



Afghanistan

There are many truisms, but precious few that can be applied as universal truths with any hope of achieving intended results. The best practitioners continually make painfully inadequate yet absolutely necessary decisions in the face of no perfect and few good solutions. We never pretend to present Gospel, particularly in this Rubik's Cube of small wars. We do get to publish insights from these authors and thank them for sharing their experience and reflection. Take them for what they are worth; we think: a lot. The challenge as always is to the person in the arena, to apply them where and when they do apply – never perfect, but hopefully less imperfect with each great effort and expenditure of blood and treasure. – SWJ

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Lessons Learned from Six and a Half Years in Afghanistan

by Dave Prugh

Ed Note -- Dave Prugh wrote a fantastic "lessons learned" as a farewell letter after his position was axed under a new contract. Many thanks to Grant for seeing its value for greater distribution and pushing it our way. Thanks to Dave for his permission to share it with you, and for all his service that put him in a position to right it in the first place.

Friends in the Coalition,

As I depart, I would like to thank the thousands of fellow members of the Coalition with whom I've had the pleasure to serve these past 6 ½ years. I'd also like to pass on a few things for you to consider... for what it's worth. If you like the observations, make them your own.

This is definitely a stream-of-consciousness effort. I expect, though, that each of you will be able to readily grasp what I'm talking about because each of you has at least partially "seen the elephant". (More on that elephant later).

You may agree with some points / observations and disagree with others. That's fine, of course. My main purpose for writing this is to give you something to chew on.

Here are the topics I'll cover:

- Disclaimer – The Blind Men and the Elephant
- The Myth of the Uneducated Afghan
- Don't worry; your counterpart is getting it.
- Chronic Underestimation

- He who sticks his neck out...
- Building Bridges
- Making Progress
- Cronyism and the Bazaars
- Security thru commerce
- Are Afghan Logistics really the problem??
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- Relax. Take a deep breath.
- Get out and Get Around
- US Officer Development System - a two-edged sword
- Gravitating toward a comfort zone
- A canary in a coal mine
- Long lead-time projects
- The Main Effort is the Reserve??
- Unity of Command, Bizarro Style

Disclaimer - The Blind Men and the Elephant

Lest anybody think that my writing this is an indication that I'm assuming to be all-knowing, I'll

start with the story of the Blind Men and the Elephant.

The story goes – 6 blind men encounter an elephant and compare observations about it afterward. The first describes the elephant as a snake-like creature that wraps around a man and has two holes at the end... because he only touched the trunk. The second man says “You wrong. An elephant is long and narrow like you say, but it is smooth and hard and it comes to a point at the end”... because he only touched a tusk. The third man says, “Are you both crazy? An elephant isn’t anything like that. It is round and flat and waves in the breeze”... because he only touched the ear. The fourth interjects, “You’re all three mistaken. An elephant is big and round like a huge beach ball”... because he only touched the elephant’s belly. The fifth man exclaims, “What are all of you smoking? I know what an elephant is because I’ve just encountered one. It is like a tree trunk”... because he only touched a leg. The sixth man says with exasperation, “I’m amongst a bunch of idiots. Gentlemen, an elephant is no wider than a garden hose and it has a furry tip almost like a broom”... because he only touched the tail.

Like the 6 blind men, many of us thought we knew how the Afghans think after a month or two of interaction with them. Also like the 6 blind men, many of us think anybody who sees the Afghans in a way that doesn’t match our own observations must be an idiot.

I propose to you that none of us “knows the elephant”... that is, none of us knows the full picture of Afghan culture... and none of our brothers-in-arms is an idiot. Listen to the observations of others, no matter how long/short a time he’s been here. There’s something to learn there.

Most importantly, though – Listen to the Afghans. There’s a whole lot to learn there.

However... I will continue with my list of “things I’ve learned” as if I do ‘know the elephant’. I’ll leave it up to each you to accept or reject my assertions.

The Myth of the Uneducated Afghan

There is no such thing as an uneducated Afghan; they’re just educated differently.

The folks you see walking around the cities and towns, working in the fields, driving the taxis, slaughtering the livestock, etc are all survivors of a



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past that was much tougher than anything any of us has faced. Each has likely seen more than his fair share of processes wherein one misstep means death. They would not have survived that without a little bit of luck and a whole lot of savvy. That savvy comes from an education process, albeit an education that has an entirely different focus than our own.

Granted, most may not know how to read or write any language... not even their own. Most may not have a grasp of higher math, fluid dynamics, or geography outside of Afghanistan. Indeed, few are educated in a way that most of us in the West would call an ‘education’.

But they know how to read people. They know how to shape events to their advantage. They do it all the time, usually without their western counterpart ever noticing.

So how is it that they can almost always maneuver around us? I submit to you that it is because they have mastered the things that this culture places real value on.

In the west, we place a high value on mathematics, grammar, diction, articulation, all kinds of hard sciences, reading, writing... and a whole lot of other subjects that each of us were hammered with back in school. Those are the tickets to prosperity in the west.

In Afghanistan, those aren't the things that keep you alive. In fact, being well educated in those areas likely invited unwanted attention. Around here, that means grave danger. So those things are not emphasized here.

Don't worry; your counterpart is getting it.

You might not ever see your Afghan counterpart demonstrate that he's internalizing the things to which you're trying to expose him... but that doesn't mean that he's not getting it. In fact, he probably is capturing all of it.

A lot of westerners come in and make suggestions to their Afghan counterparts in less-than-fully-private situations. This is usually unavoidable. However, even if there's only one other Afghan around when you're making suggestions... including your interpreter... any suggestion from you might be catalogued in his brain for use after you've departed.

Why? Because he is not going to allow anybody under his command to get the inkling that you are doing his thinking for him. That is a sign of weakness.

After you've departed and he has another mentor, he will start to use the suggestions you made... unless your successor makes the same suggestions in an obvious/semi-public way. In that case, he'll wait for the next mentor... or the next... or the next. He's got all the time in the world, but he is certainly not going to allow himself to be seen as dancing to the mentor's tune too obviously.

I've noticed this with the collective capabilities of units too. I've seen units muddle along without demonstrating any discernable competence, and then rise to the occasion in a crisis situation, demonstrating an astounding level of competence that they had never shown before.

Chronic Underestimation

The ANSF can do more than most of us are willing to imagine.

It has always amused me over the past 6 ½ years to watch the fairly predictable pattern that people and units go thru. When the new guy/group comes in, he/they look around, and say, "These guys (the ANSF) are all screwed up. We need to take charge and show them how to do things correctly before they'll ever be able to handle it on their own." Then, by the time they leave, they appreciate... at least to some extent... that the ANSF is much more capable than they originally observed. So they loosen up before they turn the operation over to another person/group who goes thru the exact same phases.

Think about it. Each ANSF guy has been thru about 8 years of these cycles by now. He's probably more than a little frustrated with the "Amriki" by now.

Human nature is such that a man will instinctively think that something that doesn't look/behave/perform in a manner that is familiar to him must be "screwed up". The more experience the man has, the more he's convinced that the wisdom he's collected over the years is as close to a perfect collection of wisdom as is possible for a human.

Here in the coalition, we are a collection of very, very senior officers and NCO's. Even the few of us who aren't COL's have "seen and done it all". Each of us has been everywhere and knows exactly what "right" looks like.

And nothing the ANA does even remotely resembles our pre-conceived notions of what they should be doing... until we've been here about 11 ½ months, by which time we are already "smelling the barn".

I recommend to each of you that you seriously consider "loosening the reins" on your ANSF counterpart... even if you just got here yesterday. He/They can succeed. He/They can excel. I predict that you'll be pleasantly surprised if you have the courage to "let the horses run."

He who sticks his neck out...

... gets his head cut off.

Unlike in the US, being conspicuous is not a good thing here.

In most western nations, conspicuous knowledge/aptitude/capability is celebrated. It is rewarded.

That's not the case here in Afghanistan. Standing out in a positive way is the surest way to become somebody's target.

I noticed it at every echelon. Each time I saw an officer or NCO demonstrate a level of competence that was clearly superior, I later noticed that same guy shrinking back into mediocrity. Sometimes, I would notice that same guy screwing something up in manner that was just as much outside-the-norm as his earlier demonstration of superiority. It was as if he was screwing up on purpose, just to show that he's not a threat to... whomever.

My conclusion... and I could be wrong, of course... is that each of these guys knows that conspicuous competence will likely be seen as a threat to the powerful (those of higher rank) and/or a threat to the fortunes of other ambitious peers. Shining too brightly could invite a smack-down from the boss or a back-stab from a peer.

Building Bridges

Believe it or not, Afghans can build bridges. They just usually don't want to.

Early in my time here, I lost count of the number of stories I heard about some bridge that we Americans built. It was always a bridge that eased travel between two villages. Apparently, without this new bridge, these two villages couldn't interact. We always felt good about it, and there was always some news article associated with the completion of the bridge.

Then a couple of years ago, I had a conversation with an Afghan guy who gave me a different perspective.

He told me that in probably every case where we built a bridge, there had earlier been no bridge because... get this... neither village wanted a bridge. If they had wanted a bridge, they likely would have built one for themselves. After all, it really isn't such a complicated thing.

He further told me that in every case, the village elders who asked for the bridge did so for one of two reasons – 1) because the elder thought his village was stronger than that neighboring village and a new bridge would allow his villagers to more easily exploit the neighbor's weaknesses, or 2) because the elder wanted to get his hands on some of the raw material from which the bridge

was constructed (such as steel beams, wood planks, etc). Either way, he said, the bridges never last long because one village or the other tears it down to either prevent predation OR to sell / reuse the components.

I honestly haven't seen enough to either confirm or deny what I heard from my Afghan friend... but I do try to look at the condition of bridges between villages whenever I get a chance. I've seen a lot that looked like they were partially dismantled.

Making Progress

Since the late summer of 2003, I've seen an undeniable growth in both the Army and Police.

In my nearly 7 years here, I have seen many highs and lows. I have seen watershed events wherein our Afghan hosts demonstrated a collective competence far greater than that which any westerner would have credited them. I've seen the average Afghan's outward behavior shift from something that revealed disrespect and derision for the GIRoA to an obvious glowing pride in the soldiers' professionalism and competence. I've seen the ANA grow from 3 incomplete brigades to a force that capably covers the entire nation. I've seen the ANP grow from... well, nothing... to a force that has presence throughout the nation.

My first memory of the ANA was of a collection of individuals who were... to be charitable... barely capable of doing much more than marching in step. Now they are routinely conducting combat operations in support of the Commander-in-Chief's intent, and doing it well.

My first recollection of the ANP in action came several months into my first tour here. This was well before the US had a role in developing the ANP. I was driving somewhere in Kabul... we could do that back then... and I came across a traffic light. I had, before that date, been pretty much all over Kabul and I had never seen a traffic light. While I was surprised to see the traffic light, I wasn't surprised to see that none of the drivers were paying any heed to the signals.

Then, a few days later, I came across that traffic light again and saw that an Afghan National Policeman was assigned to that intersection and charged with the responsibility of making sure that the drivers paid attention to the traffic light. He was whistling, swinging his paddle about, hitting cars, and yelling something at the drivers. Naturally, there were still no drivers paying

attention to either the light or the policeman. It was both comical and sad.

My last recollection of the ANP was vastly different. In early 2010, the ANP succeeded... without any assistance from coalition forces... in thwarting a well-planned and well-organized insurgent attempt to disrupt the swearing-in ceremony for several newly elected officials.

To those who say that the ANSF isn't making any progress, I assert that you are mistaken.

Cronyism and the Bazaars

Westerners often castigate the Afghans for perceived endemic corruption. Our own POTUS has recently done that very thing in a public forum. I suspect, though, that few westerners try to take the time to view things from an Afghan perspective.

I will concede up front that I fully believe the good folks who run the bazaar on Fridays here are honest, hard-working folks. I also fully believe that the average Afghan merchant doesn't see it that way.

To us, the bazaar is an opportunity for the folks on Camp Eggers to purchase some local goods in the safe surroundings of our home base camp. To most of the Afghan merchants around town, the Camp Eggers bazaar is a venue where only the well-connected gain access to customers with more money than market-sense and who will pay grossly inflated prices. The majority of the merchants around town do not have access to us, and therefore cannot do business with us. Hence, they have no stake in our security.

Which brings me to my next observation...

Security thru commerce

Once upon a time, we used to have a pretty good level of freedom to frequent the local restaurants, shop at the local businesses, visit the local museums, play at the local golf course (yes, there is at least one golf course here), etc.

Back then, the local shop owners had an economic interest in ensuring our safety as we went through their areas. Our very presence constituted a patrol... we were armed, after all... but it was as non-threatening a patrol as possible. We were there to conduct business. The conventional wisdom was that the local business owners would charge us more than he would charge his Afghan customers, but that never

seemed to bother any of us. As a matter of fact, I looked at that presumed 'fact' as simply being the cost of security. The extra expense was, in effect, a sort of insurance payment. And it seemed to work. IEDs in the local shopping areas were quite rare. For that matter, IEDs in Kabul were rare outside of J-Bad road.

I firmly believe that the locals policed the area and kept the insurgents out. They knew that a threat in their neighborhood would reduce pedestrian traffic... and customers. And not just any customers either; they would lose the customers who paid more per item than the local Afghan... if you subscribe to that theory.

It was actually a symbiotic relationship. They looked after our safety because they had an economic incentive to do so, and our frequent armed presence allowed the local businessmen to use that "threat" to keep insurgents at bay.

Then we changed our policy.

We stopped shopping downtown. We cut off access to local restaurants. Sure, some folks continued to defy the rules, but the majority of folks conformed and stopped conducting business outside the walls.

The local businessmen no longer had an economic interest in ensuring our safety. What's worse, we no longer offered an armed presence for the local businessmen to threaten the insurgents. The balance of power in the neighborhoods was tipped in the favor of the insurgents.

The local businessmen, therefore, were forced to choose sides. And their choice was an obvious one.

Now we have more insurgent activity in Kabul. Who'd-a-thunk it?

As a final note – Although I have no way of knowing exactly why GEN McChrystal ordered that all the on-post restaurants should close, my immediate assumption was that this move was a preliminary step to getting us back out into the economy.

Are Afghan Logistics really THE problem??

Lots of folks bemoan the difficulty we have experienced in getting our Afghan partners to grasp the concepts that underlie the logistics system that we've designed for them. Know what? I fully agree. Our Afghan partners have been exceptionally slow at getting it down.

So we're all agreed that logistics is a problem... but not necessarily the root problem.

In my opinion, the root problem isn't Afghan reluctance... or Afghan ignorance... or Afghan corruption. The root of the logistics-related difficulty here stems from the fact that we've attempted to deliver the wrong kind of system to them.

Back in 2003 and 2004, there were a lot of Afghans talking about wanting to hit back at the Pakistanis for their apparent role in supporting the Taliban prior to the decision by the "Coalition of the Willing" to assist the Taliban's opponents. It hadn't been very long since the Taliban was in control of most of Afghanistan, and there were clearly some residual hard feelings back then. While we all understood the hard feelings, we were trying to get the Afghans now in positions of power to focus on merely protecting the homeland.

And yet we somehow managed to design an Expeditionary Army rather than a Homeland-Defense type army. I know how it happened, but the details aren't as important as the fact... or perhaps it is better to say 'the argument'... that it was the wrong kind of force and that that mistake has been the root of our problems in the logistics arena.

The logistics system here is based quite obviously on the US Army's logistics system. I know this *NOT* from inference but because I was here when the ANA units were designed. I wasn't the guy designing the log part, but I knew him. And he did what seemed most logical to him at the time – he designed the organic tactical-level logistics units after our Forward Support Battalions. It seemed to make sense at the time because, well, that's pretty much the way the rest of the ANA was designed back then – after the US Army's design.

Some of us thought we were pretty wise back then to say things like "We're not trying to make the Afghans into the US Army of the 21st Century, the 1980s, or even of the Vietnam era. We should aim at something like the US Army of WWII." But even that was off-target because the US Army of WWII was an expeditionary force, not a homeland defense force.

The key difference, in my opinion, is in the logistics area. An expeditionary force requires organic units to execute logistics functions whereas a homeland defense force can... and arguably should... rely on contracting with local vendors for that support.

I don't claim that everything would be perfect if we tried to go that route instead, but we certainly wouldn't be dealing with the frustration of trying to get our Afghan partners to embrace something they seem unwilling to even consider. They had been very accustomed to a foraging approach to logistics support, and contracting for logistics support isn't all that different.

An additional benefit of this approach is that it would inject capital into the local economy. Local contractors would need to employ local laborers. The contractors and their employees would have an economic interest in protecting the logistics assets and lines-of-communication. Everything would be sweetness and light!

Well, maybe not. Truth is that it would inject an entirely different set of challenges. For example, it would introduce a whole lot of opportunities for corruption. But I firmly believe that, unlike our current situation in the LOG arena, we'd at least be aimed in the right direction.

So says a career infantryman. Some will say that my lack of LOG pedigree negates any standing I may have on this topic. I'll leave it up to you to decide whether I'm on or off target.

The Bright Light Always Shines

Service in an environment like this shines a bright light on every character trait that each of us has.

All of your outstanding qualities will be on conspicuous display for all to admire, marvel at, and celebrate. So, too, will all of your negative traits be on display... if only for a moment or two from time to time.

Learn about yourself while you're here... and learn about others. Learn that everybody reaches a point of utter frustration so that he doesn't want to do anything... and everybody has the capacity to step up and carry the entire unit on his shoulders for awhile. Learn to recognize when you've "hit the wall", and learn to recognize it when others around you have hit it too. Learn how to enhance your strong points and learn to improve upon or mitigate your weaker points. Learn how to help others do the same.

Relax. Take a deep breath.

If you're not laughing at something here at least once an hour, then you're in serious need of a "chill pill".

As I've hinted in a section above, it is up to each of us to recognize and make allowances for others' idiosyncrasies. But that doesn't mean that we can't have fun with it. Just don't ever make anybody the perpetual butt of all jokes. Spread it around, and accept it when you are the goat for a moment or two.

Have fun. There is entertainment value in everything that happens here. Even the simple things.

Have a thick skin, and be aware of when you've hit somebody too hard.

Get out and Get Around

No amount of PowerPoint briefings or written products (like this, for example) will ever do you any good if you don't get outside the wire and interact with the Afghans.

We all have enough "nerd" in us to still be fascinated and impressed with all the cool stuff that PowerPoint, Excel, etc can do. The briefings we've all seen are quite impressive. All the moving icons, maps, sound effects, and dazzling artistry can really make a man think he's learned something after he's sat thru a briefing. But if making or attending briefings is all you do, then you are myopic and uninformed. You are like a man who merely spends his time looking at cars compared to one who spends his time actually working on them. Which of the two is likely to know how to make a car work properly?

Do yourself, your brothers-in-arms, and the Afghans a huge favor; don't let a week go by without getting out there and doing something meaningful.

US Officer Development System - a two-edged sword

Several decades ago, the US Army used to have different SOPs in different places. The "III Corps way" was markedly different from the "VII Corps way" ... which was markedly different from the "XVIII Abn Corps way".

Back then, I'm told, as an officer rose thru the ranks he had to adjust to his new surroundings. Arriving as a CPT or a MAJ or even as a General officer into a new and unfamiliar unit meant that the officer had to continually adjust to his new surroundings.

We "fixed" that by adopting doctrine which, for the most part, standardized things throughout the Army.

By the time I came into the Army, things were pretty standardized. I noted that as I changed from unit to unit, the systems and processes were pretty much the same. The adoption of the standardizing doctrine has been largely good for the Army.

But there has been a negative side, and it has reared its ugly head here. Senior officer often seem to no longer be able to adapt to unfamiliar organizations.

My theory goes like this:

A 2LT is pretty wide-eyed when he arrives at his first unit. He knows that he's completely ignorant, and he's like a sponge soaking in new observations about 'what right looks like'.

By the time that first tour is over, about 3 years have passed and the now-1LT has got the systems and processes down. Everything is familiar.

Then he goes as a newly-promoted CPT to his next assignment. Because of standardization, the systems and processes there are the same. Moreover, the very structure of the organization is the same. The S3 does what the S3 did at his previous unit; the S1 does the same stuff; etc.

Later, he serves at higher echelons. Those echelons have other staff sections like a G5, G7, etc. So he has to learn a few new things, but what he learns is standardized across the service.

Then he serves as an S3 or an XO in a unit that functions exactly like all the others.

Then he commands another unit just like all the others.

Then a Brigade.

And then he shows up here in Afghanistan. Suddenly, after 20 years of seeing the same design, he's in an organization that is constantly shifting. The mission isn't like anything he's ever done before. The staff structure hasn't been in place for any more than a couple of years because we are always changing. The staff sections don't function like any similarly-named section that he's seen before.

So the guy who has not had to adjust to anything really new for 2 decades is suddenly expected to adapt to new surroundings. A lot of folks pull it off pretty well. A lot don't. And part of

the reason why they don't is because they have been conditioned to expect things to look, feel, and function the same way... but that's not what he gets here.

Which leads me to a follow-on point...

Gravitating toward a comfort zone

One tends to eventually gravitate toward a comfort zone, often at the expense of the actual mission

This observation is really a continuation of the last one and the first one. Plus, I've mixed it with a little bit of my own observations on how people typically cope with stress and unfamiliarity.

When folks show up here, each seems to be pretty gung-ho about making a significant contribution to an important mission. Most keep that gung-ho attitude for at least a month. At the end of that month, the newby reaches a conclusion about what ought to be done. Then he spends another month fighting with everybody else about his conclusion. Then frustration sets in.

The root of that frustration seems to come from two phenomena to which I referred earlier – “The Blind Men and the Elephant” and “The Two-Edged Sword”, so if you haven't digested those two commentaries I suggest you go back and do that before you drive on with this one.

So the new guy coming into Afghanistan takes about a month to put this place into some context that makes sense to him. If he came from an Acquisition background, he asserts that this whole mission is really one big Acquisition operation. If he comes from a maneuver background, he pegs some maneuver-related solution. If he's a Loggie, he gravitates to a log-related solution. If he's a Navy guy, well, who the hell knows what that guy would conclude? (You know that I had to take that dig at you Squids.)

He then spends the next month trying to push an agenda that is based on how he's pegged the nature of the mission. This is where the “Blind Men and the Elephant” comes in. In other words, he gets frustrated at the ignorance of others around him because they don't see the problem the same way he does.

So two months in, he concludes that he can't fight the system so he decides that he needs to focus on something that is within his comfort zone. Most of the time it isn't something really outlandishly off-base, but I've actually seen guys who spent the last half of their time here

apparently focused on little other than training their Afghans to play soccer... as if the Afghans needed soccer training from an American.

The picture that this part of my commentary paints is probably a little more absurd than the reality, so make sure to not exaggerate your inference here. Most people's diversion into a comfort zone isn't noticeably off target. But when you are a leader in a situation like what Afghanistan presents, I suggest that you look for typical signs of coping to stress and unfamiliarity... because you'll certainly find them here.

A canary in a coal mine

We are, whether we know it or not, a sort of “canary in a coal mine” for our Afghan hosts. They watch our protection posture for the first indication of GIROA legitimacy and success.

Here's a logic chain written as if it comes from the Afghan perspective that “walks the dog” on how our normal posture plays in the typical Afghan eye:

As an Afghan citizen, I expect little from my government other than that it will leave me alone and ensure that my neighborhood, my city, my province, and my nation are safe places so that I and my family can thrive and continually improve our lives.

As an Afghan citizen, I accept that there are military forces from other nations here in Afghanistan, and that the purpose for their presence is to assist in making this place a safe environment for me and my family.

I accept that, as a part of their mission, these foreign guys are going to have a military presence in places like the roads, airports, etc for as long as they need to be present... and no longer.

I accept that even after the foreign guys' presence isn't needed for security that they will stick around for a long time, but that their long-term presence will have no impact on me other than that they will be buying the products in my store, hiring me to paint their buildings, hiring me to transport something for them, etc. I'm aware that this is what they did in Germany, Japan, Korea, Italy, and other places; and that those other places seemed to fare well because of it.

I assume that these foreign military folks wouldn't be wearing all that uncomfortable armored vests and stuff unless they had a good reason... and that reason must be safety-related.

I assume that, since these foreign military folks have proven that they can do amazing things with their technology, they must have access to information that gives them a good reason for going everywhere looking like camouflaged Star Wars Storm Troopers in 6-vehicle armored convoys that run everybody off the road.

These foreigners will continue to behave in this way until it is safe enough for them to not behave that way... and no longer.

Therefore, my first indication that my government is really gaining control will be when I see these foreigners blending in with traffic and/or conducting normal business just like me and my neighbors.

There will, of course, need to be other indicators of GIRoA legitimacy after I've seen the foreigners behave more normally; but it all starts with this indicator.

Long lead-time projects

Some necessary systems take longer than our rotations will allow.

I'll illustrate this point with an example that is close to my heart. Some will correctly deduce that I'm venting on this section. But I hope to make a larger point than merely venting about recent frustrations.

Way back in 2004, I and a couple of other know-it-alls concluded that there were two things that this theater needed:

- a unit with the mission to validate the collective competence of the ANA (we didn't have responsibility for the police yet) and to ensure a standardized approach to assessments, and
- a system (involving a database and the appropriate computer-geek-type folks to run it) to routinely capture data produced by the monthly assessments which will give us the ability to note trends AND to gauge the extent to which MoD-generated systems are implemented down to the appropriate echelon.

Our logic held that these two things would be the backbone upon which a solid ANA-development-program could be built.

I was fortunate enough to be hand-picked to head the validation mission. After a very short absence from the theater, I was back in Afghanistan to take the lead on that mission.

Unfortunately, the two echelons of general officers who we had "sold" these ideas to had departed and, although almost everybody else was still there, the momentum behind the mission was lost. The new leadership deemed the whole validation idea to be one of those "good ideas whose time has not yet arrived". The database notion never even got briefed. So after a very short lifespan, the Mobile Validation Team (MVT – the name we gave to that validating organization) ceased to exist.

The next year some folks at TF Phoenix reached the same conclusion about a database to capture the results of the monthly assessments and to store it for analysis. They got the ball rolling by establishing a web-based system which would allow the assessors scattered all over Afghanistan to input their data via the internet. However, that system proved to be unworkable because the load-time for their very uncomplicated system took too long for the guys out at the tip-of-the-spear. But they had at least proven what wouldn't work, so that was a very useful effort.

Another year passed. In the meantime, CSTC-A had another general come and go. CFC-A was de-activated. Then another general officer came in and very quickly reached one of the same conclusions that we know-it-alls had reached 3 years prior – that we needed a Validation Team. So he created one.

The good news was that we had, in our previous effort to start up the MVT, gotten the personnel authorizations lined up. Those personnel had arrived and, since the MVT didn't exist anymore, they were distributed to wherever TF Phoenix needed them. So, since the new CG had directed that we create the Validation Transition Team (VTT), we were able to snag those personnel resources. It wasn't easy, and we inconvenienced a few folks in the process, but we managed to get the VTT started. And they are still in operation almost 3 years later.

The database idea is another story. Although we managed to learn the valuable lesson about the infeasibility of a web-based system here in Afghanistan, we seem to have to continually learn that lesson over and over again. By my count, we've got through at least 3 subsequent attempts to regenerate this sort of web-based program. In the mean time, we have also generated, fielded, and validated the efficacy of a Microsoft Excel-based system that actually works; but that system has recently been scrapped in favor

of... you guessed it... another stab at a web-based input concept which has not been developed yet.

I'm sure that someday, somebody will succeed in getting that database established. However, there will be an unavoidably inverse relationship between the utility of the data and the efficacy of the system unless the developers get the many-times-proven-ineffective notion of a web-based input out of their brains.

My hope is that this cathartic narrative has illustrated that the rapid turnover here is hell on any effort to establish a program or system which has a long lead-time for resourcing.

The Main Effort is the Reserve??

This one is, in my opinion, perhaps the most baffling thing I've watched happen here in Afghanistan.

Way back... I'm assuming it was some time in 2002... somebody somewhere had to decide who would get which mission in Afghanistan. There were essentially two major missions to perform:

1. Develop the indigenous Afghan Security Sector capability, and
2. Conduct operations to provide a secure and stable environment within which the Afghan Security Sector development mission can take place.

One of those missions should logically be considered the main effort, and the other mission should be considered a supporting effort.

One of those missions involves executing collective tasks that every Active Component and Reserve Component maneuver unit in the Army have been training on for decades. The other mission involves skills and proficiencies that are outside of the METL any of our maneuver units, Reserve or Active.

One of those missions required that a unit should have a METL proficiency that would enable it to out-perform enemy units that were not exactly world class at tactical and/or operational levels. The other mission required a mastery of systems and processes from the Division level down to the lowest echelon and the gravitas to demand the respect and attention of the Afghan military leadership.

You're probably already figuring out where I'm going with this.

When the mission allocation took place, the Active Component naturally got the supporting mission to:

- just be better than the guys who are living in the caves, and
- keep that unorganized rabble from interfering with the Afghan Army development mission.

The Reserve Component, meanwhile, got the mission to:

- become instant experts on the Afghan systems;
- train and mentor your Afghan counterparts from Division* through battalion levels on the implementation and continued execution of systems and processes across the entire spectrum of staff functions, tactical proficiencies, and operational proficiencies;
- provide combat multipliers to the ANA units during their operations;
- replicate the functions that the ANA should be doing but are not yet capable of doing (such as FSB-like operations).

* It is actually called "corps" in the ANA, but it is the equivalent of a division for the US Army.

Bottom line – The Reserve Component got the tougher mission while the Active Component got the mission that either of them could have done rather well.

In truth, though, both the Reserve and Active Component units were doing just fine... until the rate of ANA growth radically out-paced the US military's ability to keep up with Joint Manning Document (JMD) changes. But that's a longer discussion.

So what's the lesson learned here? If we do this sort of thing again, I recommend that we reverse the missions.

Unity of Command, Bizarro Style

It is one of the Principles of War.

We all studied it back in one or more of our professional development courses.

Some of us studied it back in our undergraduate days.

Yet we still can't seem to get it right. I'd even give us credit for having it right if we only had it 'kinda' right. But we don't.

It used to appear to be in the too-hard-to-do box. When we assumed the Police Development Mission, we had to deal with the fact that INL jumped in and got some contractors out there on the mission at the same time that OSC-A did. So, since we suddenly had a two-pronged-yet-completely-uncoordinated effort between OSD (Office of the Secretary of Defense) and DOS (Department of State), we couldn't get the Unity of Command problem fixed.

Recent decisions, though, have assisted in solving that Unity of Command problem... while simultaneously creating an entirely new Unity of Command problem.

Now it appears that we are on the cusp of getting all the players dancing to the OSD tune. No more playing the DOS "mom" against the OSD "dad". That's great.

But we have now taken what ought to be the main effort (the ANSF Development mission) and fractured what Unity of Command we had by the creation of the IJC / NTM-A split.

A coherent program to develop the ANSF from the Ministry down thru the Kandak/District must allow those who have responsibility for Ministerial development to have visibility on relevant data. That means data that reveals the

extent to which systems are integrated down to the lowest level.

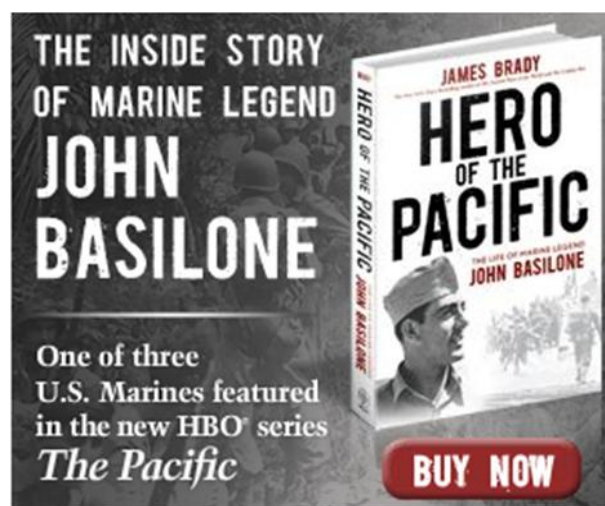
In order for NTM-A to get that visibility, it must have command authority over the personnel who are present at these echelons. Since that is not the case, NTM-A has effectively been blinded by the recent IJC decision to cease executing the reporting systems which would give that visibility.

And that 2011 deadline isn't changing.

That's it for me. Until my next opportunity to contribute here, I'll be focused on another mission in another land. I sincerely wish the best for all who remain in Afghanistan, and I give a heartfelt thanks to them and to the thousands of other folks who have contributed in the past.

-- Dave

Dave Prugh is a Texan, a former US Army Infantry Colonel, and a 1985 graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point. He has served as a soldier and a contractor in combat zone leadership positions for over 75 cumulative months, most of it at the senior or directorial level. In his over 6 years in Afghanistan, Dave has worked closely with every echelon of the Afghan National Army from the battalion through the ministry, including several echelons above corps. He is scheduled to leave Afghanistan in mid-April 2010 after 6 ½ years of combined Active Duty and contracting service in Afghanistan.



Fight Right to Fight Well

General McChrystal's Approach to Preserving Noncombatant Immunity

by Dr. Rebecca J. Johnson

Abstract

This article evaluates two approaches to preserving noncombatant immunity – one that prohibits harming noncombatants and the other that prohibits the intentional targeting of noncombatants – to provide insight into the current debates surrounding the limits placed on the use of lethal force in Afghanistan. The article argues that when used to vindicate the population's collective right to life, which is violated when insurgents hide among them and coerce their complicity, the use of lethal force does a better job of honoring the norm of noncombatant immunity, *even when noncombatants are killed inadvertently*. The article calls for a clear-minded interpretation of General McChrystal's ROE as prohibiting the targeting, not strictly the harming of noncombatants.

In the early morning on September 4, 2009, German forces participating in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the northern Kunduz province of Afghanistan called in two F-15E Strike Eagle jets to drop 500-pound bombs on two fuel tankers that had been hijacked by the Taliban the previous day. Roughly 125 people were killed in the attack, and though German officials denied harming any civilians initially, reports surfaced quickly of villagers who had been wounded and killed by the strike.¹ General Stanley McChrystal, commander of ISAF and American troops in Afghanistan, immediately apologized to the people in Kunduz and launched an investigation into the incident.² The event has sparked an intense debate surrounding Gen. McChrystal's recently announced rules of engagement (ROE). Some observers support his efforts to reduce collateral damage and build support among the population by constraining the use of airpower to non-civilian areas or as a last resort in force protection and by adopting a less aggressive approach while conducting operations. Others have condemned these moves as "moral fecklessness."³

At the heart of this issue lies a question: How far should troops go to protect civilians from the pain of war? The new ROE are a clear effort to reduce collateral damage to an absolute minimum; opposition comes from a belief that collateral

damage is an unavoidable, if regrettable, result of military action. The tension between these two positions becomes even more acute in a counterinsurgency when insurgents co-locate with and draw fire toward the very civilians whose support the counterinsurgents need to win.

An examination of the ethical considerations surrounding the norm of noncombatant immunity provides a practical way forward. Protecting noncombatants is essential, but in counterinsurgency this protection requires, rather than competes with, defeating the insurgents. The two objectives must go together. In the language of ethics, the Taliban and Al Qaeda have violated the Afghan people's right to be left outside the zone of battle by comingling with, threatening, and targeting the population. In other words, the insurgents have willfully violated the Afghan people's right to noncombatant immunity by taking actions that refuse to acknowledge that the right exists in the first place.

U.S. and coalition counterinsurgency efforts in Afghanistan seek to vindicate this right when they take actions to repel the Taliban and Al Qaeda from the region. While there are multiple non-kinetic means to do this – such as coopting insurgents through negotiations and incentives or severing access to external financial support and recruiting opportunities – some insurgents must be killed or captured. Given insurgent tactics of mixing with the population, these actions carry the risk of collateral damage and raise an ethical dilemma.

Counterinsurgents must strike a balance between the obligation to leave *individual* noncombatants outside the battlespace and the obligation to vindicate *all* noncombatants' right to be left outside the battlespace. In this equation, vindicating the right takes precedence over

¹ Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Sole Informant Guided Decision on Afghan Strike," *Washington Post*, September 6, 2009.

² Stephen Farrell and Richard Oppel, "NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War," *New York Times*, September 5, 2009.

³ Ralph Peters, "The Rules Murdering our Troops," *New York Post*, September 24, 2009. Accessed at http://www.nypost.com/p/news/opinion/opedcolumnists/the_rules_murdering_our_troops_u935ECKNWXpLK8C5D96pdN October 3, 2009.

protecting the individual. First, vindicating the right is the only way to ensure that individuals collectively will be protected. Second, violating a right is worse than infringing it. It is undeniable that collateral damage prevents a specific person from exercising his right to be left unmolested by war, but it does so by affirming that the right both exists and is worthy of defense in the first place. Collateral damage is the *exception*, not the norm.

While the difference may seem academic, it matters for the troops fighting in Afghanistan. Imposing overly restrictive ROE in the hopes of protecting individual Afghans from harm allows the far graver violation of the right to noncombatant immunity by the Taliban and Al Qaeda to continue. General McChrystal's inclination to protect civilians from the harms of war makes good sense, but if his ROE are misinterpreted as preventing the use of lethal force, they fail. The only way to actually vindicate the population's right to noncombatant immunity is to defeat the agents who have violated it – the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The use of lethal force must be allowed to this end, even in cases where individual noncombatants will be killed.

Why We Preserve Noncombatant Immunity

Civilians do not forfeit their right to life simply because their governments have chosen to wage war. They are seen as being innocent of the state's war making. This serves as one of the moral differences between soldiers and civilians. Soldiers have no presumptive right to life in combat – the conduct of their profession eliminates it. This is why killing a soldier in the legitimate conduct of war fighting is not murder, while killing a soldier in cold blood is. Unless a civilian acts as a soldier by participating in the conflict, she never loses her right to life, regardless of her proximity to the battle. Chris Mayer lays out the responsibility this places on militaries:

Noncombatant immunity does not simply protect the noncombatant from death, but it directs military forces to treat noncombatants differently from soldiers. Military forces should do their best to fight around noncombatants and should, as much as possible, avoid disrupting their way of life. This means that there is a strong presumption against military forces taking any sort of action, lethal or nonlethal, against

noncombatants, even if not doing so creates more risk for the combatants.¹

The logic underlying noncombatant immunity is the same as that found in the protections guaranteed to those soldiers who find themselves *hors de combat* (out of the fight) because of injury, detention, or any other reason. Common Article Three of the Geneva Conventions specifies clearly that once a combatant lays down or loses his weapon, he removes himself from the battlespace and may be captured, but not killed. Combatants are presumed to be inside the battlespace unless circumstances force them out (and so may be targeted legitimately unless they demonstrate themselves to be *hors de combat*). The opposite is true for civilians. They are presumed to be outside the battlespace unless their behavior indicates quite clearly that they are participating as combatants. Only then may they be targeted legitimately.

Noncombatants also retain the right to their way of life. Any action that intentionally targets noncombatants' ability to live their lives normally violates noncombatant immunity. Forced detention, curfews, curtailment of speech and other denials of individual autonomy all fail to honor the distinction between who may be placed inside the battlespace legitimately and who retains the right to be held outside. Because of this, such tactics fail to honor the norm of noncombatant immunity.

This is why the American military refrains from targeting religious centers, museums, hospitals, schools, and other civilian infrastructure. One could conceive of attacking any of those facilities in a way that would eliminate civilian casualties (attack the museum at night when it is empty, for instance). Yet these facilities are among the most difficult targets to clear, even when the enemy uses them as a base from which to launch attacks. Why? Because targeting them is seen as targeting the people. Regardless of the literal harm (or lack thereof) that may be done to a civilian population, this action is seen as wrong. This is precisely what makes such places so attractive to insurgents.

The Challenge of Noncombatant Immunity in Counterinsurgency

There are two aspects of counterinsurgency that challenge the military's ability to fulfill the

¹ Chris Mayer, "Nonlethal Weapons and Noncombatant Immunity: Is it Permissible to Target Noncombatants?" *Journal of Military Ethics* Vol. 6, No. 3 (September 2007), 229.

'*hors de combat*' approach to noncombatant immunity. The first challenge is the tendency of insurgents to hide within the population, making it hard to discriminate between combatants and noncombatants. The second challenge is that the population is the strategic center of gravity, making it necessary to target the population intentionally with non-kinetic means in the conduct of the counterinsurgency.

In conventional wars, militaries have been able to honor noncombatant immunity because they could discriminate between combatants and noncombatants. The Hague and Geneva Conventions identify combatancy as "1) that of being commanded by a person responsible for his subordinates; 2) that of having a fixed distinctive sign recognizable at a distance; 3) that of carrying arms openly; 4) that of conducting their operations in accordance with the laws and customs of war."¹ As decolonialization intensified following World War II, these constraints were loosened to focus more on the latter two criteria of carrying arms openly and respecting the laws and customs of war. This is the reason why unofficial groups like the Kosovo Liberation Army and Northern Alliance have been viewed as legitimate combatants under international law. Both groups adhered to these two criteria, though the KLA lacked a clear command structure and the Northern Alliance lacked a fixed, distinctive sign.

In today's small wars, meeting these rules becomes difficult, if not impossible. Coalition adversaries lack all of the determining criteria for combatants (they likely have a command structure, but it is difficult to identify). Who is a combatant, and who is simply a fighting-age male in the area of insurgent activities, is blurred. The fact that insurgents may live among the population and even coerce the population to provide them with material support frustrates the prospects for discrimination even further. A civilian who provides information on coalition troop movements to Taliban in Helmand in an effort to spare his family from certain retaliation can be seen as a combatant no more than someone who has just been carjacked at gunpoint can be seen as aiding and abetting the criminal who drove away in his sedan.

The character of counterinsurgency compounds this dilemma. Tactics may vary in conventional warfare, but they generally focus on applying lethal force on an enemy in an effort to erode and ultimately defeat his capacity and/or will to fight. Diplomacy, economic sanctions, information operations, and other non-kinetic elements of state power (the DIE of the DIME construct)² may support the military's actions, but lethal force serves as the main effort. This is simply not true in counterinsurgency. As General McChrystal stated clearly in his Tactical Directive, issued July 2, 2009, and in his Commander's Initial Assessment, issued August 30, 2009, the population is the strategic center of gravity in counterinsurgency.³ This means that the main effort of American troops in Afghanistan is aimed at severing the relationship between the insurgents and the population (as the insurgents' source of strength) and at strengthening the relationship between coalition forces (specifically host nation troops) and the population. Success requires both providing civilians with the governance, economic, social, and legal programs needed to develop their faith in their governments *and* targeting insurgents with kinetic as well as non-kinetic means of warfare.

To the extent that insurgents come along with the population, targeting the insurgents kinetically places noncombatants in the battlespace, which threatens the counterinsurgents' ability to win the population's support for the government and thereby influence their strategic center of gravity. At the same time, strategic victory alone is not sufficient, because counterinsurgents must be able to influence decisively their operational and tactical centers of gravity as well, which requires at least some use of lethal force in order to actually defeat the insurgents.

How to Preserve Noncombatant Immunity in Counterinsurgency

It would appear that preserving noncombatant immunity may be impossible in counterinsurgency – counterinsurgents cannot

¹ Hague Convention (IV) Respecting the Laws and Customs of War on Land and its Annex: Regulations Concerning the Laws and Customs of War on Land (1907), sec. 1, ch.1, art. 1; Geneva Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field (1949), art. 13, and Geneva Convention (III) Relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War (1949), art. 4.

² Dennis Drew and Donald Snow, *Making 21st Century Strategy: An Introduction to Modern National Security Processes and Problems* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 2006), 31-41; *US Army War College Guide to National Security Policy and Strategy* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008).

³ ISAF Tactical Directive (unclassified), released July 6, 2009, and Commander's Initial Assessment (unclassified), August 30, 2009, 2-4. Accessed at September 29, 2009 at www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official.../Tactical_Directive_090706.pdf; and <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/09/21/AR2009092100110.html>.

defeat the insurgents' capacity and will to fight without targeting noncombatants. Does this render counterinsurgency inherently immoral? Not at all. Ethical, and effective, action depends on the counterinsurgents vindicating the population's rights to life and livelihood – the very rights that are violated by the insurgents when they live among the population and coerce locals to provide them with material support.

In just war terms, this type of war is known as a 'counter-intervention', or a war that seeks to restore the rights of a community that cannot do so on its own.¹ The United States' defense of Kuwait following Iraq's invasion in August 1990 can be seen as a textbook illustration of this principle. This war is generally accepted as legitimate internationally because force was used to restore Kuwait's sovereign rights, which had been violated by Iraq's invasion. To the extent that the same purpose underlies the counterinsurgents' efforts, their actions may be seen as legitimate.

In practice, if counterinsurgency is to be understood as counter-intervention, the counterinsurgents' kinetic and non-kinetic efforts to sever the relationship between the insurgents and the population must serve to vindicate the rights violated by the insurgents. This means lethal force must focus on defending the literal right to life that has been violated by the insurgents. Quarantining populations into villages or establishing free fire zones within which counterinsurgents can fire at will would not be appropriate, because such tactics further deny the population's right to life. Providing security forces that protect a village 24-7 (and not merely during daylight hours) would be an appropriate targeting of the population because it serves to protect that right.

General McChrystal's guidance to the troops reflects his understanding of this necessity. The Tactical Directive released in July notes,

We must fight the insurgents, and will use the tools at our disposal to both defeat the enemy and protect our forces. But we will not win based on the number of Taliban we kill, but instead on our ability to separate insurgents from the center of gravity – the people. That means we must respect and protect the population from coercion and violence – and operate in a manner which will win their support.²

The implication of McChrystal's guidance has been a reduction in the use of lethal force to spare noncombatants the harm that clearly results when discrimination is difficult. The new standard attempts to eliminate all infringements of the population's right to life and livelihood, not merely violations.

It is important to note the difference between violating and infringing upon a right. A person's right is infringed when she is prevented from expressing it. For example, my right to free speech is infringed when I walk through an airport and am prohibited from cracking jokes about hiding a bomb in my carryon. A right is violated when the infringement "entails *disrespect* for the victim, one that debases her as a person."³ For example, my right to free speech is violated if I am detained for criticizing the president's education policy on my blog. Thus, targeting noncombatants intentionally *violates* their right to immunity (because it willfully disregards existence of the right), but unintentionally harming noncombatants *infringes* on that right (because it prevents the noncombatant – perhaps permanently – from expressing the right).

While for some observers this distinction is clearly nitpicking – a dead civilian doubtless cares not whether her death was the result of her right to noncombatant immunity being violated or infringed – for combatants it is vitally important. The difference between violating and infringing noncombatant rights is a key difference between just conduct in war and murder. There are justifiable reasons for infringing individuals' rights. The public safety I jeopardize by joking about a bomb in an airport clearly trumps my right to crack stupid jokes; likewise, the military benefit (and in the context of counter-intervention, the communal rights vindication) achieved from a particular engagement may trump my individual right to live untouched by the pain of war. If the military benefit is sufficiently important and killing me was not the purpose of the engagement, then my death is regrettable; it is not immoral. So long as it is proportionate, the force used in a counter-intervention serves the purpose of vindicating my right to life, even if I am killed as a result.

While the 'rights vindicating' approach to honoring noncombatant immunity may have intuitive appeal, there are some obvious concerns that arise from moves to limit the use of force for the purpose of protecting noncombatants. Arguably

¹ Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, chapter 6.

² Tactical Directive (unclassified), released July 6, 2009.

³ Fernando Tesón. "Eight Principles for Humanitarian Intervention," *Journal of Military Ethics*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2006), 104.

the two dominant concerns raised by skeptics of General McChrystal's approach are (1) What about when a soldier cannot achieve his objective without harming civilians, and (2) What about when defending noncombatant immunity comes at the expense of legitimate force protection? Both are important issues, and will be treated in turn.

Does This Approach Rule Out Kinetic Operations?

Some people have opposed General McChrystal's ROE for placing too great a limit on the use of lethal force. The logic is understandable and has been laid out above: Since the population is the strategic center of gravity, military actions that cause them harm are counterproductive. While roughly four times as many Afghan civilians are killed by Taliban IEDs and suicide bombers than coalition airstrikes, the perception of NATO and US forces killing civilians has had a profoundly negative effect on coalition efforts to build legitimacy.¹

While the commitment to limit collateral damage with stricter ROE is certainly in keeping with the *'hors de combat'* interpretation of noncombatant immunity, protecting the population from harm is not the fundamental purpose of noncombatant immunity: it is protecting the population's *right* to life and livelihood. Villagers' responses to the tanker bombings in Kunduz last September reveal their understanding of this distinction. Reports from local leaders demonstrate a recognition that many of the people present that night at the tankers were strangers, not villagers (and by implication likely insurgents, and therefore, legitimate targets). As one local leader recounted, "who goes out at 2 in the morning for fuel?"²

It is clear that not everyone at the tankers were Taliban – villagers reported Taliban threatening them if they did not assist with off-loading the fuel,³ and some children were roused by all the commotion and headed down to the river to

see what was going on.⁴ These are precisely the deaths General McChrystal's ROE are designed to eliminate. Under the *'hors de combat'* view of noncombatant immunity, these deaths are unacceptable. The rights-vindicating approach views these deaths differently. To the extent that bombing the tankers served the legitimate military purpose of stopping the insurgents from using the fuel in an attack on a nearby base, and was a means to defend the population's rights against Taliban coercion, it did not violate noncombatant immunity.⁵

It appears the people of Kunduz interpreted the bombing in this second way. There was virtually no opposition to the attacks, despite Taliban efforts to paint the NATO strikes as directed at the villagers. In fact, villagers called for *more* force to be used against the insurgents, not less. There is real fear among some Afghans that more restrictive rules of engagement will allow insurgents to continue their effort to intimidate the population. When General McChrystal met with village leaders in Kunduz following the bombing, Council Chairman Ahmadullah Wardak pleaded for NATO forces to act "more strongly" in the area. According to reports of the meeting, Wardak told the commander, "If we do three more operations like was done the other night, stability will come to Kunduz." He continued, "We've been too nice to the thugs."⁶ For Wardak, the use of lethal force is critical to vindicating his villagers' rights to life and livelihood. If ISAF wants to win the support of the population in Kunduz and elsewhere, it must use the force necessary to do so.

Is it regrettable that civilians were harmed and killed? Absolutely. Do the villagers' responses to the bombings demonstrate their acceptance of the use of lethal force for the purposes of eliminating the insurgents operating in their area and vindicating their right to live free from Taliban aggression? One could make a reasonable case that they do.

Again, the fundamental purpose of the norm of noncombatant immunity holds – while it is wrong to target noncombatants intentionally, it may not be wrong to harm or kill them. It is only

¹ "Afghans Protest New Rules of Engagement," September 38, 2009, <http://www.strategypage.com/htm/htwin/articles/20090928.aspx>. For a detailed review of civilian casualties from airstrikes, see Human Rights Watch, *Troops in Contact: Airstrikes and Civilian Deaths in Afghanistan*, September 2008. While US and NATO have virtually eliminated collateral damage in planned attacks, civilians are routinely injured and killed during the provision of close air support. See p. 4, 29.

² Chandrasekaran, "Decision on Airstrike in Afghanistan," September 6, 2009.

³ Pamela Constable, "Afghan Reaction to Strike Muted," *Washington Post*, September 8, 2009; Chandrasekaran, "Decision on Airstrike in Afghanistan," September 6, 2009.

⁴ Stephen Farrell and Richard Oppel, "NATO Strike Magnifies Divide on Afghan War," *New York Times*, September 5, 2009.

⁵ M. Karim Faiez and Laura King, "Afghan officials say NATO airstrike killed mostly civilians," *Los Angeles Times*, September 5, 2009.

⁶ Chandrasekaran, "Decision on Airstrike in Afghanistan," September 6, 2009. See also "Afghans Protest New Rules of Engagement," <http://www.strategypage.com/htm/htwin/articles/20090928.aspx>, September 28, 2009.

wrong to kill them unintentionally *when that killing was avoidable*. When rules of engagement become so restrictive that they prevent counterinsurgents from carrying out their legitimate role of vindicating rights and restoring welfare – when *any* collateral damage is seen as disproportionate – then the ROE have gone too far. In this situation, rights vindication becomes impossible without the killing and capturing of that subset of the insurgency who are responsible for violating those rights and who cannot be neutralized by other means.

One can make the case that the German ISAF troops should have sent ground forces to Kunduz rather than relying on airpower. Individual soldiers would have been better able to target insurgents precisely while minimizing harm to village residents. Some villagers may still have been killed, but likely fewer than resulted from the bomb strikes. Holding the caveats placed on Germany's participation in ISAF aside, if ground forces could have done as good a job punishing the Taliban while reassuring the population of ISAF's commitment to their security, then the case against the Germans has merit. Still, it appears that the psychological effect of the F-18 strikes was profound in terms of instilling confidence in the villagers that ISAF actually intended to protect them from the Taliban, which was something the German troops had been unable to do previously.

Does This Approach Rule Out Force Protection?

ROE that focus on minimizing harm rather than vindicating rights force an inherent tension between noncombatant immunity and force protection. Jonathan Landay, a writer for McClatchy, sparked an intense debate on this issue recently when he recounted a firefight between coalition forces (consisting of 60 Afghan soldiers, 20 border police officers, 13 U.S. Marine and Army trainers), and Landay and insurgents in the area outside of Ganjal in early September.¹ According to Landay, the 10th Mountain Division rejected requests for air support or artillery to repel an insurgency ambush, citing General McChrystal's guidance to avoid directing air power toward civilian areas. Finally, an hour and twenty minutes after the assault began, helicopters arrived to deliver white phosphorus cover for the retreating

troops. Four U.S. Marines were killed, along with eight Afghan military and police, and one Afghan interpreter. The Pentagon's press secretary, Geoff Morrell, denies Landay's interpretation of events, arguing that close air support (CAS) was rejected not to spare civilian casualties but because of the distance between the helicopters based in Jalalabad and the location of the ambush.²

The unclassified version of General McChrystal's directive for the use of airpower does not provide clear guidance for how the CAS request should have been answered. On the one hand, McChrystal states his expectation for:

... leaders at all levels to scrutinize and limit the use of force like close air support (CAS) against residential compounds and other locations likely to produce civilian casualties in accordance with this guidance. Commanders must weigh the gain of using CAS against the cost of civilian casualties, which in the long run make mission success more difficult and turn the Afghan people against us.³

On the other hand, two paragraphs later General McChrystal notes, "This directive does not prevent commanders from protecting the lives of their men and women as a matter of self-defense where it is determined no other options (specific options deleted due to operational security) are available to effectively counter the threat."⁴

If the main purpose of counterinsurgency operations is to protect the population from insurgent violence and coercion, sufficient support must be allocated to the combat units providing that protection. It is true from a strictly moral perspective that the lives of civilians 'trump' those of combatants, because of the difference noted earlier – combatants forfeit their right to life when they enter military service, while noncombatants retain their right to life regardless of circumstance. Nevertheless, unless combatants receive the support they need to protect the population, their efforts – and their deaths – will be in vain.

The '*hors de combat*' approach to noncombatant immunity makes force protection exceedingly difficult in situations where insurgents comele with the population. If the priority is to spare the population from potential harm, then

¹ Jonathan Landay, "We're Pinned Down: 4 U.S. Marines Die in Afghan Ambush," McClatchy News Service, September 9, 2009. <http://www.mcclatchydc.com/227/story/75036.html>. Accessed October 1, 2009.

² "DoD News Briefing with Geoff Morrell at the Pentagon Briefing Room, Arlington, VA," September 9, 2009. Accessed at <http://www.defenselink.mil/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=4475>, October 5, 2009.

³ Tactical Directive (unclassified), released July 6, 2009.

⁴ Tactical Directive (unclassified), released July 6, 2009.

counterinsurgents must accept that close air support cannot be guaranteed during their operations in or near populated areas. They either fight unsupported or they do not fight. The likely result of this approach is one where soldiers refrain from operating in areas where they fear (rightly or wrongly) that they would be denied close air support. This effectively cedes huge swaths of Afghanistan to the insurgents and prevents counterinsurgent forces from doing the very thing they are there to do – vindicate the rights of the Afghan people. Ironically, this effort to protect the local population from harm puts them individually and collectively in even greater danger as commanders make the decision not to risk their troops' welfare on missions that carry higher levels of risk.

A rights-vindicating approach would accept increased risk to noncombatants' safety for the purposes of defending the population from Taliban and Al Qaeda aggression. This support translates tactically into units that are willing to patrol greater distances from their FOBs or Combat Out Posts (COPs), operationally into commanders who are willing to place COPs farther from their FOBs, and strategically into the type of consistent, wide-ranging presence that is needed to actually protect the population.

Adopting a rights-vindicating approach means striking a balance between noncombatant immunity and force protection that both minimizes collateral damage and provides the necessary reinforcement for troops under assault. Should CAS be available every time someone calls a "Troops in Contact?" Clearly not, but neither should the general proximity of civilians preclude its use. It may be that the new ROE strike that balance and recent events only demonstrate the natural learning curve people experience when changing their ways of doing things. General McChrystal's repeated affirmation – that coalition forces will take necessary actions to support their troops while conducting the raiding and policing functions necessary to protect the population 24-7 from Taliban and al Qaeda aggression – could go a long way to reign in what may be an over-correction to our previous over-reliance on air power.

Conclusion

What insight can be drawn from this analysis? General McChrystal's new ROE appear to align more closely with the '*hors de combat*' interpretation of noncombatant immunity than with the 'rights vindication' view. Further, it

suggests the limitations of this interpretation in counterinsurgency – while it is morally and strategically essential to minimize harm to the greatest extent possible, efforts to *eliminate* harm thwart the counterinsurgent's dual objectives of aligning the population with the government and eliminating the insurgents' ability to threaten the population. Because insurgents coningle with civilians, there are moments when a trade-off exists between vindicating the population's rights and creating the conditions for their wellbeing on the one hand, and saving individual lives on the other. Actions taken to vindicate the population's rights should trump actions taken to protect individual lives, even when this means civilians' lives are lost.

In other words, while General McChrystal's approach in Afghanistan is a sensible and laudible effort to protect noncombatants from harm, this is ultimately not the goal of counter-intervention. The goal of counter-intervention is to protect the population's right to life and livelihood from Taliban and Al Qaeda attack. This is a more accurate understanding of the norm of noncombatant immunity and is a better method for linking the strategic, operational, and tactical centers of gravity in counterinsurgency. General McChrystal's Tactical Directive goes a long way towards correcting a willing acceptance of 'collateral damage' and forcing individual counterinsurgents to reflect on how they can be more respectful of noncombatant immunity. Still, that respect is only made meaningful to the extent that those counterinsurgents do what is needed to expel the Taliban and Al Qaeda from Afghan villages and restore Afghans' individual and collective rights to live their lives unmolested by outside forces. Ethical counterinsurgency requires the proportionate use of lethal force for vindicating rights and providing those conditions that foster the population's collective life and wellbeing. Service personnel should be provided the parameters and support with which to conduct these vital tasks.

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Information Operations in Adaptive Campaigning

Putting the Green* in the Green Zone

by Major Andrew Dahl, IO RTF 4

* *Green* – In common military usage Red denotes activities by the enemy, Blue is friendly forces, and Green denotes neutrals, which in this context is used for the local population.

Background

This paper is based on *Adaptive Campaigning; The Land Force Response to Complex Warfighting*, 01 Dec 2007. That reference was replaced by *Adaptive Campaigning 09 – Army's Future Land Operating Concept* Sep 09; however, this amended doctrine represents an incremental change from the original and has little impact on this paper.

Australia is a great partner. Yet some Australian professionals are sensitive that their niche contributed capabilities, however important and valued, are not a broad spectrum capability at current levels of commitment to Afghanistan. For the author, this "means for me that I have risked my life, and other are risking theirs, but without any possibility of winning based on *our* efforts. So the paper is born from the frustration that we must rely on the efforts of others for any victory, and as MAJGEN Jim Molan said, we as a country are in this to the last drop of American/British/Canadian blood." This paper is further "born out of long standing dissatisfaction with our IO doctrine, and the doctrine of all western powers. However, I think that Adaptive Campaigning, while far from perfect, represents a significant step forward in IO doctrine that can achieve a real effect in COIN. While I think that Adaptive Campaigning is a strong part of the COIN solution, I am also frustrated by our obsession with Joint Land Combat over all other lines of operation, where I think all COIN experts would agree that the Population Protection is the key at this stage of the Afghanistan campaign. There is certainly much debate in the Australian defence force about these issues." Thanks for bringing the debate here.

-- SWJ Editors, based on a dialog with the author

Introduction

'One of the very difficult things for a regular army to understand is that an undefeated army can lose a war'.¹ The Vietnam experience clearly demonstrated that an army can achieve a sustained string of tactical successes, but still suffer Operational and Strategic failures. This experience introduced the concept of fighting the *wrong war*; and this is a risk that Australia and the international community faces in current operations in Afghanistan. Whilst the insurgents are fighting 'a battle for the hearts and minds of the population'², if the counter insurgency force is focused on fighting the insurgents rather than on gaining the support of the population it is fighting the *wrong war*. Thus the insurgents gain access to

'the richest source of power to wage war', which according to Mao, *lies in the masses of the people*.³

There are two general approaches to Counter Insurgency (COIN) operations. 'These two approaches – annihilating versus turning the loyalty of the people – are the foundation of the two approaches to COIN to which armies have turned throughout history.'⁴ The comparison is between the Clausewitzian concept of the destruction of the enemy military capacity by targeting the red Centre of Gravity (CoG); 'The destruction of the enemy's armed force appears, therefore, always as the superior and more effectual means, to which all others must give way'⁵; to a more politically effective and psychologically appealing concept based on addressing the concerns of the local population: 'Equally important, the critical mass of

¹Haycock, R. *Regular Armies and Insurgencies*, p9.

² Stubbs, R, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*, p147.

³ Mao Tse-Tung, *Selected Military Writings of Mao Tse-Tung*, p260.

⁴ Nagl, J, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, p26.

⁵Carl von Clausewitz: *Clausewitz on War*, p134.

the people must believe that there is greater advantage and hope in supporting the existing government rather than the revolutionary force.¹

In reality, the two approaches are not mutually exclusive, and relying on only 'hearts-and-minds' is bad strategy both because it can't work and because it directs an enemy onto one of our principal vulnerabilities². The international approach to COIN in Afghanistan combines these two approaches, and is based on a 'clear, hold and build'³ strategy. The clear phase is intended to remove insurgents from designated areas, and this phase requires direct targeting against the red CoG. The hold and build phases of this strategy are targeted at the local population, and require a green-focused approach. By fighting a wrong war, the counter insurgency force remains focused on the clear phase and never moves on effectively to the hold and build phases. The debate in both the Australian and the International community about strategy in Afghanistan appears to be less about this approach, but more about how to transition from the clear phase, to effectively achieve the hold and build phases. It is, however, clear that this transition depends on the application of effective Information Operations (IO) based on sound IO doctrine.

In 1996 the author entered the IO arena as the Staff Officer Grade 2 IO at Headquarters of the Australian 1st Division. Over a period of three years he worked in the field of IO, both in barracks on a number of JTF⁴ level exercises; in the operational environment he was the IO Officer for Operation QUICKSTEP⁵ in 2006 and for the Reconstruction Task Force Number 4 (RTF 4) on Operation SLIPPER in the Uruzgan province of Afghanistan during 2008. From this experience he has developed a perspective on IO that diverges significantly from current ADF⁶ IO doctrine in key areas.

The aim of this paper is to describe this divergence from ADF doctrine, and to propose modifications to the current doctrine to enhance IO decision making methods within the ADF for COIN operations, both generally and with specific emphasis on current COIN operations in Afghanistan.

The paper begins by describing the key aspects of the Australian Army doctrine of Adaptive Campaigning⁷, demonstrating that it represents a significant advance in offensive IO doctrine. It then identifies some perceived shortfalls that remain in current IO doctrine. Specifically it will discuss two main areas of weakness; being a lack of consideration of 'social influence' on decision making, and a lack of attention to 'blue decision making processes'. As part of these discussions, it proposes ways of addressing these identified shortfalls in the IO domain.

The paper then proposes a model for the application and measurement of IO within a COIN operation. This statistical model will use the people of the Afghanistan as the principle target of a COIN campaign, selected to allow real verification of decision making by the application of Operational Analysis. The model will be used to introduce two new planning concepts in the green domain, being *Centre of Balance* and, in conjunction with this, the use of *Force Field Analysis*. These tools will then be applied to Lines of Operation identified in Adaptive Campaigning to provide examples of their potential applicability to ADF operational planning.

This paper contends that failure to address these issues places the ADF at risk of fighting the wrong war. To implement an effective COIN strategy we must transition from *clear* to *hold* and *build*, and this will not occur while we continue to pick and choose which of the Adaptive Campaigning Lines of Operation we will resource and implement, and which we will leave for allies to either resource or ignore.

What is Adaptive Campaigning?

Adaptive Campaigning is the ADF Land Force response to Complex Warfighting. The intent of this doctrine is to shape and develop the Australian Army for the future operating environment. Adaptive Campaigning has been described as '*the framework for conflict resolution based on three fundamental pillars. The first pillar is that actions taken by the Land Force must be part of a whole-of-government approach and not conducted in isolation or without purpose. The second pillar, related directly to the first, is the requirement to adopt a holistic approach that considers tactical actions along multiple, simultaneous lines of operation to create conditions that achieve operational objectives. The third pillar is the recognition that to be successful*

¹Sarkesian, S, *Unconventional Conflicts in a New Security Era: Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, p16.

²Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan*.

³LWD 3-0-1 *Counter Insurgency – Developing Doctrine*.

⁴Joint Task Force.

⁵Non Combatant Evacuation Operation of Fiji and Tonga.

⁶Australian Defence Force.

⁷*Adaptive Campaigning; The Land Force Response to Complex Warfighting*, 01 Dec 2007.

the Land Force, and the approach taken by the Land Force, must be inherently adaptive¹.

Adaptive Campaigning is clearly a joint and Whole of Government (WoG) population centric approach to campaigning that accords with the four domain approach to IO proposed later in this paper. A comparison of the purpose of Adaptive Campaigning with the joint definition of IO demonstrates that Adaptive Campaigning is actually an evolution of the offensive aspects of IO doctrine. The definition of IO and Adaptive Campaigning are reproduced below with the key sections in bold in both definitions so that this linkage can be clearly identified. If Australia's national interest is to *allow peaceful political discourse and a return to normality* then the Adaptive Campaigning definition is identical to the definition of the offensive component of IO.

'Adaptive Campaigning is defined as: 'Actions taken by the Land Force as part of the military contribution to a Whole of Government approach to resolving conflicts.' The purpose of Adaptive Campaigning is **to influence and shape the perceptions, allegiances and actions of a target population** and control the overall environment to **allow peaceful political discourse and a return to normality.**²

'Information Operations - The coordination of information effects **to influence the decision making and actions of a target audience** and to protect and enhance our decision making and actions **in support of national interests.**³

The area of IO doctrine not addressed within the doctrine of Adaptive Campaigning is the requirement '*to protect and enhance our decision making and actions*'. This omission will be discussed in detail in the section on blue force decision making issues later in this paper. Given that Adaptive Campaigning is an IO doctrine, it is not surprising that the application of the five LoO shown in Figure 1 and described below appeared to be intuitively and logically correct method of achieving influence in a COIN campaign:

- **Joint Land Combat** - actions to defeat organised resistance and secure the environment in order to set and sustain the conditions required for the other lines of operation.

- **Population Protection** - actions to provide protection and security to threatened populations in order to set the conditions to establish order and the rule of law.
- **Public Information** - actions that inform and shape the perceptions, attitudes, behaviour, and understanding of target population groups; assure the quality of our own information; while attempting to disrupt or dislocate enemy command capabilities.
- **Population Support** - actions to relieve immediate human suffering by establishing, restoring, or temporarily replacing necessary essential services in affected communities.
- **Indigenous Capacity Building** - actions to nurture the establishment of capacity within civil communities whilst simultaneously working to establish long term governance and socio-economic capacity to meet

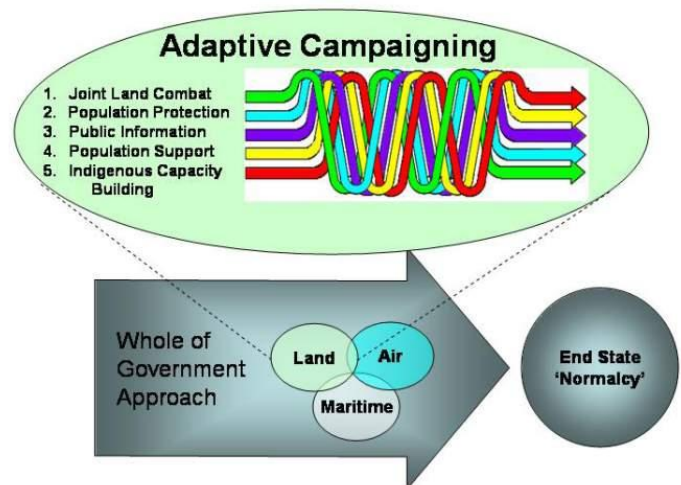


Figure 1 – Adaptive Campaigning Lines of Operation

people's needs.

In addition to the five LoO, Adaptive Campaigning describes an Adaptation Cycle illustrated in Figure 2. The Adaptation Cycle proposes that planning and execution are the start point for interaction within any complex adaptive system, and that an adaptation cycle of some sort is

¹ Scott, T. *Defeating Insurgencies: Adaptive Campaigning and an Australian Way of War*, 2008.

² *Adaptive Campaigning; The Land Force Response to Complex Warfighting*, 01 Dec 07.

³ ADDP 3.13 Information Operations Procedures.

essential to operational success. While the illustrated adaption cycle is the proposed and endorsed model, the key effect is that the force be inherently adaptive.



Figure 2 – Adaptive Campaigning Adaption Cycle

What is Wrong With Current IO?

US, UK and Australian IO doctrines are largely similar in content, and in all doctrines display a lack of alignment between the definition of the intent (Ends) of the doctrines, and the method of execution in terms of elements and

processes (Ways and Means). While IO doctrine continues to develop (as demonstrated by the recent production of the developing doctrine of Information Actions¹), this development continues to be marginal in addressing issues of linking the ways and means to the stated ends. While IO doctrine is changing, change should not of itself be confused with progress.

Few would question the appropriateness of the stated ends of IO, illustrated in the definition of IO given earlier in this paper. While the definition appears sound, what follows it in most doctrines lacks the clarity of purpose contained within this definition. Specifically these doctrines lack an effective working model of the context in which IO must operate, and as a result of this incomplete model lack the appropriate elements to influence the full context. In addition, few if any elements of IO in current doctrines examine issues of protecting and enhancing blue force decision making.

A Three Domain Model

Most doctrines divide the IO context into three domains, being physical, informational and cognitive, and attempt to describe IO as actions taken in the information domain to influence the cognitive domain. Most doctrines lack maturity within this three domain model, and a more mature

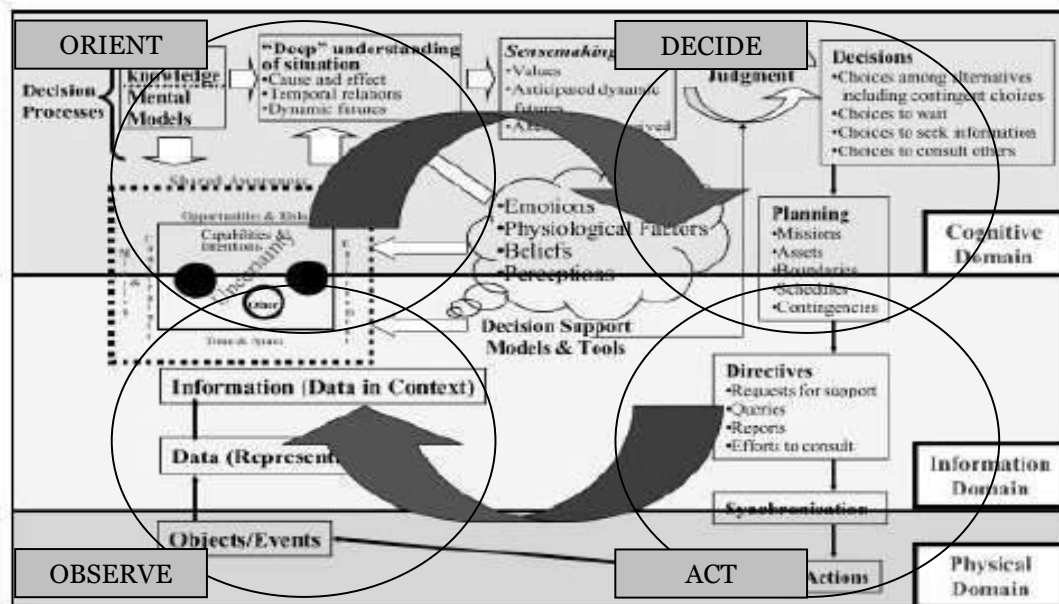


Figure 34. Action-Reaction Cycle

Figure 3 – Smiths Three Domain Model

¹ LWD 3-2-0 Information Actions – Developing Doctrine.

description of the three domain model has been provided by Edward A. Smith, in his work on Effects Based Operations¹, as shown at Figure 3.

This early Smith three domain model provides more clarity on data flows and interactions within these three domains, and on its own is a useful enhancement to IO doctrine. Within the model the OODA² components of the Boyd cycle can be clearly seen, with the OODA labels added to the Smith model by the author.

The concept that information is the only influence on the cognitive domain, however, is hardly credible. This three domain model fails to acknowledge a wide range of other significant human motivators. One of the greatest influences on the decision making and actions of the broader population is money, as just one example. Money is a tool that is used extensively to influence populations and is recognised in our developing COIN doctrine, which states that '*money is ammunition in both insurgency and COIN*³'. No IO doctrine recognises this as an element, and as a result no doctrinal guidance in the application of this source of influence has been codified, resulting

in frequent mistakes in applying this resource. Other examples of key factors that influence target audiences that are not acknowledged in the three domain model include religion, education, social standing, tribal tradition, etc.

A Four Domain Model

The Social Cognitive domain model provided by Edward A. Smith in his later work on Complexity⁴ is shown in Figure 4. While not endorsing Smith's effects-based approach to operations, this four domain model is a significant step forward in conceptualising the IO context, and significantly it overcomes all of the shortcomings identified above in the three domain model.

It is clear from even a cursory view of this model that almost all the effects that a Commander would wish to generate to achieve victory in a COIN campaign are in the Social domain, while most military action occurs in the Physical domain. In this model the expanded role of IO is to use information and action not just to influence the Cognitive domain via the Information domain, as most doctrines would propose, but to achieve

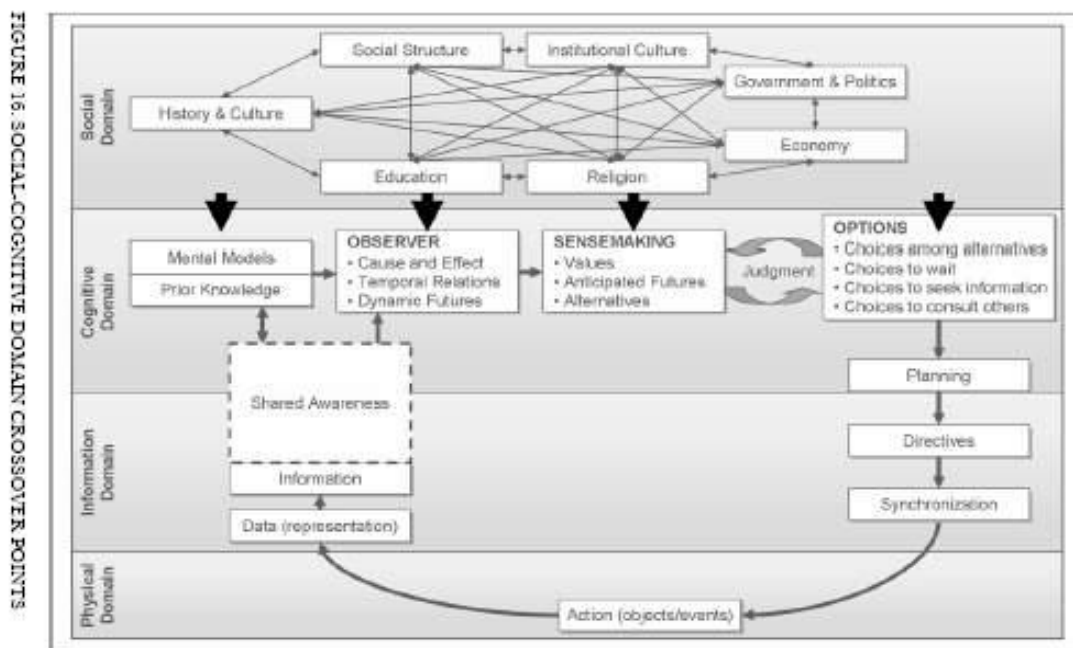


Figure 4 – Smiths Social Cognitive Domain Model

¹ Edward A. Smith, *Effects Based Operations: Applying network centric warfare in peace, crisis and war*.

² The Boyd Cycle – Observe, Orient, Decide, Act.

³ LWD 3-0-1 Counter Insurgency – Developing Doctrine.

⁴ Edward A. Smith, *Complexity, Networking, & Effects Based Approaches to Operations*.

influence in the Social domain. The Social domain is the only place where a COIN campaign can be won or lost, and it is for this reason that ADF operations need to focus on the Social domain and to adopt a green view in the development and application of IO doctrine and operational planning in the hold and build phases of a COIN campaign.

Elements of IO Issues

Acceptance of the Smith four domain model clears the way for the inclusion of this wider social context in the means and methods used to influence target groups, allowing the development of doctrine, tactics, techniques and procedures. Figure 5 illustrates the author's attempts to place the current Australian doctrinal elements of IO into the four domain model. Use of the four domain model to map current IO elements highlights the limits of current doctrine, and Figure 5 includes some of the author's views on missing doctrinal elements. This work is incomplete, and a significant body of work to develop missing elements of IO, and capture and codify best practice in each area remains to be conducted. Some components such as Army Knowledge Management (AKM) and Common Operation Picture (COP) have received or are receiving significant attention; however, other issues such as application of financial resources or decision support methodologies currently appear to

lack the same level of focus.

IO Adaption Cycles

As described earlier, Smith's three domain model displays close alignment with the classical Boyd OODA cycle. The doctrine of Adaptive Campaigning introduces a modification of the Boyd cycle known as the Adaption or ASDA (Act, Sense, Decide, Adapt) Cycle. In his four domain model Smith describes his essential processes as being awareness creation, sensemaking, social interaction, decision making and execution as shown in Figure 6. These processes suggest another modification to the Boyd cycle which provides for an interaction within the social domain before decision and action. This modification proposes a five phase cycle being Observation, Orientation, *Interaction*, Decision and Action (OOIDA). The ASDA Cycle proposes that discovery actions be taken, and that these form the basis for adaptation, but it is clear that many within the ADF do not find the ASDA Cycle to be intuitively appealing. The proposed OOIDA modification is not intended to replace this ASDA Cycle, but to provide another method of viewing the process of achieving adaption, with the benefit that implications in the social domain are considered before discovery action is initiated.

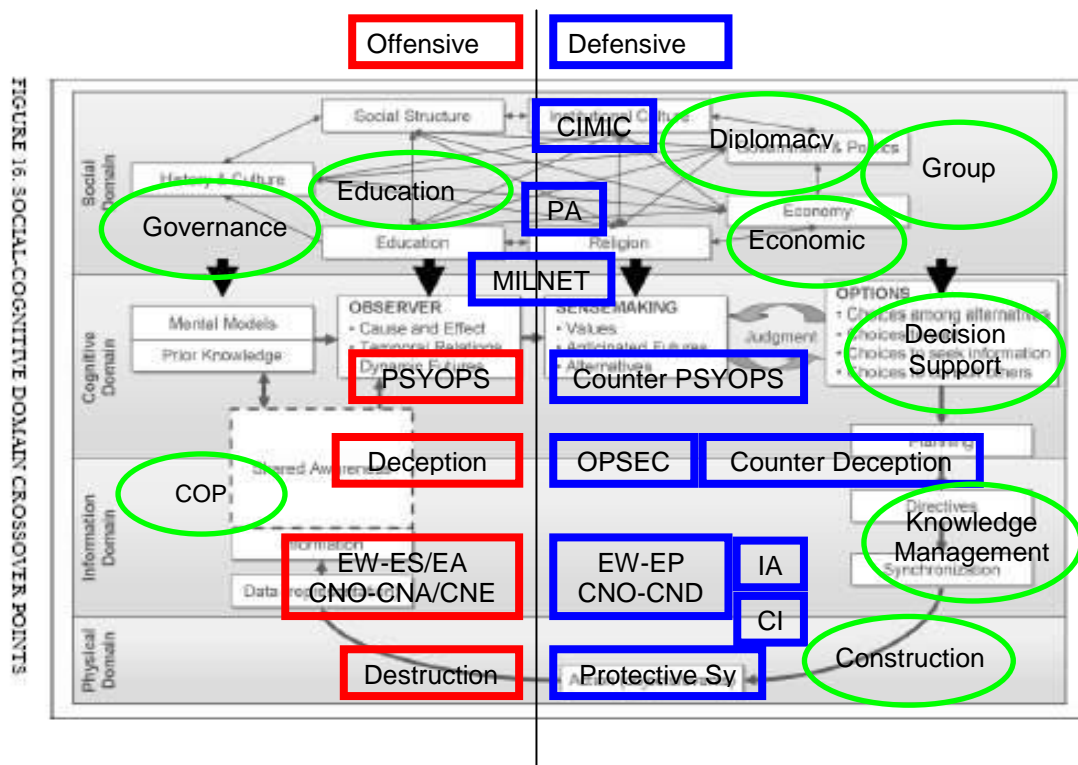


Figure 5 – IO Element Alignment with Four Domain Model¹

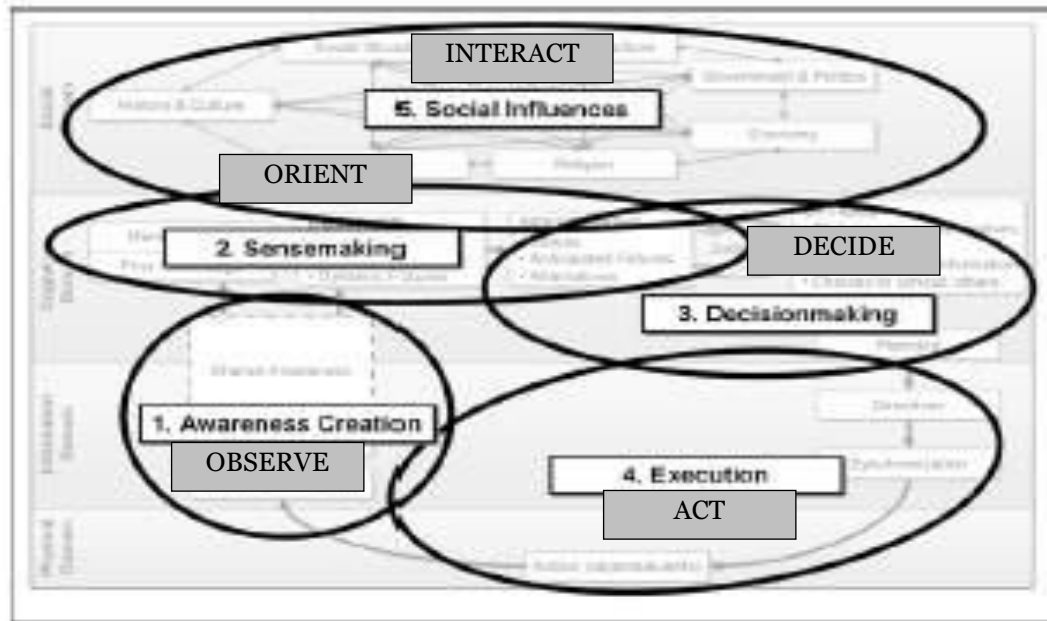


FIGURE 17. ESSENTIAL PROCESSES

Figure 6 – Smiths Essential Processes and Dahls OOIDA Loop

Blue Decision Making Issues

The other major omission from IO doctrine are elements or methods to enhance our own decision making. Those who use the Military Appreciation Process (MAP) or Joint MAP (JMAP) on a regular basis will all agree that the process has flaws, and the symptoms of ‘Groupthink’¹ are magnified by military structures. However, while IO is by definition tasked to ‘*protect and enhance our decision making and actions*’, current IO doctrinal elements are focused only on the protection of information (IA, OPSEC, CI, EP, CND²) and there are no IO doctrinal process or elements designed to examine our methods of decision making with view to enhancing them. With no doctrinal review of decision making or of decision making processes, this begs the questions, “what if our entire decision making processes are flawed and we were making the wrong decisions?” “What if our Warfighting culture and the red focus of our decision making

process are leading us down the path of potentially fighting the ‘wrong war’ in Afghanistan?”

Planning within Army is currently based on the Military Appreciation Process (MAP) and while there is debate and differences in application across Army, fundamentally our plans are based on achieving Decisive Events (DEs). A DE comes from a combination of Essential Tasks and enemy Targetable Critical Vulnerabilities (TCVs), with these TCVs being developed as part of a Red CoG analysis. This Red CoG approach is clearly based on the Clausewitzian concept of destruction of the enemy force as discussed in the introduction to this paper.

All strategic guidance and historical lessons suggest that the people of Afghanistan are our CoG, which would be a green CoG rather than the red one expected within the MAP. The application of the CoG method of targeting green populations is clearly possible, but in the experience of the author it can be problematic. The use of a CoG construct fundamentally assumes a ‘systems of systems’ approach that allows for the disaggregation of systems, while the four domains of Smith’s model represent a complex adaptive system that resists this process.

Regardless of the possibility of a green CoG approach, our ADF planners have been conditioned

¹ Groupthink is a type of thought exhibited by group members who try to minimize conflict and reach consensus without critically testing, analyzing, and evaluating ideas, <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

² IA – Information Assurance, OPSEC – Operational Security, CI – Counter Intelligence, EP – Electronic Protection, CND – Computer Network Defence.

by extensive training and doctrinal guidance to target the red CoG, so while green factors are considered important, it is red CoG issues that retain primacy. This is a key area where our planning process may be flawed, and in COIN operations our planners should not be arguing about how to make our DEs have a greater red focus, but how to make them have a green focus. This is not a flaw that the Taliban have in their planning processes, as while they clearly do target ISAF¹, this is incidental to their desire to influence local populations to support their activities. If the Taliban produced operational documents similar to ours, it is likely that they would have a main IO based document describing the desired influence effect on the local population, and their manoeuvre and fire support issues would be covered at the back with supporting annexes. We, in contrast, continue to shove IO up the back as a supporting plan to our main manoeuvre based planning documents, normally prepared after the main plan and often in isolation. *'We typically design physical operations first, then craft supporting information operations to explain our actions. This is the reverse of al-Qaeda's approach. For all our professionalism, compared to the enemy's, our public information is an afterthought. In military terms, for al-Qaeda the 'main effort' is information; for us, information is a 'supporting effort'*².

This may be a controversial thesis in some circles; however, in seeking supporting evidence ask the following questions:

Q1: If the people of Afghanistan are our operational CoG, where is the green CoG analysis with resulting green TCVs driving our campaign planning? RTF 4 began this work at the tactical level, but there appears to be no evidence that this has been done at the operational or strategic level.

Q2: What percentage of the Australian effort is targeted outside the Joint Land Combat LoO? We can always make the claim that the Dutch lead all the green effects via the PRT³, but our contribution to LoO outside Joint Land Combat and more recently in Capacity Building demonstrate a lack of attention to the other LoO of Adaptive Campaigning.

Q3: What percentage of our collective effort is targeted at the Green population? We are

appropriately concerned with preventing the Taliban from achieving tactical surprise, but this becomes an obsession when almost all of our Intelligence effort is red focused.

The answers to just these three questions demonstrate that the ADF approach to COIN in Afghanistan is skewed towards the red CoG and the Joint Land Combat LoO, and unless we can balance our contribution across all the LoO contained in Adaptive Campaigning (and as proposed in Adaptive Campaigning) we are in danger of prosecuting the 'wrong war'. To be fair this is not an issue that is exclusive the responsibility of the ADF, as it is the Australian Government that has set the tone for this by pursuing a strategy that is skewed toward employing a Military solution to Afghanistan without appropriate allocation of other elements of national power at a WoG level. *'If it is Government policy to be in Afghanistan, let's match the tactical competence of our troops with strong strategic decision making: do it right or get out'*⁴.

Some doctrinal method of injecting green into our decision making processes and reviewing our operational design is required. One possible doctrinal method of measuring and reviewing our decision making methodologies is by the application of Operational Analysis (OA). Currently our OA effort is not focused on the population of Afghanistan and appears to operate more like a science LO to the deployed force. Our OA assets are not located in the same province as the bulk of our deployed forces, and this means that our OA effort is not assisting us to measure progress towards or away from our operational goals. The development of a population centric model and an operational objective that enables the application of OA based measurement tools would allow us to employ our OA assets to measure our progress among the population. This feedback loop would be one method of ensuring that we review our decision making and operational design in line with actual achieved performance.

Population Model

If we accept the premise that IO encompasses the actions taken in all four of Smith domains, but especially in the social domain, then it is useful to propose a model to support operational planning to influence the target audience and to measure the progress of actions in the social domain. The model proposed is a statistical one,

¹ International Security Assistance Force.

² Kilcullen, D. – *New Paradigms For the 21st Century*, p8.

³ Provincial Reconstruction Team.

⁴ *More commitment or get out*, MAJGEN J. Molan, The Age 15 Sep 09.

given that the normal distribution curve is a widely accepted and well understood model that clearly lends itself to the use of OA tools, techniques and assets to measure and track progress. It assumes that the key measure of COIN success is the attitude of the population towards either the Taliban (TB) or the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRoA), and further, that this population across Afghanistan is normally distributed (i.e. distributed in a bell curve). This focus on the attitude of a single population would not work in all cases, for example in a Northern Ireland type situation with two separate clearly defined populations, and this model may require the examination of multiple populations in other contexts. However, in the Afghanistan example the population, although fractured by tribal differences, is largely from a single ethnic religious group.

Given that this is a statistical model, it is appropriate to begin with some revision on the characteristics of a normal distribution. The normal distribution is bell shaped and symmetrical, with values clustered around the mean. The area under the curve represents probability, and 68% of the population are within +/-one standard deviation from the mean, 95% are within +/-two standard deviations from the mean, and 99% are within +/-three standard deviations from the mean. Key aspects of a normal distribution are shown in Figure 7 for review purposes.

For the purposes of the model a normal distribution has been placed on an axis showing standard three standard deviations either side of

the mean. The x-axis of the graph will represent the attitude of the population towards the IRoA and TB. Those committed to active support the TB will be on the far left, with those actively supporting the IRoA on the far right. The population is divided into six different categories, being committed TB, strongly pro TB, weakly pro TB, weakly pro IRoA, strongly pro IRoA, and committed to IRoA. For the purposes on this model, these six categories will be fixed to the x-axis and the distribution will move against this axis based on the actions of the TB and IRoA/ISAF. The intent of both sides is clearly to move the distribution in their favour, with the TB seeking to move the distribution to the left and IRoA/ISAF seeking to move the distribution to the right. In this model the aim of any COIN campaign is to move the distribution to the right until the level of committed TB support is minimal, and the level of support for IRoA/ISAF is significantly increased.

In a departure from normal statistical practice, the distribution has been placed upside down as shown in Figure 8. This has been done to allow the concept to be more easily explained to others, as in our contemporary experience of Afghanistan it is common to describe the attitude of the local population as 'sitting on the fence'. With the distribution inverted this is how the distribution appears graphically. With the distribution inverted it is also easily possible to visualise a new concept of addressing planning being the renaming of the location of the mean as the 'Centre of Balance' (CoB), with our clear aim being to move this CoB to the right. The CoB concept appears to be similar in

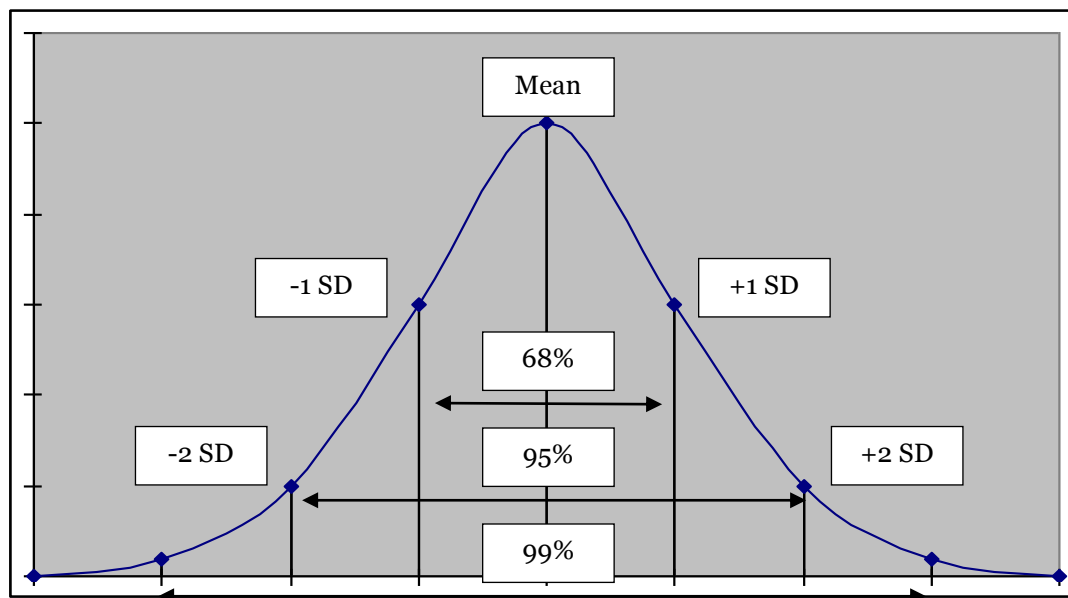


Figure 7 – Characteristics of a Normal Distribution

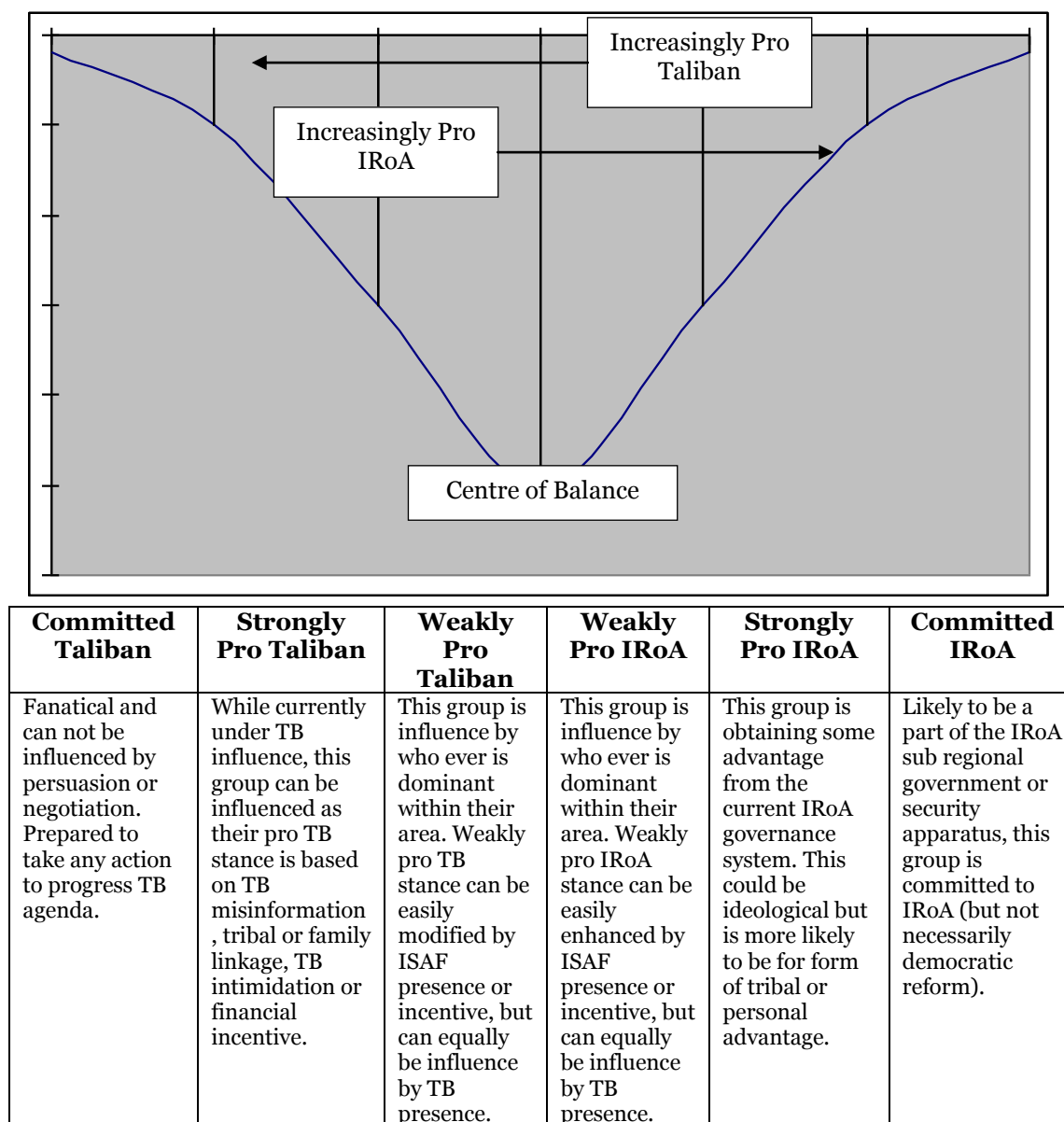


Figure 8 – Populations Attitude Model

concept to Gladwell's ¹ idea of the 'Tipping Point' defined as the moment of the critical mass.

In proposing such a model it is important to provide a description of the attitudes of the populations within the model, as this enables measurement of the population position. Some basic descriptors for population attitudes to the model are shown in Figure 8, but it should be noted that these are preliminary thoughts that could be

matured with increased intellectual effort. Certainly the authors experience with RTF 4 demonstrates that Australian officers interacting with the local population can easily gauge the mood of a population and place its mean into one of these categories, and with the support and application of appropriate OA tools and techniques it is likely that this can be done with a high degree of accuracy.

To achieve movement of the Centre of Balance (CoB) the employments of a well known problem solving process know as Force Field Analysis is proposed. The Force Field Analysis

¹ Gladwell, M, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, 2000.

process fits well with the statistical population model, and its simplicity supports its easy inclusion into any planning process down to the lowest level. The population model and the use of both the CoB and Force Field Analysis are intentionally simplistic concepts that can be easily explained and understood at the lowest tactical level. The definition of Force Field Analysis given below is simple to understand and no further explanation of its application is provided. Integration into the MAP would simply be based on the development of essential tasks based on the forces identified as moving the CoB of the population to the right or preventing the CoB from moving to the left.

‘Force field analysis is an influential development in the field of social science. It provides a framework for looking at the factors (forces) that influence a situation, originally social situations. It looks at forces that are either driving movement toward a goal (helping forces) or blocking movement toward a goal (hindering forces).¹

Having proposed the model and planning tools for use with it, the paper will now attempt to demonstrate their application to the LoO contained within Adaptive Campaigning to indicate how the CoB of the Afghan populations could be influenced using Force Field Analysis methodology.

Application in Adaptive Campaigning

The remainder of this paper will discuss the application of the modifications of IO doctrine outlined in this paper on the Adaptive Campaigning LoO with specific applicability to COIN Operations in Afghanistan. It will provide some discussion regarding the key IO issues within each LoO, and then provide some examples of the use of Force Field Analysis to move the CoB within each LoO in turn. As a complex adaptive system, these explanations and examples may no longer be valid, but are provided as an example of applicability to the Uruzgan province as at Oct 2008.

Population Protection

Contemporary experience clearly shows that security is the main area of concern of the local population in Afghanistan. There is a strong argument that this LoO is the foundation on which all the other LoO are build as *‘without security*

there can be no progress—good intentions and good deeds are not sufficient². This importance is clearly supported by our developing doctrine of COIN, which states that *‘the control of violence will be a central requirement prior to establishing the conditions for major actions within other lines of operation³*.’ One memorable AAR⁴ verbal briefing provided to the author by a US Army Officer indicated that a clear lesson from his experience was that *‘if you are not protecting the population 24/7 then you are not protecting the population’*, a lesson that is reinforced by Kilcullen who says that *‘We must focus on providing human security to the Afghan population, where they live, 24 hours a day. This, rather than destroying the enemy, is the central task of counterinsurgency⁵*.’ There is a key difference between actively protecting the population, and providing incidental protection while protecting your own forces. In the latter case any protection to the population is simply a side effect of self protection and local national populations can identify from our actions that our protection is not provided for their benefit.

Population Protection occurs in three main layers; the ability to self protect at the family/community level; the protection provided by the Afghan security forces; and finally the protection provided by ISAF. This first layer of self protection is one that should be examined closely in light of Malayan lessons relating to the success of home and village guards. Much early progress was made in Afghanistan in disarmament of the population but there is some evidence that this was not done in a tribally balanced way. The Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP) and ISAF in Afghanistan are all reluctant to allow anyone but registered security forces to possess weapons, however, it is often stated by IROA officials that a farmer is allowed to own an AK47 for self protection. This has led to an inconsistent weapons ownership policy and frequent weapon confiscation by ANA, ANP and ISAF. Local populations are clearly of the view that there are not enough weapons in the community to allow the population to protect itself, and it may well be true that increasing the number of weapons could have a significant positive impact on this LoO. *‘Whatever government is in power and whatever your political leanings, unless you are confident in the ability of your government to enforce its peace then the man with a gun at your*

¹ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Force_field_analysis on 03 Apr 09.

² Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan*.

³ LWD 3-0-1 Counter Insurgency – Developing Doctrine.

⁴ After Action Review.

⁵ Kilcullen, D. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*, p111

*door at midnight is your master*¹, unless of course you have a gun to match his.

Protection provided to local nationals by local security forces is of a highly variable standard. The ANP have poor training and a culture of corruption that makes them, in the eyes of the local nationals, more often part of the problem than part of the solution to their security needs. The ANA have a higher standard of training, but being drawn from across the country, are not tribally linked to the community and this impacts on the level of trust that the community has in them. Systems needed to allow local nationals to call for the assistance of security forces are at best in their infancy. This leaves the local population in a situation where they are not permitted to protect themselves, they do not trust either the ANP or the ANA, and they have no system to allow them to call for emergency security assistance even if they wanted to.

Generally the local population does trust ISAF to provide security, and to progress this LoO we should conduct highly visible operations partnered with ANA and ANP that are designed with the protection of the population in mind, and not just with this as a useful side effect of our own self protection. Experience from RTF 4 suggests that the impact of this incidental type of protection, if provided for extended periods, can be seen on the local population, and that sustained presence and positive interaction will eventually lead to a movement in the CoB of the population to the right. It is likely that security operations specifically designed to provide population protection will have a quicker and more substantial impact on local populations. Importantly, this LoO is the key to enabling all other LoO in the social domain, and the role of Joint Land Combat is as an enabler to this LoO.

Other examples of the application of Force Field Analysis to determine possible methods of influencing the CoB in the Population Protection LoO are shown in Table 1.

Joint Land Combat

The ADF contribution to Afghanistan is heavily based on capabilities designed for employment primarily on the Joint Land Combat LoO. When looking at the proposed population model, it would be easy to assume that using these capabilities to remove those in the strongly pro TB and pro TB category would automatically change

the CoB and move the mean to the right. Experience shows that this impact is dependant on the method of removal as *'ongoing military operations alienate and disrupt local populations'*². It is clear from current operations in Afghanistan that actions such as collateral damage involving civilians have a strongly negative impact and potentially move the mean to the left, as *'the population's alienation and growing sympathies for the Taliban are in large part due to the very high civilian casualty rate of US-NATO operations in Afghanistan'*³.

It is clear that not all TB are committed and many are influenced or intimidated to participate in the insurgency. Australian policies relating to not negotiating with terrorists and the classification of all TB as such do not recognise the complex nature of the operating environment. Without amnesty programs there is no method for populations linked to the TB to move to the right, so support for such programs should be Australian policy. *'The offer of reconciliation can sow internal division within the insurgency between moderates and hardliners, erode insurgent morale, and degrade insurgent capabilities by depriving the insurgency of the manpower and leadership of insurgents who reconcile.'*⁴ Conducting high end kinetic actions and withholding amnesty from those who have been induced to fight with the TB has the potential to influence the rest of the population to the left, given the close family and tribal linkages within the community. Thus it is an excessive focus on fighting the TB that is one of the key things that is likely to contribute to breeding the next generation of TB.

This is not to suggest that the hard core committed TB should not be killed or captured where possible, as this is clearly good COIN strategy. As indicated in the introduction, the two approaches to COIN are not mutually exclusive, and targeting of the red CoG remains critical to success, as *'it is sometimes forgotten, in our constant repetition of the mantra that there is no military solution to an insurgency, that there could be no solution without effective military action and that this action inevitably focused, in the first instance, on the annihilation of the enemy'*⁵. It is also true that, if we are engaged in Joint Land Combat by TB in a conventional manner, then we must win or

² Frewen, J.J. *Contested Nation-Building: The Challenge Of Countering Insurgency In Afghanistan In 2007, 2008.*

³ Gagnon-Lefebvre, V. *Applying the Iraqi Surge Strategy to Afghanistan: Consequences of President Obama Escalating the Afghan Conflict*, 2009.

⁴ Report to Congress, *Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, January 2009.

⁵ Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan.*

¹ Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan.*



Move the Population Right (Pro IRoA) 
<p>Arrest, investigation, processing and detention of criminals. Stable AO's allowing increased familiarity with LN personalities and patterns. Restriction on movement and supervision of curfews. Covert surveillance, patrolling and physical security of key points. Cordon and search of COI/POI ¹ with support from LN elders. Emergency response system that is responsive to LN needs. EOD² disposal system that is responsive to LN needs. Mentoring and supervision of ANA and ANP. Uniform policy on self protection gun ownership including registration and licensing. Development of local ANP auxiliary forces at village level. Focused intelligence collection within the green social domain to identify TB influence networks. Integration of effort with all other LoO.</p>
 Move the Population Left (Pro Taliban)
<p>ISAF focused on protection of self over protection of the population. Lack of supervision or training for ANA and ANP. Remaining within secure FOB³'s attracting TB response. Allow TB FoM to conduct intimidation and direct actions. Disarmament of LN denying them any ability to self protect. Inconsistent application of weapons ownership policy. Lack of responsive emergency response systems. Poor quality ANA, ANP interactions with locals. Failure to integrate effort with all other LoO.</p>

Table 1 – Force Field Analysis Population Protection LoO



Move Population Right (Pro IRoA) 
<p>Precise elimination of committed TB members. Careful application of joint fires to avoid collateral damage. Culturally sensitive conduct of person and quala searching. Culturally sensitive actions towards women. Regular demonstration of force and capability. Sustained presence within any given AO. Irregular patrols to deny TB FoM. Regular friendly interaction with LN's. Provision of amnesty programs for non-committed TB. Integration of effort with all other LoO.</p>
 Move the Population Left (Pro Taliban)
<p>LN deaths caused by collateral damage, especially leaders and children. Large scale deaths or injuries in populations induced to fight for TB. Lack of amnesty options for non-committed TB. Disrespectful conduct of person and quala searches. Disrespectful conduct towards women. Lack of presence or interaction with LN giving TB FoM. Aggressive interaction with LN's. Failure to integrate effort with all other LoO.</p>

Table 2 – Force Field Analysis Joint Land Combat LoO¹ COI – Compounds of Interest, POI – Persons of Interest.² EOD – Explosives Ordinance Disposal.³ Forward Operating Base.

cede a significant IO win to the TB. It is not the use of lethal force itself that is the issue, as the Afghan population understands this after decades of warfare, but it is how the force is employed, how it is linked to other LoO, and significantly the weight of effort placed on this LoO in comparison to other LoO that is critical.

One example of the potential for strong negative response to our actions on this LoO is the reaction by local nationals to searching of their dwellings. This proved to be an interesting case study, because local leaders understand the ISArequirement to conduct cordon and search both for weapons and equipment caches, and to seek out persons of interest. If asked, the local leadership will provide options to ISAF to achieve the required intent that minimise the negative social impact of the activity. This is an example of the interaction in the OOIDA loop in practice. Some dismiss these local options as they do not conform to our current TTP's, however, it is clearly possible to adapt and develop effective TTP for cordon and search that achieve the ISAF requirements but do not have a negative impact on the support of the population.

Other examples of the application of Force Field Analysis to determine possible methods of influencing the CoB in the Joint Land Combat LoO are shown in Table 2.

Public Information

Many would constrain the public information battle to the realm of the Public Affairs or PSYOPS specialists or, using the more restrictive doctrine of Information Actions, view this as a minor domain of the IO specialist. The Taliban clearly have a different view, and for them public information regarding their activities (real or imaginary) is a primary focus that drives their actions. The Public Information LoO is critically important, as how our actions are perceived by target audiences is much more important than the actions we actually take.

Our IO doctrine proposes that we establish a Dominant Narrative, which is defined as *'the fundamental story or perception that has been established as valid in the minds of members of one or more target audiences'*.² This is useful as far as it goes, but the reality is that there are multiple target audiences to be told multiple stories.

The first target audience is one beyond the reach of the ADF, that being the domestic and international community. Clearly the TB are

pursuing a strategy of exhaustion. *'For expeditionary counter-insurgents (that's us in Afghanistan), an enemy pursuing a strategy of exhaustion is manifest in a steady trickle of casualties, the absence of discernible progress perhaps underlined by an occasional headline event and, often, an international media offensive focusing on the impact on individuals of military action and the proselytising of the insurgent's political justification'*.³ This narrative is the responsibility of the Australian Government, who have failed at this stage to break the linkage in the Australian consciousness between the perception of a dubious mandate in Iraq and the internationally endorsed and UN mandated actions in Afghanistan, or to explain the importance of the mission. Without this 'top cover' it is significantly more difficult to establish a Dominant Narrative within Afghanistan, as it is hard to counter the TB rhetoric that we are not in it for the long haul.

The other Dominant Narrative that needs to be established is between the Government and people of Afghanistan, and in this narrative ISAF is an enabler and should not be the driver. Lessons from other COIN campaigns clearly show the success of the use of indigenous intermediaries to spread the message, as opposed to the intervention force. *'In Vietnam, El Salvador, and Colombia, counterinsurgents used indigenous intermediaries with established social networks to earn the trust of the population and psychologically unhinge the insurgents'*.⁴ The ISAF role should be to identify those who speak for the democratisation of Afghanistan, and moderate forms of Islam, and support them in their attempts to deliver these messages.

Where ISAF does need to speak directly to the people, either with or without the use of indigenous intermediaries, they should have the means and methods available to do so. The TB has a well developed network of information distribution that permeates the operational environment, and can deliver word of mouth threats, rumours or night letters at will. If we are to have the Dominant Narrative, then we must compete with this pervasive delivery network. Given that the spoken word is the main method of communication in this largely illiterate population, then ideally this competition would be done face to face as *'you cannot influence Afghans without looking them in*

¹ Tactics, Techniques and Procedures.

² LWD 3-0-1 Counter Insurgency – Developing Doctrine.

³ Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan*.

⁴ RAND, *Money in the Bank: Lessons Learned from Past Counterinsurgency (COIN) Operations*.

*the eye*¹, thus the best communication method is to be strongly embedded in the community along the Population Protection, Population Support and Capacity Building LoO. Current ADF manning in Afghanistan does not facilitate this face to face contact, with RTF 4 only having one dedicated CIMIC position on its establishment.

In addition to face to face contact we should also include the use of broadcast media and Loud Speaker Operations (LSO). At the end of 2008 ISAF still had no direct radio station coverage within the Uruzgan province, nor was any ADF platform deployed to Afghanistan equipped for the conduct of LSO, with RTF 4 forced to borrow such equipment from the Dutch. This represents a significant limitation to the ability to compete with the TB in the supply of information to the local population.

Other examples of the application of Force Field Analysis to determine possible methods of influencing the CoB in the Public Information LoO are shown in Table 3.

Population Support

*'Because the Afghan campaign was originally conceived as a reconstruction rather than a counterinsurgency effort*², it would seem that this reconstruction focus has given the Population Support LoO greater emphasis than it should receive at this stage of the COIN campaign. This LoO currently struggles to achieve the effects required because the conditions have not yet been set on the Population Protection LoO. This brings us back to the issue of the man with the gun, as *'it doesn't matter if you are happy with your electricity, content with your children's educational arrangements and satisfied with the government's agenda—you are in thrall to the threat posed to you and your family by that man with the gun*³.

The lack of effective UNAMA coordination of NGO/IO efforts, indeed the general lack of UNAMA and NGO/IO presence in Uruzgan, has left much of this work to be performed by organisations such as the RTF. Much has been achieved on this LoO, especially by unique protected reconstruction capability that the RTF represents, and this work demonstrates the impact that such development work could achieve in an improved security

environment. However, this work has been hindered by the lack of focus on the Population Protection LoO, which has prevented NGO/IO involvement, and seen much of the population afraid to come forward to assist RTF sponsored projects. Population Support can only be effective when combined with Population Protection and other LoO, as *'synchronising community engagement with manoeuvre and development assistance is fundamental*⁴. Australia can contribute much more to this LoO at a whole of government level, especially if these efforts are supported by effective Population Protection.

Assuming improved security is achieved, one area where Australia could provide a much greater contribution that it currently does in the area of water management and dry land agriculture. The Uruzgan province is primarily agrarian in nature, with much of the population involved in what is effectively subsistence agriculture. While the Dutch PRT have had a number of agricultural functional advisors, and the ADF have commissioned a water and agricultural study through AUSAID, by the end of 2008 no clear progress had been made in the area of improving agricultural performance and water management. In the absence of such improved agricultural performance, a significant percentage of the Uruzgan population will suffer from poor food security each winter, and the provision of targeted humanitarian assistance should form a clear part of the Australian operational design. Prevention of these food security problems by improved water and dry land agricultural management practices would have a more long term impact, and would appear to fall within an area where Australian expertise is likely to represent world's best practice.

No discussion of this area can be complete without an examination of the main cash crop, the opium poppy. It is well known that profits from this cash crop are used to fund insurgent activity, and result in significant local corruption of government officials and security forces. Australian Government policy to date has been to ignore this complex problem, and it has directed that Australians take no active part in any counter narcotics programs. While the problem may be complex, ignoring it is not an effective strategy, and Australian policy need to take a more considered and constructive position. In the absence of the Taliban, local farmers in Uruzgan still select a mixture between food and cash crops as a hedging system for survival. In 2008 the poppy crop in Uruzgan was

¹ Frewen, J.J. *Contested Nation-Building: The Challenge Of Countering Insurgency In Afghanistan In 2007, 2008*.

² Kilcullen, D. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*, p66.

³ Kelly, J. *How to win in Afghanistan*.

⁴ Kilcullen, D. *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting small wars in the midst of a big one*, p69.

Move Population Right (Pro IRoA)
<p>Maintain support for our commitment from the Australian community. Identify and establish a community of indigenous intermediaries. Facilitate access to the population by intermediaries and IRoA officials. Provide appropriate means to pass information in a non-literate environment. Apportion intelligence effort to monitoring the green environment so that we can respond to TB injected information. Increase capacity in the education of the population. Integration of effort with all other LoO.</p>
Move the Population Left (Pro Taliban)
<p>Failure to prevent TB FoM. Failure to engage with LN populations. Failure to identify or respond to TB miss-information. Failure to provide means and methods of passing information. Failure to integrate effort with all other LoO.</p>

Table 3 – Force Field Analysis Public Information LoO

Move Population Right (Pro IRoA)
<p>Improved agricultural and water management. Targeted provision of humanitarian assistance. Development of effective population centric services (health, education, etc). Improved economic outlook and employment prospects. Effective dispute resolution services provided by local government. Promotion of free trade and price control achieved by denying TB influence on MSR. Integration of effort with all other LoO.</p>
Move the Population Left (Pro Taliban)
<p>Poppy eradication without compensation. Failure to demonstrate that life under GIRoA would be better than under Taliban rule. Indiscriminate injections of money without balancing actions to increase supply creating pressure on prices. Provision of assistance and services perceived as tribally biased and influenced. Failure to integrate effort with all other LoO.</p>

Table 4 – Force Field Analysis Population Support LoO

Move Population Right (Pro IRoA)
<p>Capacity building across all security forces and governance sectors. Increased local population confidence in security forces. Development of an effective justice system. Integration of effort with all other LoO.</p>
Move the Population Left (Pro Taliban)
<p>Failure to address governance and corruption issues. Failure to develop all aspects of the security infrastructure including the ANP and justice system. Failure to integrate effort with all other LoO.</p>

Table 5 – Force Field Analysis Indigenous Capacity Building LOO

poor, and the price of wheat high, and this led to many farmers in the RTF 4 area indicating a significantly reduced poppy planting in the next season. This demonstrates that, at least in the more permissive areas, it is economics and not the Taliban that is the driver of the poppy crop, and this suggests that some form of market manipulation could be an effective strategy. However, it is clear to most commentators that no poppy eradication strategy will be effective until it is appropriately supported by alternative food and cash cropping options supported by strategies to increase agricultural production.

Development is occurring at an increasing pace in Uruzgan, and there is no shortage of development money. But simply injecting funds into the environment indiscriminately without addressing issues of supply and demand is likely to cause more problems than it solves. Economic theory suggests that large injections of funds will have the effect of increasing prices unless there is some significant elasticity in supply. Given limited resources in the province and the Taliban influence on the main roads into the province, such elasticity of supply is clearly not evident, so unintended effects from such actions are highly likely in the absence of doctrinal guidance in the use of money to stimulate the economic development of the province. Injecting funds also raises issues of governance and corruption, and all highlight the lack of Australian Government contribution to the development of capacity or governance issues outside of the mentoring of the ANA.

Other examples of the application of Force Field Analysis to determine possible methods of influencing the CoB in the Population Support LoO are shown in Table 4

Indigenous Capacity Building

The expansion of Australia's efforts to include Operational Mentoring Liaison Teams (OMLT) to train one battalions of the local Afghan Army has been a most significant development on this LoO, and appears to be set for further expansion¹. This is clearly a step forward in progressing along part of this LoO, but progress in other areas of indigenous capacity remains minimal. The Afghan National Police remain vital to an effective COIN operation², but to date they have received little of the development assistance

lavished on the ANA and are often seen by the local population as part of the problem rather than contribution to the solution. However, the judicial system is almost totally dysfunctional and without this in place the efforts of security forces to arrest and prosecute members of the Taliban are almost futile. Indigenous capacity building is clearly one key component of any exit strategy, but increasingly ANA capacity building is being proposed as the Australian Governments only requirement for exit. However, in addition to the actions on the other LoO, capacity needs to be built in a wide range of institutions, and not just in the security sector.

Other examples of the application of Force Field Analysis to determine possible methods of influencing the CoB in the Indigenous Capacity Building LoO are shown in Table 5.

Conclusion

This paper has critically examined IO doctrine as a key enabler of a COIN campaign and as a method of preventing the prosecution of the *wrong war*, which in this context has been described as a failure to transition from the *clear* phase, to the *hold* and *build* phases of our espoused COIN doctrine and the articulated international approach to COIN in Afghanistan. The aim of the paper was to propose modifications to current doctrine to enhance IO decision making methods within the ADF for COIN operations generally, but with specific emphasis to contemporary COIN operations in Afghanistan.

The paper has described the key aspects of Adaptive Campaigning and demonstrated that this doctrine represents a significant advance in offensive IO doctrine. It has identified two shortfalls with current IO doctrine as a lack of consideration of 'social influence' on decision making, and a lack of attention to 'blue decision making processes', and has proposed possible options to address these shortfalls. These shortfalls have not been presented as conclusive, but more as a 'work in progress' with options for the development of IO doctrine along a new path.

The paper has proposed a model for the application and measurement of IO within a COIN operation that uses the people of the Afghanistan as the principle target of a COIN campaign. The model has been used to introduce two new planning concepts in the green domain, being Centre of Balance and in conjunction with this the use of Force Field Analysis. These tools were then applied to each of the 5 LoO identified in Adaptive

¹ Further expansion has occurred since this was written, and is due to expand again.

² Since this was written Australian Special Forces have begun training ANP.

Campaigning, to provide examples of their potential applicability to current ADF operational planning.

The conclusion to be drawn from this discussion is that as a matter of Government policy and as a result of a lack of WoG representation our contribution to Afghanistan is not currently balanced across all LoO, but biased towards Joint Land Combat supported by Capacity Building. While this may be suited to the *clear* phase, if we are to progress we need to transition into the *hold* and *build* phases where Population Protection should lead, with all other LoO supporting. As our involvement in Afghanistan increases and the Dutch role in Uruzgan is drawn down, we need to review our apportionment of effort across all LoO, as well as our ability to mobilise all our elements of national power to ensure that we are part of a WoG response, or we remain in mortal danger of fighting the wrong war.

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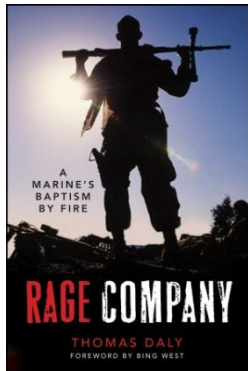
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Rage Company

A Marine's Baptism By Fire

by Thomas Daly

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After two months of conventional operations in Ar Ramadi, Iraq, the Marines of Fox Company, 2nd Battalion, 4th Marines came across an unlikely ally: Iraqi militiamen. The following excerpt describes the first interaction between the two groups in January 2007.

The Scouts

January 25, 2007

Looking for the American adviser, I scanned the stationary Iraqis through my NVGs. The silent group appeared to be in formation. One of them, a tall figure out front, was smoking. A Kalashnikov hung over his chest. The rest of the group carried similar weapons. Most of the men each also held what appeared to be a small sack or blanket to combat the low-forty-degree weather.

An extra set of hands appeared around the tall leader, and I quickly spotted the American on the opposite side of the towering but skinny Iraqi. I walked directly in front of the group and took the opportunity to stare at each face as I strolled past, knowing that from their point of view, I was nothing more than a shadow floating through the dark night.

Collectively, the Iraqis were old. Every face was worn with wrinkles and lines. None was younger than thirty. It dawned on me that they were Saddamists, Iraqi veterans experienced through decades of conflict. I would come to find out that their perspectives were an even mix: half were officers; the rest, senior enlisted. Some had fought in the Iran-Iraq War; most, in the Gulf War. Nearly all of them were the soldiers who put down the Kurdish and Shi'a uprisings in the 1990s and the Ba'athists whom the United States faced in March and April 2003. Now they were forsaking their goals as nationalist insurgents to assist their

notorious enemy in facing a greater threat to their social structure: the danger from al Qaeda.

I stopped between the smoking Iraqi and the one American. "Major, sir, Lieutenant Daly," I said, extending my hand to the adviser. He shook it and introduced himself. Then he turned to the Iraqi, whom he referred to as "general," and introduced me. The two of us exchanged greetings in simple English.

"General, you and your men can get on this truck," I said, pointing at the vehicle behind me. The seven-ton was stationary opposite the group on the far side of the road. The senior Iraqi barked orders at one of his men, and the disciplined formation broke ranks and moved toward the vehicle.

As the Iraqis went past, the American major leaned over and spoke softly. "Lieutenant, treat this guy like an American general," he said. "Do not make him ride with his men." The simple words would become the most important advice I ever received in Iraq.

I spotted the general counting his men as they climbed onto the seven-ton. "Sir, I have a seat for you in my truck," I told him.

"Okay, Daly," he replied. He directed one of his men to take over counting. Then the general moved next to me at the front of the seven-ton and yanked a small laminated card from his left breast pocket. He gave it to me.

I pulled back part of the infrared lens covering the headlight and read the piece of plastic

paper, roughly the size of a Community Chest card from the game Monopoly.

“This is to certify that _____ is a member of Thawar Al Anbar.” Below, it continued, “courtesy of 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marines.” I looked up at the general. His broad smile revealed the immaculate trimming job on his thick, black mustache. The card was his offer of cooperation. He informed me that all of his men had the same card. Although I understood how dangerous it was for the general and his men to carry such an item, it was not going to be enough to convince my fellow Marines to trust him. Twenty-five random Iraqis, all of them armed and none screened or vetted, were not going to be welcomed by many at COP Rage.

We walked together to the head of the convoy. I opened the door to the seat directly behind me for the general. He was immediately captivated by the map of the surrounding area displayed on the monitor next to my green chair. I didn’t hear his questions about the map; my thoughts were hovering around the fact that the truck behind the Iraqis, seven-ton two, did not have a machine gun. I put my headset on and keyed the radio.

“All victors, this is Mobile Actual; stand by for change in convoy order. Gun truck 3, I want you to move between the seven-tons to—” I paused, thinking that the general might understand English more than he was letting on and would take offense to my orders of moving a machine gun to cover his men. I didn’t want him to know my thoughts about the twenty-five Iraqis possibly assisting in a complex ambush of our convoy. “To better protect our cargo. Acknowledge receipt,” I said, finishing the radio transmission. Once the vehicles were in order, we began another trip to COP Rage. As the convoy went through the arches, the general pointed toward the north, the Sijariah crossing, and stated, “Al Qaeda neighborhood.” I pretended to be surprised by his information.

When my vehicle turned onto Ruby Road, it immediately halted. A column of tanks and Pathfinder vehicles were at a stop, occupying the hard-packed dirt path. Their pause in route clearance meant that they had found something.

“Daly, there is IED near mosque,” said the general. “You should move on this road.” The general pointed to the left window of the vehicle. He was referring to Irish Way.

I could not follow his advice, because in our push into Julayba, Pathfinder had never cleared Irish Way. The engineers had focused on the Ruby–

Nova–Orchard Way loop that followed the region’s perimeter. Irish Way was a risk I did not have to take. The general might know the area better than I did, but I was willing to wait and follow Pathfinder.

The tank in front of us began to spin its turret. In seconds it stopped, the 120mm cannon pointed directly at my vehicle.

“Convoy on Ruby Road, this is Warlord Blue 1, identify yourself, over,” said a voice on the battalion net.

The Marine manning my truck’s turret flashed his middle finger at the tank. I, too, was upset. For the last ten minutes I had been the only voice on the radio, passing my convoy’s location to battalion. Only moments earlier, I had stated that the convoy was turning onto Ruby Road. The tankers were probably sleeping and spooked by our presence. Their actions, however, gave me an excuse not to respond to the general’s advice.

“Warlord, this is Rage Mobile, convoy is en route to COP Rage. Recommend you orient your turret to an exposed flank, over,” I said. The tankers moved their turret and informed us of a pending controlled detonation 100 meters north on Ruby. I assumed that Pathfinder had found the IED outside the mosque. After the blast, the convoy moved agonizingly slowly through the Nasaf Marketplace and along the dimly lit Route Nova to COP Rage. The snail’s pace allowed the general plenty of time to give me his version of an intelligence update on the local area. I was impressed.

* * *

A few tense hours later . . .

* * *

Eventually, Captain Smith asked the general about his plan.

“They did not show it to you?” replied the general, continuing with, “I was told they translated it into English.”

From Captain Smith’s expressions, I could tell he and I were thinking the same thing: that’s your plan — a list of fifty targets and a map of where they are? Captain Smith explained to the general that we needed more detail. He described the coordination that was required for helicopters, tanks, and other assets to be used properly.

The general was caught off guard. “There is no time for that now. We have to leave in one hour,” he said.

Captain Smith laughed. “The mission is tomorrow night,” he said. Our two groups were clearly not on the same page.

The general turned to our interpreter, Jack, and let fly a few short bursts of Arabic that were accompanied by a successive chopping motion with his hands. The interpreter spoke English about as well as the general did, so we didn’t even bother to let him translate.

“General.” It was the first time Captain Smith referred to the senior Iraqi’s status. “I do not have all of my men and equipment. The mission must be tomorrow.” Two out of the three squads for Rage 1 and Rage 3 were occupying platoon patrol bases roughly 1,000 meters from the COP. Their lieutenants took the other as an escort to the COP to execute mission planning. Rage 4 was due to arrive that night after a few days’ rest.

“Smith, understand my men live here. They have been gone three days. Wives and neighbors expect them to be home yesterday. How would they explain their absence? If we wait to do the mission, everyone will know it was them that helped the Americans.”

Captain Smith leaned back in his chair. He went to stretch his long arms into the air, but his right forearm knocked his spit bottle off the desk. It flew a few inches past Albin’s resting head. The crashing of the plastic bottle was followed by the proverbial “Fuck!” as a saliva-and-tobacco mix seeped onto the floor. A quick-acting Albin grabbed some paper towels out of the desk and began to wipe it up. Captain Smith leaned over and tried to clean what he had created, but Albin insisted. Accepting the rebuke, Rage 6 returned to the conversation.

“The timing of the mission is nonnegotiable. It will be tomorrow night,” said Captain Smith, who paused and looked around the room.

There was no response from the general. After making eye contact with each of the platoon commanders, Rage 6 asked, “How do we want to do this? . . . Daly, what’s the total number of scouts?”

“Twenty-five, including the general, sir,” I said.

“And we are going to have two squads from Rage 2, 3, and 4. So that would be six four-man teams, one for each squad, and the general will go with headquarters. Will your squads be comfortable with that?” said Captain Smith. He directed the question at Lieutenants Thomas, Jahelka, and

Grubb. Each of them nodded in agreement but did not comment.

“Shearburn, operating from your patrol base, you will be the company’s reserve,” continued Captain Smith. Shearburn looked annoyed. He wasn’t used to being a reserve. Rage 1 was always the main effort. He didn’t question the order; instead, he recommended that his patrol base, recently named OP Jack Bauer in honor of the 24 character, be made into a permanent fighting position. Captain Smith said he would think about it and returned his attention to the near fight.

“Now, each of these teams of scouts needs a leader. General, do you have six men you can depend on?” asked Captain Smith.

The general was confused by the question. “I am the leader, and I have more than six men,” he said. It literally took a notepad and a few sketches of the structure Captain Smith was proposing to get him to understand — although once he did, he informed us of some crucial facts. The general already had cells of fighters in each of the neighborhoods who not only knew everything about the local subtribe but were actually members of the tribe. The leaders of these cells were already here.

With this information, Captain Smith took out his map, which had the fifty targets labeled on it, and identified six objective areas — one for each squad. He showed the areas to the general and asked him to marry up each of his leaders with one of the objective areas. At the same time, we assigned one of our squads to the same objective. Then the general went and got his chosen men.

The six scouts came into the room and sat at a few empty chairs or stood around the map. The general did not introduce them, and Captain Smith had to ask who was for which objective. As the scout for each objective was revealed, he was introduced to the platoon commander he would work with. The two men shook hands, but the scouts did not speak. After the first three behaved in such a manner, Captain Smith was becoming agitated.

“Well, what are their names?” he asked the general.

“They do not want to tell you; your men may say it in front of the people,” the general responded.

“Not their real names. I want to know their aliases, their fake names.”

As the general translated what Captain Smith wanted, the tension eased out of the room. The scouts began to smile and joke with one another.

Two even argued over who was going to be “Abu Ali.” The general resolved the dispute. There was another round of introductions, followed by the details of the plan.

Unlike on previous missions, where we left as soon as it was dark, the scouts advised that we wait until midnight. They said at that point, the terrorists would have decided nothing was happening and would have gone to bed. Once under their blankets, they would be too lazy to run when we showed up. We took their advice.

At midnight, Lieutenant Jahelka would take two squads from Rage 3 and hit the two western objective areas in Julayba. The majority of his targets were along Orchard Way in the vicinity of the Al Risala mosque. Rage 4, Lieutenant Grubb, took the central objective areas that followed along Route Nova to the north. Captain Smith and I would move with Lieutenant Thomas and Rage 2 to the northeast. Their targets rested near the Albu Musa mosque. In another striking contrast to our previous missions, it took Captain Smith only thirty minutes to come up with and brief the plan. The abbreviated process was a result of the meshing of our planning style with the scouts’. They knew where the targets were and would have simply walked to them. We usually took a day to coordinate aerial and tank assets, as well as brief our superior and adjacent units. The result was the banditry I had envisioned outside the headquarters of 1-37 Armor two months earlier. There weren’t

going to be any tanks, helicopters, or Pathfinders on this mission, just the scouts and our infantrymen.

* * *

*Hours later the Iraqis and Marines conducted their first of a series of raids together. Within weeks dozens of al Qaeda militants would be captured. By April, the insurgency would collapse. **Rage Company** is the street-level look at the emergence of the Anbar Awakening that achieved this success.”*

* * *

Captain Thomas Daly joined the Marines following his graduation from the University of Rochester in the spring of 2004. During his career as an artillery officer he held a multitude of billets, ranging from Forward Observer to Intelligence Cell Leader. His unique perception of the battlefield has been shaped while operating with units of the United States Army, Navy SEALs, ANGLICO (Air, Naval Gunfire Liaison Company), Iraqi Army and Police Units, and anti-Al Qaeda guerrillas. This diverse interaction with multiple styles of warfare, coupled with the dramatic effect it had on the city of Ramadi, has provided the author with an unusual view of Iraq; a viewpoint of success against the modern insurgent.



Fair Winds & Following Seas!

Congratulations, Major General Charlie Dunlap, on your retirement. As you embark aboard your next flight, we wish you the best and will continue to count on you to enforce intellectual rigor and skewer the group think and. Sacred cows make the best burgers. See you at the next BBQ.



Considerations for Tribal Engagement

A Summary of the Tribal Engagement Workshop 2010

Introduction

Tribal engagement in Afghanistan is an increasingly hot topic among U.S. Government, academia, the think tank community and the blogosphere. Articles, blog posts and papers on tribal engagement written by authors with recent experience in Afghanistan collectively ignited a heated debate on the efficacy of pursuing this kind of sub-national strategy – a debate that many in the national security community are watching closely. With this in mind, Small Wars Foundation hosted a two-day Tribal Engagement Workshop (TEW) focused on Afghanistan from March 24-25, 2010 in Fredericksburg, VA. The TEW was cosponsored by [Small Wars Foundation](#), the U.S. Joint Forces Command [Joint Irregular Warfare Center](#), the U.S. Marine Corps [Center for Irregular Warfare](#), the [U.S. Army / U.S. Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Center](#), and [Noetic](#). The workshop was designed to address conceptual issues associated with tribal engagement and explore the considerations that operators and planners would have to address in order to implement a tribal or local engagement program.

A group of subject matter experts, all with firsthand experience with tribal engagement or local operations in Iraq or Afghanistan, were invited to participate. The group deliberately included individuals with significantly differing opinions on how to undertake tribal engagement or whether it should be undertaken at all. The ensuing discussion covered a variety of topics from strategic, operational and tactical perspectives.

Participants were tasked with:

- Evaluating the feasibility of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.
- Assessing what secondary effects adoption of a tribal engagement

strategy would have on the political and military situation.

- Identifying the operational components of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.

This paper captures the key themes and ideas covered in the workshop, but is not intended to (nor could it) capture the rich debate participants engaged in. Additional thoughts, perspectives and commentary by TEW participants will be hosted on *Small Wars Journal* at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/events/tew/>.

Findings

Should Tribal Engagement Be Conducted?

At the time of the workshop the international mission in Afghanistan faced numerous challenges:

- A limited timeline for military operations.
- Extensive enemy operations vying for political and military supremacy.
- An Afghan government that is viewed by many at the local level with suspicion or hostility.
- Insufficient international and Afghan forces.

As a starting point, the U.S. objective is to “to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.”¹ In order to accomplish this in Afghanistan, the United States

¹ White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/09/03/27/a-new-strategy-for-afghanistan-and-pakistan/>

has essentially committed to helping build a stable and sustainable Afghanistan. As such, the group first considered whether tribal engagement would help or hinder these efforts. There is a legitimate concern that too much emphasis at local levels might result in the further fragmentation of Afghanistan and could ultimately destabilize the region.

TEW participants largely agreed that focusing efforts at a sub-national level could potentially provide a significant and necessary augmentation to the current ISAF mission, with some important caveats:

- Tribal engagement is appropriate in some locales, but needs to be considered as one component of a broader community or local engagement approach in order to reflect the wide variety of local social and power structures across the country.
- Community engagement must be accompanied by reinvigorated efforts to link the national with district and village level governments – in essence, a “top-down, bottom-up” strategy must be employed or the international community risks further balkanization of Afghanistan.
- The focal point for the engagement must be at the district level where, constitutionally, the interface between GIROA and the Afghan population occurs.
- Government legitimacy, accountability and transparency must be improved at the district level, either through actually conducting district elections or by holding local community jirgas to appoint district representatives. Without this legitimacy Afghan communities will have little to no desire to reach out and interface with their local leadership.

Most participants underscored that a perception of an 18-month timeframe for beginning to withdraw from Afghanistan was not helpful. Furthermore, due to the lengthy timelines sometimes required to be accepted as partners by local communities, some individuals noted that community engagement initiatives could be perceived as contrary to the 18-month timeframe. Others noted that local defense initiatives are the only realistic way to stabilize Afghanistan to the point whereby the international community can begin withdrawing forces.

Tribal versus Community Engagement

While it was agreed that the U.S. and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) should undertake tribal engagement in some areas, the general consensus was that engagement should occur through a variety of entities (alternately referred to as local or community, this document will refer to “community engagement”), including but not limited to tribes, based on the following reasons:

- There are a number of political, tribal, religious, economic, etc. sub-national and sub-district power sources across Afghanistan that vary widely in strength in different locales and contexts. Focusing solely on a single type or group misses other opportunities.
- Solely engaging tribal leaders could subvert non-tribal sources of power.
- Engaging only select tribes could alienate other tribes in the same geographic area.
- There was significant and heated discussion on the importance of the mullah in Afghan communities. While it was agreed that mullahs must be engaged with there was significant disagreement on the nature of this and religious dynamics across Afghanistan.

Bearing the above in mind, there cannot be a “cookie-cutter” approach to community engagement that could apply to all of Afghanistan. Commanders must tailor their methods to local needs and situations and must therefore have appropriate operational flexibility to enable their approaches.

Connecting Afghans to their Government

Consensus was also broadly achieved on the need to simultaneously undertake ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ approaches in Afghanistan. In general, initiatives associated with the central government were seen as ‘top down’ with community engagement seen as ‘bottom up’. Establishing the appropriate integration point for these two approaches was seen as perhaps the most important conceptual challenge of the TEW. While no one viewpoint on this issue fomented consensus, significant time was spent discussing the importance of districts and villages in

establishing this linkage. Participants raised the following considerations:

- A majority of participants saw district governments as the constitutional and logical connection point between national and community groups with others adding that villages may be equally critical in practical terms.
- A majority of participants also saw the need to further empower and legitimize this level of government. Many, but not all, participants thought district elections should be held in line with the Afghan Constitution as a way to achieve this objective.
- Many participants also saw the districts as the most likely entity able to balance the relationship between national organizations like the ANA or ANP with local actors. However no consensus was gained on how this would work in practice.
- Many participants recognized that Afghans are suspicious of central government or outside initiatives based on multiple failures over many years. This implied the need for an extended period of engagement to win back trust.

Addressing Corruption

One of the greatest challenges to connecting community governance and security to national Afghan governance and security is the degree of perceived GIROA illegitimacy caused by allegations of corruption. This perception is driving Afghan skepticism towards the central government and, in many instances; Afghans are actively resisting government involvement in their affairs. Running community engagement programs separate from the central government may effectively buy time and space to counter enemy efforts in the short and medium term, but addressing the corruption issue is a prerequisite for sustainable integration of local entities with national institutions.

While total corruption eradication is unlikely, international actors should strive to reduce corruption to a “manageable” or “functional” level so as to afford GIROA a greater degree of legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary Afghans.

Building Afghan Capacity

In addition to tackling corruption, the international community must work to build civil

capacity at the local levels. Doing so is essential to ensuring that effective, legitimate command and control arrangements are in place for local forces – and will prepare the groundwork for transition from ISAF to Afghan security leadership. In other words, there must be a meaningful governance “plug in” point for local security forces, otherwise the international community risks complicating the eventual reintegration of these forces into the national-level security framework.

At the same time, it was largely agreed that this must be done in appropriately Afghan manner. As an example, one group discussed mirroring the Taliban local justice system. This is delivered by two men on a motorcycle carrying only the Quran, the Sharia and a book to document agreed judgments. Judgment is immediate and then enforced by local Taliban representatives.

Transition and Hand Over

Transition planning and conceptualizing hand over also provided conceptual challenges for the group with most recommended techniques implicitly requiring ISAF forces to be deployed in country. Again, no formal consensus was achieved but key considerations were:

- Plans for transition and hand over in general, and for community governance control of security forces in particular, must be drafted prior to mobilization.
- Community actors must know what is expected of them, ISAF and GIROA.
- All transition plans must have the support of ISAF, the international community, GIROA, and community governance and security organizations.
- When ISAF and other international organizations begin withdrawing from Afghanistan, transition plans must be continually tested to ensure their long-term efficacy, especially as many regional groups are already planning for this eventuality.

Information Activities and Strategic Communications

Participants largely agreed that information activities and strategic communications are other critical elements of community engagement. ISAF forces will be on the ground among Afghans and in communication with a variety of local leaders. Therefore, understanding local messaging and

signaling appropriate intentions, in a manner aligned with strategic communication efforts is essential. Messaging should:

- Provide assurances that U.S. and GIRoA support for community governance and security will be long-term and that they will prevent Taliban reprisals against these communities to the best of their abilities.
- Communicate current and future community engagement activities to convince the Afghan people that community engagement is in their best interests.
- Include a national-level component to allow central government and local leaders to maintain a constant dialog between each other and the Afghan people.

International Unity of Effort from the Strategic to the Tactical

Community engagement has the potential to provide a significant boost to our efforts in Afghanistan, but it is not a silver bullet and cannot replace existing approaches being implemented by ISAF. This element of the TEW was especially rich, key points included:

- The need to achieve unity of intent and effort ahead of time as to which groups ISAF should support or not and the actions required to achieve this intent.
- The importance of nesting campaign plans at all echelons to consider operations across time, not just for the life of a particular rotation.
- The increased criticality of the operational level both as a key piece of ‘connecting tissue’ between strategic intent and tactical action (which involved significant discussion of operational design) as well as the institutional memory for diverse knowledge and relationships earned at high cost at the tactical level (significant discussion highlighted issues with the RIP/TOA process and the loss of institutional knowledge).
- Commanders will likely require greater freedom of action and support from higher headquarters to assume higher levels of risk than current approaches allow.
- Community engagement is undertaken by all forces in Afghanistan whether they realize it or not. Formal community engagement

activities can be undertaken by either SOF or GPF.

How Might Community Engagement Fail?

There are four groups whose action – or inaction – could result in the failure of a community engagement program: the enemy, the U.S. government, the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people.

- Enemy actions - participants identified two likely adversary courses of action:
 - Executing a more effective community engagement approach and co-opting local groups. The enemy is already working at the local level to win the support of communities. As ISAF and GIRoA teams begin engaging tribal, religious, political or other groups at the local level, the contest for popular support will become increasingly violent with potential negative consequences from a perceptions perspective. Further, it is difficult to perform community engagement without, to some degree, picking winners and losers. Those communities that receive, or can be perceived as receiving, less effective support from ISAF and the GIRoA present a ripe opportunity for adversary engagement.
 - Targeting community engagement teams. These teams will be small units, Operational Detachment Alphas or platoons. The enemy could mass forces to overmatch these teams with associated losses weakening U.S. domestic resolve for community engagement and operations in Afghanistan more broadly.
- U.S. specific actions - effective community engagement requires high levels of coordination across multiple USG organizations and within the military. Multiple groups from within that stakeholder community could easily hamper community engagement programs by blocking funding, policy or operational support. Additionally, personnel with the right skills and experience for this approach will be in short supply.

- Government of Afghanistan - if elements of the government perceive community engagement as a threat to their influence or sovereignty, they may attempt to stop the program before it begins. Furthermore, local security forces could become militias outside of the Government's control and breed further instability.
- The Afghan people - the success of community engagement rests entirely upon the Afghan people accepting that it will improve their lives. It is possible that despite all efforts they will reject eventual transition to central Afghan government control. They could also turn away attempts at engagement because of fear of enemy reprisals. Conversely, local leaders could accept and

then co-opt ISAF efforts to achieve their own objectives or simply take advantage of free resources.

This paper presents a summary of the proceedings of the Tribal Engagement Workshop. All participants were encouraged to provide amplifying or dissenting views. The background material from the event and all responses from participants is available at: <http://smallwarsjournal.com/events/tew/>.

The views expressed in this report reflect a summary of the proceedings of the Tribal Engagement Workshop and do not reflect the official views of the cosponsoring organizations, participants' units or organizations, or the U.S. Department of Defense.

Afghanistan: Security First

by LtCol Karl C. Rohr, USMC

"We are content with discord, we are content with alarms, we are content with blood, but we will never be content with a master."

Afghan Elder reply to Lord Elphinstone 1809

The provision of security to the Afghan people will do more to defeat the Taliban insurgency than any other method, tactic or technique. The question is what security entails and how far the international community must go to achieve it. At the strategic level, according to United States (U.S.) National Command Authority, security requires the prevention of Al Qaeda and its allies from launching attacks against the U.S. and or its allies. At the operational level, U.S. Joint doctrine FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency* defines security as a condition that results from the establishment of protective measures that ensures a state of inviolability from hostile acts or influences. At the tactical level, in the case of counterinsurgency, security can be defined as the measures taken to protect the population from the influences of an insurgency. Regardless of the definition, what is agreed by most is that security enables a government's capacity to govern and protect its people. This relationship is aptly demonstrated throughout the conflict in Afghanistan. The Afghan government's strategic goal is to establish itself as the legitimate representative of the Afghan people. The establishment of security is the principle operational measure to achieve this goal. The counterinsurgency methods applied are security

centric. Here, the goals of the U.S. lead coalition and the Afghan government merge – security first. The purpose of this paper is to investigate the need for security first and the operational and tactical tasks necessary to achieve it in Afghanistan.

After the attacks of September 11th, the U.S. became the latest in the line of foreign forces to engage in this most unfortunate of countries. The 2001 U.S. removal of the Al Qaeda supporting Taliban from power cleared the way for the birth of a new Afghanistan – a free, independent and stable state. Yet, the country has been beset by war, with 2008 marking the thirtieth year of continuous conflict. Afghanistan has not known a moment's peace since the fall of Mohammed Daoud Khan in the coup of 1978. Thirty years of fighting and thousands of years of tribal fracture are not to be overcome easily. In order to become a country free from conflict Afghanistan needs a period of stability to allow for national growth. This stability will only come from security.

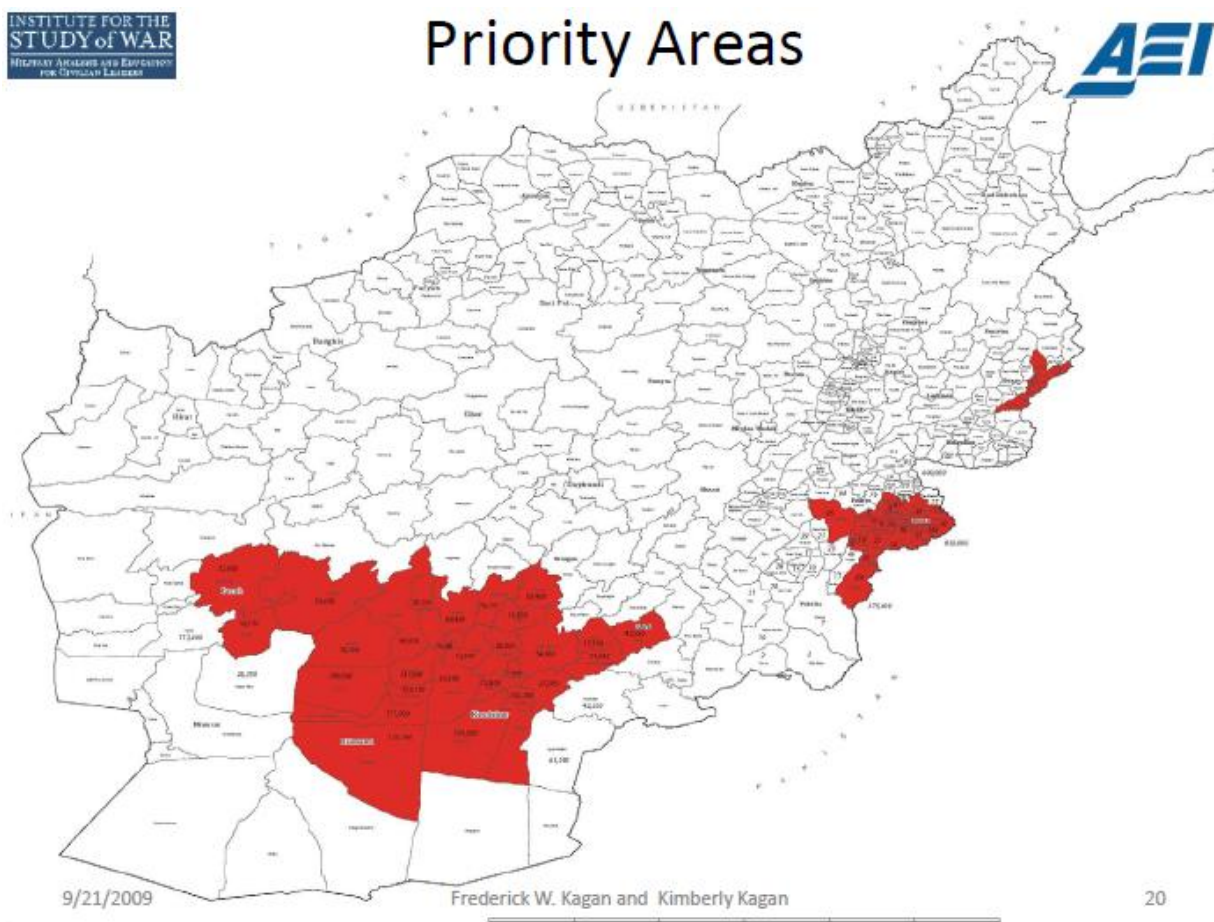
Unfortunately, achieving a stable security situation has proven extremely difficult. The Afghans are a diverse and fractious people; they have developed well honed suspicions of outsiders. They do not trust easily and their confidence in the international community to come to their aid is low

due to a legacy of failed initiatives. The government is generally weak and the ability for it and the international community to provide for the country's basic needs is questionable. Trying to fix all of Afghanistan's problems at once is futile. In order to create the conditions for the stabilization and the growth of an independent Afghanistan, the international community and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) need to establish security first.

Why is it so important to establish security first? Security will prevent the re-emergence of trans-national terrorism and criminal influence. At the same time, security enables the government to develop the infrastructure for governance. The provision of security will make it possible for the tribal and other group leaders who are on the fence to join the government. The end state is an Afghanistan capable of providing its own security, maintaining the rule of law and exercising free and independent government without extensive

external military and civilian support. Thus, security will allow for a timely withdrawal of international military forces.

The history of Afghanistan is one of broken promises, neglect and war. It is a cycle that has to be broken if GIROA is to succeed. The Taliban and the independent, elected GIROA are in a desperate struggle to see who can best govern the country. The GIROA currently relies on the international community for support — this must change. The U.S. and its allies do not want to remain in Afghanistan any longer than needed. But to withdraw too soon, before the nation is stable, will only perpetuate the cycle of war. Withdrawing too soon will not achieve the international coalition goal of preventing a resurgence of Al Qaeda's extremist allies. Renewed chaos in Afghanistan could give Al Qaeda an opportunity to reset. The emergence of a new threat of trans-national terrorism would be contrary to the international coalition's goals in the region. The mission then for



Map 1 Priority Areas, the focus of Security First
Maps reprinted with permission from American Enterprise Institute.

the international coalition is to achieve a stable security situation that prevents the resurgence of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Security will enable an independent GIRoA to establish itself and allow the international forces to withdraw.

But how will GIRoA and the coalition forces know when they have achieved a stable security situation? What is success? Success will be known when GIRoA has met the following metrics: (1) the people are confident in the government, (2) insurgent influence is disrupted and (3) the nation perceives the GIRoA as the legitimate government. The remainder of this paper investigates the measures necessary for the international coalition and GIRoA to meet these metrics for ensuring stable security in Afghanistan.

Building Confidence

“Nawa has returned from the dead.”

Mohammed Khan
District administrator
Nawa, Helmand Province
October 2009

Confidence is born of commitment. GIRoA and the international coalition must demonstrate commitment to a secure country to gain the confidence of the Afghan people. Commitment is demonstrated through stability and security operations. Stability is an overarching term for military missions to establish a secure environment. Stability and security operations are intended to counter insurgent influence, demonstrate commitment and build the people's confidence in the government.

Confidence building drives all operations whether lethal, conventional military action, or non-lethal, information and stability operations. The ability to protect, influence and win the confidence of population groups is crucial to success. ISAF must focus security, stability and information operations down to the village level in order to build confidence. Focusing on population engagement in the community encourages local participation. With this focus on the local community, the government influences the various groups -- tribal, ethnic and economic -- identifying and providing for their needs. When the government focuses on local issues, it becomes the principle patron of the people.

Government forces have the greatest opportunity to influence people's perception of confidence and commitment when they are embedded in the community. Stability and security operations are most successful at the local level.

When the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) establish security GIRoA and the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) thrive. Under this security umbrella, GIRoA forces embedded in the villages influence the people by providing services and protection. Village focused operations increase the people's confidence in the GIRoA. In short, commitment is achieved and confidence is raised by increasing the government of Afghanistan's influence.

The ISAF winter campaign of 2008-2009 in the Helmand Valley is a good example of seizing the initiative and establishing security. During this campaign the Special Purpose Marine Air Ground Task Force (SPMAGTF-A) arrived in Afghanistan and expanded upon the efforts already in place in Regional Command South. The SPMAGTF-A acted as a bridging force setting the stage for follow on forces. In the SPMAGTF-A's case, the follow on force was the Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB-A). The arrival of the very capable MEB-A and other coalition forces quickly demonstrated the international communities' commitment to creating a secure Afghanistan, something that had been lacking since 2003. This demonstration of commitment tipped the balance of power. Tribes and communities feeling safe and secure have begun to support the coalition, GIRoA and the ANSF. In this way, each successive action demonstrates the commitment of the government and coalition forces and builds confidence amongst the population.

ISAF needs to capitalize on similar confidence building measures to provide security and generate resistance to the Taliban and anti-government supporters within the general population. In order to reach the greatest population possible, ISAF utilizes tailor made security and stability organizations. These organizations vary based on location and mission. Examples of these organizations in Afghanistan are: Provincial Reconstruction teams, Military Stabilization Support Teams and District Stabilization Teams, all of which are made up of civilian and military personnel who specialize in stability operations. These teams work alongside the existing Afghan district and provincial governments, non-governmental organizations and local leaders to improve security, services and infrastructure. They gain and maintain the peoples' confidence by improving their daily lives.

Stability and security operations are designed to increase influence and to build the people's confidence in the government. Their goal is to establish the government as the principle

patron. To demonstrate this commitment and build confidence ISAF deploys tailored stabilization and security teams down to the village level. I will further discuss the actions of these teams in the next section. Their next steps are to increase this capacity, building confidence through the provision of security and stability by promoting a legitimate government. In this manner, ISAF assists the government in its efforts to become the principle patron of the people.

Disrupting Insurgent Influence: Access Denial

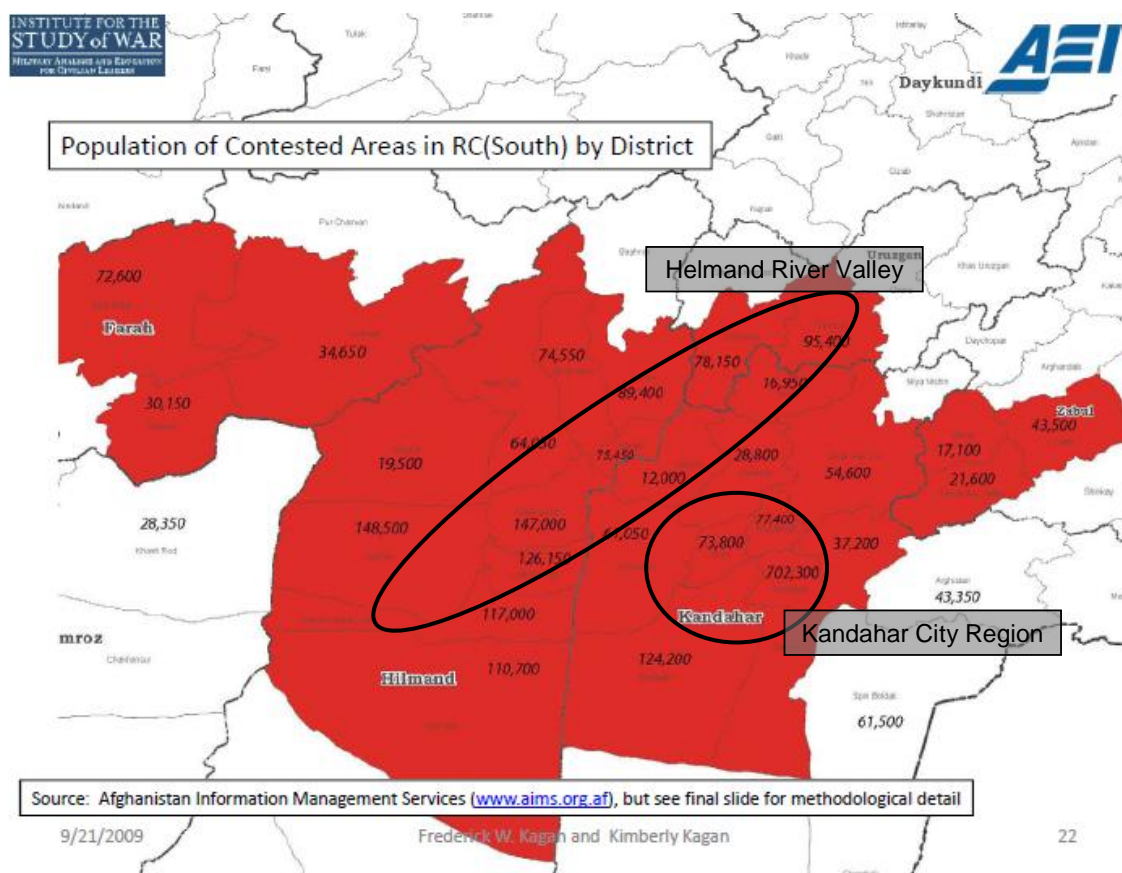
Control Kandahar and you'll control
Afghanistan.

Pashtu Proverb

When operating within a neutral or hostile population, a counterinsurgent must actively seek to disrupt the insurgents influence base. In other words, the insurgents must be denied access to the people. Access denial is achieved through every means possible from sand berms, killing or

capturing insurgent leaders, building biometric databases to the turning and reintegrating of low and mid level insurgents. Access denial is part of a coordinated counterinsurgency operation intended to suppress subversive, insurgent and criminal elements influencing a community. Denying the insurgent's access to the population separates them from their base of support. The enemy force is not the objective. The objective is to destroy the insurgent's will, their capacity and desire to fight. This fits well with the new counterinsurgency doctrine of clear, hold, build.

Clear, hold, build is civil-military action combining international military and host nation actors, including military forces, law enforcement, local leaders and government offices to a single counterinsurgency campaign. Clear, hold, build encompasses offensive, defensive, stability and enabling activities designed to reduce insurgent influence. This doctrine aims to organize the numerous military and non-military governmental agencies actions into a unified counterinsurgency effort. Clear, hold, build establishes control over



Map 2 Helmand river Valley and Kandahar City Region
Maps reprinted with permission from American Enterprise Institute.

the population and key geographic areas so government and internal development programs can be pursued in a secure environment.

In Afghanistan, the GIRoA and coalition partners are using the Taliban insurgents own tactics against them. When ISAF forces arrive in force, the Taliban runs away. This self-preserving tactic works well for the Taliban when the forces driving them out withdraw in short order. This tactic backfires when they do not. When ISAF establishes a hold on a location, it allows GIRoA and the ANSF to establish a presence in the region. This presence initiates the hold and build phase which centers on defensive and stability operations. The Taliban cannot return when hold and build efforts are established. With the Taliban thus stymied, coalition stabilization teams focus stability and reconstruction efforts in these population and economic zones.

Access denial is accomplished by progressively establishing security and governance forces throughout the country; a variation on the oil spot theory. In this theory, government presence and control spreads gradually by infiltrating columns of troops and special administrative organizations into districts, provinces or tribal regions. The purpose is to disrupt the symbiotic relationship between the people and the insurgents by steadily increasing confidence building measures. The presence of government forces and administrators providing basic services facilitates the elimination of subversive support systems. This is a methodical increase of government control via military forces and specially designed administrative organizations. These teams range in scope and size covering many different aspects from policing and military training to agriculture, medical and governance. This synergistic effect provides stability through direct contact with the population across a wide spectrum.

ISAF's clear, hold and build operations have been aptly demonstrated along the Helmand River. The spring and summer operations in the Helmand River Valley expanded ISAF's foothold in the economic heartland of the south. This offensive has denied Taliban access to their bases in Nawa, Garmsir and Now Zad districts and has expanded government influence in Musa Qala, Sangin and Kajaki to name a few. This area equates to approximately thirty percent of the population in the southern focus area and is the region's principle economic zone. The loss of these bases and the isolation of others have off balanced the Taliban. It has shifted the strategic and operational

initiative to ISAF. The Taliban can do little to dislodge the international coalition forces and ANSF from the Helmand Valley. This loss has cut the Taliban off from their principle access point to the population. The Helmand River represents their most lucrative line of communication — its loss will eventually prove the Taliban's undoing.

From these secure zones, the government can confidently project power and garner influence. Additionally these zones provide a base for the varied coalition forces to provide training, direct and indirect support to the ANSF. A successful access denial operation throws the Taliban back on its heels snatching away one village from the enemy at a time.

Disrupting Insurgent Influence: Counter-Subversion and Insurrection

To this end, security operations in support of access denial focus on counter-subversion and counter-insurrection operations. Subversion, insurgency and the criminal enterprises associated with them are the main methods used by the Taliban and its supporters to build power. The wide spread application of subversion and insurrection on the population at large is the main source of the Taliban's strength. The prominent military and police actions of access denial operations reduce the effects of insurgency and subversion. In his classic work on counterinsurgency, *Low Intensity Operations*, Frank Kitson defined these two activities as they relate to stability operations:

Subversion is all illegal measures short of the use of armed force taken by one section of the people of a country to overthrow those governing the country at the time, or to force them to do things which they do not want to do. It can involve the use of political and economic pressure, strikes, protests, marches, and propaganda, and can also include the use of small-scale violence for the purpose of coercing recalcitrant members of the population into giving support. Insurgency is held to cover the use of armed force by a section of the people against the government for the purposes mentioned above. These activities can occur at the same time in the same country.

Subversion and insurgency are the methods by which the Taliban and the other Afghan criminal elements exert influence over people. The

true contest of this and any insurgency is over the people. Therefore, the people are the focal point for counterinsurgency activity. By placing security forces throughout the target state, including its most remote sections, the government can counter insurgent and subversive action. However, the more densely populated areas must be the initial focus. When counter-insurgent forces are limited the enemy's main sources of supply and manpower have to be controlled first. In Southern Afghanistan, the sources of the insurgent's strength are Kandahar City and the Helmand Valley. The presence of effective government and security in these two areas will provide protection from subversion. In turn, the people, with reduced fear of retribution, will participate in governance and provide information on potential insurgents. The counterinsurgents' close relation with the indigenous population assists in the gathering of intelligence and allows the government forces to expand their influence progressively.

The strength of the coalition regular forces is in their ability to hold and build. However, their numbers are limited. Thus, the coalition's regular forces cannot pursue the insurgents to the hinterlands. By focusing effort in the populated areas like the Kandahar-Helmand region, ISAF capitalizes on its strength. By applying the principles of war, mass and economy of force, ISAF can concentrate its combat power on its main effort, the population and economic zones. The ISAF focus must be on the population and economic centers to deny enemy access.

While regular forces mass in the Helmand-Kandahar population zones Special Forces and other light units keep the pressure on the enemy in the hills as an economy of force. The use of ANSF commandos and para-military police supported by international training teams, and special operations forces on the flanks and rear of the insurgent hideouts and supply lines keeps the enemy off balance. While, at the same time, it does not detract as many forces from the main effort in the population zones. When the population zone is secure and indigenous forces are in control of a firm base then the regular forces can join the hunt for the insurgents in the bush.

Counterinsurgency forces are finite; it is necessary to keep them focused on the areas of greatest population density. ISAF and the ANSF must resist being drawn away from the population centers by the Taliban. ISAF cannot afford to launch costly sweeping actions into the remote low density areas despite these areas being known enemy safe havens. By keeping in mind that the

enemy force is not the main objective, the coalition can focus effort on influencing the population. This focus actually improves the ability to hunt insurgents in the population zones. The most actionable intelligence comes from the people themselves. The more effective are the counter-subversion and insurrection operations, the greater the cooperation of the people. Therefore, the most effective means of defeating the enemy's will to fight is to deny him access to the population. Through pursuing this methodical approach, ISAF and its partners in the ANSF gain influence over the population and attain a state of sustainable security.

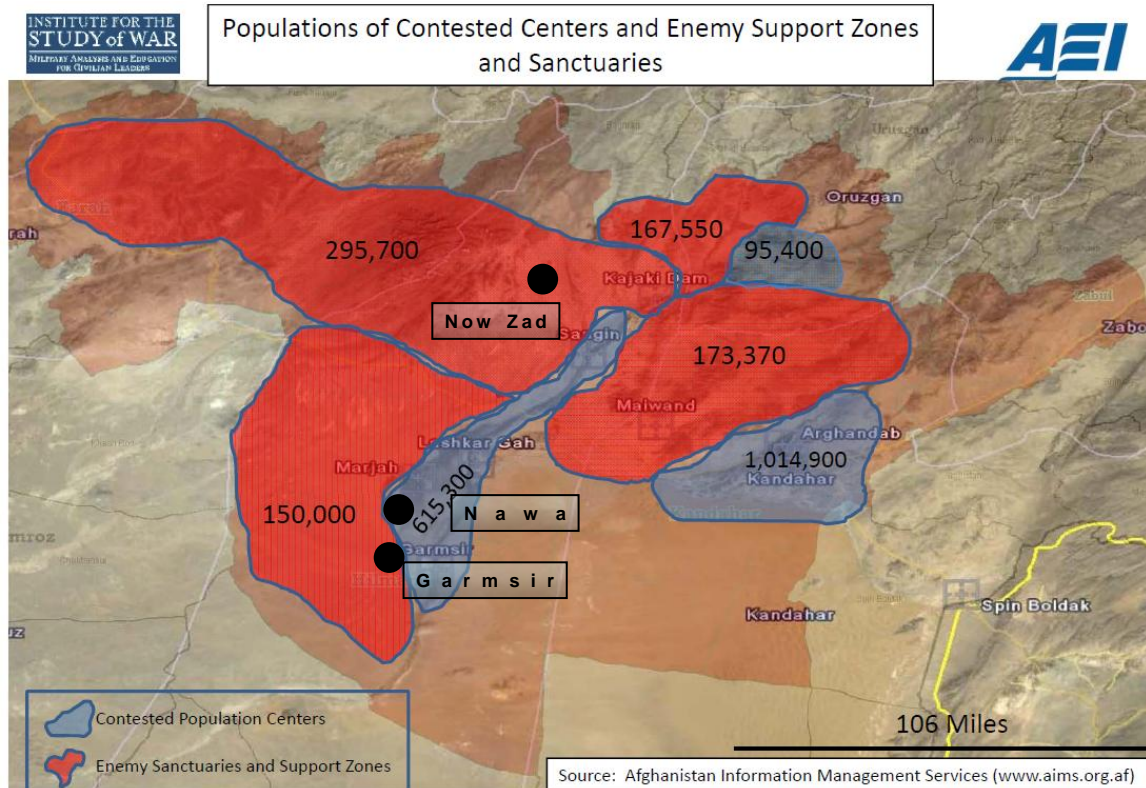
Earning Legitimacy

Don't bring the government officials with you; they're not good to us.

Farmer
Pakiran village
Helmand Province
October 2009

GIRoA must become legitimate in the eyes of the people in order to achieve a stable security situation. Writing a constitution and holding national elections are the first steps towards GIRoA's legitimacy yet, they are not enough. This is one of the reasons why capacity building is necessary despite the demands it places on resources and manpower. An organized and purposeful investment in capacity will garner more respect and influence for the legitimate government than any amount of national electioneering. ISAF must first help GIRoA improve performance and expand their scope in order to establish legitimacy. The international forces must generate buy-in at the local levels to build indigenous capacity for governance. Through capacity building, ISAF assists the government in its bid to become the principle patron. One way to achieve this is by supporting local elections for provincial and district governors, sub-governors and other key regional officials. Further, there is a need to build, rebuild and repair local and national stabilizing forces that are capable of common policing as well as large-scale counter-insurgency operations.

The legitimacy of the local governments and security forces currently depends on international support. The effectiveness of governance, security and protection of the population, key individuals and infrastructure falls heavily on the ISAF forces. ISAF is more of a patron than GIRoA at this time — this must change. The international stability teams continue to focus efforts on building local capacity



9/21/2009

Frederick W. Kagan and Kimberly Kagan

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Map 3 Influence expansion, targeted population zones: Helmand River Valley includes Nawa, Gamsir, and Now Zad.
Maps reprinted with permission from American Enterprise Institute.

to shift the role of principle patron to GIROA. These teams are staffed to build and to deploy this local capacity. The stability teams have many weapons including programs for reintegration of mid and low level fighters and micro-finance loans to spur local entrepreneurs. These programs initiated in the name of GIROA increase the local perception of government support. The supported communities are also encouraged to raise their own local governance and police forces. For instance, the locals throughout the Helmand Valley and surrounding areas are encouraged to establish development councils to work hand-in-hand with the stabilization teams.

Equally important to establishing legitimacy is building the Afghan people's confidence in the ANSF. The responsibility to create a national security force belongs to the government. However, the recruiting, training and maintaining of this force is coordinated through international organizations. Eventually, the ANSF must learn to do this for itself. The ability for ANSF to stand alone and effectively provide security without international assistance and oversight will improve local confidence. However, there are still many

difficulties to overcome. The ANSF have the dual responsibility of improving and expanding; neither of which is an easy task. The two main branches of the ANSF are the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan National Army (ANA).

The ANP has a terrible reputation for corruption. They have also taken the brunt of casualties, making recruitment difficult. Because the ANP generally come from the local region where they are stationed, they can be some of the best sources of intelligence. However, because of their close ties to the locals, they can be more easily influenced by the regional criminal, subversive and insurgent elements. Two effective means of reducing this negative influence have been to match police pay to army pay and to increase the number of mentors and trainers available. Additionally, the Focused District Development (FDD) program is making progress with improving training but it takes time. Each FDD class takes eight weeks and requires using the national police special deploying force known as ANCOP to backfill the local police for that duration. The FDD is a training enhancement program for police that stresses professionalism and competency.

Likewise, Police Mentor and Training teams from the international military forces are having success. But these teams are limited to operating within areas under coalition force control.

The ANA is seen as a fairly corruption free force. However, it too has problems. The technical difficulties encountered in army development, such as lack of infrastructure, equipment and education, disrupt everything from logistics and administration to supporting arms. The problems center on training. It is fairly easy to teach the basic infantry skills required for survival. It is another issue entirely to teach more advanced and technical skills. The Afghans have no tradition of a uniformed military to fall back on. The fighting experiences of the Mujahedeen and warlord armies did little to prepare them for the complexities of counterinsurgency. There are two main techniques for improving the army. These techniques are: embedded training teams and partnership programs.

An embedded training team is a small force placed with a specific ANA *kandak* (Afghan battalion). The members of the team conduct direct training while living as advisors with the *kandak*. These operations are risky for the coalition as demonstrated in the September 8th, 2009 ambush of a Marine embedded training team in the Regional Command-East area of operations. This team operating in the remote, mountainous Kunar region was ambushed without ready recourse to quick reaction supporting forces. They waited over an hour in an intense firefight to receive helicopter close air support. An hour under fire is a long time to be without supporting arms. During the initial portion of the engagement, the principle interpreter was killed adding to the difficulties. The team escaped from the ambush but suffered four Marines killed in action. The training benefit of these teams has been excellent but the risk of casualties is high due to their isolation.

Partnership is the preferred training method. It pairs a coalition battalion with an Afghan *kandak*. This relationship fosters training through direct contact, mentorship and emulation. However, the number of active *kandaks* for coalition forces to partner with is not high. The established *kandaks* are in high demand and are being worn out due to the pace of operations. Meanwhile, the new units need more time to train for the conduct of complex counterinsurgency operations before they can effectively partner.

Using tailored stabilization teams, embedded training and mentorship units and

partnership programs, the ISAF can help improve GIRoA's capability to govern and to secure the people. This improved capacity establishes the GIRoA as the legitimate government and principle patron. The mutual trust and confidence gained by enabling and allowing the community to defend and to regulate itself will help diffuse the potential for subversion. As the counter-insurgency progresses, confidence increases and the indigenous capacity for self-reliance grows. In this way, ISAF works its way out of the job.

Conclusion

We have enough Marines to shake everyone's hand

LtCol William McCullough
Battalion Commander
1st Battalion, Fifth Marines
Nawa, Afghanistan
October 2009

The U.S. objective is to prevent a resurgence of trans-national terrorism that can strike the U.S. or its allies. The GIRoA's objective is to establish their own legitimacy. Both goals are achieved by defeating the will of the insurgency. The enemy's will is his capacity and desire to attack the U.S. and her allies and to fight the GIRoA for influence over the Afghan population. Both the coalition and the GIRoA objectives can be met by achieving a stable security situation in Afghanistan, by pursuing security first. A stable security situation in Afghanistan can be measured by gaining the people's confidence, reducing insurgent influence and establishing the legitimacy of GIRoA to govern. These metrics are affected by the application of the clear, hold and build doctrine via military forces and tailored stability teams. The effort to attain security includes offensive, defensive, stability, and enabling activities. These activities include counter-subversion and insurgency operations to deny the enemy access to the source of power-- the population. The effort requires the establishment of legitimate security forces and government agencies. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the ANSF and Afghan Government must be built up from the local level. Legitimacy is established through the provision of effective local governance. Effective governance is dependant on security. Security can be attained by coalition forces attacking the sources of guerrilla and criminal power and separating them from the civil population. This is achieved by employing counter-insurgent tactics to disrupt insurgent group formation. The separation is facilitated by rapidly establishing sufficient security presence across as

much of the targeted country as possible. A strong, competent, and corruption free ANSF who can lead the security missions and is backed by a legitimate government is the goal. ANSF operations must demonstrate actions visibly beneficial to the general Afghan population. The forces must be capable of mobilizing the population, actively protecting them and involving as many as possible in the stabilization effort. This involvement generates buy-in to the cause of an independent and stable Afghan nation.

Although the Taliban operate shadow governments and armies, they lack legitimacy within and outside Afghanistan. The end state of their return to power would be a continuation of the cycle of violence and warfare that has plagued Afghanistan since the 1970's. To re-install their rule, the Taliban would have to resort to a reign of intense terror far more oppressive and deadly than 1993.

It was made clear on my recent deployment to the region (October 2008- May 2009) that the average Afghan desires a better future. Yet the legacy of thirty years of war has imbued them with a natural fatalism that only a long term effort can overcome. Afghans have no reason to trust their government more than the Taliban and after centuries of invasion xenophobia is a self preservation trait. However, the civilian population generally sees the increased presence of government and coalition forces as a positive action. They often expressed concern and doubts as to the international community's commitment. They have a real fear that ISAF will leave before the job is done. They fear retribution from a resurgent Taliban.

Confidence in ISAF is the first step to a lasting security solution. If the coalition forces stay the course until the GIROA can stand on its own the people will support the government and the security it offers. Simplistically, ISAF must build confidence in its staying power. The second step is to build confidence in the ANSF and Government of Afghanistan through improved professionalism and proficiency. GIROA must demonstrate that the Afghan people are the masters of their own destiny and that the government serves them. In this manner the population centric approach centers on establishing a stable security environment in order for civil society to flourish. The prevention of Al Qaeda resurgence is the reason for U.S. involvement in Afghanistan. The best way to achieve this goal is to have an Afghanistan that can resist police and contain these forces on its own. For the U.S. to foster Afghanistan's resistance to

radical fundamentalism and trans-national terrorism the focus of effort must remain security first.

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A District Approach in Afghanistan?

by Major David S. Clukey

As Secretary of Defense Robert Gates' one-year timeline to make progress in Afghanistan approaches, the U.S. and the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) still struggle to accomplish President Obama's goals in the region.¹ I suggest that the current top down approach employed by U.S. and ISAF forces requires a corresponding and simultaneous application of a bottom-up approach to maximize operational effects.

Operational experience gained from four deployments and three combat tours to Afghanistan with the U.S. Army Special Forces (SF) (2004-2008), and thesis research conducted on Afghanistan at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) inspired my hypothesis that the district level is the center of gravity for counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan. My recent attendance and participation in the Small Wars Journal's Tribal Engagement Workshop (TEW) served to reinforce this hypothesis.

A small group of active duty Army Special Forces officers, academics, former military officers, and members of various Washington D.C. think tanks comprised the TEW. Working groups broke out to focus separately on tactical, operational, and strategic levels. Each of the three groups addressed the following topics:

- (1) evaluate the value and feasibility of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan,
- (2) assess what secondary effects adoption of a tribal engagement approach would have on the political and military situation, and
- (3) identify the operational components of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.²

Each group shared their findings at the conclusion of the forum. I was shocked to discover

that each of the three groups, with little or no collaboration, determined the district level to be the center of gravity in Afghanistan. Each group developed a district approach concept when identifying operational components of a tribal engagement approach in Afghanistan.

The findings correspond with my hypothesis, that in Afghanistan a bottom-up approach incorporating foreign internal defense (FID), and COIN operations focused at the district level, may effectively deny insurgents³ sanctuary, critical resources, and serve to isolate and separate insurgents from the population. In order to illustrate why it is important for the U.S. and international community to recognize Afghan traditional governance at the local level in order to spread influence from the bottom-up, this paper:

- (1) compares and contrasts a top-down and a bottom-up mission focus in Afghanistan,
- (2) examines factors that may facilitate the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) endorsement, and the feasibility of a district approach, and
- (3) recommends four lines of operation for military units assigned to a district.

A Top-Down vs. Bottom-Up focus.

Acknowledging the importance of employing a balanced approach in the distribution of limited resources to each level of the Afghan government, it is important to understand the difference between a top-down and a bottom-up strategy as it pertains to Afghanistan. Outside of the urban centers of Kabul and Kandahar, Afghanistan is composed of somewhat semi-autonomous

¹ President Obama's goals in Afghanistan can be referenced at: President Barack Obama, "White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan," *A New Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan*, March 27, 2009, <http://www.whitehouse.gov> (accessed April 1, 2009).

² Dillegge, Dave, "SWF/SWJ Looking for Some Experience and Expertise," *Small Wars Journal*, March 9, 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/03/swfswj-looking-for-some-experi/> (accessed March 25, 2010).

³ Thomas Riddig defines the insurgency in Afghanistan as segmented and consisting of seven armed structures: the Islamic Movement of the Taliban, the networks of the Haqqani and Mansur families in the South-East, the Tora Bora Jehad Front (*De Tora Bora Jehadi Mahaz*) led by Anwar-ul-Haq Mujahed in Nangrahar (Eastern region), HIG, small Salafi groups in Kunar and Nuristan provinces (Eastern region) and, as a new phenomenon, a number of not inter-related local ex-mujahedin groups that (or whose historical leaders) had been pushed out of power, are taking up arms and starting to adopt Taliban-like language and behavior, see *The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors, and Approaches to 'Talks'*, 2009, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/AANRuttigSummary2.PDF> (accessed October 25, 2009).

communities or "village states," managed by district and village level governances dispersed across the country.¹

The existence of decentralized local governances, not affiliated with the Afghan central government, is a result of macro historical processes as well as three interrelated contemporary dynamics consisting of: (1) a general recognition of *qawm* or "the basic sub-national identity based on kinship, residence, and sometimes occupation,"² (2) the inability of the central government to effectively provide security and essential services, and (3) numerous ongoing insurgencies that undermine both the central government and local governances.³

A top-down strategy allocates resources and places emphasis on the highest-level government institutions and political and military leaders, to spread influence from the government center. According to Dr. Seth Jones, the U.S. and ISAF "have focused the bulk of their efforts since 2001 on trying to create a strong central government in Kabul, capable of establishing security and delivering services."⁴

A district approach would entail a bottom-up focus and allocate resources to the local or village level, promoting the authority of established local leaders, and embrace the macro historical processes that have manifested Afghan traditional governance.⁵ This method spreads influence from the rural areas outside of the central government's control and considers *qawm*, and existing tribal or community socio-political hierarchies. A bottom-up strategy allocates resources to promote local leaders and as counterinsurgency advisor Dr. David Kilcullen suggests, "assists them in providing security and services to their populations, and may better connect them to the central government when necessary."⁶

¹ Ali Ahmad, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (Quantico, VA: United States Marine Corps Studies and Analysis Division, 1995), xiv.

² Ibid., xiv.

³ Thomas Riddig, *The Other Side: Dimensions of the Afghan Insurgency: Causes, Actors, and Approaches to Talks*, 2009, <http://aan-afghanistan.com/uploads/AANRuttigSummary2.PDF> (accessed October 25, 2009).

⁴ Seth Jones, *U.S. Strategy in Afghanistan* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, April 2009), 7.

⁵ David Kilcullen describes tribal governance as divided into three poles of authority consisting of the khan (tribal leadership), the malik (government representative) and the mullah (religious authority) in, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 80.

⁶ Ibid., 7.

I assert that the simultaneous application of a bottom-up and a top-down strategy would effectively link the Afghan central government through each provincial governor with respective district governors. This linkage would facilitate the flow of essential services to the district level to promote and enhance the legitimacy of the GIROA.

A bottom up approach at the district level could leverage the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) consisting of: (1) security, (2) governance (rule of law and human rights), and (3) economic and social development.⁷ The flow of essential services and capacity building efforts at the district level will encourage national identity, while building trust and confidence in elected officials as well as the central government.

How to Implement a District Approach.

The implementation of a district approach will require assessment, political endorsement, allocation of critical and limited resources, and a reversal of existing paradigms. Assessments would in determine a priority for which districts to allocate resources first. Following assessments, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) would require the endorsement of the GIROA political leadership.

The recent top-down pilot Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3), conducted in Wardak Province is indicative of this. AP3 disrupted the influence of insurgents in rural areas not protected by Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). AP3 placed emphasis on provincial and district leaders who lead efforts, and recruited Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF) volunteers.⁸

Without the support of Wardak's governor, Mohammed Fe'dai, who facilitated the cooperation of district level leaders, AP3 would not have been possible. Governor Fe'dai took a lead role in shaping public perception and setting conditions for the implementation of AP3. He accomplished this through a campaign of radio broadcasts, addresses, and visits to the districts within his province.⁹

⁷ Adib Farhardi, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy*, Kabul, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Secretariat, Author, 2008, 5.

⁸ This information was ascertained through interviews with members of Special Forces who conducted AP3. Interviews were conducted at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, August 2009.

⁹ Ibid.

On the surface, implementation of a district approach presents a fivefold dilemma:

- (1) execution cannot begin immediately
- (2) a proponent unit and command relationship requires further analysis
- (3) commitment of limited ANSF and ISAF to select districts
- (4) the proneness of *arbakai* (tribal security system)
- (5) *arbakai* funding, regulation, and demobilization considerations

Conversely, a district approach will spread legitimacy to the district level and link each level of government. A district approach and its inherent bottom up focus, forces coalition forces to, as General McChrystal acknowledges, “interact more closely with the population and focus on operations that bring stability, while shielding them from insurgent violence, corruption, and coercion.”¹ Shielding the population will also insulate local leaders from insurgent influence and facilitate the re-establishment of *shuras* (councils), as governing authorities. The development of local security forces, if implemented as part of a district approach, could mitigate the long-term requirements of ANSF at the district/village level to a core cadre of ANP/ Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) advisors, and facilitate the creation of an integrated and tiered ANSF security concept between districts and provincial capitals.

Focus of a District Level Approach.

ISAF units assigned to a district, in accordance with the ANDS, should focus on the GIRoA's development objectives through four areas:

- (1) governance, insulate the district *shura* representatives and district governors from insurgents allowing them to reassert authority,
- (2) security, develop the local security apparatus or *arbakai* and place them under the control of local leadership
- (3) support local leaders in addressing the rule of law and human rights (already generally

understood through *pashtunwali* and *shari'ah* [Islamic law]),² and

- (4) focus on economic and social development through the incorporation of a District Development Team (DDT),³ as an attachment to the military unit assigned to the district.

Small, versatile, and independently capable units should be positioned in select districts to address GIRoA development objectives, U.S. and NATO stabilization goals, and most importantly, to restore authority to local leaders and marginalize insurgent influence. Units should integrate with the community by renting a compound or “safe house” within the district.

The units should operate as decentralized elements, and maintain a presence in the district until it is secure, has improved social and economic conditions, and its governance and security apparatus is assessed as independently capable. The units should ensure that all tribes in the district are represented equally in the *shura*. If it is determined that *arbakai* be trained, the program of instruction (POI) designed for the pilot Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3) should be used; however, it could be taught at a pre-determined training area in the district.

Conclusion.

In considering a district approach in Afghanistan, I suggest employing a strategy that addresses local conditions as they pertain to Afghanistan, and not attempting to replicate surge operations that may have contributed to relative success in Iraq. COIN in Afghanistan must maximize and focus available resources to enhance security, governance, and development both from the top-down and from the bottom-up simultaneously.

The findings ascertained from the TEW working groups support my hypothesis that a

² Miakhel Shahmahmood describes the centerpieces of Pashtunwali ideology as consisting of four elements equality (Seyal), the application of equality (Seyali or competition), the protection of female members of society and wealth (Namus), and honor (Ezat) in *The Importance of Tribal Structures and Pakhtunwali in Afghanistan; Their Role in Security and Governance*, 2006, 4, <http://www.pashtoonkhwa.com/files/books/Miakhel%20-%20Importance%20of%20Tribal%20Structures%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf> (accessed October 29, 2009).

³ Professor Thomas R. Johnson described District Support Teams (DST) or District Development Teams (DDT) as “diplomats, aid workers or agricultural experts,” in his article “All Counterinsurgency Is Local,” *The Atlantic* (October 2008).

¹ McChrystal, *COMISAF's Initial Assessment*, 1–1.

bottom-up district approach would promote and enable established village and district political hierarchies, and separate the insurgents from the population. Successful application of a district approach will require ISAF assessment, the endorsement of the GIROA, and a reversal of existing paradigms. In conclusion, military units employed in support of a district approach should promote Afghan development objectives through four lines of operation, and link the Afghan central government with district leaders through sustained capacity building, civil-military operations, intelligence and information operations.

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