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Three Wickets and A Bulldozer: Overcoming Afghanistan's Geopolitical Barriers

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Abstract

This strategic and operational-level proposal discusses some of the important dynamics at play in Eastern and Southern Afghanistan, as observed by the authors from 2002 - 2009. It identifies key, positive catalysts that have been largely overlooked or under emphasized by the Coalition, its international and interagency partners, and the Afghanistan National Security Forces. The authors believe that these catalysts, if applied in a geographically focused and integrated manner, rapidly expand social networks across tribes, increase the amount and fidelity of human intelligence, and multiply areas of influence to overcome Afghanistan's geopolitical boundaries. This proposal offers an Afghan-centric and network-centric approach to counterinsurgency that ultimately leads to insurgent defeat in Afghanistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Area of Pakistan, as well as a unified Afghanistan with rule of law and economic prosperity.

Throughout its history, Afghanistan has been difficult to conquer, and attempts at central governance have largely failed. Once an army has entered, it has found itself within a complex labyrinth of tribes, religion, and mountains. The country's compartmented geography has served to strengthen its tribes and clans, making central governance extremely difficult at best.

If Afghanistan is to achieve effective central governance, security, rule of law, and economic prosperity, counterinsurgency strategies demand a willingness to think unconventionally, perhaps counter-intuitively, in ways challenging conventional doctrine and western experience. These are ways unlikely to be recognized at first glance, but they are ways that work within the culture. These are ways that build on the local strengths of Afghanistan's rich culture, while at the same time, removing the country's geopolitical barriers that have led to the failure of occupying armies and the past failures of central governance.

Success demands a network-centric strategy that creates integrated and expanded social networks through linked centers of commerce. The coalition needs a unified and inter-dependent strategy with an end game. The strategy must be simple and consistent with Afghan culture and thinking. Furthermore, the strategy should shift from a mirror imaging Western social and cultural paradigms of the 21st century, and chart progress in terms of starting points and relevant progress with the context of Afghan culture. To this end, success is about exploiting that which goes too often unobserved with audacity and creativity to attack and erode the enemies' strengths and minimize ancient tribal structures.

Achieving an end game is ultimately not found in the application of kinetic warfare, but rather in the folds of daily life.

Background

In many respects, especially in the east and the south, rural Afghanistan is an underdeveloped society permeated by 14th century ideologies. For Afghanistan to become a productive member of a 21st century international community that will not be in danger of retreating to a fragmented state wherein Islamic extremists find sanctuary, Afghanistan needs to undergo rapid modernization and ideological reformation. This is not to assert the country must advance entirely into the 21st century to be successful. In many respects, just achieving 19th century standards would have immediate, positive results. Yet, as years of constant warfare have shown, this is a formidable task that must first begin with an understanding of the existing infrastructure and tribal structures that currently dominate the country.

Afghanistan's geography is extraordinarily complex and daunting. The physical infrastructure of roads that link the diverse geographical regions is limited at best. Other than the major highways leading to Kabul, the connecting roads are mostly primitive, rough, and often barely drivable. From the air, the dirt roads seem deceptively smooth and trafficable. Physically driving them, however, offers a completely different perspective that can be a frustrating, slow, and painful experience. It is common for a drive of 25 miles between major villages to take almost two hours. Such a primitive road network retards information exchange, and by extension, social change. While the country has enjoyed success in the construction of the "Ring Road" linking Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat, and is currently having reasonable success in the construction of the Khowst-Gardez Highway in Eastern Afghanistan, progress has been extraordinarily slow and unfocused. The vast majority of road projects are currently contracted, behind schedule, over-priced, and usually use security and unskilled labor that is recruited from

areas outside of the local area in which the road is being constructed. The result is a failure to connect localized hubs of commerce that fuel local economies that, in turn, employ local Afghan populations.

As a largely agrarian society, Afghanistan is one of the most underdeveloped countries in the world, ranking 218 out of 230 in per capita GDP. The Afghan people have an average life expectancy of 47 years, an illiteracy rate that exceeds 70 percent, and an unemployment rate of nearly 40 percent. With 45 percent of the Afghan population 14 years or younger, the lack of employment and education possibilities creates the potential for this population group to become further disenfranchised, and, in turn, more susceptible to insurgent recruiting efforts. Thus, it is essential that the youth of Afghanistan are considered an enormous change agent for the country's future.¹

Further complicating the geopolitical landscape is a history of fierce tribal independence and tribal complexities. Compounded by geographical barriers, and poor infrastructure, the center of gravity—or the source of power—in Afghanistan is not a single entity. Actual power, and thereby the means to influence, resides in decentralized systems at the local level. Afghanistan is an Islamic state and Islam is one of the few unifying factors in a country of mostly artificially-drawn boundaries. By its own constitution, the rule of law unifies the authority of Islam with the authority of governance. This paradigm differs greatly from the western models of democracy where the authorities of church and state are separated. The foundation results in a ruling structure that integrates faith and governance as one, and is at the very core of Afghanistan's geopolitical character.

Tribal and village structures of governance address spiritual instruction, education, and authority. With the exception of sporadic cellular phone service, information generally flows through word of mouth beginning with the village leadership then passing to the people. At the local level, power usually takes the form of a dynamic triad composed of the Mullah, the Elder and the Teacher. Tribal Elders or Mullahs are typically the most powerful of the three, depending on the specific region. Each is grounded in the teaching of the Koran, each has a measure of ruling authority, and each has a primary and influential role in the village. Lacking a nationally unified system, this trilateral is tasked with providing security and the rule of law, often relying on tribal alliances and ancient codes of conduct as the basis for enforcement. Locally, villagers are expected to financially support those holding these positions, providing them with shelter, food, and clothing plus additional needs that they may have for their specialty or comfort. In smaller villages with limited resources, the village triad is often incorporated to one person; hence, it is common to find only the “Mullah” or the “Elder” even though their role spans that of Mullah, Elder and Teacher. A similar structure exists in the Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) with Mullahs serving as Religious Cultural Advisors, or RCAs. The RCA offers a spiritual and moral bridge between the village, the national government, and the ANSF.

Identifying the factors that can overcome the geopolitical barriers is challenging. Other than the physical links of roads and the spiritual bridge of religion, there are few unifying factors in Afghanistan's history other than war. However, a close look into Afghanistan's ancient history shows that competition through the ancient sport of Buzkashi had been a common bridge between tribes throughout the central Asian region since the period of Genghis Khan. Similar to Polo, Buzkashi involved horseman struggling to make a goal with the carcass of a dead calf.

¹ CIA. “Afghanistan”. The World Fact Book. US Government Online Publication. 2009

Buzkashi competitions are played for days, and involved local and regional competitions. In modern history, even though Afghanistan has participated in twelve Summer Olympics, one sport above all others offers promise as a national and regional unifier with international effects: Cricket. Introduced to Afghanistan in the early 1900's under the reign of Amir Habibullah, Afghanistan has recently risen to international acclaim in international Cricket tournaments. With Pakistan and India considered to be international powerhouses in the sport, Cricket offers the potential as a change agent for young and old alike that ideologically bridges geopolitical barriers.

Catalysts for change

To overcome Afghanistan's geopolitical barriers, expanded social networks are the key to success. To create such a system requires unique, positive, and local catalysts that can produce immediate and transformational change across the country's geopolitical landscape. Some key catalysts have been overlooked due to 21st century and Western cultural biases. Other catalysts have taken time to develop. Nevertheless an historic opportunity now exists to effect widespread social change through focused development of self-sustaining dynamic networks, and thereby defeat the insurgency, with three key catalysts: building improved gravel roads, building ideological bridges, and securing the network. Each is interrelated and bound together through the focused application of the Afghanistan National Security Forces. Together each is synchronized and integrated in a select geographic area to connect critical nodes (see Figure 1.) These strategic nodes combine to form a hub, which then expands to other nodes to make other hubs, ultimately forming an expanded social network that defeats Afghanistan's geopolitical barriers—and the insurgency. It is an Afghan-centric counterinsurgency strategy that is driven by bottom-up catalysts.

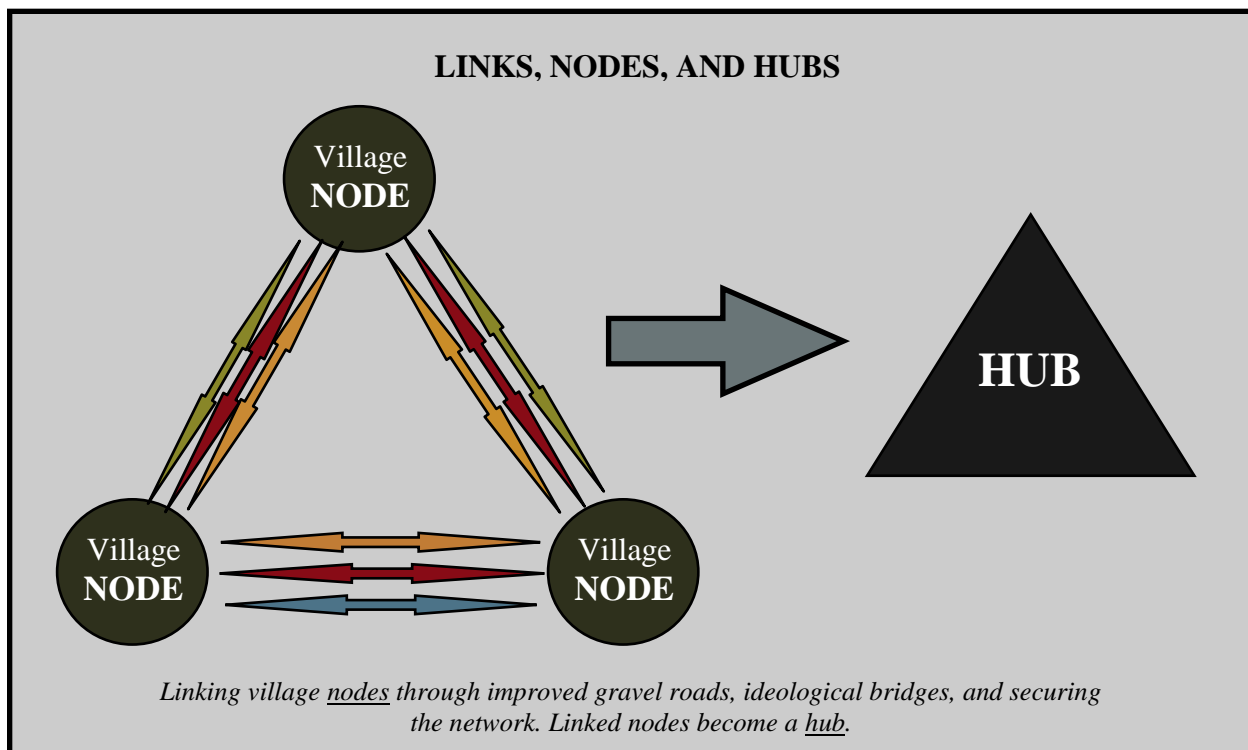


Figure 1.

Catalyst #1: Building improved gravel roads

Observation:

In the Fall of 2008 CPT Kilbride sat on the floor of the Shavak District Center as the local village elders assembled in a circle to begin the shura. One of the topics to be discussed was the concerns over the state of the promised Khost-Gardez Highway. The elders were upset; each shared a similar story. The road construction had been contracted to the Indian company Louis Berger Group with the promise of local jobs, but the villagers had yet to see any results. The road was over a year behind schedule and the contractor had hired most of his labor force from outside areas. The security in the villages had since deteriorated, and the insurgents had moved back in to the surrounding mountains and valleys. For CPT Kilbride his hands were tied. Lacking any resources to address the problem, he would have to defer to higher headquarters to deal with the contractor.

Building roads can easily be misconstrued as a purely humanitarian effort; by Army doctrine, this could easily be categorized as a defensive strategy. In the context of Afghanistan, however, strategic thinking needs to move beyond the classic definitions of “offensive,” as defined by kinetic actions. Building improved gravel roads is the first strike of offensive capabilities. It is the modern day equivalent of building runways on the Pacific Islands during World War Two that allowed for waves of US aircraft to stage supplies and launch attacks against other Japanese-held islands. Similarly, building roads in Afghanistan may be more accurately viewed as an asymmetric, offensive mindset that links communities, supports developing micro-economies, builds community loyalties, and supports expanding human intelligence networks, while allowing a more rapid projection of forces to remote areas. Ultimately, building and improving gravel roads in Afghanistan provides a means of gaining trust and loyalties, thereby acting as a positive catalyst with far greater impact than the road itself—especially with the Afghanistan National Army doing the building and the Afghanistan National Police providing the security.

Why improved gravel roads over paved roads? Mainly because they are significantly faster to construct, are within the capabilities of the Afghan Army, are more cost effective than paved roads, are sustainable within the limits of the existing economic structure, and, if properly constructed, offer a high degree of protection against Improvised Explosive Devices, or IEDs. Essentially improved gravel roads achieve the same benefits of connecting communities as paved roads, but do so at a fraction of the time and cost. They are critical to rural Afghanistan to bring it from 14th Century constructs to 19th Century potentialities. Gravel roads in themselves are a remarkable progress forward for a rural agrarian economy.

Observation:

Oshay is a small village in the northwest of Uruzgon Province that sits at the edge of Forward Operating Base (FOB) Cobra. In the Fall of 2006, Special Forces Operational Detachment-A (ODA) 324 assumed control. The Taliban had infiltrated Oshay to such a degree that ODA 324 was being ambushed within a few hundred meters of FOB Cobra every time they left on patrol. The Team began meeting with the village elders. They arranged to have the streets of Oshay graded, graveled and new drainage flows dug in. Then they assisted some of the shop owners with reconstruction to improve their store fronts. Within two months the market area had grown from a handful of shop owners to over fifty shops plus a local hotel. The Taliban were pushed out, and it became possible to walk from FOB Cobra through the village of Oshay without fear.

To build these roads, ANA engineer units must increase their capability from a handful of bulldozers, excavators, and dump trucks to a fully-manned, trained, equipped, and mentored force with an explicit mission to build improved gravel roads. A quick and relatively easy fix is to add road graders and compactor equipment to the existing engineer companies that are organic to each of the ANA's five regional corps. There is an engineer battalion slated for delivery to each of the five ANA Corps, but it is not projected to be fielded until 2011. Using the ANA engineer battalion and the existing engineer company (the latter with four pieces of additional equipment), mentored and using US techniques, the ANA could build up to 4 km—or almost 2.5 miles—per day of improved gravel road over relatively flat terrain, not including culverts. This assumes that gravel production is contracted and timely. At the expense of delaying ANA artillery or other supporting units, these engineer battalions could have minor modifications to their equipment listing, and be brought forward in the fielding process for more immediate impact. What this would mean in Eastern Afghanistan, for instance, would be that the approximate 180 km of dirt road between its three main nodes of commerce—Gardez, Ghazni, and Sharana, could be upgraded to gravel road in less than two months, rather than the three years it will take for contractors to finish improving and paving these roads, assuming the contractors finish on time. Moreover, engineer units from one corps, for instance in the relatively peaceful north or west, could be attached to an ANA corps in the east and south to achieve greater effects. This works because Coalition Forces provide the vast majority of indirect fire in Afghanistan and artillery is largely ineffective against an enemy who tends to hide among the civilian population and seldom masses in numbers.²

"If there is one thing Afghanistan will never be short of, it's rocks." Two soldiers talking over tea.

Together with micro-business loans from emerging credit unions to fund local gravel production, the ANA should be building the majority of the roads to link the key centers of commerce—and the ANA and ANP jointly securing them—interacting with and helping the people in the same way US National Guard units have done for years at home and abroad. Where the ANA and ANP cannot provide security for all roads, success of the Village Stability Program spear headed by Special Forces Teams in the South, Central, East and West of Afghanistan demonstrates villagers are reasonably effective in providing local security. This program could easily be expanded to include road maintenance and improvement as part of a permanent localized means for economic stimulus. Doing such enables the ANSF commanders to have more flexibility in the tactical application of relevant combat power within their areas of operation. It significantly increases the rate at which roads can be built in this country, employs local military-age males in generally impoverished areas, and restores a skilled pool of labor and engineering expertise the country lost during the last 30 years of war—the infrastructure development expertise Afghanistan will need for years to come. The local employment provides an essential domestic tax base—one that pays for eventual repairs of road infrastructure and the salaries of public servants. Contractors that have now completed most of Afghanistan's major highways could pave these roads as resources and finances allow. Additionally, this plan provides a market for distressed US heavy equipment and steel manufacturers.

The central theme to this strategy is about connecting selected communities. As such, building improved gravel roads is far more than the process of construction; however, roads are

² CSTC-A. "Afghan Engineer Forces - Corp and Below". March 2009.

the essential link in a strategy that seeks to build focused connections between key localized nodes of commerce. This in turn leads to strategic hubs of control that are linked to other hubs, creating an expanding area of security that supports a continuing process of development, government legitimacy, and commerce. Roads connect markets and also create new centers of commerce. They provide the base link from which to work outwards with villagers closest to the road being most likely to be supportive of national government's efforts in the short term. Roads link villages, offer the fuel for the growth of micro-economies, while reinforcing the legitimacy of the central government. It is a dynamic and expanding process with widespread effect.

Catalyst #2: Building Ideological Bridges

With the preponderance of effort having been directed towards the ethnically balanced Afghanistan National Army (ANA) over past few years, it has evolved into an institution that is respected and trusted throughout most of Afghanistan. Nearly half of its fielded units have reached the highest capability rating, requiring only limited Coalition assistance. Corruption has been reduced, as it has become more professional and its connection to communities has increased. In effect, the ANA has become the moral compass for the developing state of Afghanistan.

Observation:

As the four Afghanistan National Army (ANA) Ford Rangers stopped in front of the 203rd Corps Mosque, Colonel Shah, the ANA Corps Religious and Cultural Advisor (RCA), was waiting outside to greet his guests. The eight men who exited the vehicles were Elders and Mullahs from the District of Zormat. Shah had sent the small detachment of Afghan soldiers to pick them up and bring them to the Corps Mosque for a shura. They greeted each other as Shah led them towards the entrance. The group seemed visibly surprised. Gesturing towards the entry to the Mosque, Shah spoke in his calm voice as the group of men paused, "Let's pray." The men looked at each other and then turned their stare back to Colonel Shah.

"We have been told that you did not pray; that none of you are Muslim."

Colonel Shah smiled softly, as he opened the door and gestured in, "Please, come in. Let us pray together."

One of the reasons the Army has developed into a respected institution in the eye of local village and tribal leadership is its Religious and Cultural Advisors. As the mullah for the Army, the RCA offers direct connection to village elders, mullahs, and teachers. The Coalition has spent a great deal of money to build mosques for the ANA. Bringing the mullahs and the other village leaders to these mosques, exchanging information with educated and relatively moderate Afghanistan National Security Forces RCAs on the Koran and the Hadiths, not only sends a powerful message to the community that ANSF is a respected and honorable representative of a legitimate Muslim government, but it immediately nullifies religiously-based Taliban propaganda. As incentive to participate in the exchange, select villages—those along the critical links and in the nodes of commerce—could be awarded projects through the Coalition's Provincial Reconstruction Teams and the government could pay for village leadership to participate in the Hajj—something most can't afford to do even though it is a requirement for all Muslims to attend once in their lifetime, if they are physically able and have the financial means. Over time, this ideological bridge builds village loyalty to the government and its security forces, and plays an important role in separating the insurgents from the people.

If the ANA's RCA were properly augmented with Information Operations capabilities near par with his Coalition counterparts, the RCA's ability to connect with villages would be tremendously increased beyond simply meeting with village elders and mullahs. Unfortunately RCAs have virtually no Information Operations capability due, in part, to an under-appreciation of the effects Information Operations can achieve, and due to an apparent reluctance by the Ministry of Defense to give too much power to a religious figure as it tries to build a democratic state. To maximize the impact of the RCA in Afghan counterinsurgency, especially in the East and in the South, the ANA must have robust Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs teams.

To achieve support in Kabul for such a program and enhanced Information Operations capability, indigenous efforts should be under the auspices of unified ANA and ANP traveling Cricket sports demonstration teams. Information Operations would therefore not be identified as a religious asset, but incorporated into ANSF recruiting and outreach programs for the villages. Using this process, the Cricket sports demonstration teams, would be fitted with sports equipment as well as promotional equipment and materials. Additionally, they would have mentorship by the Coalition's Psychological Operations and Civil Affairs teams while taking advantage of existing public affairs capabilities.

Observation:

Following a morning of tight security that followed an area-wide threat of suicide bombers in the city of Gardez, the Command SGT Major (CSM) for the ANAs 203rd Corps took a small contingent after lunch and left the 203rd Corps gates. Heading to the western edge of the city, the CSM was welcomed by an assembled group of local VIPs as the honored guest for the first annual regional competition of Cricket.

In the middle of a dirt field was a long strip of concrete with three wickets placed on each end. At the outer perimeter of what had been measured to meet the Cricket rules, was an outline of white painted rocks marking the out zone of play.

As the spectators began to assemble, groups of players arrived on foot, by bicycle, and by car, each dressed in traditional dress. As the time approached the beginning of the tournament, each player donned uniforms. Lining up for the Mullah's prayer, each team stood next to the other, designated by their individual colors, and the Province's name from where they had come. This was the beginning of the 20-day tournament for the regional title.

The unified Cricket sports demonstration team made up of a mix of ANA and ANP that is ethnically balanced would become a key element of the RCA's village first contact and continued community outreach. These capabilities would be completely integrated into the Coalition's Information Operations planning. In this proposed strategy, Information Operations is not a separate line of effort, but built into the design of village exchange through key leader engagements with the village elders and the RCA, followed by an ANA/ANP Cricket demonstration for the village. This strategy uses the RCA as the spearhead to exchange information with the local village elders, mullahs, teachers, and district sub-governors while setting the conditions for a village-based sports program that will be supported and linked to the ANA, the ANP, national competitions, and ultimately, the central government.

The primary target of information dissemination is the village youth, as they are ultimately the change agent for Afghanistan. However, effectively getting to the youth first means influencing village elders—the power brokers. This can be most effectively accomplished

through the influence of the RCA. He is the one person who can calm the village elders in the wake of government-led searches and raids; the one empowered to counter insurgent propaganda; the go-to man for the Coalition to coordinate civil affairs, psychological operations, and humanitarian assistance operations at the tactical level. As such, in this society where church and state are virtually one, and in what essentially is a battle of ideologies, the RCA wields a disproportionate amount of power in relation to his small staff section. Effective RCA employment can lead to immediate impacts on the elders and transformational influence of the youth.

The use of a nationally-integrated sports program as a primary change agent at the village level is far less about sports than it is a means of connecting communities while overcoming the ideological obstacles that separate them. Using Cricket as the initial sports focus provides a means to connect local villagers provincially, nationally, regionally and for some, to the international community. Cricket provides a secular vehicle to develop pride and teamwork, while allowing tribes, sub-tribes, and clans to dismiss their differences and build unity. This has historical and current relevance. One only has to look at the resounding success the Iraqi National Soccer Team had in 2006—in the midst of unprecedented Sunni versus Shi'a violence—to foster Iraqi pride and unity. Rugby did the same in South Africa in the wake of the collapse of Apartheid in the 1990s. For Afghanistan, current success and local interest support Cricket as the sport of choice.

By introducing a nationally integrated Cricket program through the unified ANA/ANP demonstration team, an image of national governance is linked to the sports program. Assisting that image, the coaching for the sports programs would be supplied by the ANP, providing a community connection with the police. This not only elevates the ANP within the village, but also offers a tool to motivate the ANP to a higher level of performance. As the programs grow, quarterly competitions could be held at ANA bases, allowing for joint prayer before the competition led by the RCA's, and positive and competitive interaction between elders and the ANA and ANP. It also enables the RCA to promote moderate Muslim beliefs to the youth. Ultimately, Afghan community leaders working with Provincial Reconstruction Teams could link the village sports programs with "Sister Schools" or "Sister Cities" throughout the world. Using the Internet—home pages, blogs, Skype®, Instant Messages, and Twitter® feeds—villages could share their sports events with an outside link, expanding awareness of the youth far beyond the borders of Afghanistan. Using the interconnectivity of the web, the village and its youth become linked to the world.

Catalyst #3: Securing the network

Community exchanges and improved gravel roads that breakdown geographical barriers must be secured to work. While the ANA is fully capable of projecting and sustaining itself into a targeted area of connected hubs of commerce, the ANP is the appropriate long-term force for this endeavor. Unfortunately the ANP continues to struggle with community validation. In many outlying areas, where reform and retraining of many police has yet to occur, the ANP is often rife with corruption. It lacks wide spread community respect, and when left without mentorship and reform, has performance standards that are often closely associated with a marauding band of thieves. Yet, in outlying areas, the ANP are one of the core components of a successful security plan. The question is how to give them validation and sustainability. If professionalized

and strengthened, and thereby legitimized, the ANP can be another viable leverage point directed toward local leadership.³

Observation:

In a small village east of Zormat in Paktya Province an old man was sitting on the ground several meters off of the road. As the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) patrol was assembling to head into the mountains, their First Sergeant noticed the old man rise to his feet. Diverting his attention from his soldiers, the ANA First Sergeant walked over to the old man to greet him. He was one of the Elders of the village and was visibly angry:

“We are farmers. We have little extra and usually only enough for our families. But yesterday the Afghanistan National Police searched my home; turned over beds and emptied trunks of our belongings. The only thing they took was my camera. They told me not to talk. They told me I was lucky they didn’t take more. Now they say they do not remember me; that they never took a camera. The ANP are thieves. Why must they search our homes? We trust the ANA. But the ANP is only here to steal.”

The ANP are required by decree to accompany ANA in other than imminent threat searches of qalats (walled homes) and houses. Typically the ANA sets the outer-cordon for the search and the ANP searches the homes within the cordon. The problem is the ANA typically provides little or no notice to the ANP about upcoming missions for operational security reasons, and trust. The insufficient notice routinely results in a “pick-up game” for the ANP, deepening the mistrust the ANA has of the ANP and resulting in unprofessional searches of homes that widen the mistrust the locals have of the ANP. If the ANA and the locals are to have confidence in the ANP, they must experience a competent police force. The Focused District Development Program (FDD)—a successful program designed to reform and retrain police at the district level—has made much progress in building ANP ethics and competencies in selected districts, but to truly be effective in a network-centric strategy, these districts should be married with similar judicial reform, and aligned with focused nodes of commerce and the roads that link them. Additionally a similar program should exist to man, train, equip, and mentor specialized ANP units for the specific purpose of home searches and conducting joint operations with the ANA.

In October 2008, MAJ Wiker, entered Qarabagh District, Ghazni Province to complete a assessment as part of the Focused District Development (FDD) program in hopes of determining the effectiveness of the local Afghanistan National Police (ANP) units. His findings were very clear: local villagers consistently complained of ANP corruption along the “Ring Road,” or Highway 1. They also spoke of their fears of the Taliban and the ANP’s unwillingness to protect them.

Following from MAJ Wiker’s findings, the Qarabagh ANP was sent to the Regional Training Center in Konduz for professional development training. After the completion of the training in February 2009, MAJ Wiker returned to Qarabagh for a follow-up assessment. What he found was impressive. The relationship between the local villagers and the ANP was completely transformed. The villagers no longer had complaints of ANP corruption or an unwillingness to provide protection. ANP was conducting regular patrols throughout the area and was responding to local villager’s calls for assistance.

³ CSTC-A. “Talking Points”. May 2009.

One of the key tools the ANP needs to effectively and professionally conduct joint operations with the ANA is a specially trained Provincial level Special Reaction Team (SRT), or Special Weapons and Tactics Team (SWAT). Such elite tactical units, having more advanced skills than the basic uniformed policeman, would be highly trained, ethical, responsive to short-notice ANA operations, and have a habitual relationship with ANA units. Such a unit would also have an important multiplier, an RCA, to oversee its ethical development and help the innocent people whose homes are entered and searched to understand the greater good that the ANP is attempting to achieve. The SRT would also serve as “seed corn” for more advanced Afghan Special Operations units. This type of unit would provide a capable, competent, and trustworthy partner to the ANA, and a professional, honorable police force to the local people. If properly selected, trained, and led by the finest ANP officers who would one day be promoted into district and provincial leadership positions, this force would provide competent and ethical leadership to the rest of the ANP over time, thereby raising the entire quality of the force and the trust of the people in the government.

Another critical element to increase the people’s trust in the government is to place an increased emphasis on the development of the country’s nascent judicial system, particularly at the local and regional level. This requires the training of not only more prosecutors and judges, but defense counsels as well. In eastern Afghanistan, for example, the US Department of State’s Justice Sector Support Program has trained over 40 prosecutors and investigators, yet defense counsels remain in short supply. If trials are to occur, there must be judges, prosecutors, and defense counsels. The effect of this imbalance is that suspected criminals often go free while trials for others are substantially delayed. Though often barbaric, the Taliban’s swift justice is often preferred by villagers. In the proposed strategy, the Department of State’s efforts at judicial reform would target the same nodes and the same links as the FDD program. This same mirroring would also occur with efforts from the Ministry of Justice and the Provincial Reconstruction Teams.

To further support projection of the Afghanistan National Police, the ANP officers and NCOs must receive professionalized police training that extends beyond the eight weeks of training typically provided almost exclusively to those police in the Focused District Development Program. Critical centralized professional training needs immediate attention and must be greatly expanded involving criminal investigation, intelligence collection, constitutional law, ethics, and leadership. Increasing ANP leaders’ pay upon graduation from these schools would provide focused incentives to raise the bar on the quality of the force, similar to the reform-based and hazardous duty pay that some currently receive. This emphasis over time moves the ANP from a force that is primarily focused on self-protection to one that is principally responsible for, and effective at, community policing. Again, ANP professionalization in this proposal demands a focused approach in a specified area, along critical links and in strategic nodes. This focus provides ANP immediate influence locally and transformational influence regionally. (see Figure 2)

Creating actionable intelligence towards reconciliation

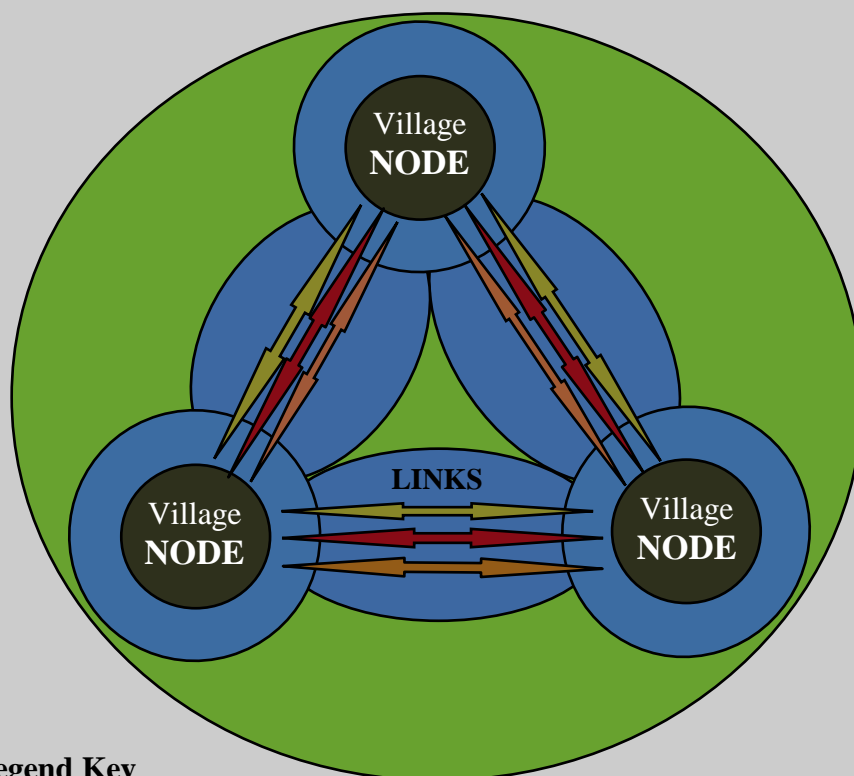
As local perception of security and the central government improves, an expanded human intelligence network provides a clearer intelligence picture than what has been attainable thus far, allowing for a more accurate assessment of which insurgent leaders and groups can be reconciled, and which ones cannot. Links, especially improved gravel roads, now provide the

central government with power it has not yet been able to exploit, giving it a stronger bargaining position with insurgent groups who demonstrate the willingness and capability to negotiate with Afghanistan's Islamic Republic. This long hoped for evidence that the central government is bringing something more meaningful to these areas than all too familiar scenes of vacant schools and district centers, and the occasional well or humanitarian assistance, builds the foundation of trust essential in developing actionable human intelligence.



Not all insurgent groups in Afghanistan can or should be reconciled. Those that can be influenced to participate in the process—or at least marginalized—are vital to obtaining an end to the insurgency. That being said, some insurgent leaders are highly unlikely to reconcile on their own accord and thus require coercion. The Afghanistan National Security Forces' expanded ability to target these leaders and their facilitators becomes more productive through the expanded source network derived from the focused links to centers of commerce; thereby enabling more efficient and effective targeting, targeting that substantially mitigates the risk of collateral damage. The message quickly spreads to the fence-sitting insurgent groups: become part of the political process or you will be considered a threat to national security.

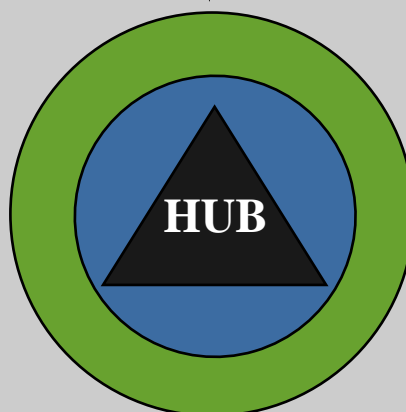
Much of the insurgent's incentive to fight, as well as his vitally-important tribal support, begins to fade as more citizens in these selected population centers—and along the roads that link them—benefit from increased trade, public services, and security. Witnessing the demise of those insurgent leaders who fail to become part of the political process further accelerates the process of support for the national government.

EXPANDING SPHERES OF INFLUENCE



Legend Key

-  = Immediate influence
-  = Transformational influence



Human intelligence develops outward from the road. As villages are linked the human intelligence network expands control to the spaces in between and outward from the hub.

Figure 2.

Expanding the network to Pakistan

The same principles of this strategy can also be applied to Pakistan, as it provides an infrastructure development model that can be implemented by Pakistani Military forces that offers the potential for a similar end state. Though the objectives needed in the Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) differ somewhat from those contained in this proposed strategy for Afghanistan, they are nonetheless directly related.

A commonly accepted counterinsurgency principle states that as long as insurgents have a sanctuary then they are highly unlikely to be defeated. Pakistan, particularly its largely ungoverned FATA, offers such a sanctuary for al-Qaeda, Haqqani, and Taliban terrorist and insurgent networks. The Pashtuns, living under their honor code of Pashtunwali with its obligation to provide refuge to guests, serve as the primary host to indigenous and foreign insurgents. The question that naturally arises from an Afghan-centric strategy focused primarily on development is how to address the intertwined problem of the terrorist and insurgent sanctuary in Pakistan. The simple answer: more of the same—with a twist.

Like Afghans, Pakistanis are also brilliant and eager capitalists, as evidenced by the sheer volume of Pakistani nationals daily negotiating a mostly treacherous road network from Karachi to Kabul to provide goods and services to Coalition Forces in Afghanistan. The porous border between these countries is about 2,500 km (approximately 1,600 miles)—only 500 km less than the US-Mexico border, but with significantly more compartmented terrain and a nascent, Afghanistan Border Police and Pakistan Frontier Corps guarding only the most prominent check points. The Pashtun have spanned both sides of this largely unrecognized border for centuries. Families, sheep and goat herders, nomadic sub-tribes of the Kuchie tribe, traders, and insurgents largely move freely across this ill-defined border. All of this is further complicated by the governments of Afghanistan or Pakistan who cannot agree on the border's precise location.

The similarities between the ways forward to remove terrorist safe havens in the FATA and the proposed strategy in adjacent Afghanistan are largely the same, although the some of the means are locally adapted to provide a bottoms-up approach to intelligence and operations. The objective of moderating the madrassas can be accomplished by two methods: educating madrassa mullahs and imams through a cooperative program with moderate Muslim nations such as Jordan and Turkey; and exchanging education between local dynamic trilateral leadership of key FATA villages and the Government of Pakistan, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The means to employ along such a path include a full team of USG Interagency participants and respected, educated, and moderate Sunni imams.

Driving a wedge between terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, and their hosts in the FATA is attainable even though their hosts tend to subscribe to the Pashtunwali code, honoring their promises and protecting their guests who have sought refuge. Given the appropriate application of specifically directed force and tailored incentives, breaking points will ultimately reveal themselves. Adding momentum to this is the use, again, of a nationally integrated Cricket program targeted at the youth. Not only will this provide a secular ideological bridge that unifies locals with the Pakistani central government, it again functions as a regional bridge with international implications. Pakistan is a world leader in Cricket, with one of its biggest rivals being India. With recent events of attacks on visiting teams, Pakistan has lost world credibility that it is now aggressively seeking to reclaim. Add to this the monetary windfall of this sporting

event that represents billions in revenue, and Cricket once again offers the potential to be one of the most powerful agents of change and moderation.

Finally, the construction of improved gravel roads to connect hubs of commerce—and then connect them to legal border crossing points into the land-locked country of Afghanistan where a similar effort would take place, must remain a central part of the strategy. Improved roads do the same for the FATA as they do for Eastern and Southern Afghanistan: extend the reach of the government and the basic services it can provide, enable goods and services to move to market more efficiently, create centers of commerce, and increase the flow of communication.

Arriving at an end game

Succeeding in Afghan and western Pakistani culture means avoiding the pitfalls of mirror imaging the expectations of Western culture. At the same time it means falling back on some of the same approaches that have made western democracies strong—religious tolerance, efficient and accessible transportation networks, and a reserve of selfless public servants. The process pulls from the same: educational exchanges that increase tolerance, demonstration of a government's benevolence and concern for its citizens, improving economies, while extending the government's legitimacy. A focus on roads thus connects hubs of commerce while increasing the wealth of a nation and its adjoining economic partners. Promoting education exchange through the RCAs and village leadership promotes understanding, trust, and tolerance. Integrating a national Cricket program ties the youth to the national government and international community while offering a moderating ideological bridge that has potentially more power than religion itself. Finally, enhancing security through the various courses of Integrated Focused District Development, establishes the framework to allow the strategy to continue and build momentum.

A unified Afghanistan that is economically prosperous under the rule of law, without the threat of insurgent destabilization from the FATA, which leads to the withdrawal of conventional Coalition combat forces, must be the desired end state. Afghanistan is not exclusively the Coalition's war; it is the Afghans' war and that of the people of the FATA. The job is to make the government successful and expand regional stability. To achieve that, Afghanistan needs starting points, not end points. In the end it is about identifying those elements that are Afghan-centric that will provide catalysts for long term development and security. For the villager in Afghanistan, those are as basic as three wickets and a bulldozer.

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