestry is Afghanistan's tribal based culture centred on villages, valleys, districts and access to necessities like water, meaning all politics is local. The tribal code of honour and a population suspicious or apathetic towards the Karzai Government, means success in Afghanistan will be won by winning the mind games as much as the war games. In a tribal based culture:

- People are not mobilised individually or by cold logical argument based on facts.
- The simplicity of life is a camouflage for the ability to prevail against asymmetrical threats – military, climate, terrain and deprivation.
- The "real" Taliban are part of the social and tribal eco-system.
- There is an overlap between the state of mind of the Taliban and the tribalism.

Tribal culture in Afghanistan, particularly in the Pashtun dominated south, is governed by a code of honour or Pashtunwali. The code is underpinned by power, loyalty, pride, bravery and the obligation for revenge. Every man in the tribe demonstrates these values in their role as a warrior. They are also very polite and will provide hospitality to enemy combatants, even though tomorrow they may try to kill you.

At the local level it is hard to separate the Taliban state of mind from that of the tribe. The importance of tradition, being a member of a group, freedom for the tribe against outside influences and the strict authority of elders are equally important. These values clash with those of the Western mindset, which supports individual autonomy, progress, being an equal citizen, and the ability to freely challenge authority.



Ahmed Rashid, one of the best contemporary authors on Afghanistan, suggests that the devastation and hardship of the Soviet invasion and the following civil war also influenced the Taliban state of mind⁽⁵⁾. We have failed to recognise their historical ability to adapt - the longer we engage the more they evolve – both politically and violently.

⁽⁵⁾Rashid Ahmed: Taliban I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd 2000

They now know they don't have to be the government, they just have to out-govern Karzai and his corrupt Provincial representatives. They also know all about counter-insurgency "*we don't want those men working because they won't have time to fight,*" was often a message to me from the Quetta Shura. They are even encouraging reconstruction projects in some areas.

Most importantly, they know we might have the watches but they have the time.

Shooting and chewing gum at the same time

In Afghan tribal society even when engaged in war against another tribe lines of communication are maintained. Dialogue between elders from rival tribes is often what resolves disputes, not military defeat.

One of important factors in Afghanistan or, in fact in many socio-ecosystems, is the significance of external cues in an otherwise complex environment that would appear to be irreconcilable. This is reflected in Shuja Nawaz's recent comments that by showing that it is willing to speak with the "enemy," the engagement could create a more positive view of the United States in local eyes.

This is because the local people, not the foreign Pakistan based insurgents, continue to maintain the code of honor that has prevailed against all foes, domestic and foreign, from the beginning of tribal history in Afghanistan.

The United States is experienced at fighting while negotiating at the same time. Paul Pillar in the National Interest reminded us that the United States has had plenty of experience negotiating while fighting; its involvement in both the Korean and the Vietnam Wars ended that way, with two years of negotiations in the former conflict and five years in the latter⁽⁶⁾.

One of the unsung heroes of the Korean War was Vice Admiral C. Turner Joy, the first head of the U.N. delegation to the Korean Armistice Conference. In his diary Admiral Joy sets out how difficult it is to negotiate while fighting. He was prevented from implementing his belief. Like dealing with leaders within the Afghanistan tribal system, only firmness would induce the Communists to agree to a cease-fire that would last. Consequently, the Communists saw that the U.N Command's position was constantly open to change, and therefore appeared to be weak. And just like the Taliban, the Communists hoped that time and intransigence would erode American resolve⁽⁷⁾.

While we all know that in Afghanistan we may have the watches but they have the time, the local Taliban are far more likely to enter into negotiations that stick if the terms are in the interests of their parochial concerns – even if we don't agree with them.

However, the foreign insurgents are not interested in the future of Afghanistan or local issues. A negotiated end to the conflict is simply not in the interests of consuming Western powers in a protracted jihad in Afghanistan, while simultaneously beginning to establish the physical and human terrorist infrastructure in Yemen and Somalia.

If we accept that being a member of the local Taliban is a state of mind then negotiations should seek to understand and then appeal to what drove the local men to take on the mind of a Talib.

Problem is we have killed many of the senior leaders – leaving mainly the young, radicalised foreign Taliban who know nothing of Afghanistan and care even less.

⁽⁶⁾Pillar, Paul: Negotiating while fighting in Afghanistan. The National Interest; 15 October 2010; <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/negotiating-fighting-4245>

⁽⁷⁾Diary of Admiral Joy: Negotiating while fighting: the diary of Admiral Joy at the Korean Armistice Conference 1978; Hoover Institution Press.

Conclusion

Once the membership of al Qaeda in Afghanistan had been dismantled, direct engagement with local Taliban should have occurred and not only with the warlords and drug barons as occurred during the early years of the conflict⁽⁸⁾.

The US-NATO leaders should have won over this local state of mind as soon as practically possible. This does not mean the new political infrastructure and government in Kabul should have been neglected. It means a two track process should have been implemented. Not only is conflict 80% political and 20% military, the 80% in Afghanistan is virtually 100% local.

The international security forces should have realised that they are not the only “foreigners” in Afghanistan. The local Taliban could have been turned against the foreign insurgents by facilitating and encouraging an organic uprising. Either that or making them an offer they can’t refuse; similar to the way General Petraeus took advantage of the Awakening movement of disaffected Sunnis against the barbaric degradation of al-Qaeda in Iraq. The Sunnis rose up against the foreign al-Qaeda. General Petraeus armed and supported the Sunnis, who were far more effective and ruthless in eliminating the foreign insurgents.

Yet, to achieve and understand this state of mind requires a level of emotional intelligence that is almost impossible to acquire within the strict rules of engagement for Australia’s troops and the superficial approach of our civilian development personnel.

One of the most prescient lessons from T.E. Lawrence is not to do too much with your own hands.⁽⁹⁾ There is always the temptation to impress upon the locals how we can do things better.

To implement processes and procedures that fit neatly in a Western context or to overlay our actions with values foreign to local customs or understanding. Better the local people do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. As Lawrence makes clear, you are only there to help them. What was so true in Afghanistan is that under the very odd conditions of that country, our practical work was never as good as, perhaps, we thought.

When reflecting on the endless meetings over green tea and flat bread, negotiating with Taliban commanders and switching my own mental arithmetic from intellectual arguments to demonstrating traditional tribal traits such as bravery, loyalty and politeness, I wish I had read Lawrence’s work much earlier. The beginning and ending of the secret of handling Afghans is unremitting study of them.

Counterinsurgency will only remain a post-modern military doctrine unless this is done properly and relentlessly. This doesn’t mean having sociologists telling US Commanders on the ground what five minutes at the Forward Operating Base bazaar will tell you.

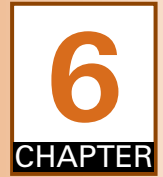
To understand this state of mind in Afghanistan it helps to have two interpreters. One to translate the literal meaning of your discussion and the other to watch and sense what is “really” being said – this person is more important than the first. As with most things in life, Lawrence was so right when he said your success will be proportioned to the amount of mental effort you devote to it.

⁽⁸⁾Ahmed Rashid: *Descent into Chaos: The World’s Most Unstable Region and the Threat to Global Security*. Penguin Books 2009.

⁽⁹⁾Lawrence T.E. 27 Articles: *Arab Bulletin* August 1917



Afghanistan: – Information Operations, Influence and the ‘Home Front’



Presenter: Professor William Hutchinson
Edith Cowan University

It is a problematic task to attempt to cover all the tasks involved in Information Operations (see Table 1) and so I will concentrate on a subset of tasks called Influence Operations; specifically on the ‘Home Front’ in Australia and also, more broadly, on that in other Western nations. This is a contentious issue, as its sensitive nature can stir up emotions simply because it is difficult to discuss influencing your own country at a time when some members of the population are in mortal danger.

So it must be understood that this is an academic exercise rather than the espousing of any particular philosophy or political persuasion. However, I do believe this is an often ignored but important aspect of the present conflict that has been mishandled, and the initiative put into the hands of those that would wish us harm.

So basically I will outline Information and Influence Operations and then ask you to apply these to the situation of Australia’s intervention in Afghanistan.

Information Operations (formally known as Information Warfare)

There are three domains of conflict: Physical, Information and Cognitive. We tend to be familiar with the first one but not so with the other two. Information Operations are mostly concerned with the information and the cognitive aspects of conflict. The protection and manipulation of information and cognition of populations are sources of attention during conflict.

Command and Control rely on information and the soul of a battle is wrapped up in peoples’ cognition of the context of the conflict. How we view the world is determined partly by data received and also our cognition of the context of any particular situation; both are dynamic.

The point of Information Operations is to obtain dominance and superiority in the information and conceptual battle space and to thwart and counteract your enemies if they try to do the same. Technical aspects, as well as human, are involved. The strategies are necessarily both offensive and defensive: although sometimes these seem to merge. An information campaign usually involves all of these aspects; and a good one integrates them so they become seamless.

A great problem is that many of the individual elements are regarded as separate and, in our networked world, this is a fatal error. Information Operations have both an Offensive and a Defensive nature; the spectrum of activities ranges from those in the ‘hard’, technologically based, world (for example, electronic warfare, and computer security) to those associated with ‘softer’ human aspects (for example, psychological warfare and deception).

The Australia Defence Force’s definition of the elements of information operations

- Civil Affairs (CA) – the activities to establish, maintain, influence and exploit relations between the military and civil authorities and population.
- Counter-Intelligence – the task to destroy the effectiveness of enemy intelligence activities and protecting information and associated personnel and equipment from sabotage or subversion.

- Computer Network Operations (CNO) – the use of computer technology to attack, defend and exploit data networks. The three modes are: attack (data is disrupted, denied, degraded or manipulated), defence (the protection of information and equipment from destruction, disruption or denial), and exploitation (the covert exploitation of computer equipment).
- Counter Psychological Operations (Counter propaganda) – attempts to counter the adversary’s psychological operations; defensively it lessens the impacts of the adversary’s message; offensively, it takes advantage of the adversary’s mistakes.
- Counter-deception – efforts to negate or diminish an adversary’s deception.
- Deception – these are measure to mislead by distortion, falsehoods, or data manipulation to gain advantage. It is usually aimed at the adversarial commander.
- Electronic Warfare – is the use of the electromagnetic spectrum; it can be used to attack, protect, or support facilities, equipment or personnel.
- Information Assurance (IA) – the protection of information systems and the associated information (data). It ensures that they are available, have confidentiality (the data is seen by only the approved person or system), integrity (the data have not been corrupted), authenticated (the users and systems have been authenticated), and the data cannot be repudiated (non-repudiation means that both sender and receiver of the data have a mechanism to ensure the data has been received).
- Operations Security (OPSEC) – offensively denies knowledge of your sides capabilities, intentions and dispositions.
- Physical Destruction – is the destruction, degradation or neutralisation of a target by physical attack. Obviously, this is not also associated with information operations.
- Protective Security – includes physical security (controls on access to information) and personnel security (the categorisation of users to ensure classified information is restricted to those who have loyalty).
- Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) – are activities, in peace and war, to influence the attitudes and behaviour of adversaries, allies, and neutrals that will affect the achievement of your objectives.
- Public Affairs (PA) – proactive interaction with the media. To ensure credibility, the information divulged should be truthful and honest.
- Influence Operations: that part of Information Operations that deals with changing attitudes (and hopefully behaviour) in targeted audiences. A US definition from RAND states that Influence Operations are:

“...the coordinated, integrated, and synchronized application of national diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and other capabilities in peacetime, crisis, conflict, and post conflict to foster attitudes, behaviours, or decisions by foreign target audiences that further US interests.”
 [Note, the US definition states that only foreign audiences are involved!]

Therefore, Influence Operations are on the 'soft' end of the Information Operations spectrum, involved with persuading and dissuading enemy, neutral and allied audiences. Influence Operations consist of many elements: psychological operations, civil affairs, public affairs, and cyber-influence (consisting of both conventional passive propaganda and the more interactive Web2 facilities). The Concept of 'Soft Power' (or 'Attractiveness Power') can be included in this grouping. Soft power is normally defined as: the pursuit of a nation to make its values, institutions and culture attractive to others and, hence, boost that nation's stature and reverence.

Of course, Influence Operations are another exercise in the pursuit of power by creating **compliance** in the target audience (often by coercion), **conformity** (using social pressure to produce desired behaviour patterns), or **conversion** (where there is a beneficial [to the 'influencer'] structural change in a person's belief system. Each of these is progressively more difficult to accomplish, but longer lasting if it is achieved.

Luke's in his text *Power – a Radical Approach* (2005) also gives a definition of power that is useful in the Influence Operations context. It splits power into three levels:

- Level 1 – to make a party do something they might not have done previously.
- Level 2 – creates or reinforces values and practices that limit the action of the target.
- Level 3 – perceptions are shaped so that certain options are not even thought about.

Of course arguments to convince and influence people can be **rational** or **emotive** but they should be **credible** to the receiver, as should the **source** of the argument. They should provide as little cognitive dissonance as possible. It can be argued that messages from Western sources have not matched these criteria, often causing the loss of credibility of the source.

Many different techniques are used by propagandists and influencers, such as:

- Taking the moral high ground,
- Stereotyping (positive and negative),
- Appealing to tradition (or modernity),
- Use of slogans,
- Creating simple solutions,
- Vilification or praise,
- Appealing to the emotions, and
- Using scapegoats.

However, with all influence campaigns an iterative set of tasks should be executed:

- Objectives/desired effects should be established
- Target (*e.g. political, military, economic, social, media power*) should be determined
- A Story (*including authors, audience, plot, characters*) should be produced
- Means and medium of message distribution should be established
- Measurements of effects should be determined.

Each one of the above steps can be iterative; and after any measurement of effect, the objectives and consequent actions should be revisited. The effects of many of the actions of Western powers regarding the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and their consequences do not seem to have been thought out. Their subsequent objectives and 'stories' have led to public disquiet about both actions.

Like information propaganda, actions are influential as well and must match messages to be successful in influencing the target. In fact, actions are a form of communication. Here the adage that, politics must have good propaganda and propaganda must have good politics is very relevant.

The Influence campaign on the domestic front

At present it has been reported that between 49 and 60% of the Australian population oppose the actions in Afghanistan. This is surprising, as there seems to have been an acquiescent media and agreement from both major political parties on the correctness of the Afghanistan campaign. The influence operation does not seem to have worked very well.

The main reasons espoused for the presence of Australian troops in Afghanistan are:

- To provide support for our American allies [and United Nations] – ANZUS.
- Because Australians are not 'quitters' and do want to be seen to be.
- To stop the resurgence of terrorist bases.
- To provide regional support, so Pakistan does not disintegrate and cause regional disaster.
- Because the Taliban is an 'evil' force; for example, the treatment of women.

Yet these do not appear to have had much emotional affect on the population as a whole. In Parliament on 19 October 2010, Prime Minister Gillard gave the following reasons in an almost Menzies-like speech:

"...to make sure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe haven for terrorists, a place where attacks on us and our allies begin".

"...to stand firmly by our alliance commitment to the United States, formally invoked following the attacks on New York and Washington in 2001."

"...we went to Afghanistan to make sure it would never again be a safe haven for al-Qaeda."

"We went with our friends and allies, as part of the international community. We went with the support of the United Nations."

"I believe we now have the right strategy."

"The overarching goal of the new strategy is to enable transition, that is, to prepare the government of Afghanistan to take lead responsibility for its own security."

"This means more fighting, more violence, it risks more casualties, and there will be many hard days ahead,"

The speech reiterated the rational government motives that had been given for a number of years, yet did not really satisfy the emotional aspects needed to put the Australian population behind the campaign. On 21 October 2010, Foreign Minister Rudd put a different slant on the same argument, but introduced the often favoured 'fear' element:

"Australians are unaware of the many 'near misses' from terrorist attacks, and a premature withdrawal from Afghanistan will only increase the threat"

In this warning, he had put the number of 9/11-style terrorist attacks by Islamic extremists around the world at about 18,000. He indicated that many of the people who had carried these out had been trained in Afghanistan. There was no indication of when, or how many, or if they had been trained before the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

There are a number of reasons why government messages are not being successful. I can posit a number of them:

- Public mistrust, for example media leaks (such as Wikileaks), have exposed some mistakes in Afghanistan and anti-war messages continue (of course, there is always the shadow of Iraq and the many public relations mistakes made there).
- Government strategy over the last few years has been low key. Media reports showed little contentious content.
- This is an Internet age and anti-war propaganda is more appealing than official versions
- Propaganda effort put into rallying support for troops has been poor.

In the UK where opposition to the war is more open and widespread, some effort has been made to reverse this with a campaign the subtext of which is: "Opposition to war is disloyal to our troops." The overall theme is to welcome "Our Heroes Home". It can be found in such places as shop windows and is an attempt to use emotion based on tribal loyalty, which is usually quite successful.

Picture 1 below gives an example of this sort of campaign to bring the public behind the campaign in Afghanistan via their loyalty to troops. It shows a newspaper report of the 'coming home' parade for the Rifles Regiment. These events (almost victory parades) not only allow the population identify with the young soldiers, but make opposing their mission seem almost traitorous (opposing the tribe). These 'Heroes' posters are spread throughout the city; they are displayed in charity collections for wounded returned soldiers and also in the media.



Picture 1: Welcome home parade on the front page of a local paper in the UK (September, 2010)

In opposition to events like this are media messages that show the real consequences of war and that bring in emotional feelings, especially when innocent children are involved. These allow the creation of doubt as the mission does not seem to have many strongly held beliefs that support being in Afghanistan. Reports such as these cause dissonance between the accepted myth of a compassionate nation, with the stark reality of unexplained geopolitical strategy.

For instance this was reported by the BBC on 22 February 2010:

Air strike kills Afghan civilians

At least 27 civilians died in a NATO air strike in southern Afghanistan, the Afghan cabinet says, revising downwards a prior statement that 33 were killed.

NATO said it hit a suspected insurgent convoy, but ground forces later found “a number of individuals killed and wounded”, including women and children.

Sunday’s attack, in Uruzgan province, was not part of a major NATO-led push in neighbouring Helmand province.

Civilian deaths in strikes have caused widespread resentment in Afghanistan.

This sort of disquieting report can only serve to cause some doubt, as the population is not immediately threatened and there has been little government propaganda to allay that disquiet.

Possible answers

Some possible ways of influencing the domestic population and taking the initiative away from the pro-Taliban influence campaigns, could involve aggressive and innovative use of the cyber-world, especially Web2 based social media and games, where other actors are seeking influence by using applications like Twitter and Facebook. The main vehicle for video-like propaganda is You Tube, where messages can be posted and watched. A campaign to comment negatively on Taliban posts would be a start. Others, using the added persuasive power of mobile devices, could give extra power to a suitably designed campaign.

Government reasons for the Afghanistan campaign should be clearly exposed. Suspicions of ulterior motives (such as the potential exploitation of mineral wealth in Afghanistan) should be addressed and confronted. If there is a realpolitik reason for the continued occupation, then stories wrapped around it will make the actions credible and show a rationale. The population realises the need for action to maintain strategic materials, this can be ascertained from the retaking of Kuwait in 1991, which was mainly supported. At that time the ‘stories’ and control of the media were significant.

Other possible but more offensive and contentious tactics might be:

- Internet/media campaigns to promote the West.
- Self-analysis of our previous actions and assumptions.
- Seeking support from local Muslim leaders.
- Encouraging a more moderate interpretation of jihad.
- Malign or ridicule radical Islamic ideas. Propaganda has always used ridicule but it must be used cautiously in this networked and sensitive world.
- Sell the benefits of Western ideas and institutions.
- Encourage domestic unity of purpose (possible in a pluralist and relativistic society?).
- Attempt to split the opposition.

Whatever the answer, there has been little effort put into a domestic influence campaign in Australia. It is perhaps timely to think of one.

Winning 'the War of Hearts and Minds': Public Perception in Afghanistan and the Middle East



Presenter: Dr Anne Aly
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In the context of today's discussions, I would like to focus my presentation on some of the questions that have emerged during the course of the day. Specifically: support for the Taliban in Afghanistan and beyond; counter propaganda; what the Western world can do better, both on the home-front and abroad; and how we might engage local communities in ways that are meaningful and relevant, to influence public perception and ultimately win support for countering the terrorist cause.

There is a plethora of literature and expert analysis that discusses whether or not terrorism is effective. Contemporary terrorism and, most notably, militant Islamist terrorism, is often described as 'a war for hearts and minds'. However, we must recognise that terrorism also has strategic and/or material goals. Strategic or long term political goals are rarely achieved to their full extent. However, there is some argument that the anti-colonial wave of terrorism was highly successful and that Palestinian terrorism has indeed achieved a measure of success in international recognition of the Palestinian State. Material goals, such as money, are much more immediate and therefore it is easier to assess their success.

Whether or not terrorist organisations achieve their strategic or material goals, terrorism is successful if it is able to instill fear in the target population and mobilise material or moral support for its cause. Both of these objectives involve influencing mass audiences in different ways by using propaganda. Terrorism has been described as 'propaganda by the deed', meaning that the act of violence perpetrated by terrorists is the principal means of communicating their message.

Originally, propaganda was not considered to be negative and referred to the propagation of religious faith. During the First World War, United States president, Woodrow Wilson, employed propaganda to influence public opinion in favour of the war. In Nazi Germany, The Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda effectively used propaganda to win national support for Nazi policies by demonising Jews and other minorities.

Since the use of political propaganda during WWI, propaganda has played a central role in conflicts. It has been used to gain public support for participation in wars and to demonise enemies of the State.

Ultimately, the use of violence by terrorists is a propaganda tool, used to influence a population in two ways: by inspiring fear either through the terrorist act itself or through provoking counter actions by governments that magnify and perpetuate terrorism as a looming threat.

Modern terrorist organisations incorporate psychological warfare strategies into their operations. They study the media to find the most effective way of communicating their threats or manipulating public attitudes towards government actions. One senior member of Al Qaeda has been quoted as saying 'Sheikh Osama knows that the media war is no less important than the military war against America. That's why Al Qaeda has many media wars. The Sheikh has made Al Qaeda's media strategy something that all TV stations look for.'⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾Schuster, H (2005), Al Qaeda's Media Strategy, In Greenberg, K.J. (Ed), Al Qaeda Now, New York: Cambridge University Press, 117

In his video messages broadcast on the internet and through media outlets, Osama bin Laden addresses the American people, often referencing the United States government's support for Israel as putting the American people at risk of further terrorist attacks. Boaz Ganor succinctly summarised how terrorists use psychological warfare tactics when he wrote:

The terror organisation knows from the outset that it will not achieve its goals purely by means of terror attacks. It must enlist the help of its victims themselves in gaining its objectives. A victory that would be impossible by military means is thus brought within reach through a protracted, gnawing campaign of psychological warfare—a war of attrition that gradually erodes the target population's will to fight and turns the tables against the stronger power.⁽²⁾

Apart from the victim population, terrorists also seek to influence potential supporters, sympathisers and recruits, through the use of psychological warfare. Terrorists strategically use violence as a way of forcing governments to retaliate with severe counter-terrorism responses which, in turn allows the terrorists to gain support from the audiences they claim to represent.

Scholars have argued, for instance, that the Irish Catholics successfully used guerrilla tactics to provoke the British government into responding in ways that collectively punished the entire population for the actions of the IRA and ultimately boosted its cause. In the 1960s, the ETA used a similar strategy of attacking Spanish targets to provoke the government into introducing measures of collective repression. The same dilemma now exists in Iraq, where the foreign military presence risks mobilising mass support for terrorists in the region. Australian troops on peace-keeping missions in East Timor are in a similar quandary.⁽³⁾

Turning now to Afghanistan, in at least the initial stages, the negative view of the US and coalition forces, was mainly due to lack of knowledge about the reasons for their presence. Taliban and Al-Qaeda propaganda also sought to perpetuate the perception that the attacks were against Islam, drawing on a historical legacy of ambivalence between the West and the East in the region.

The goal of the Taliban government and the Al-Qaida network was to gain the support of the Afghan population, mould the political will of the people, and to promote hatred and resistance towards any Western efforts in Afghanistan. Psychological Operations or PSYOPs were used as a counter measure to reach the local population, through the distribution of food and messages in the form of leaflets and broadcasts. These efforts were designed to demonstrate to the Afghans that the United States was not engaged in a battle against Islam but against terrorism.

The Afghanistan leaflets campaign (2001) focused on two objectives:

1. To counter the negative view of the coalition forces among the local population
2. To counter Taliban and Al Qaeda propaganda

The leaflets used in the campaign had four different but related focuses:

1. Target public support for the Taliban (including reward posters)
2. Target the 'enemy'- defined as Taliban fighters / Al Qaeda
3. Target public perception of the US and coalition forces and their actions
4. Educate and inform the local population (with a secondary purpose of improving the public perception of the US).

⁽²⁾Ganor, Boaz (2002), *Terror as a Strategy of Psychological Warfare*, <http://212.150.54.123/articles/articledet.cfm?articleid=443>

⁽³⁾Ethan Buena de Mesquita and Eric S. Dickson (2007) *The Propaganda of the Deed: Terrorism, Counterterrorism, and Mobilization*, *American Journal of Political Science*, 51 (2), 364-381

These four elements were achieved through the distribution of leaflets that combined powerful images and key messages. One leaflet called for the local population to “drive out the foreign terrorists”. This leaflet clearly identifies foreign (mainly Arab) fighters as terrorists and may bolster attempts to fracture the Taliban along potential fault lines of ethnic, religious or political agendas.

Another message used in the leaflet campaign sought to eradicate public support for terrorism by portraying terrorists as enemies of the Afghan people. One leaflet, for example, uses an image of Osama bin Laden and Taliban leaders and states: “Terrorists are the people who do not care about your family or your life; they are traitors. Why do you let these people take your brothers away to fight when they do not know why they are fighting or what they are fighting for?”

Another full colour leaflet targeted public perception of the United States and sought to address the terrorists’ propaganda that the West was engaged in a war against Islam. This leaflet featured images of American Muslims worshipping in American Mosques. It states “Muslims in the United States worship freely. There are more than 7 million Muslims and 1200 mosques in the US.”

Other leaflets portrayed the coalition as friends of the local population: “The coalition of the United Nations is here to help”, and called on the local population to support the rebuilding of Afghanistan.

The Afghanistan leaflet campaign is just one example of the use of PSYOPS in conflicted areas. However, with the internationalisation of terrorism and the growth of diasporic communities in multicultural countries like Australia, countering terrorism also necessitates the use of strategies to influence public perception among the homegrown population.

Increasingly, governments are using principles borrowed from marketing and social marketing to devise campaigns designed to influence public opinion and attitudes towards terrorism. Social marketing is the application of marketing principles to social issues, to encourage positive behavioural change or discourage negative behaviour.

Recently, social marketing has also been applied to the development of campaigns targeting public support for terrorism. Interestingly, these campaigns have been initiated by governments in countries like Iraq, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Perception campaigns in the Middle East fall under four categories, each with a specific goal:

1. Target public support for terrorism
2. Target public perception of the United States
3. Target public perception of terrorist ideologies
4. Target nationalist/loyalist traditions.

These four categories combine secular and religious messages according to the context. Saudi Arabia’s anti-terrorism messages, for example, draw on a long tradition of loyalty to the ruling monarch as a basis for encouraging the population to resist terrorism.

The ‘Say No to Terror’ campaign includes websites, videos, print advertisements and a blog (all in Arabic). The print advertisements are freely available to download and focus primarily on public support by portraying the destructive nature of terrorism. One poster in Arabic states “Terrorism, I am Muslim and I am against it.” ⁽⁴⁾

⁽⁴⁾<http://www.saynototerror.me>

“Yeh Hum Naheen”: Say no to Terrorism, began as a musical event featuring some of Pakistan’s biggest music artists in a music video that imitated Western produced music videos, such as “We are the World”. The ongoing campaign features posters and print advertisements, as well as a website dedicated to eradicating public support for terrorism through an emotional appeal. The print advertisements feature emotional images of suffering and ask questions such as “Are we the ones who are destroying our own future?”; “Are we the ones who deprive mothers of their children?”; and “Are we the ones who deprive children of their father’s affection?”⁽⁵⁾

Based on a view of the struggle against violent extremism as a war of ideas that centres on the legitimacy of authority, Saudi Arabia’s anti-terrorism campaign stresses loyalty, recognition of authority and obedience to leadership. The campaign centres on the message that the use of violence within the Kingdom is not permissible and only legitimate authorities can authorise Jihad. It is a message that works within Saudi Arabia: a Muslim monarchy and the seat of Wahhabism.

According to Saudi Arabian sources, their ‘soft approach’, which includes a de-radicalisation counseling program for prisoners, is highly successful. Around 3,000 prisoners have participated in portions of the counseling program, and about 1,400 of them have renounced their former beliefs and been released.⁽⁶⁾

What constitutes a successful counter-terrorism campaign and how can success be measured? There is actually very little in the way of research to draw any real conclusions about the short and long term effectiveness of psychological operations and communication campaigns that aim to influence public opinion (and ultimately public behaviours). To begin we might propose that certain criteria need to be incorporated in the development of anti-terrorism messages, informed by careful consideration of the target audience and the context:

1. Authenticity - the message must be authentic and sincere. This requires knowledge and understanding of the world views of the target population and their constructs of terrorism and violence.
2. Cultural and contextual relevance - the message must work for the context. The Saudi Arabian approach requires a central and stable authority, and public support for authority- factors that are lacking in Afghanistan and Iraq. Images of violence that are designed to affect emotion and depict the destructive nature of terrorism will be less effective in combat zones where violence is an everyday experience.
3. Credible sources and mediums - the message must be delivered by a trusted source. Research can cultivate an understanding of pathways of influence and inform the development of campaigns that are effective in reaching the target audience.
4. Transparency of the message - the motivations and sources must be clear, so that it is not perceived to be an attempt at ‘brainwashing’ the public.

To conclude, public support for terrorism is the most pressing issue that is facing governments and the international community today. Today’s terrorists are media savvy, technologically adept and fully cognisant of the power of public support for their cause. Unfortunately, countries like Australia and the United Kingdom lag behind, without a dedicated communication strategy that targets public perception of terrorism and support for the terrorist cause. However, recent events, such as the arrest and subsequent sentencing of an Australian man for publishing terrorist content on the internet, have highlighted the need for a strategy that engages the terrorists’ audience, de-legitimises the terrorist cause and counters the terrorist propaganda.

Social change is a long-term and tedious process that requires continual reinforcement and constant monitoring. Campaigns that aim for social change need to be relevant to the context, credible and authentic- we need to know our target audience, their world views and how they are influenced, before we can begin to change their perceptions.

⁽⁵⁾http://www.yehhumnaheen.org/cc.php?finalpage_os=index.php

⁽⁶⁾Boucek, C 2008, Saudi Arabia’s ‘Soft’ Counterterrorism Strategy: Prevention, Rehabilitation and Aftercare, Carnegie Papers, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Beyond the 4th Brigade: An Examination of Australia's 'Exit Strategy' in Afghanistan



Presenter: Raspal Khosa
Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI)

Security transition underpins the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) 'exit strategy' in Afghanistan. Transition is the process by which the international community will enable the Afghan government to take full responsibility for its own country. Besides security, transition is also contingent on governance and development. Transition is determined by conditions on the ground and not by the calendar. Nor does it signify ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan, but its gradual shift to a supporting role. The NATO summit in Lisbon, Portugal on 19-20 November 2010, will 'pave the way' for a detailed transition to an Afghan government lead.

In Afghanistan, Australia is a 'strategy taker' rather than a 'strategy maker'. Significantly, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is committed to the strategic main effort of the ISAF campaign, which consists of expanding the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) to lead and conduct security operations across Afghanistan by December 2014. However, the coalition's governance and development lines of operation are more difficult to implement in the overall plan to stabilise Afghanistan. This presentation will examine how the Australian Government is managing the transition of security to the Afghan Government in our national area of responsibility—Uruzgan Province in southern Afghanistan while building capacity for improved governance and long term socio-economic growth.

Australia's strategic objectives in Afghanistan

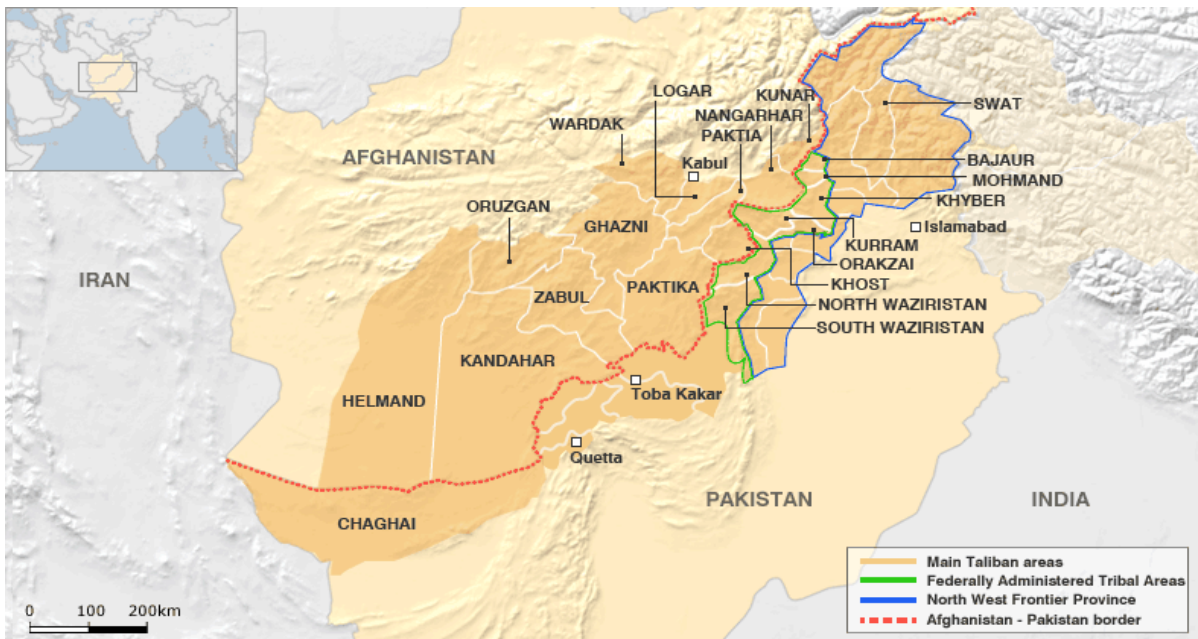
Prime Minister Julia Gillard's statement to the House of Representatives last week was a strong affirmation of the Labor government's grand strategic rationale for Australia's \$6.1 billion Operation Slipper military commitment in Afghanistan, and the strategic imperatives that will keep us engaged in that country 'in some form for a decade at least'.

Denying a sanctuary to transnational Islamist terrorists that threaten Australian citizens was offered by Gillard as one of two fundamental issues at stake for Australia in Afghanistan. The other is the Alliance commitment to the United States under the ANZUS treaty, which was formally invoked following the September 11, 2001, al-Qaeda terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Arguably, a third major strategic interest behind Australia's involvement in Afghanistan, is a commitment to upholding global security and a rules-based international order—ISAF is a 'coalition of the willing' operating under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter and with a Security Council mandate that was renewed unanimously last month.

It was the erstwhile Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, who recast Australia's mission in Afghanistan in April 2009, in line with the core US strategic goal 'to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Afghanistan and Pakistan'.⁽ⁱ⁾

Three elements outlined by Rudd still underpin the Australian government's support for the Afghanistan war. First, is strategic denial of the country as a training ground and operating base for the al-Qaeda network and other terrorist organisations. Second, is stabilisation of the Afghan state through combined civil and military efforts to consolidate the primary interest of strategic denial. Third, is providing military, police and civil government training in concert with coalition partners, to hand over the responsibility for Uruzgan Province to Afghan authorities within a reasonable timeframe. Successful implementation of the third element of the mission creates the basis of an 'exit strategy' for Australian forces.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾



Fielding the 4th Brigade

This new strategy demanded a well resourced effort to train Afghan soldiers and police, where the best measure of success is to make Australia’s own forces redundant. Consequently, the government increased troop numbers from 1,090 to a new authorised ceiling of 1,550 ADF personnel in-country (I will say more about the role of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) later). The operational goal of sending the extra military forces to Afghanistan was to raise the effectiveness of an ANA infantry brigade, so it can assume primary responsibility for security in Uruzgan Province, thereby creating the conditions for the withdrawal of the ADF over the medium-term.

The main focus of the ADF mission in Afghanistan is now narrowly defined by government as training and mentoring the Uruzgan-based 4th Brigade of the ANA’s 205th ‘Atal’ (Hero) Corps, which is located in ISAF’s RC-South (that also takes in the adjacent provinces of Kandahar, Zabul and Daykundi). Australia has the primary responsibility for mentoring the 4th Brigade’s headquarters and all five of its constituent kandaks (units): 3 rifle kandaks, 1 combat support and 1 combat service support. This task was previously shared with Dutch and French coalition partners. Around 720 soldiers in the ADF’s 2nd Mentoring Task Force (MTF-2) are now committed to this activity, using the ISAF Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) methodology.

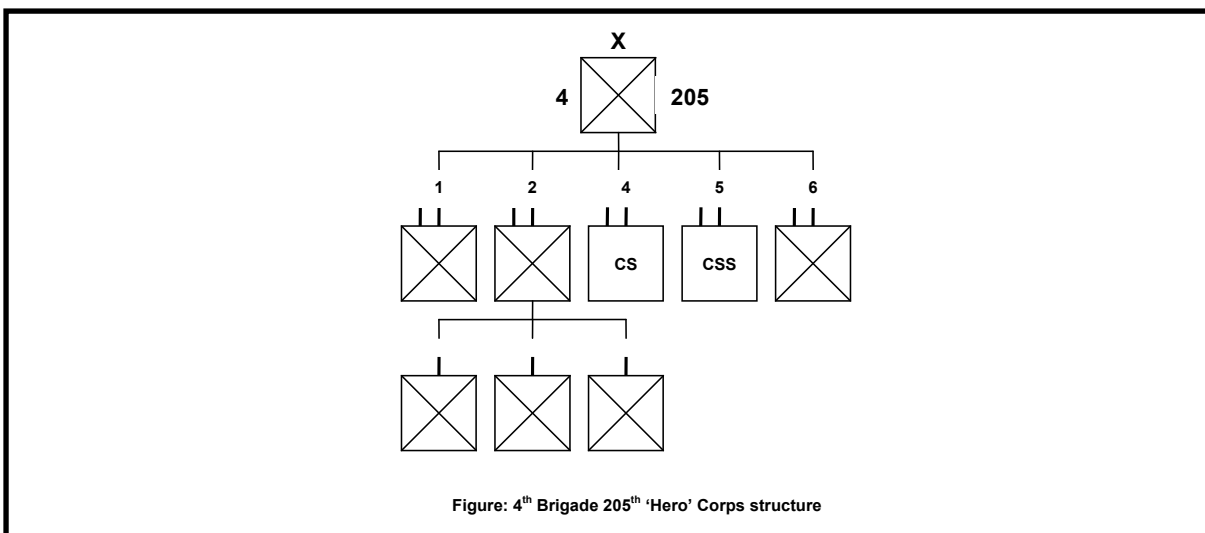


Figure: 4th Brigade 205th ‘Hero’ Corps structure

Raising the effectiveness of 4th Brigade is a slow and painstaking enterprise. On advice from the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, the Australian Government has assessed that the ADF training mission will need between two and four years before Australia can begin a conditions-based transfer of the main responsibility for security in Uruzgan to the Afghan Government. Following this, the CDF has indicated that our troops will assume an 'overwatch' role. What this entails has not been clarified, but it may take the form of a quick reaction force.

A range of variables affect the pace and intensity of the ADF training mission and extend operational timeframes —not the least of these is simultaneously conducting combat and combat support operations amidst a dangerous insurgency.

Since 2002, 21 ADF personnel have been killed and 156 wounded while serving in Afghanistan. Most of these casualties have occurred in Uruzgan. It is one of Afghanistan's most insecure provinces and is likely to become a more hostile operating environment for the ADF over the next year. The deployment of US combat brigades to southern Afghanistan as a result of the coalition force uplift (otherwise known as Obama's 'surge'), may result in displacement of insurgents into Uruzgan from adjacent provinces.

Uruzgan occupies a unique position at the 'hinge' of RC-South and RC-East, providing a natural infiltration route between these coalition commands for the Taliban, who are known to traverse the 22,700 sq km province.

Uruzgan belongs tribally and culturally to Afghanistan's southern region. The province's population of 320,000 is overwhelmingly Pushtun (91%), with a small Hazara minority (8%).

Uruzgan's rugged, mostly desiccated topography, is interspersed with 'green zones' along its river valleys. It has afforded the Taliban an internal safe haven from coalition operations in the past. The Province's more remote districts, which lack a permanent ISAF presence, are dominated by the insurgency.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ Besides offering sanctuary, Uruzgan also provides a source of capital to the Taliban through the opium trade, which has 7,337 hectares of the province's arable land under poppy cultivation.^(iv)

The ethnic composition of the 4th Brigade and the ANA in general, is an enduring concern for the coalition. Afghanistan is a deeply ethnically-riven society; it remains questionable whether soldiers from non-Pushtun communities can provide a vital link to the population of Uruzgan, to establish trust and communication and gather intelligence on insurgents.

Developing an ethnically-balanced ANA that is a manifestation of the Afghan state, is one of the key goals of the NATO Training Mission —Afghanistan (NTM-A) the coalition body responsible for generating and sustaining the ANSF. However, there is still an over-representation of Tajiks from northern Afghanistan in the officer and non-commissioned officer categories. While the percentage of the majority Pushtun community in the ANA is more-or-less coincident with their proportion of the Afghan community, there is still a paucity of recruits from this ethnic group joining the ANA from Taliban heartland areas in southern Afghanistan.^(v)

Other manpower challenges lie ahead for the coalition efforts in building a self-sustaining ANSF. This includes losses from attrition as a result of desertions, deaths or low retention; they pose the greatest threat to both quantity and quality of the ANSF. For example, based on the attrition rates as at August 2010, to expand the ANSF by the additional 56,000 needed to meet the 2011 goal of 305,000, the authorities will need to recruit and train 141,000 soldiers and police. To put this into context, to meet the 2011 goal, NTM-A will need to recruit and train in the next year approximately the same number of soldiers as make up the total strength today.

MTF-2 must also deal with widespread illiteracy among Afghan soldiers, which presents a particular challenge to professionalism within the ANA (14% literacy across the whole ANSF). This is especially pronounced in training 4th Brigade personnel in the more technically demanding combat support skills.

Equipment is also a problematic area in building the ANA. NTM-A is in the process of re-equipping the ANA with NATO standard weapon systems. The ANA currently makes extensive use of donated Soviet-style equipment, which has made it harder for Western military personnel to train Afghan soldiers. Coalition personnel lack experience with these weapons, which are often in poor condition or obsolete. In particular, the second ADF OMLT must instruct the 4th Brigade's combat support kandak in the use of former Warsaw Pact D-30 122mm howitzers.

Another challenge for the 4th Brigade and other ANA formations is the combat service support role. This is a major weakness in the ANA, which is heavily reliant on embedded coalition forces to fulfill functions, including: signals, maintenance, transport, logistics and catering capabilities.

But perhaps the greatest hurdle in building the ANSF is how the Afghan government will pay the costs of a security force that is authorised to reach 305,000 personnel by 2011. Afghanistan will, for the foreseeable future, be almost completely reliant on budgetary assistance from the international community.

Besides developing local security forces as the means to hold ground, the ADF also works to establish security in Afghanistan by degrading insurgent capacity through kinetic military operations, carried out by the ADF Special Operations Task Group (known as TF66). Transition, however, is dependent not only on the application of military capability, but also on increased civilian capacity and aid delivery. As a result, the ADF will need to provide increased support to civilians from Australian Government agencies, coalition states and implementation partners, involved in strengthening governance in Uruzgan and helping to build the provincial economy for the next few years.

I will now address the governance and development lines of operation largely neglected in the current debate.

Continuity and change in Uruzgan

Prime Minister Gillard made the point in her Parliamentary statement that 'our mission in Afghanistan is not nation building'. This echoes President Obama's remarks in his December 2009 address at the US military academy at West Point (where he announced a 'surge' of extra 30,000 troops), that America's commitment in Afghanistan cannot be open-ended - because the nation that he is most interested in building is the United States.^(vi) This plays to a domestic constituency apprehensive at becoming mired in a decades-long conflict. While it is correct that nation building should be a generational task for the Afghans themselves, Australian civilian agencies are nonetheless responsible for facilitating improvements in governance and socio-economic development in Uruzgan. The question that must be asked is whether the Australian Government has the wherewithal to undertake these functions.

On 1 August 2010, the command of the erstwhile Task Force Uruzgan (TFU) was transferred from the Netherlands to the multinational Combined Team-Uruzgan (CTU); in which ADF personnel now comprise the greater number of the total strength. In addition to more onerous SSR activity (that I have already discussed), the full implications of Australia's new responsibility for leading the Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), within CTU, are still being realised. Indeed, Australia's whole-of-government response to meeting the challenges posed by the Dutch departure is very much a work-in-progress.

The new arrangements in Uruzgan arose as a consequence of a decision taken by the Netherlands parliament in late 2007, to end its military commitment in Afghanistan. An attempt to extend the deployment beyond its July 2010 deadline, following a request from NATO, precipitated a domestic political crisis in the Netherlands. The crisis led to the collapse of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende's coalition government in February this year. The pull-out of the 1,950 strong Dutch contingent marks the most significant withdrawal of personnel to date by a major ISAF troop contributor and NATO member in the nine year war.

Dutch forces employed population-focused techniques, which were held up as a model for other ISAF members. The Dutch approach to COIN was centred on the, so-called, '3-D' strategy, of: defence, diplomacy and development. The mission was essentially civil-military in nature and involved integrated military, political and economic elements. Under this methodology, the Netherlands stressed 'reconstruction where possible and military action where necessary'. This stabilisation and support mission aimed at transferring responsibility for the province to the Afghan government.

The process involved combating the Taliban-dominated insurgency and building up local security forces (ANSF), while at the same time reaching out to Pushtun tribes and establishing development programs. During the four-year period the Dutch were deployed in Uruzgan, the number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) assisting the local population rose from six to 50, as security steadily improved. The result was better healthcare, education, commerce and infrastructure—much of this was achieved in close partnership with Australia.

The US now leads coalition forces in Uruzgan under an ISAF flag. The new organisation is only three months old and it remains to be seen whether CTU has the capacity to continue the 3-D approach. Nevertheless, its US Army commander, Colonel James Creighton, has stated that the Dutch effort won't be wasted. Indeed, he regards it as his mission to 'maintain what the Dutch have done and build on it if possible'.^(vii) This suggests a continuation of the 3-D strategy within Uruzgan but perhaps with a greater emphasis on security over development.

CTU is designed as an integrated outfit and has a multinational headquarters. Of the senior positions in the command structure, Australian civilian and military officials fill those of Senior Civilian Coordinator Uruzgan PRT, Deputy Commander CTU and Commander Multinational Base Tarin Kowt. All told, CTU comprises around 1,800 military personnel drawn mainly from Australia and the United States, but also includes smaller contingents from Slovakia, Singapore and New Zealand.

A Comprehensive Approach

The concept of operations for the Australian Government in Uruzgan is consistent with the ISAF strategy that calls for a 'comprehensive approach'. Although there's much evidence to suggest that the ADF and civilian agencies are moving towards adopting this methodology, they are yet to embrace a genuinely integrated civil-military commitment in Afghanistan. But what exactly is the comprehensive approach? The pursuit of a 3-D style strategy lies at its heart, but it also entails a move beyond Australian integration, to see us working closely with coalition partners, the Afghan Government, multilateral bodies and the NGO community in support of our mission in Afghanistan.

The operating environment in Uruzgan comprises the overlapping domains of: the host nation, joint ADF and combined ISAF, Australian and US whole-of-government efforts, international agencies and the NGOs. All are negotiating a complex human and physical terrain amid an adaptive insurgency. Success in these challenging circumstances requires the development of shared attitudes, values, practices and goals, that transcend and integrate individual entities into a consolidated whole. We still have some way to go in achieving this.

As a start, Australian Government agencies may require improved interagency planning and training—both key enablers of the comprehensive approach in the way they expect to operate in the field. The ADF and the main agencies it must work with in the theatre of operations—the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP)—all have differing perspectives on security challenges and methods of operation. The aim, ultimately, should be to develop a common understanding of issues likely to be encountered in Afghanistan.

The task in Afghanistan highlights the need to increase the ability of Australia's civilian agencies to deploy overseas, by instilling in them 'expeditionary mindsets'. This means that civilian staff must train and exercise with the ADF so that they can work effectively in insecure environments like Uruzgan. But it might also require some reshaping of existing approaches to civil-military cooperation.


Defence currently has the lead for whole-of-government pre-deployment training, which creates a problem of 'scale' for the much smaller civilian agencies. They don't have large pools of deployable people and are hard pressed to release key staff for ADF exercises, which can run over several weeks. Defence, therefore, may need to adjust its force preparation processes and be more adaptive to the needs of its partner agencies. Notably, the AFP conducts its own United Nations-endorsed predeployment training, at its International Deployment Group facility at Majura in the Australian Capital Territory, but also participates in ADF mission rehearsals. Given the problems of departmental asymmetry, the Australian Government should perhaps consider a role for a dedicated inter-agency staffed organisation to develop tailored training solutions for Australia's commitment in Afghanistan.

Significantly, personnel preparing for overseas deployment must have a practical appreciation of the policy context in which they'll be operating. Pre-deployment training should also familiarise course members with the history, tribal dynamics, cultural practices, social mores, religious observances and value systems of Afghanistan. More specialised training could look at the Afghan legal system, shari'a and customary law, and local patterns of land tenure in Uruzgan.

Uruzgan Provincial Reconstruction Team

Australia has assumed the lead of the Uruzgan PRT and it is now headed by a senior civilian official from DFAT (Mr Bernard Phillip). It is among the largest of 27 similar teams currently operating throughout Afghanistan. It combines around 60 civilians from Australia and the United States, with a 60 strong ADF force element incorporating Army Engineers and a Combat Team for organic force protection. The command structure of the PRT has multiple national and coalition lines of accountability. The integration of civilians from a number of agencies into the Uruzgan PRT is a highly effective force multiplier. Civilians bring expertise, focus and specialised capability to the stabilisation mission and may contribute to reducing the duration of the military deployment.

PRTs are, by definition, a civil-military cooperative effort. It is worthwhile examining how the Australian-led hybrid body will carry out its major roles in Uruzgan in line with the three pillars of the Afghan National Development Strategy—security, governance and development. These include: fostering security and stability, extending the reach of the Afghan government, and rebuilding physical infrastructure. Through the PRT methodology, ISAF plays a supporting role in the extension of governance and socio-economic growth in Afghanistan, which must be an Afghan government-led process. The challenge for CTU is how to promote local authorities as a legitimate alternative to the Taliban. The focus must be on confidence building between the local population and the Afghan government.



The establishment of effective governance is critical to improving development and security. DFAT officers in the PRT work with the central and provincial government, and will deal with other credible actors present in Uruzgan. Their approach should be to mitigate the influence of local power brokers to balance the province's competing Pushtun tribes and prevent disgruntled communities from joining the insurgency.

The dilemma for Australian officials is they have little option but to deal with so-called 'malign actors' that occupy a power vacuum in Uruzgan. CTU, however, must avoid being used by tribal power brokers to consolidate their hold over the province. One controversial figure is Matiullah Khan a sometime chief of the now defunct Afghan Highway Police in Uruzgan (and a member of the dominant Popalzai Durrani tribe), whom US and Australian authorities have in the past referred to as a 'security provider'. Building a deep understanding of Uruzgan's complex social dynamics should now be a priority for CTU.

Development challenges must also be properly diagnosed through 'do no harm methodologies' before applying policy prescriptions that may otherwise exacerbate existing disputes. AusAID has undertaken a comprehensive needs assessment for Uruzgan.

AusAID's development assistance is aimed at strengthening the capacity of Afghan institutions to govern more effectively and to provide basic services for local people. Capable civil servants in Afghan government line ministries are vital to increasing and improving capacity for service delivery at the national and sub-national levels of governance. The focus is on improving literacy and numeracy, and supplementing the meager salaries of government employees.

To properly fund the activity of the PRT, the Australian government will increase the percentage of its \$123 million (2010-11) Official Development Assistance (ODA) for Afghanistan disbursed in Uruzgan from 9% to 20%. The government is also committed to channeling 50% of ODA (\$740 million to date) through Afghan government programs, in line with undertakings made at the January 2010 International Conference on Afghanistan (the London Conference), provided necessary accountability measures and reforms are in place.

Although they are nominally included in the overall number of Australian Government civilian staff in Uruzgan, AFP officers are not integrated into the PRT structure. In many ways the police capacity building activity they are engaged in, is regarded as the Achilles Heel of CTU.

As is the case elsewhere in Afghanistan, the ANP is widely perceived as an incompetent and corrupt entity, that more often than not serves sectional interests at the expense of the general community. Added to this, there is an absence of established rule of law in Uruzgan, with insurgents engaged in a violent competition in governance with the Afghan state. Furthermore, two separate, but related, law enforcement institutions—the judiciary and correctional services are largely absent in Uruzgan. In these circumstances it is extraordinarily difficult for a civil police force like the AFP to reform the ANP.

For their part, AFP officers are not trained, equipped or organised as a paramilitary force and have little place in war fighting. As a result, the 28 strong AFP contingent is restricted to training local police at the Police Training Centre within the confines of MBTK. The AFP received \$32 million in funding over two years to run this facility, which has so far graduated over 700 local police officers. But creating a police force is not simply a numbers game. One solution to improving the quality of police is to use Australian Military Police to staff Police Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (POMLTs). However, this would require increasing the permanent strength of the Australian Army Military Police Battalion.

Leveraging our national expertise

The need to promote Afghanistan's economic growth was highlighted at the London Conference. Strong attention must be paid to developing the country's agricultural base, which is the major source of income for most of the Afghan population. It's here that Australia can leverage its national expertise to assist in rehabilitating Afghanistan's historically strong licit agricultural sector. This will generate long-term employment and help to foster economic growth and political stability. Extending agricultural assistance to farmers may also assist the Afghan Government counter-narcotics strategy, by helping farmers in opium-growing districts to transition to alternative crops, thereby interdicting the nexus between narco-trafficking and the insurgency.

Uruzgan's economy is heavily dependent on agriculture based on surface water. Under the Dutch, TFU facilitated various projects and programs in local agriculture within its secure development zones. It's hoped that Dutch funding and oversight of major projects, such as the construction of roads in Uruzgan, will continue after December 2010, but that is not certain. Thus, it's important that CTU moves to assume responsibility for the type of infrastructure development that underpins efforts to improve security in the province and build the local economy. A good-quality road transport network is vital in delivering Uruzgan's agricultural goods to markets, both within Afghanistan and in the wider region. The province's highly prized almond crop, for example, is now accessible to a burgeoning market in India as a result of a transit trade agreement signed by Afghan and Pakistani authorities in July 2010.

There is also potential for improving irrigation, as well as hydro-electric power generation, in Uruzgan through the construction of dams. The drought-prone province's main watercourses flow south-west and coalesce at Deh Rawod district, where they join the Helmand River. A number of sites in Uruzgan's various districts have previously been identified for dam construction. However, ensuring water security, and meeting local energy needs, requires substantial resources and a secure environment. The associated irrigation canals and electricity transmission grid are vulnerable to disruption by insurgents.

One notable area of economic opportunity is the mining sector. Afghanistan has abundant mineral resources, but they haven't been developed much beyond artisanal and small-scale mining; nor have they been studied using modern mineral resource assessment methodologies. Uruzgan's minerals include: tin, tungsten and fluorite deposits, and there are coal mines in the Khas Uruzgan district. Further study of the province's mineralised areas is clearly warranted. The Australian Government could investigate the possibility of commissioning a geological survey, with a view to assisting Afghan authorities to establish future extractive industries in the province. Needless to say, this type of resource exploitation is a longer-term proposition that will require significant external investment in building the supporting infrastructure and skills sets.

Conclusion

Afghan ownership is the exit strategy, but this may take over a decade. And in many ways building a self-sustaining ANSF is transition, although Coalition forces will continue to provide key enablers and maintain overwatch for some time to come. However, while improving security is an important first step, progress toward overall transition to an Afghan government lead cannot be sustained without parallel improvements in governance and development. A comprehensive approach that addresses all three lines of operation through a properly resourced 3-D type strategy is crucial to the eventual success of Australia's whole-of-government mission in Afghanistan.

⁽ⁱ⁾White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on US Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, p 1, available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf

⁽ⁱⁱ⁾http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2009/interview_0938.cfm

⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾'The Dutch model', *The Economist*, 12 March 2009

^(iv)United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010: Summary Findings September 2010*, p 36, available at http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afg_opium_survey_2010_exsum_web.pdf

^(v)Obaid Younossi et al., *The Long March: Building an Afghan National Army* (RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 2009), pp 21-22.

^(vi)<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-address-nation-way-forward-afghanistan-and-pakista>

^(vii)<http://www.rnw.nl/english/print/139278>

Since the October 2010 Workshop, a number of developments have occurred in relation to the Coalition's intentions and several Wikileaks documents were released.

Australian Parliamentary Debate

The first significant event was the Australian parliamentary debate that had started before the Workshop and would run through four parliamentary sitting weeks. Both Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Opposition Leader Tony Abbott agreed that Australia had two missions: to ensure Afghanistan did not become a safe haven for terrorists and that Australia continued to support its commitments to the United States.

The Prime Minister believed the NATO-led coalition strategy was correct and stated that Australia would complete its training mission within the next four years. She noted that the insurgency was resilient and that the situation in Afghanistan remained dangerous.

She also stated that while the Taliban should never be allowed to return to power, there were signs that some of its leaders were looking for some form of reconciliation.

NATO 2010 Summit

The NATO Summit in Lisbon (Portugal), which was held in late November 2010, resulted in a commitment by the United States and its allies to have the Afghan forces assume responsibility for the conflict by the end of 2014.

The scope and pace of the withdrawal, however, remain unclear. There also appeared to be a general consensus that withdrawals would, at best, be modest in 2011 given the security and governance challenges faced by the Afghan government. Indeed, there is some confusion as the meaning of the withdrawal of coalition forces with the option of the coalition continuing to provide support after 2014.

Close reading of statements, particularly by US officials, suggests that 2014 is "an aspirational goal" only. This assessment is supported by NATO's Secretary General who warned that the West must remain committed for "as long as it takes." Another NATO spokesman stated that while he was "fully confident" of meeting the 2014 target, he added that it was "conditions based."

White House Overview

The White House released its much anticipated overview on 16 December. Not surprisingly, it appears consistent with the NATO decision. The overview is a five-page summary of a recently concluded classified assessment of the war in Afghanistan and the role of Pakistan in that campaign.

The overview states that, while al-Qaeda's leadership in Pakistan is at its lowest point since 11 September 2001, pressure on the movement should continue. It also points out that, despite gains against the Taliban, such gains remain "fragile and reversible."

Despite these assessments, there is considerable emphasis given to the progress to date. Local security measures have expanded and improved at village level and Taliban influence has been reduced. The Afghan National Army and police are expected to grow to a 300,000-strong standing force over the next two years. No mention, however, is made with regard to the effectiveness, or otherwise, of the Karzai government.

The White House overview does, however, call for a more coherent strategy on Pakistan.

Wikileaks Revelations

Not surprisingly, considerable attention has been given to the so-called Wikileaks revelations. In particular, these show that the US Ambassador to Afghanistan, Karl Eikenberry, is a serious critic of President Karzai. Eikenberry, a former three-star general and commander in Afghanistan, portrays Karzai as corrupt and refers to the President's brother as a "narcotics trafficker." Karzai is said to "shun responsibility for any sovereign burden, whether defense, governance, or development." While these cables, and the assumption that the Ambassador actually wrote them, are yet to be confirmed, they nevertheless reflect what many others have said.

Other Wikileaks indicate that US officials continue to believe that Pakistan still supports Taliban insurgents. Pakistani generals, of course, regularly dismiss any idea of collaboration.

Coincidentally, with the release of the White House review, details of two National Intelligence Estimates were apparently leaked to the press. The leaks appear to suggest that Pakistan represents a major obstacle to the coalition strategy. This has led some analysts to suggest that the intelligence community disagrees with the White House assessment.

Conclusion

There is little doubt that the coalition's decision to remain at least to the end of 2014 is a statement of intent. But there is little to suggest that there has been a fundamental re-examination of policy, strategy or even tactics. In other words, it is more of the same on most fronts.

Clearly there have been some positive results, particularly over the last six months and the US troop surge is working in some areas. Taliban strength and influence, however, may also be increasing in some areas, and the three basic impediments to a successful counter-insurgency remain: public resentment towards foreign forces, a lack of support for the Afghan government and the presence of sanctuaries in Pakistan. All these issues could allow the insurgency to regenerate.

All sides will now be considering the way ahead. Only time will tell whether the coalition's intentions will result in an Afghan government that is capable of defending itself. Or are we seeing yet another example of spin where wishful thinking is a substitute for hard sacrifice and uncertainty.

Speaker Biographies

Major General John Hartley, AO (retd)

General Hartley graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1965. He served two combat tours of duty in South Vietnam. As a general officer, he headed the Defence Intelligence Organisation, was Deputy Chief of Army and commanded Army's Training Command and Land Command. He was appointed CEO and Institute Director of FDI in September 2009.

Dr John Bruni

Dr John Bruni is Director of SAGE International, an Adelaide-based national security think tank and consultancy. Dr Bruni has served in advisory roles in both the United Arab Emirates and Australia, and lectured at the University of Adelaide on Australia-Asia relations, asymmetric warfare and broader issues of international strategy.

Mark Briskey

Since February 2010 Mark Briskey has been an adjunct member of Charles Sturt University's (CSU) Australian Graduate School of Policing (AGSP) where he has taught both online and face to face subjects upon Organised Crime, Criminal Intelligence and National Security and Crime both domestically and internationally. From 1987 – 2008 Mark was a member of the Australian Federal Police, where between 1998 and 2008 he was posted to Islamabad Pakistan, Jakarta Indonesia and Dhaka Bangladesh. During this posting Mark worked extensively in the Islamic Republic of Iran, the United Arab Emirates, India, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Mark is an executive council member of the Pakistan-Australia forum and an executive member of the South Asian Studies Association (Australia).

Dr Alexey D Muraviev

Alexey D. Muraviev is an award-winning senior lecturer in International Relations and Strategic Studies and a strategic affairs analyst in the School of Social Sciences and Asian Languages at Curtin University. Alexey is a founder and director of the Strategic Flashlight forum on national security and strategy. He has over 40 publications on matters of national and international security, including two books (one co-authored) and two research monographs. In 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, the Australian Research Council (ARC) College of Experts has nominated Dr Muraviev as an "expert of international standing". He advises members of state and federal government on foreign policy and national security matters, consults relevant security agencies, and is frequently interviewed by state, national and international media.

Jason Thomas

Jason Thomas returned from Afghanistan after implementing counterinsurgency activities with US and Coalition forces. He delivered \$3M of medical equipment to the civil war area in Sri Lanka - this also involved negotiating with the Tamil Tigers. In 2008 Jason implemented the Kokoda Track Project for disadvantaged youth. He has also worked in the House of Commons for the Shadow Cabinet. In 2006 he was a Queen's Relay Baton Runner for the Commonwealth Games, nominated Citizen of the Year in 2005 and awarded a Paul Harris Fellow.



Bill Hutchinson

Bill Hutchinson is an honorary professor at Edith Cowan University and Deakin University. He was formally the Foundation IBM Chair in Information Security, and Director of SECAU (Security Research Centre). Bill was the co-founder of the Journal of Information Warfare. His areas of interest are influence operations and environmental security.

Raspal Khosa

Raspal Khosa is a Research Fellow with the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI). He is the author of the ASPI Australian Defence Almanac and a range of publications on Australia's military commitment in Afghanistan. He has visited the Afghanistan theatre of operations with the Australian Defence Force and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation.

Dr Anne Aly

Dr Anne Aly was born in Egypt and raised in Australia. She is Senior Lecturer and Researcher in counter terrorism and radicalisation at Edith Cowan University. She has presented at national and international conferences and seminars on topics including terrorism, the fear of terrorism, al Qaeda, Islamism, homegrown terrorism and internet radicalisation. She is the author of Audience Responses to the Media Discourse About the Other: The fear of terrorism (Edwin Mellen Press) and Terrorism and Global Security: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives (Palgrave Macmillan). Anne has a background in public policy and was previously a senior policy officer and manager with the Western Australian government. In 2010, she was appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs to the Council for Australian Arab Relations.

Strategic Flashlight Forum, Curtin University

Curtin University's Strategic Flashlight (SF) forum on national security and strategy is Perth's leading academic and professional forum that addresses matters of national and international strategic significance, as well as issues that are of critical significance to Western Australia and its major stakeholders, including mining and energy sectors and the maritime industry.

Launched in late 2009 by the School of Social Sciences and Asian Languages, Faculty of Humanities, SF offers a range of professional activities such as a series of specialised seminars (by invitation) on matters of national and international security and strategy, closed door security briefings, public forums, and an annual strategy workshop/conference. For more information please visit - www.strategicflashlight.humanities.curtin.edu.au.

Curtin University is Western Australia's largest and most diverse university, with students from 105 countries and the third-largest student population of all Australian universities. Since the University was established in 1968, it has rapidly expanded its horizons to become a global leader in education and research.

Curtin is at the forefront of international education in Australia and was one of the first Australian institutions to offer degree programs offshore. Along with the main Australian campuses in Bentley and Sydney, Curtin now has international campuses in Singapore and Sarawak, Malaysia. The University has a very strong presence in the Asian Pacific region, running degree programs through international partner institutions in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mauritius, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Vietnam. Curtin has been building its research credentials in recent years, which has been reflected in Curtin's inclusion in the top 500 universities worldwide on the two most recent Shanghai Jiao Tong University Rankings, which are arguably the most respected international university ranking system.

