



THE AFGHANISTAN CAMPAIGN:

Can We Win?

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There are no certainties in war, and the tasks that NATO/ISAF and the US must perform in Afghanistan go far beyond the normal limits of counterinsurgency. They are the equivalent of armed nation building at a time when Afghanistan faces major challenges from both its own insurgents and international movements like Al Qa'ida, and must restructure its government and economy after 30 years of nearly continuous conflict.

It is also a war that must be won after years in which member countries, particularly the United States, failed to react to the seriousness of the emerging insurgency. They failed to provide the proper level of resources and coordination, placed serious national caveats and limits on the use of their forces and resources, and let the enemy take the initiative for more than half a decade. Compounded with the weaknesses in the Afghan government, this created a situation where the war now has *five, not one*, centers of gravity:

- *Defeating the insurgency not only in tactical terms, but by eliminating its control and influence over the population.* NATO/ISAF and the US must secure the population during the course of the next few years; and then systematically eliminate insurgent and Jihadist networks, eliminate their ability to operate as a shadow government, and help Afghan forces eliminate their remaining ability to carry out significant violence over as long a period as is necessary to succeed. These are the shape, secure, and hold phases of the conflict, but NATO/ISAF and the US must also help the Afghans develop an effective mix of national, region, and central governance; develop economic hope and security, establish a functioning rule of law, and move towards development. Counterinsurgency cannot be won without fighting, but it also cannot be won without an integrated civil-military effort that focuses on popular perceptions and needs.
- *Creating an effective and well-resourced NATO/ISAF and US response to defeating the insurgency and securing the population.* Years of neglect and underresourcing have steadily raised the price tag for future success. This means more troops, more civilians, and more money over at least the next two years to decisively take back the initiative and win the support of the Afghan people. Years of sustained resourcing will then be required at lower levels of effort to achieve lasting security and stability. For the US, this means fully implementing plans to greatly increase the number of civilians, increase the number of brigade combat teams, and adequately fund the war effort for the first time – for example, raising the budget of the US Embassy country team from some \$2.1 billion last year to some \$5 billion next year. For other NATO/ISAF countries it means putting an end to national caveats and restrictions that have left most of Afghanistan far more vulnerable than the US areas of operation in the east, and created nearly paralytic situations where some countries would not use their troops to actively support their PRTs, were far too defensive and static to be effective, or limited their actual areas of operation to small parts of the regions and provinces they were operating in.
- *Building up a much larger and more effective mix of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to first support NATO/ISAF and the US, then take the lead, and eventually replace NATO/ISAF and US forces or limit the mission of the remaining forces to an advisory role.* This will require a new and far more

effective level of partnership with Afghan forces, new training and mentoring methods, and much closer operational links in the field that allow NATO/ISAF, the US, and Afghan forces to act as true partners and do so in ways that steadily put Afghan forces more in the lead. It also means a near doubling of the present force goals for the ANSF – which are the product of years in which NATO/ISAF and the US failed to set the kind of force goals that could give Afghanistan security.

- *Giving the Afghan government the necessary capacity and legitimacy at the national, regional/provincial, district, and local levels. This means develop governance – often for the first time since the Afghan civil war. It means meeting the basic needs of the people for government services and a functioning justice system. It means reducing perceived and real corruption and abuses by senior officials power brokers to levels the Afghan people can accept; and it means creating a level of governance that can ensure lasting security and stability.*
- *Creating an effective, integrated, and truly operational civil-military effort. NATO/ISAF and US, UN member country, and NGO and international community efforts claim a unity of effort they do not have, are wasteful and sometimes corrupt, and often pursue unrealistic and unachievable goals. They provide unintentional aid to both the insurgency and Afghan corruption and the abuses of power brokers. There is a need to develop true unity of effort and face the reality that Afghanistan is at war. Until NATO/ISAF and the US can provide the people with security, and the ANSF can sustain it, the military must have civilian partners. They must provide aid efforts in governance, economics, and rule of law that directly support or complement NATO/ISAF and US efforts to defeat the insurgency and create effective and legitimate levels of governance in the field. At the same time, NATO/ISAF and the US must look longer into the future, and beyond the priorities of war. They must continue to implement longer term development efforts to help the Afghan government and people move towards lasting security and stability.*

There also is a de facto “sixth center” of gravity outside Afghanistan and NATO/ISAF’s formal mission. The actions of Pakistan, Iran, and other states will be critical to success in Afghanistan.

Feasibility: Can the Mission be Accomplished?

No strategy can be successful unless it answers the most basic question in going to war: Can we win? *The answer is yes, provided that victory is defined in realistic and practical terms.* The answer, however, is only *yes* under demanding conditions that achieve substantial success in all five centers of gravity.

Years of chronic underresourcing, failures by the Afghan central government, corruption and waste on all sides, a lack of effective civil-military cooperation and anything approaching a real-world unity of effort within the US team, NATO/ISAF, and UN and international agencies have had serious costs. So have past efforts to deny the scale of insurgent success, and the fact that the situation has deteriorated into a crisis where the Taliban and other Jihadist movements are now winning.

Coming to Grips With Past and Ongoing US, Allied, and Afghan Failures

NATO/ISAF and the US can only succeed if they systematically and ruthlessly prioritize and integrate their resources on a nation-wide level in ways that directly support immediate efforts to *shape, clear, hold, and build*. They cannot achieve the mission if they set unrealistic goals, under-resource their efforts, or create impossible schedules for success.

Equally important, NATO/ISAF and the US cannot achieve their mission unless they face the real world limits of the Afghan government. The threat does not simply consist of insurgent movements like the Taliban and Al Qa'ida. It consists of a central government and many elements of provincial and local governments that now lack capacity at many different levels. It is a government whose real and perceived excessive corruption, ties to informal power brokers, and links to narcotics trafficking and organized crime have severely undermined its popular legitimacy -- regardless of the fact that the central government is elected. Just as there are no purely military solutions to counterinsurgency, there are no solutions where the host government fails its people. The NATO/ISAF and US mission face the equivalent of two threats rather than one.

These threats are further complicated by the self-destructive lack of unity of effort within NATO/ISAF, UNAMA, the US and other national efforts, and other aid donors. Unity of effort is now an empty slogan in far too many areas where the real world efforts are stovepiped, uncoordinated, and lack measures of effectiveness. What is needed is a plan with commonly defined objectives, an integrated civil-military strategy, and a useful set of combined measures of success.

In past years, setting unrealistic goals, putting political considerations before effectiveness, accepting myths about development and the adequacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA), and allowing internal dysfunctions to continue in NATO/ISAF and US operations have seriously weakened their efforts to the point where the steady deterioration of security has now reached the crisis level. So has denial of the basic facts on the ground and focusing on post-conflict reconstruction and long-term development when Afghanistan has actually been fighting a war against the Taliban and other radical insurgents. *The US and other NATO/ISAF member countries cannot achieve the mission unless they recognize the need to focus effectively on the immediate task of providing security and defeating the insurgency.*

Resource or Lose

The need for adequate resources at the NATO/ISAF, US, ANSF, and civil levels will be another key factor in the search for victory. Years of systematic underresourcing have led to a climate in the US and other NATO/ISAF member countries where commanders, officers, and officials at all levels fail to explicitly state the resources they need to perform their part of the mission, and when they must be available.

Plans have become decoupled from specific resource requirements for combat forces, civilian advisors, and money. Vague effects-based goals are substituted for well-defined and specific objectives tied to near-term, practical time lines. A culture exists where resources gaps are not laid out in clear and specific terms, or directly linked to well-defined risks. No strategy can succeed on this basis, and no operational plan or civil-military plan can be adequate that has any of these gaps. Critical efforts, like creating an ANSF large and capable enough to provide security were neglected for half a decade, and still pursue force goals far below the need.

The situation has been sharply different in those areas where governments did provide something approaching the required resources. It is important to note that while *all* NATO/ISAF nations require a new approach to counterinsurgency, the US has been more effective in the east simply because it provided more forces and resources, and its civil-military efforts were directed at actively defeating the insurgency. Far more than more resources are needed, but no one can win without them.

At the same time, this does not mean that the US has come close to providing all the resources needed, or has yet responded to the fact that it must meet the needs of both the US commander in the field and the US Ambassador as the head of the US country team.

Even today, the civil side of the US country team has less than half the budget it needs (some \$2.1 billion versus a requirement closer to \$5 billion). The number of US civilians has also been far too low to be effective. For example, there were 336 State Department Foreign Service positions in Iraq (not including USAID) in the summer of 2009. The matching total of State Department Foreign Service positions in Afghanistan (not including USAID) was 159, and is only planned to rise to 315 during the rest of the year.

What some have described as a “civilian surge” would add all of 732 new US government civilian positions from all agencies, and 410 of the 732 positions will be based in Kabul, and 322 of the positions will be based in the field. These hires are not a “surge,” but rather a step to correct years of understaffing. There will also be a need for substantial additional contractor and temporary staff.

Moreover, the whole US approach to civil-military operations must change – as should that of most NATO/ISAF countries. The US country team has also worked with ISAF and US commanders to develop a civilian increase plan that can establish a structured civilian presence throughout the country to achieve a new level of civil-military unity of effort at the sub-national level.

This will involve the creation of a Senior Civilian Representative in Regional Commands (RC) East and South. These Senior Foreign Service positions will direct a new “fusion” of effort through the coordination and direction of work of all civilian staff under Chief of Mission authority within the region. They will tie together the political direction and developmental efforts, and serve as the civilian counterpart to the military commander in the Regional Command. In addition, at each level with civilian representation, a lead civilian will be identified to serve as the military commander's counterpart. Seven years into the war, the US now needs roughly two more years to provide minimal staff and create effective unity of civil-military effort.

The most costly consequence of years of underresourcing, however, is the need for more military forces. This is an American-led war, and large increases in US military forces will be needed to win it. US forces are at best adequate to deal with a resurgent threat in the east. Even when current reinforcement plans are fully executed, the US will need a major increase in brigade combat teams to provide the level of strength needed to seize the initiative and create the overall level of NATO/ISAF forces needed to win. While calculating troop to task ratios is an area for military experts, any look at the current ratios of NATO/ISAF troops to population and territory, indicates that the US will not only need a significant further increase in brigade combat teams, but an equal increase in a wide range of other force elements or “enablers.”

Requirements: The Conditions for Success

NATO/ISAF and the US must do more to define and implement a successful strategy. NATO/ISAF and the US cannot win unless they address the full complexity of both the war and the need to improve Afghan governance and development capacity over time. They must defeat the enemy at local level, eliminate its hold over the population in many areas, weaken its networks and influence to the point where they have marginal impact; and empower Afghan governance and security forces at every level to win a prolonged battle of attrition at the political, religious, ideological, economic, and security levels.

Many of the necessary actions to achieve mission success are already underway or in the planning stage, including an effort to redefine what the enemy represents and to coordinate the operations necessary to defeat the insurgency at every level. At the same time, major further progress is critical in dealing with each of the five major centers of gravity:

The NATO/ISAF Military Effort

The following steps must be taken to create an effective and well-resourced US and NATO/ISAF response to defeating the insurgency and securing the population:

- *NATO/ISAF and the US must act as if they are in Afghanistan to win.* They cannot play at war, or try to back away from its reality by playing with semantics and calling it a “conflict,” or finding other ways to dodge away from military reality. They must recognize that US and NATO/ISAF strategy and campaign plans will only be real to the point they are part of a detailed plan for implementation at the national, regional, and local levels that is shaped without regard to artificial and dysfunctional barriers like provincial borders. Living in a world of politically correct denial about the dangers, waste, and ineffectiveness caused national caveats and restriction that can cost NATO/ISAF and the US the war and the Afghan people their future. It may protect individual elements of NATO/ISAF and US forces for a while, but the cumulative effect is to send more men and women home in body bags, rather than protect them. The failure to treat war as war, and the resulting focus on individual national political interests, is an act of political and moral cowardice on the part of the governments involved.
- *Focus current efforts on the immediate task of defeating the insurgency in key geographic areas, while implementing shape, clear, hold, and build.* NATO/ISAF and the US, aid donors, and GIRoA must be made part of a coordinated plan that employs resources effectively to reverse insurgent gain and take the initiative over the next two years. In the process, NATO/ISAF and the US must demonstrate serious progress over the next year to halt the erosion of support of the Afghan people, as well as support for UNAMA and international aid efforts.
- *Face the complexity and uncertainty of this war and the overall exercise in armed nation building.* Prioritize and develop key lines of operation and centers of gravity, but understand that any campaign will be a moderate to high risk

experiment with many dimensions and many unknown elements. The US and NATO/ISAF will lose if they pursue any line of currently planned operations without rapidly and constantly adapting. It will fail if it does not constantly focus on all aspects of the military, political, religious, governance, rule of law, and economic dimensions of the battle. While the US and NATO/ISAF do not have to deal with every aspect of the situation at once, it must understand every aspect and consistently react to the situation more quickly than insurgents. The side that adapts most quickly to change and the impact of reality with the best-focused resources will win.

- *Provide a clear and fully operational definition of shape, clear, hold, and build; and create specific plans and objectives to show how it can be implemented and measured.* NATO/ISAF and the US must fully examine the extent to which its new focus on population centers -- and reliance on the doctrine of *shape, clear, hold, and build* -- acts on a functional definition that will achieve a strategic objective. It must also examine how *hold and build* -- and the necessary civil-military operation -- will be achieved.
- *Give every NATO/ISAF region, and every major NATO/ISAF military action, a clear operational definition of clear, hold and build that define how the US, NATO/ISAF, the ANSF, GIRoA, and civil partners will allocate resources, improve governance, and provide suitable metrics for progress and success.* One metric, the “Abrams test” should be applied to defining both the goal and progress in all cases: Any effort to claim that operations have reached the hold stage that fails to address whether local security exists at night as well as during the day, and whether freedom of movement is possible, is false. Any claim that operations have reached the build stage where essential services like education, electricity, water, and effective justice are not available is equally false.
- *Restructure every aspect of NATO/ISAF and member country planning so that commanders, officers, and officials at all levels explicitly state the resources they need to perform their part of the mission, and when they must be available.* Plans must be directly coupled to specific resource requirements for combat forces, civilian advisors, and money. They must set forth clearly defined and specific objectives tied to near term and practical time lines. Resource gaps must be laid out in clear and specific terms and directly linked to well-defined risks.
- *Systematically improve and expand the present US and NATO/ISAF metrics to create integrated reporting systems based on best practices at the level of individual commands and components.* These should concentrate on portraying combat in net assessment terms, on portraying the actual flow of resources and activities, and on providing clear measures of effectiveness. A later section addresses this issue in detail.
- *Re-examine the present allocation of US and other NATO/ISAF forces, and ANSF forces, to focus on the most urgent areas in the east and south, with phased plans to secure all critical areas in ways where clear, hold, and build are not only prioritized, but also tied to resources that are actually and clearly available.* Explicitly decide on the extent to which plans should reflect the withdrawal of and/or real-world increases in given elements of US and

NATO/ISAF forces. Make the provision of adequate local justice systems a key part of *hold and build*, relying primarily on traditional and existing elements of the formal and informal justice system, and ensuring that adequate pay is tied to effective anti-corruption efforts.

- *Shape the use of NATO/ISAF and US forces to properly reflect the local and regional differences that create a series of “microwars” requiring planning, intelligence, and operations tailored to the specific conditions necessary for success.* This requires a layered approach to national, subnational, community, tribal and geographic conditions. It also requires an approach based on full assessment of the human elements of threat, of local power structures, and of popular perceptions and needs.
- *Tie every aspect of this effort to clearly defined timelines, deliverables, and measures of effectiveness.* No aspect of the campaign plan should be defined in terms of open-ended concepts and goals. One of the most serious problems in US and NATO/ISAF efforts over the last seven years is an obsession with planning that effectively treats the situation as if it was the first year in Afghanistan for what is now approaching the eighth time. Many of the right concepts have been advocated for years but never actually put into full operational practice or given anything like the real world resources needed for success.
- *BUT, don’t set rigid deadlines, create unrealistic benchmarks, and demand success before it is really possible.* Never forget that the NATO/ISAF and the US must base their strategy on realistic and flexible timelines and schedules at every level. Many aspects of the progress required can only move at an Afghan pace and must be achieved on Afghan terms. This will require lasting strategic patience if the US, NATO/ISAF, the ANSF, and hopefully Pakistan are to achieve the level of security that is the immediate priority.
- *At a different level, NATO/ISAF and the US must also deal with the following more detailed operational tasks:*
 - Carry out an information operation within the limits imposed by the fact that the US and NATO/ISAF are Western and that the present activities of GIROA have actively aided the Taliban and other Jihadists. Understand that no such effort can be successful until fundamental reforms take place in the behaviour of the GIROA, and a combination of the ANSF, NATO/ISAF, and the US have shown the Afghan people they can get lasting security, while GIROA and aid activities provide a real world demonstration that *hold and build* offer practical progress and hope.
 - Refocus the intelligence effort away from a narrow focus on the threat and its kinetic activities to one that addresses the full range of threat activities, including its efforts to dominate and influence the population, and its ties to power brokers and narcotics.
 - Tie this intelligence effort to an explicit analysis of the threats and problems raised by elements within GIROA and the network of power brokers which are the second major threat that NATO/ISAF and the US face in carrying out *shape, clear, hold and build*. Create net assessment models that explicitly tie together analysis and reporting on the combined progress of threat activity, as well as links between power brokers and narcotics, GIROA and ANSF activity, and NATO/ISAF and US activity.

- Make the counternarcotics effort part of the *shape, clear, hold and build* effort, and focus it on activity that is directly and clearly Taliban related. Focus on attacking narcotraffickers and related power brokers at the local, provincial, and national levels as part of the broader effort to reduce excessive corruption and predatory behavior and abuses within the formal and informal GIRoA and ANSF power structure. Delay broader eradication efforts until SCHB has reached the point where agricultural aid and alternative corps can rapidly be adopted.

The Crucial Role of the Afghan Security Forces (ANSF)

NATO/ISAF and the US cannot succeed on their own. Their success will ultimately be judged by how well and how quickly they build up a much larger and more effective ANSF first to support, then to take the lead, and eventually to replace NATO/ISAF and US forces or limit the mission of the remaining forces to an advisory role.

They must make the development of fully adequate ANSF forces an even higher priority. NATO/ISAF and the US should immediately begin to support and resource NTM-A/ CSTC-A plans and the baseline for further major expansions of the ANA and ANP as goals for 2014.

These plans would nearly double the ANA and ANP, possibly leading to enough success to make full implementation unnecessary. Making a fully resourced start, however, will ensure that adequate ANSF forces will be available over time, and help ease the strain of maintaining and increasing NATO/ISAF and US force levels. Funding such expansion will also be far cheaper than maintaining or increasing NATO/ISAF and US forces.

The Afghan National Army (ANA)

The ANA has already proven its value in combat. In the near-term, the ANA will play a key role in the shape and clear missions, as well as in the hold mission because the ANP is not yet strong and capable enough to perform the task. The ANA needs to be expanded and fully resourced for its de facto role in the current fight, even while more concerted efforts are made to build an effective ANP for the longer term.

- NATO/ISAF and the US must focus in the near-term on building up the ANA to carry out critical counterinsurgency tasks and to *hold* in threatened population areas. At the same time, they must improve the ANP and ANCOP forces so they can provide *hold* capabilities where there is a less serious threat but when, and only when, this is clearly within their current capacity. This effort can only succeed if adequate resources are provided, if adequate time is taken to provide force quality as well as force quantity, and if NATO/ISAF and the US are willing to support the resulting force not only during critical periods of combat, but in phasing it down to a post conflict size that GIRoA can fund and sustain.
- CSTC-A already is actively expanding ANA forces from an assigned strength of roughly 91,000 to 134,000, and from 117 fielded kandaks to 179. It is procuring improved equipment and raising the number of Commando kandaks from 6 to 8. A total of 76 of the 117 fielded units are already capable of leading operations. There are three additional areas where decisions must now be made about the future of the ANA.

- *The first decision is to accelerate training and current force expansion goals, and to set a new goal for expansion of the ANA that will increase it from a goal of 134,000 men to 240,000 in 2014. This will mean a major expansion in funding, in training facilities and trainers, in equipment, and in mentors or partner units. Resources to do this well should be identified and committed concurrently.* Every regional and task force commander visited or interviewed indicated that such an expansion is now needed. If NATO/ISAF and the US are more successful, then this process can be slowed and/or the force goal can be cut. Given the lead times, however, it is necessary to act now to begin this force expansion process, particularly if it is to both be done at the pace Afghans can support and to maintain the necessary force quality.

- *The second decision is to end the shortfall in NATO and ETT mentors and resources.* There are no easy ways to quantify the present shortfall, but CSTC-A reports that the ANA had a need for a minimum of 67 OMLTs plus US trainers in July 2009. However, it had 56 OMLTs on the ground, of which only 46 were validated. American ETTs were also under resourced in the past, though ETTs are being replaced by the “two BCT” concept of providing mentors. The requirement for OMLTs also will expand along with the ANA. It will rise to 91 by the end of CY2010, and only a maximum of 66 OMLTs will actually be on the ground. This is a deficit of 25. Expert analysis is needed, but it may take the equivalent of a third new brigade combat team (changing the two-BCT approach to a three-BCT one) to correct this deficiency. Expanding to 240,000 men would require substantially more OMLTs plus additional ETT mentors, many of which must be carefully chosen to help the ANA develop critical new “enablers” like artillery, engineering, C2, medical services, and logistics and sustainability.

- *The third decision is to create a full operational partnership, focused around the development of the ANA and key elements of the ANP, so that Afghans are a true partner in all NATO/ANSF and US operations and take the lead in joint operations as soon as possible.* It is not enough for NATO/ISAF and US units to partner with the ANSF. The ANSF must be made a full partner at the command level as well. Afghans should see Afghans taking the lead in the field as soon as practical, and as playing a critical role in shaping all plans and operations as well as in implementing *hold and build*. This often cannot be done immediately; it must be done as soon as possible. This can be accomplished by embedding a US brigade combat team into each ANA Corps to provide the expertise and enablers to carry out joint planning, intelligence, command and control capabilities, fire support, logistic expertise, and other capabilities that the ANA now lacks and can acquire through partnership and joint operations with the US.

The Afghan National Police (ANP)

Improving the various elements of the ANP, while somewhat less time critical in terms of combat operations, is equally urgent due to the ANP’s central role in performing the *hold* function in population centers, without which COIN will not

succeed. Such improvement, however, presents different challenges than improving the ANA.

The ANP currently lacks the ability to support the hold and build missions in the face of insurgent attacks, bombings, and subversion. In July 2009, the Afghan Uniformed Police had an authorized strength of 47,000 and 51,000 assigned. Strength, however, is only part of the problem. The ANP faces critical problems in winning popular support and acceptance. Unlike the ANA, which is the most respected institution in the Afghan government, there is a wide consensus that many elements of the ANP are too corrupt, and too tied to politics and power brokers, to either be effective or win/retain popular support.

As a result, NATO/ISAF and the US plan raise serious questions as to whether the *hold* function can be performed with the US, NATO/ISAF and ANSF resources available, and without a major expansion of and improvement in the ANP. Time is critical because the initial phase of the *hold* function will require a transition to proving regular policing activity and supporting the prompt administration of justice, and ANP are not yet sufficiently trained, effective, and free of corruption in this regard. At the same time, the build phase cannot be properly implemented unless the ANP has the capacity and integrity to support an effective civil rule of law by Afghan standards and custom.

There are several areas where NATO/ISAF and the US need to act to shape the future of the ANP:

- *First, reducing current levels of corruption in the ANP, and limiting the impact of political abuses and power brokers must be part of the operational plan for shape, clear, hold, and build.* NATO/ISAF and the US cannot succeed in their mission unless these problems are sharply reduced, and the ANP can carry out the political aspects of the hold mission and show that they provide real security and prompt justice. As is the case with the ANA, fighting corruption and political misuse of the ANP are as critical as expanding forces. This can only be done through great improvements in ANP leadership, facilitated by far more robust mentoring and training efforts.

The Focused District Development (FDD) program is one possible key to this process. The program is still in development, and any effort to apply it is necessarily slow, because it is time and trainer/mentor limited. The Directed District Development program may offer a possible solution to provide an additional quick reaction capability, and this will need continuing reassessment to determine what scale of effort is practical. Both programs also need to be tightly focused on ensuring that they meet the needs in the population areas most threatened by insurgent activity and where providing the hold function is most urgent.

No ANP programs can succeed, however, where political interference, corruption, and power brokers block effective ANP action or ensure it cannot be reformed. Power brokers have a clear need to disrupt this process, as it directly threatens their operations. This must be understood and be included as

part of the planning for ANP improvement. The political dimension of ANP development is as critical as the military and civil dimensions.

- *Second, major efforts need to be made to increase the size and quality of the ANP. NATO/ISAF and the US should begin to expand the ANP and the other elements of the Afghan police from an authorized strength of 82,000 to 160,000. In Kabul alone, for example, the current goal for the ANP is 4,800 and commanders feel some 7,200 are needed. Current plans seem to leave the ANP underequipped for some aspects of its mission, in spite of current orders, and that additional attention is need to the quality of its leadership and facilities.*

The ANP's most urgent immediate need in order to execute this expansion, however, is for is adequate numbers of qualified trainers and mentors who have the military experience and counterinsurgency background that will be required for several years to come. These must be placed under CSTC-A and the NMA-A, not under some civil leadership or trainers. The day may come when the ANP's main mission is conventional law enforcement in a secure environment, but that day is years away and the ANP needs to focus on security.

Filling these gaps will be difficult. The ANP faces even more severe shortfalls in partnering and training than the ANA. A CSTC-A report in July 2009 stated that the ANP needed at least 98 additional POMLTs plus added US PMT trainer/mentors by the end of CY 2010, and 46 more by the end of CY 2011. It is requesting a total of 182 POMLTs and BMTs by the end of CY2011. There will be a need for added PMTs as well. However, these requirements will be substantially increased if the goal for the end strength of the police was raised to 160,000 by the end of CY 2014.

- *Third, a major reorganization is needed to strengthen several major elements within the ANP. These include elite gendarmeries or paramilitary elements to deal with counterinsurgency and key hold missions. These could build on ANCOP and police commando cadres. The Afghan Civil Order Police (ANCOP) are designed to provide more capable forces that can defend themselves, perform key hold functions in urban areas, and provide a lasting police presence in less secure remote areas. Its assigned strength was 3,345 in July 2009, and it had four fielded brigade headquarters and 16 fielded battalion headquarters. It could grow to 20 battalions by the end of the year; and significant further increases could take place in 2010. Other special elements may be needed to work with the NDS and ANA to eliminate any remaining insurgent shadow government, justice systems, and networks; and to deal with the investigation of organized crime and power brokers involved in gross corruption. The majority of the Afghan police can be trained to the levels of police capability suited to meet Afghan standards and needs.*
- *Fourth, the development of the ANP must be linked to improvements in the Afghan formal and informal legal processes to provide prompt and effective justice. The ANP cannot succeed in meeting one of the most critical demands of the Afghan people -- the need for prompt justice -- unless ANP development*

is linked to the creation of effective courts and the rest of the formal justice and corrections systems, or use of Afghanistan's informal justice system. The ANP's problems with corruption also cannot be corrected unless the criminal justice system is seen as less corrupt and subject to political influence. Fixing these problems reflects one of the most urgent demands of the Afghan people. An integrated approach to ANP development and improved popular justice is critical and may need substantially more resources on the justice side of the equation.

The Afghan Border Police (ABP)

The ABP already has an authorized strength of 17,600 authorized and 12,800 assigned. Afghanistan will require a competent and sufficient border police function in the future. However, border forces are notoriously difficult to create and make effective under counterinsurgency conditions. Afghanistan's geography and historical border disputes make border enforcement even more difficult than usual, and NATO/ISAF, the US, and the ANSF have higher and more urgent priorities.

Present plans to develop the ABP should be executed, and the Focused Border Development program may help to improve performance, reduce corruption, and increase government revenues. These efforts should be complemented by specific technologies, including biometrics and ISR, to the extent feasible.

Border protection, however, should not be a priority area for NATO/ISAF and US action or additional forces and capabilities. A tightly focused effort could help the Afghan government get substantial revenues from commercial vehicle traffic across the border than are now being lost through corruption. There is no prospect, however, that the ABP can seal the borders or do more in the near-term than harass the insurgency while becoming a source of casualties and more corruption. This is particularly true as long as elements of the Pakistan government and ISI covertly support key elements of the Taliban.

The Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3)

Tribal and local security forces can play a useful role under carefully selected conditions. The AP3 is a tribal force designed to provide the equivalent of security guards for district-sized areas. (In Afghanistan, there are 364 districts, excluding major urban areas). This force is still in development, and Afghanistan's tribal and regional differences mean that it may not work in every area and needs to be carefully tailored to local conditions.

The best approach is to use the AP3 model only where it is clear that local Afghan commanders and officials, and local NATO/ISAF and US commanders, feel this can work. Ensure that the expansion of the AP3 is fully coordinated with Afghan provincial and district officials, local ANSF commanders, and NATO/ISAF and US regional and task force commanders to limit loyalty problems and tribal friction.

The ANA Air Corps (ANAAC)

The Afghan National Army Air Corps is already contributing to the COIN fight and further contributions – particularly lift and medevac – would relieve ISAF of some key

requirements. ANAAC development plans must be tailored to Afghan needs and capabilities. There is a clear case for giving the ANSF at least the currently planned mix of air lift, battlefield, mobility, RW attack, IS&R, and multi-role capability. This would expand the ANAAC from a total of 36 aircraft and 2,500 airmen today to 139 aircraft by CY 2016.

There is a broader and more urgent role that the ANAAC can perform. It can develop the skills to support NATO in targeting and managing air operations, and take on responsibility for vetting air strikes and air operations. Such a partnership would do much to assure Afghans that Afghan forces were true partners in all air operations and played the proper role in reducing civilian casualties and collateral damage. Such a “red card” role presents obvious difficulties, but it will be applied to all NATO/ISAF and US operations, including ground operations, in time. Working to make it effective now, and a key partner and part of Afghan, US, and NATO/ISAF strategic communications could have major benefits.

National Directorate of Security (NDS)

The NDS does not fall under MoD or MOI command, but it cooperates closely with ANSF at every level. There are no indications that the present role and capabilities of the NDS need to be changed. It is clear, however, that NDS activities do need to be fully integrated with those of the ANSF, the US, and NATO/ISAF, and there have been coordination problems in the past.

The “Iron Laws” of Force Development

NATO/ISAF and the US must follow two “iron laws” for force development in carrying out all these efforts. First, they must pay as much attention to ANSF force quality as to increasing force quantity. Do not create units where there are inadequate mentors, partner units, facilities, equipment, and training capacity. Pay close attention to performance in the field versus formal training and quantified readiness measures. Second, they must properly equip and support ANSF forces or not put them into harm’s way.

Improving Afghan Governance and Afghan Popular Perceptions of Its Capability and Integrity

The mission cannot succeed unless the Afghan government reverses the steady decline in public confidence and support that is enabling the insurgency, and demonstrates its capability to govern in the field. NATO/ISAF and the US must make concerted efforts to give the Afghan government the necessary legitimacy and capacity at the national, regional/provincial, district, and local levels.

The US and other outside nations need to start dealing honestly with the longstanding realities on the ground and the impact of their failure to see the cost of overcentralizing political power in setting up the present Afghan political structure. Corruption and abuses by power brokers are so pervasive that they have widely discredited the Afghan national government -- but this is only part of the story.

The level of Afghan government activity falls far short of what is needed to win the support of the Afghan people. Provincial governments are small, deficient in capacity

and sometimes corrupt, lacking funds and funding authority, and have minimal justice systems at best. Afghan experts indicate that many of Afghanistan's 364 districts do not have enough staff, adequate facilities, or even transportation.

Many of Afghanistan's 153 municipalities lack effective governance, services, and justice systems. Most of its some 4,000 villages lack any meaningful government presence other than tribal or traditional authorities. Virtually all government revenues and government-managed aid flows through ministries in the national government. District and local governments have little or no practical control over resources. Efforts to change this situation are still in the legislative process and will take years to begin to be implemented – even assuming that corruption and power brokering do not block much of their effectiveness.

This means breaking up a system that puts control of virtually all government resources under ministries of a central government which are not staffed to act at the provincial and local level, which are sometimes corrupt or subject to pressure by power brokers, and often do not respond to local needs.

The present system relies on appointed provincial governors and district officials which lack resources and discretionary funds, are sometimes repeatedly returned to office in spite of proven corruption and incompetence, and often cannot act at the village or local level where action is most critical in dealing with the insurgency.

Real and honest elections are needed for provincial and district leaders and councils, they need to be funded in ways that allow them to be honest and to carry out their duties, and they need enough discretionary funding so they can serve their constituents and meet their urgent needs. They must also have enough resources to make the formal and informal justice systems work – rather than leave real world justice to the Taliban or arbitrary local actors.

Actively Fighting Corruption and Abuses in the Afghan Government and International Community

This cannot be a passive or exhortative process that takes years to have an impact on the loyalties of the Afghan people and the military realities shaping the insurgency. NATO/ISAF and the US must work with member nations, UNAMA, and members of the international community at the highest level to use a mix of incentives, penalties, political pressure, and other levers to reduce perceived and real corruption and abuses by senior Afghan officials and power brokers to levels the Afghan people can accept; and to create the level of actual governance and government services to necessary to sustain security and stability.

- *Deal with the real and perceived weaknesses, excessive corruption, and predatory behavior that make GIRoA a major problem and barrier to success. This does not mean trying to eliminate all corruption and power brokering. It does mean taking the action necessary to meet the immediate needs of the Afghan people for security and economic progress in the key population centers and making a broad effort at the local, district, and provincial levels in addition to the efforts of the central government. This effort must be conducted in ways*

that will rapidly give the Afghan people reason to support the government and the NATO/ISAF and US effort to give them security, without illusions as to the capacity and integrity of the current elements of the Afghan government.

- *The US and NATO/ISAF must work with the UN and other countries to carry out a visible, aggressive and transparent effort to restore and create Afghan popular support for the Afghan government. It must provide essential services where these do not exist and fight corruption and the dysfunctional and negative actions of power brokers, at every level.* Such an effort should take careful account of the political realities in Afghanistan. It should focus on meeting popular needs and shaping local perceptions, and anti-corruption efforts that deal with individuals should be limited to the most urgent needs of the Afghan people and the effort to defeat the insurgency. The US, NATO/ISAF, and other elements of the international community must, however, clearly separate their actions from corruption and predatory actions by GIRoA and power brokers. This means they must:
 - Use the full “tool box” of possible levers and incentives in ways that coordinate national activity at least within NATO/ISAF and hopefully UNAMA. Make the policy clear at the highest levels of NATO/ISAF and national leadership. Act consistently in ways that focus on mission critical needs.
 - Develop detailed national and provincial network analyses that trace the ties between senior officials, officers, and power brokers to excessive corruption, and to elements of the insurgency, narcotraffickers, and organized crime. Treat such actors, not the Afghan government as a whole, as part of the threat.
 - Create similar models of the flow of government revenues, aid, contracts, and funds.
 - Reward successful and honest ministries and officials at every level by giving them growing discretionary authority related to performance.
 - Tie funding to audits and accounting systems that are transparent and public. Require performance standards and measures of effectiveness.
 - Ensure that the flow of funds only goes through the central government, provincial and district officials when they have proven integrity and effectiveness.
 - Bypass funding and contact with corrupt officials, contractors, and power brokers. Go directly to local officials and contractors with proven performance.
 - Openly shift funds that are not mission-related to areas and officials with integrity and capability. Explain publically that there will be penalties

affecting ministries, provinces, and districts lacking in integrity and capability.

- Support carefully target anti-corruption efforts at every level, focusing on persons and activities that affect the mission. Where prosecution is not possible, provide unclassified reporting with a personal history. Actively blacklist worst cases. Deny visas to corrupt individuals and their families.
- *Aid must provide the proper level of immediate and sustained operational support in the field and battle areas to hold and build if there is to be a meaningful longer-term development phase.* Aid also needs to go to the Afghan people, not to activities outside Afghanistan, and not through institutions that are corrupt or that waste much of the funds provided.
- *The Afghan government is, however, only part of the problem. There is an unforgivable lack of transparency and integrity in the US and international aid community, sometimes mixed with direct corruption.* Organizations, countries, and NGOs do not report full financial data, do not validate requirements and programs by showing they have Afghan support and meet Afghan needs, do not comply with Ministry of Finance reporting requirements, or have useful measures of completion or effectiveness – particularly in terms of overall regional and national needs. This lack of reporting ensures that there are no remotely reliable numbers in many critical areas. However, Matt Waldman of Oxfam estimated in March 2008 (*ACBAR Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan*, p. 5) that,
 - There is an aid shortfall of \$10billion – equivalent to thirty times the annual national education budget: donors committed to give \$25 billion in aid since 2001 but have only delivered \$15billion.
 - An estimated 40% of aid goes back to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries – some \$6 billion since 2001.
 - Largely due to lack of coordination and communication, the Afghan government does not know how one-third of all aid since 2001 – some \$5 billion – has been spent.
 - The US military spends close to \$100m a day in Afghanistan; yet the average volume of aid spent by all donors since 2001 is just \$7million per day.
 - Over half of aid is tied, requiring the procurement of donor-country goods and services.
 - Over two-thirds of all aid bypasses the Afghan government.
 - According to the latest OECD figures less than 40% of technical assistance is coordinated with the government and only one-third of donor analytical or assessment work is conducted jointly.
 - Profit margins on reconstruction contracts for international and Afghan contractor companies are often 20% and can be as high as 50%.
 - Most full time, expatriate consultants, working in private consulting companies, cost \$250,000-\$500,000 a year.
- *Ensure that higher percentages of aid actually reach the people and serve their interests* to make the present levels of aid far more effective, to change Afghan

perceptions that much of the aid effort is enabling corruption and does not help Afghans, and to provide powerful support to the broader goals of the NATO/ISAF and US campaign.

- *Redirect as much aid and assistance as necessary to support provincial, local, community, and tribal leaders and groups in the process of the shape, clear, hold, and build effort.* NATO/ISAF and the US must never lose sight of the fact that the excessive corruption and predatory behavior, cronyism, factionalism, and lack of capacity in the central government mean it will be at least several years before any combination of the central, provincial, and local levels can effectively take the lead in shape, clear, hold, and build.
- *Make the provision of adequate local justice systems a key part of hold and build.* Rely primarily on traditional and existing elements of the formal and informal justice system at the local level, and ensuring that adequate pay is tied to effective anti-corruption efforts. No form of *SCHB* will work without popular access to quick and responsive justice.

Dealing with a Dysfunctional Mix of NATO/ISAF, National, UNAMA, and International Community Efforts: Develop a True and Effective Civil-Military Partnership

NATO/ISAF and the US have sometimes been as serious a threat to themselves as the insurgency and the limitations of the Afghan government. To win, they must create an effective civil-military effort where civilian partners – and aid efforts in governance, economics, and rule of law – directly support or complement NATO/ISAF and US efforts to defeat the insurgency and create effective and legitimate levels of governance in the field. At the same time, it is important to implement key longer-term development efforts to help the Afghan government and people move towards lasting security and stability.

This means that NATO/ISAF and the US must:

- *Develop a tightly coordinated and focused civil-military effort in every area of operations against the insurgency, and create civil efforts strong enough and focused enough to support the shape, clear, hold, build effort.* This will require enforcing unity of effort as an operational reality rather than an empty slogan. It means providing adequate civilian support to the hold and build effort as the priority until near term goals for *shape, clear, hold and build* are achieved. Make a ruthless and systematic effort to create an effective unity of effort within the present divided and dysfunctional mix of US, other ISAF nation, or international civil efforts and remove ineffective and corrupt elements. The US Congress and every member government should demand to see monthly measures and reporting to show that there is real world, operational progress in these areas. The present level of stove piping, and lack of operational civil-military unity of effort, is unforgivable. So is the waste and ineffective caused by so many diverse and uncoordinated national efforts.
- *Work with UNAMA, other UN agencies, and the international community to develop more realistic aid plans.* These need to be linked to achievable real world economic objectives, and tailored to achievable levels of security, which

find better ways to cope with GIRoA's problems with capacity and excessive corruption, and make every feasible effort to ensure all aid funds go directly to meet actual needs and priorities of the Afghan people.

- *Create integrated civil-military plans to make the eventual transition from build to post conflict reconstruction, and to secure longer term aid efforts until the insurgency is defeated.* Aid needs to be refocused from Western priorities to those of Afghans and in ways that suit Afghan culture and values. It also needs to stay in Afghanistan and not be driven by waste, corruption, and national or institutional goals and fund raising needs.
- *Honestly and openly recognize that the excessive corruption, waste, and a lack of coordination that affects GIRoA also affects far too many UNAMA, US and other national, and NGO aid efforts.* NATO/ISAF and the US, in particular, must get their own house in order in order to support the war effort. While improvements are claimed be underway, they are still largely in the planning or trial stage. The current level of activity in the US, allied, and international efforts that actually help win – and provide a vital level of security to the Afghan people -- are underresourced, stovepiped, uncoordinated, and oriented towards longer term aid and not the population. Far too many are oriented towards specific projects or vague nation-wide goals and the overall aid process is barely operational in any sense relevant to the fact that the nation is at war.
- *Act directly in the field to ensure that the aid resources necessary to support the immediate needs of the shape, clear, hold, and build campaign are provided in the right areas in the right time with the needed flexibility, and that firm steps are taken to bypass corrupt organizations in both GIRoA and the international community.* If, as seems nearly certain, far too few civilians will be available, the US and other NATO/ISAF military forces must take up the slack until truly capable civilians are actually working effectively in the field, and must have full flexibility to use CERP or CERP-like aid funds to take immediate action to provide aid where it can help bring stability and security or defeat the insurgency.

Take Full Account of Pakistan and the Role of External Powers: The Sixth Center of Gravity?

This is not the place to address all of the sensitive international issues that help shape the course of the war in detail. Nevertheless, the Afghan theatre is only part of the conflict. The US, working with NATO/ISAF and individual member countries, must find formal and informal ways to make Pakistan part of its strategy and operational plan.

The US and NATO/ISAF must recognize that Pakistan presents mission critical risks, but can also be a major asset. Today, Pakistan's actions are ambiguous at best. There is a continuing flood of press reporting to show that the ISI is still active in meddling with the Taliban and other insurgent elements in ways that undercut NATO/ISAF and US efforts in Afghanistan and the Afghan government and forces. At the same time, elements of the Pakistani Army and government have finally begun to address their own insurgent threat, and may have begun to see that the two sets of threat cannot be decoupled.

NATO/ISAF and the US may be able to achieve its mission without Pakistani cooperation and support both in Afghanistan and in the FATA and Baluchi areas of Pakistan. Improved Pakistani cooperation would, however, greatly ease the mission task, as well as support the needs of both the Afghan and Pakistani people.

NATO/ISAF and the US must also take the role of other regional and major powers into full account. More broadly, they must continuously re-examine the interactions between the US, NATO/ISAF, and all major outside powers, and develop effective contingency plans for two key cases: A major increase in the threat or problems in terms of logistics and lines of supply and spoiler operations by Iran. Here, any future major transfer of advanced light weapons like modern manportable surface-to-air missiles, anti-tank guided weapons, and artillery rockets and mortars, could pose a major new threat.

Provide Adequate Resources or Give Up and Leave

The fact that NATO/ISAF and the US can only succeed in their mission if they are given the proper resources is a constant theme in all of the previous recommendations. The war has been badly underresourced over the last eight years, and NATO/ISAF and the US must now seize the initiative.

Each of these recommendations also, however, has also highlighted the extent to which any form of credible victory requires adequate manpower and adequate funding over a period of years and major funding for at least the next four to five years. In practice, the US must also deal with the reality that most of the new resources will have to come from the US and that this will probably require substantial increases in US forces beyond those that President Obama and the Congress have so far committed.

This means the US must deploy a substantial number of additional brigade combat teams and "enablers." It also means substantial additional costs and. Americans need to understand, however, that the war has been critically underresourced for seven years, almost totally because of US decisions and mistakes, and that this has been the key reason the insurgents have taken the initiative.

They must also understand that *shape, clear, hold, and build* involve new forms of war fighting where force requirements cannot be predicted with precision. Past troop-to-task

ratios would require far higher levels of US forces than 3-6 more brigade combat teams, but such ratios ignore the impact of technology, new tactics, a civil-military approach to war and the role of civilian partners, and the ability to build up major new ANSF reinforcements over the next two years. At the same time, force requirements may be increased by new insurgent tactics and added foreign volunteers, instability in Pakistan, and the lack of adequate civilian partners and capability.

The end result is that the Afghan conflict does not involve classic troop to task ratios but resource-to-experiment ratios. The US almost certainly needs to deploy a significant number of additional brigade combat teams to support NATO/ISAF. What is not clear is how many, or that the course of combat during 2009 and 2010 will justify increasing the US commitment to such levels unless *shape, clear, hold, and build* proves successful and the problems with corruption and a lack of effective cooperation by the Afghan government can be solved. Accordingly, the US should set the conditions to deploy at least 3-6 more brigade combat teams during the coming year if required, but constantly monitor the overall progress in the war and Afghan government actions and cooperation and support.

At the same time, the US should not bear the entire burden. Other NATO/ISAF countries may not be able or willing to make major new contributions, but there is an urgent requirement for these nations to maintain their current force levels until it is clear that the requirement no longer exists, and member countries should not set a cap on force levels until it is clear what forces are required. The expansion of ANSF forces must be fully funded and adequate economic and civil aid must be provided to support the hold and build phases of the campaign.

No foreseeable build-up of NATO/ISAF and US forces, UNAMA and other aid, and Afghan military and civil efforts will eliminate the need to carefully allocate scarce resources to meet the overall needs of the national campaign, to make hard trade-offs in the areas to be covered, and require a careful focus on key population centers. This means reducing and eliminating national caveats and restrictions within NATO/ISAF wherever possible, and implementing unity of effort with the civil and aid efforts rather than calling for it.

More than warfighting will be involved. The fact that NATO/ISAF and the US must now focus on the immediate task of winning the war also does not mean that the long-term goals set for Afghan development can be ignored once the people have the security they so vitally need. This means recognition that the military effort will serve no purpose unless NATO/ISAF countries and UNAMA donors are willing to commit to the 10-20 year aid effort necessary to give Afghanistan lasting security and stability.

Finally, there will be a need for political courage and honesty at every level of the international effort in Afghanistan. NATO/ISAF country ambassadors, senior officials in capitals, and senior commanders at every level must not fail again to demand additional resources when these are necessary and critical to victory and protecting the Afghan people. Defeat is excusable; a failure to warn that it is probable, to propose solutions, and ask for the resources that are truly required is not. The conflict in Afghanistan cannot be won through “spin,” denial, and moral cowardice.

The Need for Transparency and the Proper Metrics

NATO/ISAF and the US cannot succeed in their mission unless they are honest and transparent in dealing with the conflict. They also cannot win a prolonged military, political, and ideological struggle by down playing the threat, exaggerating short-term

gains and achievements, and promising more than it can deliver. *There is a broad need for far more honesty at every level, and above all to under-promise and over-achieve.*

NATO/ISAF and the US already have some useful metrics for internal and public briefings. There is value in showing trends for significant incidents of violence and casualties, and the districts where significant incidents occur. Many metrics, particularly public metrics, do not, however, provide an adequate or honest picture of what is happening. For example, UN maps contrast with NATO/ISAF and US significant incident maps. The UN maps of insurgent activity and influence show significant areas in every AOR in the country, and that they were steadily expanding in the south and east until the recent offensive began.

NATO/ISAF, the US, and all member countries need to move further away from propaganda that downplayed the seriousness of the situation for political purposes at a time of war, and grossly overemphasized kinetics over the full range of COIN activities. It needs new public and classified metrics to deal with the realities of COIN and *shape, clear, hold, build*. These metrics should include the following:

- *Level of corruption and perceived corruption:* NATO/ISAF and US judgments compared with polling or focus group data. This is one key to understanding Afghan perceptions of legitimacy. Excessive corruption and abuses by power brokers are interfere to such an extent with the mission and diminish the support of the Afghan people that NATO/ISAF and the US should rate corruption and the impact of power brokers for each element of governance and the ANSF in each province and area.
- *Quality of law enforcement and prompt justice.* Again, show NATO/ISAF and US judgments of the status of the rule of law in every critical area, and poll or sample Afghan views. This is a critical area that clearly dominates Afghan perceptions and where the Taliban often scores gains.
- *Perceptions of security with trend polling:* This is the third critical area shaping Afghan perceptions of legitimacy and the key to tracking progress in *shape, clear, hold, build*. Implement a civil-military approach to creating a NATO/ISAF or US rating of progress in clear, hold, build, and some definitions of key polling questions to cover the topic in ways that show Afghan perceptions.
 - A summary rating of Afghan perceptions of insurgent violence, including the lower levels of violence and intimidation that allow the insurgents to seek control over the population. The Significant Acts of Violence approach to reporting is close to useless in this regard.
 - Summary ratings of Afghan perceptions of the US, UNAMA/Aid, and NATO/ISAF.
 - Comparisons of perceptions of threat posed by/violence from actions of NATO/ISAF and the US vs. insurgents. NATO/ISAF and the US may be the good guys but we need to know that Afghans see this.

- *Perceptions on employment and economic well being.* Classic economics are fine for some purposes, but again, the focus of our strategy and actions has to be on winning popular support. The economic side is critical and there should be a break out of young male Afghans as a special category. Their perceptions of jobs, a stable economic future, and their economic well being are critical to knowing the real operational climate and its impact on the people.
- *Develop ratings for key population centers/cities in addition to provinces.* NATO/ISAF and the US are adopting a strategy based on population centers and not provinces. The rating system should focus at least as much on performance in the key areas of the campaign as provinces per se.
- *Show the impact of aid in governance, ROL, and economics.* Get both a rating based on official judgments and a summary score/rating based on polling. Here, it might be useful to rate what most Afghans seem to care most about: roads, electricity, water, irrigation, education, and medical. Add a question on perceived corruption and waste in the aid process as a control.

Add key maps/metrics. These should include the present Significant Acts of Violence, and casualty maps, plus the UN rating of security/threat levels, but do so by district or key topographic areas in given provinces. Nation-wide maps show the big picture, but not the detail necessary to show trends in a highly local war. Other key maps should:

- *Provide well-defined, topographically shaped, estimates of areas of insurgent influence and do this by province* in ways that show whether the areas are expanding or contracting over the previous year. Also show areas where we lack clear data in grey. If possible, map polling results in some scale for support/opposition to insurgents.
- *Map progress in shape, clear, hold, and build in the same depth.* Get off the past emphasis on kinetics as the test of insurgent influence and apply the Abrams test from Vietnam: If you cannot go there in a normal vehicle, you are not yet at hold. If it isn't safe overnight, you are not yet at build. Again, use polling data where possible, rather than just our ratings.
- *Show such data relative to population density in key areas which are the focus of our current strategy.* These also are areas where NATO/ISAF and the US need to poll and map Afghan perceptions in detail. If we have a population-oriented strategy, we need simple maps to show its popular impact.
- *Map quality of government activity, ROL, and corruption by district.* Show where there is no effective government presence or the situation is unknown. Consider mapping provinces by district showing the quality of governance as polled.
 - Map quality of governance in broad terms.
 - Map level of corruption and impact of power brokers.

- Map quality of ROL as determined by availability of prompt and effective justice.
- Map areas of major narcotics growing and narcotrafficking/major impact from organized crime.
- *Map GIROA budget, aid flows, and impact.* Map economic progress. Again, key metrics seem to be status of roads, electricity, water, irrigation, medical services, and education.
- *Map popular Afghan perceptions of NATO/ISAF and the US,* which are a key metric for overall western influence,
- *In all of these cases, show where NATO/ISAF and the US do not have meaningful data* by province or district on the map. Make it clear what we don't know.

Developing suitable efforts may be simpler than it seems. Every theater and task force commander now seems to have their own rating and mapping systems. A small NATO/ISAF and US team needs to be put together to collect them all, see which are best and include them in an integrated model. Building on metrics of proven operational value can cut through the Gordian Knot of theory in a hurry.

Planning for the Possibility of Failure: A Conditional Exit Strategy and the Need for Transparency and Honesty

No one can currently quantify the probability of success or failure in Afghanistan, particularly since any real world effort to implement the previous recommendations will be limited by political, bureaucratic, and military reality. It is clear, however, that the odds of success are not yet good and failure is all too real a possibility.

Critical Assumptions

The conclusion that NATO/ISAF and the US can still win depends on the assumption that significant progress will take place in each of the following areas:

- The Afghan government will come to actively support the major shifts in the NATO/ISAF and US approach to counterinsurgency warfare, working with the Afghan people, and developing improved command, control, and coordination. They will provide the forces, civilian manpower, funding, and political support necessary to aid necessary to succeed, and cooperate in executing an integrated civil-military plan and operation
- The US and NATO/ISAF countries will act decisively to improve the strength and capability of the ANSF. They will provide the necessary trainers and mentors to expand the ANSF, and additional forces necessary to fill critical gaps or delays in the availability of the civilians necessary to execute shape, clear, hold, and build.

- The US and NATO/ISAF countries will act to remove caveats and national constraints on the use of military and civil resources, their military forces and PRTs, and focus their resources on supporting the new strategy. They will move beyond hollow claims of unity of effort, and develop an effective, integrated civil-military approach to winning the conflict that is actually operational.
- The US, other NATO/ISAF member countries, UNAMA, and enough other elements of the international community will cooperate to ensure that excessive corruption and predatory behavior by power brokers does not interfere with successful execution of the NATO/ISAF and US mission, and prevent the Afghan people from supporting the government and ISAF.
- The US and other NATO/ISAF member countries, UNAMA, and other elements of the International community will continue to support and fund the longer-term development efforts necessary to give Afghanistan lasting security and stability.

There is no need for 100% success in any or all of these areas. There is, however, a need for substantial success, and leaving the status quo in any area can meet defeat.

Critical Risks

Failure can occur in many other ways. NATO/ISAF and the US need prepare contingency plans for the failure of their current efforts. This need for contingency planning, however, is driven as much by their own failures to deal with the political, economic, and external conditions that shape the broader strategic conditions in Afghanistan. The key risks include:

- Instability in Pakistan or a hostile new Iran will create new levels of threat on Afghanistan's borders. The threat of instability in Pakistan would be particularly serious and could significantly raise the requirement for NATO/ISAF and US forces. Pakistan poses a key risk, and one that is unpredictable. Pessimism is as dangerous as optimism, and Pakistan can follow many different courses of events between the best and worst cases. It is, however, a risk that must be explicitly monitored in NATO/ISAF and US planning where every effort must be made to strengthen formal and informal cooperation at every level.
- Development of the quality and capacity of the ANSF will lag behind requirements; or have insufficient mentors, other trainers and resources. The corruption and problems in the ANP will leave it unable to perform either hold missions or routine law enforcement and security missions.
- NATO/ISAF will not receive adequate funds or resources. The US will not meet requirements for all the additional forces required. Allied countries will not make significant increases in their forces, and key countries will withdraw their forces from combat.
- The countries in NATO/ISAF will continue to ignore the need for an integrated civil-military plans, coordination within ISAF and by member countries, adequate capability to perform the civil aspects of the hold and build mission, and proper delivery of such capabilities to meet the operational timing of the

shape and secure mission will not be provided. These problems will be compounded by UNAMA and national caveats and limitations on the use of aid and PRT resources.

- A failure to fully characterize the threat will limit the effectiveness of NATO/ISAF and US operations and there will be a far more resilient mix of insurgent networks, dispersed forces, and resources in various sanctuaries than NATO/ISAF and the US now estimate. The insurgent strategy of political attrition will outlast the US and NATO/ISAF's capability to sustain shape, clear, hold, and build.
- Insurgents will find a significant source of modern light surface to air, anti-tank guided, weapon, and other modern weapons.
- GIROA's corruption, predatory behavior, and failure to meet the needs of the Afghan people will grow worse after an election that many Afghans perceive as rigged to the point of being illegitimate or meaningless. NATO/ISAF will not provide sufficient leverage to limit the impact on operations or reverse the steady decline in support from the Afghan people. It will also seriously erode political support in ISAF countries for sustaining the mission.
- The scale of the operations and resources needed to implement shape, clear, hold and build will prove to be badly miscalculated, and the mix of problems in GIROA, a lack of adequate NATO/ISAF resources and ANSF, and underestimation of the threat will have a negative synergistic effect.
- The US and NATO/ISAF nations will continue is the tendency to deny the extent to which a crisis exists, to claim unrealistic successes, and promise more than NATO/ISAF and the US can deliver. As has been stated earlier, NATO/ISAF, the US, and member countries must learn to communicate with far more honesty and transparency, they must admit risks and problems, and they must focus on the perceptions and security of the Afghan people and not simply on the success of GIROA. Above all, they must communicate that they have a valid campaign plan at every level, communicate its purpose and the reasons for that campaign, and adopt a communications strategy based on one central principle: *underpromise and overperform*.
- The US and NATO/ISAF will fail to deal with the broader uncertainties over how best to deal with the evolving center of gravity (or centers of gravity) in international terrorism. NATO/ISAF and the US are not at war to develop Afghanistan. They are at war to achieve its own security goals. The tradeoffs in pursuing the war in Afghanistan must constantly be reassessed and if new centers of international terrorism emerge in nations like Yemen or Somalia, or if other key threats emerge, NATO/ISAF and the US must be prepared for the reality that – dangerous as a power vacuum or Taliban take over of Afghanistan will be — this is a limited war fought for limited objectives.

The odds are still good enough in spite of all these risks to justify making the effort to win if enough of the criteria described earlier are met. It is also striking that the two

most likely risks of failures are not a Taliban or insurgent victory coming resulting from their effectiveness or from the actions of outside powers.

The first key risk is that GIRoA will continue to fail to maintain and build popular support through excessive corruption and predatory behavior, favoring power brokers, and lack of capacity. This threat will require as much attention over the next two years as any element of the enemy threat.

The second key risk is the self-inflicted threat posed by the uncertain political will of outside powers, and the dysfunctions and lack of focus in NATO/ISAF, UNAMA, and individual national efforts. Every denial of this reality for political reasons will further compound the risk of defeat. The US, NATO/ISAF, UNAMA face a serious risk of defeating themselves and this risk will require constant attention.