



Center for Strategic and International Studies

Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy

1800 K Street, N.W. • Suite 400 • Washington, DC 20006

Phone: 1 (202) 775-3270 • Fax: 1 (202) 457-8746

Email: BurkeChair@csis.org

Assessing the Afghan- Pakistani Conflict

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Anthony H. Cordesman
Arleigh A. Burke Chair in Strategy
acordesman@aol.com

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The US focus on the Iraq War, and detailed reporting on its successes and failures, has been accompanied by surprisingly little US attention to the Afghan-Pakistan conflict. The US sometimes seems to only be able to focus on one war at a time. US troops do not have that luxury, and for many of our allies, the Afghan conflict, and not Iraq, is *the* conflict. For most of the NATO and other countries in Afghanistan, the Afghan-Pakistan conflict is the conflict and sometimes their first real experience with out of area power projection and actual warfare.

An Uncertain War with Far Too Few Useful Metrics

What virtually all the Western governments involved, as well as NATO/ISAF, have in common is that they provide little meaningful data on progress in the conflict in military, political, economic, and ideological terms. There also is little effort to analyze the length of effort required, the ratio of resources available to resources required, and treat the conflict as what is almost certain to be a long war and a long exercise in nation building.

Part of the problem may come from the fact that so many governments and official bodies are involved, and there is no central authority that provides comprehensive reporting. Most of the official reporting on Afghanistan – whether US, NATO, or allied country - is little more than public relations material. NATO and national web sites provide almost no meaningful “metrics” for measuring progress, and there have been few meaningful government reports.

The United States government, which provides the bulk of the military and financial resources for the war, is a good case example. Unlike Iraq, the US government has never attempted to provide any structured metrics or analysis of the fighting. The US Department of Defense has largely halted detailed reporting on the war. It has not provided any recent formal reporting on the course of the war. The web site for Operation Enduring Freedom has been replaced by a general heading for Afghanistan that is almost useless in providing meaningful information on the war.ⁱⁱ The US State Department provides some data on aid spending, but no meaningful data on either the detailed justification for that aid or measures of effectiveness of aid beyond some data on projects completed as distinguished from the level of requirements met and impact on war fighting.ⁱⁱⁱ The White House web site is little more than a morass of slogans.^{iv}

The US, however, is hardly alone. Canada, for example, issued a paper called “Canada’s Mission in Afghanistan: Measuring Progress,” in February 2007. The report does provide some judgments about the short-term course of the war, but has less than a page of such assessments in a nineteen-page report. There are no maps, no metrics, and virtually no analyses of how Canadian and other allied activities impact on the course of the fighting, meet estimated requirements, or will affect the outcome of the war. Like most US reporting, it is largely a short-term puff piece – long on noble rhetoric and short on useful content.^v

The United Nations (UN), the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board of the Afghan Compact (JCMB), US Government Accountability Office (GAO), the UN, the record of testimony to the US congress, and the Defense Committee of the House of Commons are partial exceptions – but only provide only limited coverage and none of the details that have become common for reporting on the war on Iraq.^{vi}

Most of the reporting that does exist focuses on “inputs:” cost, number of troops, aid and military activity levels. It does not attempt to measure requirements, whether requirements are being met, and whether the end result is winning or losing. Reporting from governments also tends to focus on “positive” anecdotes – events or actions taken out of context – that justify intervention and the current course of action. Media and analytic reporting sometimes goes to the opposite extreme -- finding “negative” actions or events and generalizing on the basis of negative trends with little supporting analysis or evidence.^{vii}

There are major problems in the scope of reporting on the war as well as in providing useful measures of effectiveness and progress. Almost all reporting on the war has also dealt with the Afghan conflict as if it was somehow separate from the build-up of the Taliban, Al Qa’ida, and other Islamist extremist movements. Governments and the media have covered one conflict as if it were three different struggles:

- The fighting against the Taliban and Islamist extremists in Afghanistan.
- The fighting against the Taliban and Islamist extremists in the tribal agency areas (Waziristan) in Eastern Pakistan.
- Al Qa’ida and Bin Laden operations in the near "sanctuary" in the region, probably Waziristan.

The fact is, that all three of these conflicts are so interlinked that they cannot be separated from each other. Moreover, it is far from clear that the US, NATO, or Pakistani government are winning any one element of this broader struggle. Its center of gravity has become a struggle for control of Pashtun territory that is evolving along ethnic lines and cuts across national borders. As Musharraf’s declaration of a State of Emergency shows, events in Pakistan are too troubled and uncertain at every level to not see this war as an Afghan –Pakistani conflict.

The Afghan government, NATO, and the US do have the opportunity to win at least the Afghan aspect of this broader conflict. Taliban influence is still limited, and the Taliban and other Islamist extremist movements are generally unpopular except in a limited number of Pashtun areas. At the same time, the war is not a military struggle or classic counterinsurgency. It is an exercise in armed nation building that involves all of Afghanistan’s ethnic and sectarian groups, and which is primarily a struggle for the control of political and ethnic space that extends across a national boundary.

As was the case in Vietnam, NATO’s tactical victories can become irrelevant unless the Afghan government and its allies succeed in uniting Afghans, create effective governance, provide key services, and develop the economy. Moreover, they must do so in the face of what is almost certain to be a war of political and military attrition where the Taliban will seek to outlast NATO and the US over a period of a decade or more, and where victory will always be local and not national. Tactical military victories can never “win” this war on either side of the Afghan-Pakistani border. Aid, development, government services, and security and the rule of law must be established at the provincial and local level, and particularly in the high-risk areas, where the fighting is most intense, and along the border area.

Time is another critical issue, in part because media inevitably focus on “now” rather than the future, governments do not like to publicize the need for years of commitment to “long wars” of attrition, and the Afghan compact creates an ambiguity as to the level of ISAF involvement after February 2009. No one can predict the future, but it is all too clear that any meaningful form of victory is going to require aid well beyond 2009, and aid in terms of troops and help in developing local forces, governance, and the economy.

This requires something that as yet is totally invisible -- at least in unclassified terms -- a coherent long-term plan or plans. It also requires that such plans at least be compatible in creating something approaching a coordinated approach to dealing with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the broader challenge of violent Islamist extremism from movements like Al Qaeda. At present, the closest substitute for a plan is the Afghan compact, but this is more a plan for Afghan national development than anything approaching a coherent war plan even for Afghanistan. It may well be that the most that is possible is for key actors to develop their own plans and constantly modify them to reflect both the changing facts on the ground -- *and the plans of others*. At this point, however, any effort to look beyond 2009 is in a virtual state of denial.

Victory requires public understanding of what is involved, the need for resources, the need for patience, and acceptance of the fact that “victory” means security and stability in local terms and not conversion to Western values and an idealized concept of democracy. It also requires a level of transparency that reveals the problems and flaws in the course of the war, and that ensures proper outside review and constructive criticism. Governments do not become honest and competent warfighters simply because they are elected and are democratic. In fact, the entire history of governmental reporting on war since ancient Athens is a warning that democratic governments need constant public and legislative scrutiny, that they make more mistakes without it, and that governments do not deserve public trust, they must earn it.

The Uncertain Course of the Fighting in Afghanistan in 2007

Part of the problem is that the war that actually exists is not the war that any of the Western nations involved wanted or planned to fight. Much of current Western thinking and analysis of the Afghan War repeats key mistakes made in Iraq. The struggle for Afghanistan is a war of attrition in which the Taliban and other neo-Salafi extremist movements can win by dominating populations and space and by denying the central government control over wide areas of the country. It is also an ethnic and tribal struggle heavily tied to Afghanistan’s Pashtun population.

As is the case in many classic insurgencies, a combination of the Afghan government, the US, and NATO/ISAF forces can win virtually any serious open battle with the Taliban or other Islamist forces. They can lose the odd ambush, but they have far superior firepower, mobility, and IS&R capability and can often use airpower to attack the Taliban with near impunity.

The practical question is whether the Taliban can control major parts of the countryside and many local towns and villages – at least at night or when Afghan government, the US, and NATO/ISAF forces are not actively present. Real victory is not military; it is control of space and people. It also consists of denying the Afghan government and

outside aid areas the ability to operate and establish its legitimacy – to the extent the Afghan government can do this at all.

Seen from this perspective, the ability to defeat or kill Taliban and other hostile forces is largely meaningless unless the Afghan government can exploit tactical success with lasting political success and the ability to govern safely and has no lasting value equally meaningless unless this disrupts Taliban operations on a lasting basis, and such leaders cannot be replaced. It also is unclear that any series of victories in Afghanistan can have a lasting strategic impact unless there are similar victories in the Pashtun tribal areas in Pakistan, or the border can somehow be made secure.

The GAO June 2007 Report

While there are no detailed unclassified official reports that map and quantify the patterns in the fighting in 2007, it seems clear from virtually all reporting that US and ISAF forces win every significant tactical clash and made broader progress at the military level. They also succeeded in preventing the Taliban from carrying out a major new offensive in the spring and summer, and NATO and Afghan forces did improve their warfighting capabilities in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

At the same time, a reporting by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), which had extensive review by the Department of State and Department of Defense raises many issues about the overall course of the war, and highlights the need for a long-term engagement and suitable patience and resources.

The following excerpts are chosen to focus on the war, rather than longer term efforts at economic development, and report on developments as of the late spring /early summer of 2007. They do, however, illustrate the need to look beyond bottom line or summary judgments to assess the situation in Afghanistan:^{viii}

Overall Progress

Progress to date has been mixed in all areas we have reported on, including reform of Afghanistan's security sector. We reported that progress needs to be congruent in all five pillars of the security reform agenda established by the United States and several coalition partners. These pillars included: creating a national army, reconstituting the police, establishing a working judiciary, combating illicit narcotics, and demobilizing the Afghan militias...While some progress has been made in each pillar, the United States and its coalition partners continue to face challenges.

Although some army and police units have been trained and equipped, Defense reports that none are capable of independent operations, Afghanistan still has no formal national judicial system for the police to rely upon, opium poppy cultivation is at record levels, and the Afghan police often find themselves facing better armed drug traffickers and militias.

In the absence of national security forces capable of independently providing security for the country, ISAF is helping to provide security for Afghanistan. However, ISAF's ability to do so is limited by a number of factors, such as national restrictions on its component forces and shortages in troops and equipment. Lastly, though reconstruction assistance helped Afghanistan elect its first president, return millions of children to school, and repatriate millions of refugees, Afghanistan continues to face reconstruction challenges, which are exacerbated by the security-related concerns described above.

Defense, State, and USAID officials have suggested that securing, stabilizing, and reconstructing Afghanistan will take at least a decade and require continuing international assistance. If the recent

administration budget proposals for Afghanistan are approved, the United States will increase funding for Afghanistan well beyond earlier estimates. Until recently, Defense's plans for training and equipping the Afghan army and police, called the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), were based on the assumption that the insurgency in Afghanistan would decline and the overall security situation would improve. However, Defense revised its plans to adapt to the deteriorating security situation and to rapidly increase the ability of the ANSF to operate with less coalition support. These modified plans call for a total of \$7.6 billion for the ANSF in 2007, which is over a threefold increase compared with fiscal year 2006 and represents more than all of the U.S. assistance for the ANSF in fiscal years 2002 through 2006 combined. The costs of these and other efforts will require difficult trade-offs for decision makers as the United States faces competing demands for its resources, such as securing and stabilizing Iraq, in the years ahead.

Economic Constraints

... Since 2001, the Afghan economy has received large amounts of foreign assistance. In 2005, the most recent year for which data are available, official development assistance (foreign grants and concessional loans) from international donors was \$2.8 billion, or over a third the size of the national economy. In addition, about 60 countries attended a January 2006 conference in London on the *Afghanistan Compact*, which maps out how the international community will contribute to Afghanistan's future development. Afghanistan has also received substantial reduction in its external debt, which had totaled over \$11 billion. However, according to IMF, Afghanistan's ability to assume additional debt for development purposes is limited due to Afghanistan's remaining debt and limited export revenues.

In terms of international trade, Afghanistan's exports are dominated by illicit narcotics (opium and its products, morphine and heroin), which have an estimated total value of \$2.7 billion to \$2.8 billion per year, according to the World Bank. By contrast, officially recorded exports are estimated at several hundred million dollars. The country is highly import dependent for basic goods like petroleum products; construction materials; machinery and equipment; medicines; textiles; and, in bad harvest years, food, with imports financed largely by aid and (to a considerable extent) illicit drug proceeds. According to the World Bank, growth and diversification of legal exports will be critical for the country's longer-term development success.

Progress in Force Development

According to Defense progress reports from March 2007, 21,600 combat troops² and 62,500³ police officers and patrolmen and women have been trained, equipped, and assigned. Therefore, over the next 2 years,

- Defense plans to complete the training and equipping of 70,000 army personnel, including an additional 29,045 new combat troops (for a total of 50,645), and complete the establishment of an Afghan Ministry of Defense and military sustaining institutions; and
- Defense and State plan to complete the training and equipping of 82,000 police personnel—an increase of 20,000 over previous plans—including at least 19,500 new recruits, and complete the reform of Afghanistan's Ministry of Interior, which oversees the police.

These plans are ambitious and require both the rapid expansion of efforts to train and equip new recruits and substantial improvements in the current forces' capabilities to operate independently. According to Defense progress reports from March 2007, no army combat units are fully capable of operating independently and less than 20 percent are fully capable of leading operations with coalition support.

Defense reports that no Afghan police units are fully capable of operating independently and that only 1 of 72 police units is fully capable to lead operations with coalition support...Moreover, according to Defense officials, due to attrition and absenteeism, the number of forces on hand is less than those trained. For example, although 20,400 combat troops had been assigned to combat units as of mid-January 2007, Defense officials stated that approximately 15,000 were actually present for duty.

Furthermore, efforts to equip the Afghan security forces have faced problems since their inception. In 2004 and 2005, Defense planned to equip the Afghan army with donated and salvaged Soviet weapons and armored vehicles. However, much of this equipment proved to be worn out, defective, or incompatible with other equipment.

In 2006, Defense began providing the forces with U.S. equipment—an effort that faces challenges. As security has deteriorated, equipment needs have changed, and their associated costs have increased. For example, the Afghan army was initially provided with pickup trucks...and 9-millimeter pistols; more recently, Defense has begun providing more protective equipment, such as Humvees, and more lethal weapons, such as rifles and rocket-propelled grenades.

Moreover, procedures to ensure that the intended recipients receive, retain, and use their equipment as intended have lagged. For example, the Defense and State Inspectors General (IG) reported that when the United States first began training the police, State's contractor provided trainees with a one-time issue of uniforms and non-lethal equipment upon graduation. However, many students sold their equipment before they reached their duty stations, and the program was terminated.

The IGs reported that most equipment is now distributed from Kabul to police units' provincial headquarters, but hoarding equipment is reportedly a large problem, maintenance is insufficient, and end-user accountability of distributed equipment is limited.

Ministry of the Interior

... the Afghan Ministry of Interior, which is responsible for managing the country's national police force, faces a number of problems that have required reform or restructuring. According to officials from State and its police training contractor, these problems include pervasive corruption; an outdated rank structure overburdened with senior-level officers; lack of communication and control between central command and the regions, provinces, and districts; pay disparity between the army and police; and a lack of professional standards and internal discipline.

According to State, the Ministry of Interior is in the process of implementing pay and rank reforms. Reforms to date include removal of over 2,000 high-ranking officers (colonel and above) and steps to make pay for rank-and-file police officers more equitable. Additional planned reforms include establishing parity between the salaries of police and military and selecting police officers based on merit rather than loyalty and local influence.

ISAF, NATO, PRTs, and Burden Sharing

ISAF's responsibilities and efforts in Afghanistan are increasing. However, its ability to provide security for the country is limited by a number of factors. Although NATO has command over ISAF troops, control is ultimately exercised by each nation.

ISAF's rules of engagement are heavily influenced by limitations imposed by national governments (referred to as national caveats) that, for example, prevent troops from some countries from performing certain tasks or missions, or moving between geographic areas of operation. *(There were a total of some 102 national caveats as of October 2007)* As a result, the burden of combat, when it arises, falls disproportionately on the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Romania, Australia, and Estonia, which have forces in or lead PRTs in the more hostile regions of Afghanistan. Furthermore, some ISAF troops are limited by shortages of certain types of critical equipment, and most do not have strategic capacity, such as airlift. *(Senior NATO commanders blame the lack of interoperable command-and-control equipment and intelligence sharing networks for some allied fatalities.^{ix})*

Only the military elements of PRTs are integrated into the ISAF chain of command. Therefore, each lead nation can have its own concept, priorities, and, in some cases, national caveats that guide specific PRT operations. For some PRTs, particularly in the more volatile south and east, providing security is the priority, but for others in more secure areas, reconstruction is the highest priority. Overall, PRTs aim to contribute to stability and facilitate reconstruction via activities such as patrolling, monitoring, influence, and mediation. Many have also participated to some

extent in specific reconstruction projects by providing funding or other assistance, particularly in areas where nongovernmental organizations have been unable to operate.

The U.S.-led PRTs facilitate reconstruction by providing security but also devote substantial resources to reconstruction projects that are designed to advance U.S. security objectives. U.S. commanders, including those leading PRTs, have access to funds provided under Defense's Commanders' Emergency Response Program (CERP). According to Defense officials, in fiscal years 2005 and 2006, CERP funds for Afghanistan totaled \$391 million, and the requests for fiscal years 2007 and 2008 are \$231 million and \$210 million, respectively. According to the U.S. Central Command, CERP-funded projects are intended to gain the confidence of local residents and leaders and discourage them from cooperating with insurgents. U.S. CERP funds have been used by PRT commanders for rapid implementation of small-scale projects, such as providing latrines for a school or a generator for a hospital, and do not require prior approval or coordination at the federal level.

Rule of Law and Criminal Justice

Establishing a working judiciary in Afghanistan based on the rule of law is a prerequisite for effective policing. It is one of the five security pillars. However, according to donor officials, few linkages exist in Afghanistan between the Afghan judiciary and police, and the police have little ability to enforce judicial rulings. In addition, judges and prosecutors are not being exposed to police training and practices.

Supported by the United States, other donors, and international organizations, Italy—initially the lead nation for reforming the judiciary—followed a three-pronged strategy: (1) developing and drafting legal codes, (2) training judges and prosecutors, and (3) renovating the country's physical legal infrastructure. However, according to Italian and U.S. government officials, the reform program was underfunded and understaffed.

Nevertheless, Italy and the other donors made some progress in promoting reform. This included drafting a new criminal procedure code, training several hundred judges, and renovating courthouses. USAID officials indicated that they continue to have projects to develop a judicial code of conduct and to train both sitting and new judges. They also have projects to develop and implement uniform procedures and rules for courts and to establish a common curriculum for law courses. Also...the United States has supported the Afghan government's efforts to increase its capacity to arrest, prosecute, and punish illicit drug traffickers and corrupt officials.

However, these accomplishments and current efforts address only a portion of Afghanistan's overall need for judicial reform. Afghanistan's judicial sector is characterized by a conflicting mix of civil, religious, and customary laws, with too few trained judges, prosecutors, or other justice personnel. Furthermore, its penal system is nonfunctioning, and its buildings, official records, and essential office equipment and furniture have been damaged extensively. U.S. and other donor officials informed us that progress in rebuilding the judicial sector lags behind the other security pillars and that the reform effort is being undermined by systemic corruption at key national and provincial justice institutions.

Aid and Reconstruction

To date, the United States has provided about \$4.4 billion for reconstruction in Afghanistan, and the administration has requested an additional \$2.4 billion for fiscal years 2007 and 2008. Reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan, largely led by USAID with support from international donors and other U.S. government entities, helped Afghanistan elect its first president, return millions of children to school, and repatriate millions of refugees. However, the reconstruction needs of Afghanistan are immense, and reconstruction efforts face a number of challenges. Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries and ranks near the bottom of virtually every development indicator category, such as life expectancy; literacy; nutrition; and infant, child, and maternal mortality (see encl. I). Nearly three decades of war and extended drought have destroyed Afghanistan's infrastructure, economy, and government.

U.S. reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan has taken place in three stages since the ouster of the

Taliban. In 2002 and 2003, USAID initially focused on humanitarian and short-term assistance, such as assistance to displaced persons and food assistance, which helped avert widespread famine. Although USAID continues to provide some humanitarian assistance, this assistance is now a much smaller part of its program.

In 2004, USAID expanded assistance to include quick impact projects, such as infrastructure projects. At that time, due to a variety of obstacles, especially security and limited Afghan capacity, USAID had not met all of its reconstruction targets in areas such as health, education, and infrastructure. The largest component of these reconstruction efforts was the construction of roads, which, after decades of neglect, were in disrepair or lacking altogether. The United States, Afghanistan, and international donors deemed road construction critical to economic growth and security.

In recent years, USAID expanded Afghan reconstruction assistance to a comprehensive development package that focuses more on increasing Afghan capacity and aims to address a wide range of needs, such as agriculture, education, health, road construction, power generation, and others...USAID has allocated reconstruction assistance to 12 primary program categories, with more than \$1.8 billion, or about 27 percent of U.S. reconstruction assistance, to roads.

...Road reconstruction and construction has attracted considerable donor assistance. As of January 2007, about \$5.2 billion for transportation infrastructure projects had been provided or promised by the United States and more than 10 other donors. Nearly \$4 billion of this was for 366 completed projects, including most of the ring road. The ring road connects Kabul to Kandahar in the south, Herat in the east, and Mazar-e-Sharif in the north, completing a circle or ring. The portion of the ring road from Kabul to Kandahar was a signature project for USAID—opening in December 2003 to much fanfare. The Kabul-Kandahar road reduced travel time between the two cities from several days to 6 hours. However, the U.S. Embassy has restricted official U.S. travel on the road because of heightened security risks.

Because most reconstruction project evaluation has not yet taken place, it is not clear whether the broad range of USAID's reconstruction programs in Afghanistan has led to improved results in many sectors or whether, given the obstacles USAID faces, the breadth of its efforts limits USAID's ability to achieve significant results in a smaller set of priority areas.

In addition, many of USAID's reconstruction programs target specific geographic areas. In 2005, we reported that two-thirds of obligated fiscal year 2004 funds supported local projects in Afghanistan's 34 provinces, but Kabul and Kandahar provinces received approximately 70 percent of these funds, mainly for roads. More recently, alternative livelihood programs have focused on providing economic alternatives in opium poppy-growing areas. Further, the administration's proposed budget for fiscal year 2008 specifies that some of the funding be provided for roads in areas targeted by insurgents and for rural development in poppy-producing regions. Focusing assistance on such targeted geographic regions has resulted in some complaints that regions only receive assistance if they have problems such as opium poppy cultivation or heightened security concerns.

Counter Narcotics

Since 2002, the United States has provided over \$1.5 billion to stem the production and trafficking of illicit drugs—primarily opiates—in Afghanistan. Despite U.S. and international efforts in these areas, the UN estimated that the number of hectares of opium poppy under cultivation grew by 50 percent in 2006, and a record 6,100 metric tons of opium was produced. The UN estimated that the export value of opium and its derivatives—morphine and heroin—equaled about a third of Afghanistan's licit economy, with drug profits reportedly funding terrorists and other antigovernment entities. Initial estimates for 2007 indicate that the amount of opium poppy under cultivation will remain the same or possibly increase. The continued prevalence of opium poppy cultivation and drug trafficking throughout Afghanistan imperils efforts to secure and stabilize the country.

To combat opium poppy cultivation, drug trafficking, and their negative effects on Afghan

institutions and society, the United States, working with allied governments, in 2005 developed a five-pillared counternarcotics strategy addressing (1) alternative livelihoods, (2) elimination and eradication, (3) interdiction, (4) law enforcement and justice reform, and (5) public information. USAID and State initiated a number of projects under each of the U.S. counternarcotics strategy's five pillars, but delays in implementation—due to the security situation, poor infrastructure, and other factors—limited progress. Many projects have not been in place long enough to fully assess progress toward the overall goal of significantly reducing poppy cultivation, drug production, and drug trafficking.

Alternative livelihoods. USAID implemented projects to provide economic alternatives to poppy production and thus reduce the amount of Afghanistan's economic activity attributable to the drug industry. Results varied in the three principal alternative livelihoods regions, in part because of the differing security risks and access to infrastructure.

- *Elimination and eradication.* State supported the Afghan government's efforts to prevent poppy planting and eradicate poppy crops if prevention failed. State provided support for central and provincial eradication efforts...Central government eradication efforts improved with the reorganization of the Afghan Eradication Force (AEF) into smaller, more mobile units and the addition of purchased and leased transport and logistical-support aircraft. However, in 2006, AEF's fielding was delayed because of coordination problems, reducing the amount of eradication possible. In addition, not all Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) teams, which were designed to help governors discourage farmers from growing poppy, were fully fielded.

Report of the UN Secretary General of September 2007

There is a great deal of useful official testimony before the US Congress and other NATO/ISAF legislatures. ^x There is also a wide range of unofficial analysis and criticism of developments in Afghanistan from outside sources. Like the various NATO and ISAF government web pages, however, most all of the material either provides highly local or anecdotal “snapshots of the fighting, or describes expenditures, activities, and the size and nature of individual campaigns or programs. Few attempts are made to provide systematic measures of effectiveness that can be used to judge the rate of progress in providing security, stability, and *war-related* improvements in governance and economic development in Afghanistan.^{xi}

Many of the few data that are mapped or quantified cover the entire country, or are so limited in the area covered that they have little general meaning. As a result, it is almost impossible to find useful metrics that examine what is happening in high risk or combat areas, and particularly data that provide a combined view of progress in security, governance and the rule of law, and aid and economic development.

There is little mention of developments in Pakistan, except for occasional discussions of border security. Progress or the lack of it is asserted, rather than measured. Most reporting reflects the views of outside officials, officers, and experts rather than Afghans, and little use is made of public opinion polling. The Afghan-Pakistan conflict may be a war for hearts and minds, or what some have called a war of perceptions. Almost all of the reports, however, ultimately reflect Western perceptions.

A September 2007 report by the UN Secretary General on the Situation in Afghanistan does, however, provide important warnings that the Afghan government, US, and ISAF may not be winning at a strategic and political level, and dominating the battle for people and space.^{xii} Once again, it is necessary to examine the broad content of the report, not a few key quotations, to get a picture of the overall nature of the fighting and other key

elements of the war, and — like the GAO report — the analysis only covers Afghanistan and not Pakistan or the impact of al Qa'ida and the broader challenge of Neo-Salafi Islamist extremism.

Key Nation Building Problems

The UN report warns that the nation building and political efforts in Afghanistan are under severe pressure, if not failing:

- The anti corruption effort has "not yet delivered results and faces an uncertain future."
- Creating a civil service is making very slow progress, is blocked by favoritism, and is not reaching out into the field.
- Work on creating the laws needed for the 2009 and 2010 election is slow and uncertain.
- Efforts to create effective provincial governments are underway, but the central government still relies on "ethnic and tribal factors rather than merit to appoint provincial administrators.
- Many provincial governments remain weak and are not ready for the 2009 elections, and "challenges to the development, particularly in the south and southeast, are linked to increased insecurity."
- Many high threat areas have little or no civil government presence at the local level.
- "Humanitarian access has become a growing challenge; at least 78 districts have been rated by the UN as extremely risky, and therefore inaccessible to UN agencies. The delivery of humanitarian assistance has also become increasingly dangerous....the displacement of the population in the south owing to insecurity required the provision of...food and non-food items to at least 4,000 families..."
- The judicial system and rule of law are too understaffed and underpaid to cover many areas, and subject to increasing attack. The police, when present, are corrupt, passive, and ineffective.
- In spite of bumper harvest, "access to food has actually decreased owing to the deteriorating security situation and poor infrastructure."
- The total number of children in school has increased, and the number of attacks on schools is down, but, "By June, insecurity had forced 412 of 721 schools to close in the insurgency-affected Provinces of Kandahar, Uruzgan, Hliland, and Zabul." (72 did reopen by August)

ISAF reporting on reconstruction and development aid shows that completed aid in dollars per person is negligible in the most threatened and violent provinces. Hilmand, for example, has about one-third the total of the more stable provinces. There are no data on aid relative to requirement or how much aid reaches into high threat or Taliban influenced areas.^{xiii}

Moreover, the many different international agencies disbursing aid are not coordinating with each other and many nations are bypassing the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund and spending it in accordance with the rules and expectations of their own national governments.

Jean Mazurelle, the World Bank director in Kabul has said, "In Afghanistan the wastage of aid is sky-high: there is real looting going on, mainly by private enterprises...in 30 years of my career, I have never seen anything like it." He estimates that 35-40% of international aid is "badly spent."^{xiv}

Key Security Problems

The Secretary General's report notes that Taliban operations in Afghanistan intensified sharply in 2007 in spite of increased operations by Afghan government, NATO-ISAF, and US forces, and important tactical successes against Taliban commanders in Hilmand, Kunar, Paktya, and Uruzgan Provinces.

The rates of insurgent and terrorist violence have so far already been nearly 30% higher than in 2006, with an average of 548 violent incidents per month versus 425 in 2006. There were over 100 suicide attacks by the beginning of September versus 123 in all of 2006. While 76% were directed against international and Afghan forces, 143 Afghan civilians lost their lives by August 31.

The Secretary General's report also describes a number of major security problems, many of which are mentioned in the earlier GAO report:

- The Afghan Army has an authorized strength of 40,360, but only 22,000 are "consistently present for combat duty." The target is 70,000 troops by 2010.
- Few details are given on the police, but it is clear they remain ineffective. The ceiling has been increased from 62,000 to 82,000 but the actual impact of such measures is far from clear. "The extension of central authority and the stabilization of the country will be possible only if the Ministry of the Interior resolutely tackles corruption and improves popular perceptions of the police."
- The Directorate of National Security is singled out for investigation of arbitrary detentions, inhuman treatment, and torture of detainees.
- The ISAF (NATO) force has increased from 18,500 in July 2006 to 39,500, with troops from 37 countries. This force, however, is evidently not strong and cohesive enough to cover both the south and east and the focus of the ISAF effort has had to shift from the south to the east.
- Combat operations killed over 1,000 Afghan civilians between January 1st and August 31, 2007.
- Poppy cultivation is up 17%, and potential opium production is up 34%, and the "implementation of the national drug control strategy has clearly been unsatisfactory, especially in the southwest and south, particularly in Hilmand, and the eastern province of Nangarhar...Following the harvest season from April to July, for a percentage of the profits, insurgents provided security for the traffickers."

The August 2007 UNDSS-Afghanistan Report

To put the Secretary General's report in further context, much of it seems to draw upon an August 2007 report by the UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) that was supposed to be confidential. Unlike most official reports, it addressed many of the problems that NATO/ISAF and governments either fail to address, or largely gloss over. It was leaked and eventually distributed on the Internet.

UN sources confirm that the leaked report is the text of the UN document and it adds several important details to this UN assessment of the security situation:^{xv}

The security situation in Afghanistan is assessed by most analysts as having deteriorated at a constant rate through 2007. Statistics show that although the numbers of incidents are higher than comparable periods in 2006, they show the same seasonal pattern. The nature of the incidents has however changed considerably since last year, with high numbers of armed clashes in the field giving way to a combination of armed clashes and asymmetric attacks countrywide. The Afghan

National Police (ANP) has become a primary target of insurgents and intimidation of all kinds has increased against the civilian population, especially those perceived to be in support of the government, international military forces as well as the humanitarian and development community.

...the more significant change in 2007 is the shift from large-scale armed clashes in the field to asymmetric or terror-style attacks. The former do still take place and as air support is often used, casualty figures are still high. On average however these clashes are fewer and smaller than in 2006. Possible reasons include the high numbers of Taliban fighters killed during summer 2007 including many mid-level and senior commanders. Another reason must be the realization that these types of attacks are futile against a modern conventionally equipped military force supported by a wide range of air assets. The Afghan National Army (ANA) has also been improving throughout 2007.

...asymmetric or terror-style attacks are much cheaper, less visible during preparation, and require considerably fewer fighters for equal or higher media value. A suicide attack against the ANP costs one fighter and probably only requires four or five others for planning, preparation, reconnaissance, command and control but achieves immediate and widespread media coverage. A ground attack against an ANP checkpoint along a deserted rural road may lose the same number or even no fighters but achieves little or no media attention, places the group in jeopardy as they will be hunted by ground and air assets as they are a more visible entity than the suicide attack support group, and does not demonstrate their power to the local population.

... the Extreme Risk/Hostile Environment classification (pink)... now makes up about one third of the surface area of the country.

Main areas... affected, i.e. areas where the deteriorating security situation has been assessed as an Extreme Risk/Hostile Environment thereby causing less accessibility to programmes, are:

- The southern and extreme northern parts of Helmand Province, most of Kandahar Province, a portion of northern Nimroz Province and most of Zabul and Uruzgan Provinces.
- The rest of Paktika Province not previously colored pink.
- The “Tora Bora” area of southern Nangahar Province.
- The extreme northern area of Nuristan Province.

Medium Risk/Unstable Environments added include parts of Farah, Badghis and Faryab Provinces.

Areas previously assessed as Medium Risk/Unstable Environments which reverted back to being Low Risk/Permissive Environments (i.e. improved) include parts of Maydan Wardak, Badakshan (northern tip), Takhar and Baghlan Provinces. These improved areas are insignificant when seen against the large areas which deteriorated. It is also possible that some of these “improved” areas may soon revert back to previous assessments.

Developments by Zone

UNDSS described developments by region or zone in Afghanistan during 2007 as follows:

- *Eastern Zone. Nuristan, Kunar, Nangahar and Laghman Provinces; plus a small part of the central region.* The Eastern Zone... shows higher incident numbers than the individual UN Regions of the Southern Zone (SR and SER) but these are primarily asymmetric acts while open clashes in the field are more characteristic of the Southern Zone. The full spectrum of insurgent and terrorist tactics such as armed clashes, standoff engagements, ambushes, intimidation, IEDs and suicide attacks are found in all zones but to varying degrees.

...The Eastern Zone is predominantly the territory of Hizb-i Islami with two primary

factions: The Hizb-I Islami faction of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar (HIG) very visible in Nuristan and Kunar and the Hizb-i Islami faction of Yunus Khalis (HIYK) in Nangahar. Recently an offshoot of HIYK, the 'Tora Bora Front', has been established in southern Nangahar by a son of Yunus Khalis.

- *Southern Zone. Most of Uruzgan, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Nimroz Provinces; and Paktya, Khost, Paktika and Ghazni Provinces; plus a small part of the central highlands region and western region.* While Uruzgan, Zabul, Kandahar, Helmand and Nimroz Province are predominantly main stream Taliban; Paktya, Khost, Paktika and Ghazni Provinces are a mixture of main stream Taliban and the Haqqani Tribal Organization (HTO) of Jalaluddin Haqqani and his sons.

...The term "Dynamic Occupation" (Southern Zone) was coined by an external source earlier in 2007 to explain the temporary seizure of District Centers by the Taliban. It became commonplace during the year to have a District Center overrun by insurgents and then a day or two later have it retaken by international military or government forces. This see-saw effect became know as "Dynamic Occupation". The taking of District Centers is particularly prevalent in the SR and SER and negatively affects...access those areas. The District of Musa Qala in Helmand Province, occupied since 26 January 2007 is still denied to the government by the Taliban and is one of the examples where "Dynamic Occupation" became semi-permanent.

- *Central Zone. Most of Panjsher, Kapisa, Kabul, Logar, Maydan Wardak and Parwan Province, plus a small part of the North East Region.* The Central Zone is the target of all the groups involved while the Northern Zone appears to be periodically targeted by main stream Taliban.
- *Northern Zone. The rest of the country including half of Nimroz Province in most of Groh, Farah, Hirat and Badghis Provinces all of Balkh, Samangan, Sari Pul, Faryab and Jawzjan Provinces most of Badakshan, Takhar, Baghlan and Kunduz Provinces and most of Bamyán and Dai Kundi Provinces.* The Northern Zone, in all three of its constituent UN Regions (NER, NR and WR), is also plagued by a variety of political factions and their associate "warlords" and other illegal armed groups (IAGs)...pockets of activity do flare up periodically in the Northern Zone and acts of terror occur increasingly in the Central Zone. An example in the west of the Northern Zone is recent insurgent activity in Badghis Province, and in the Central Zone incursions into Logar and Maydan Wardak are becoming increasingly more frequent.

The Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) Report on Implementation of the Afghan Compact

The final report that helps illustrate the kind of reporting and metrics that are needed is the reporting by the Joint Coordinating and Monitoring Board (JCMB) Report on Implementation of the Afghan Compact. Its reporting has some major drawbacks that are not present in the previous GAO and UN reports. Most reporting comes from working groups and progress is measured in terms of implementation of the Afghan compact rather than in terms of winning a conflict.

Like a great deal of aid reporting, activity is often treated as a measure of effectiveness, rather than impact on local perceptions or meeting requirements. The goals are the goals of the compact, rather than related to the fact that Afghanistan and Pakistan are at war, and most of the rhetoric is determinedly positive and general, rather than objectively critical and specific.

The October 2007 report does, however, contain some important insights about aid, economic development, and progress in the Afghan forces. Delays and bottlenecks in electricity are identified; the fact that a start had still not been made of some 40% of the planned road projects was identified. Border security and labor migration issues are addressed. So are a number of important problems in governance, elections, rule of law, corruption, Afghan force development, disarming militias, and narcotics. It is sometimes possible to find useful war-related metrics.

For example, the October 2007 report notes that,

- ... (the 2008 timeline for disbandment of illegal armed groups cannot be met, and that) it is recommended to extend the timeline of March 2011 thus bringing it into line with the timeline for achieving Compact benchmarks for the development of Afghanistan National Army (ANA), Afghanistan National Police (ANP) and other Security Sector Reform (SSR) initiatives. It also notes that only 183 of some 1,767 armed illegal groups have pledged that they have disbanded their groups and have no more weapons. On the positive side, a total of almost 30,000 light weapons (28,913) have been collected as well as over 4,000 (4,114) heavy weapons. The total amount of ammunition collected is 9,444 metric tons of which 15,846 have been destroyed and 32,302 tons have been surveyed.^{xvi}
- The destruction of the known stockpiles of anti-personnel mines is carried out by the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) in collaboration with the UN Mine Action Centre (UNMACA) throughout the country. As of 16 September 2007, a total of 496,717 anti-personnel and 16,177 anti-tank mines have been destroyed. The process of APM stockpile destruction is on-going; the last remaining area suspected of containing stockpiles is expected to be cleared by end-2007.^{xvii}
- The initial Afghanistan National Police (ANP) census was conducted by Task Force Phoenix between 23 and 31 August 2007. The headcount was conducted in 30 of the 34 provinces (Badakhshan, Day Kindi, Nirstan Bamyan and Nimroz provinces were not surveyed due to access problems). The results reveal 32,099 police men were physically counted making up some 80% of the payroll, however of these only 48% had IDs. Of the total of Afghan Border Police, some 4139 were counted making up 86.8% of the payroll of which 33.2 % had IDs. (The manpower ceiling for the ANP was increased from 62,000 to 82,000 in 2007.)^{xviii}

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) has also developed the Afghan National Auxiliary Policy (ANAP) exit strategy, which aims to absorb ANAP in to ANP after one of year service. Work is continuing on the creation of rules and procedures for the absorption of the ANAP back into ANP. It has been determined that the service period for the auxiliary police will now be extended on the basis of requests made by police chiefs at both the district and provincial levels. A mechanism has been found to ensure tribal balance and MOI are collecting data on the race and ethnicity of each ANAP recruit. To continue within the service, beyond the one year extension as an ANAP recruit, the required performance is a minimum of 90 percent attendance report and completion of five weeks training, a good performance and clean criminal record. It is expected that some 84 percent of ANAP in 17 provinces should have completed this training by December 2007. However, it is noted that 98% of ANAP do not meet the educational standards of ANP. It has therefore been recommended by MoI that the educational standards be ignored.

- Recruitment of the Counter Narcotics Police (CNP) has also continued and of 1,400 has now been recruited. Recruitment will be finalized by the end of 2008 and a deployment plan has been finalized by MoI.
- An Afghanistan National Army (ANA) Task Force was established in September 2007 to examine the financial sustainability, quality and quantity of the ANA. It was suggested that the Task Force be composed of two levels: (1) the policy level, comprising of the Deputy Minister and the Director of Finance from the Ministry of Defense (MoD), as well as Deputy Minister and the

Director of Budget from the Ministry of Finance (MoF). (2) At the technical working level, the Task Force would be constituted by representatives from the Directorate of Finance and of Human Resources from MoD as well as representatives from MoF, the JCMB Secretariat, UNAMA, US-Embassy, CSTC-A and NATO.

The Task Force has been requested to report to JCMB VII, which is expected to be held in February 2008. At this time, it is expected that the Task Force will have:

- a) Reviewed the past three year interventions of ANA development;
- b) Examined the present status of ANA, in term of financial resources, quality, and quantity;
- c) Planned for the upcoming five years by assessing the threats, gaps, and requirements in terms of quality, quantity and financial recourses.

The report to JCMB VII will be expected to include as a minimum:

- a) Review of the past three years' strengths, weakness/gaps of the ANA;
- b) Review of the current situation, including a threat analysis (number/quantity, quality of trainings, equipment, installations, weapons, ammunition, transportation, human resources, pay systems, etc., including for the air force).
- c) Review of the option to increase the ANA ceiling;
- d) Provide a review of fiscal constraints and making recommendations to JCMB VII.

At the same time, the JCMB report never mentions that Afghanistan is a nation at war, the needs warfighters have for civilian assistance and aid, and the need to prioritize action to deal with security problems. It is equally decoupled from any discussion of border security issues, ethnic and sectarian problems, Pakistan, and Iran. It could just as easily have been written about a nation entirely at peace, with no sense of urgency, and where trends in stability and security do not matter.

Trends in IEDs

Other reporting showed that the number of IED attacks in Afghanistan was increasing. The frequency of IED attacks rose from 22 in 2002 to 83 in 2003, 325 in 2004, and 782 in 2005 to 1,730 in 2007. The number was 1,069 through July 2007. (IEDs accounted for 848 (53%) out of 1,607 US wounded in action between October 7, 2001 and September 22, 2007, and 103 (41% out of 251 US killed in action.)^{xix}

Key Issues

Even the most negative aspects of the previous reporting do not indicate that the Afghan government, ISAF, or the US are losing the war. Taliban and other Islamist insurgent gains are fragile at best, and are largely limited to Pashtun areas outside the direct influence of NATO/ISAF and Afghan forces. There are few signs that Al Qa'ida has wide ideological popularity. Sectarian and ethnic differences, local power struggles, and drugs often do more to contribute to local security and stability problems than loyalty to the Taliban or belief in its ideological goals.

The US, Canada, and several other NATO nations are implementing a new strategy that focuses on control of the Afghan population at the village level, protecting the population from insurgents, and severing the Taliban's access to local resources. Elements of this new clear, hold, and build strategy are evident in the Army's new counterinsurgency manual. This strategy calls for U.S. Special Forces to build indigenous forces in towns

and villages and couple them with the ANA to deny insurgent access to the population^{xx}. It is unclear, however, how these concepts are currently being implemented on the ground.

Several events have also taken place since the UNDSS report that may positively impact Afghanistan's security.

- A massive increase in US economic aid and aid to Afghan forces that was budgeted for 2007 has begun to flow out into the field. "Win and hold" tactics have shown real presence in Khandahar and some areas under US influence, and the Afghan Army has shown improved ability to fight when it has ISAF support.
- In early October Britain agreed to send its 3,000 soldier parachute regiment to Afghanistan, increasing its troop level to over 7,700 with 800 Special Forces personnel. The RAF pledged to add Merlin helicopters and Tornado and Typhoon ground attack planes to its existing arsenal in theater.^{xxi}
- President Karzai and Taliban leaders have recently exchanged proposals for peace talks with the encouragement of the UN and the British government. The Taliban's demands for the removal of foreign troops make a quick peace deal unlikely but the increased level of contact between Taliban insurgents and President Karzai have led some to believe that a compromise can be reached between the government and moderate elements of the insurgency.^{xxii}
- The Taliban's use of foreign tactics such as suicide attacks have increasingly alienated the population and even some members of the insurgency. 80% of the victims have been civilians according to the UNAMA report in September. This leaves the possibility that the coalition can drive a wedge between the extremist wing of the insurgency and the more moderate elements.

The observations in the GAO, Secretary General, and UNDSS reports are, however, all too familiar from Iraq and Vietnam, and deserve careful attention:

- "...Without stronger leadership from the government, greater donor coherence – including improved coordination between the military and civilian international engagement in Afghanistan – and a strong commitment from neighboring countries, many of its security, institution-building, and development gains may yet stall over even be reversed."
- "...The most urgent priority must be an effective, integrated civilian-military strategy and security plan for Afghanistan."
- "...A key... is increasing the capability, autonomy, and integrity of the Afghan security forces...especially the Afghan police...a unified vision for police reform and definitive structure for the national police that addresses the requirements of both law enforcement and counterinsurgency...tighten financial and administrative accountability to end corruption and absenteeism in police ranks."
- "An effective integrated and coherent government-led subnational governance program...the government must be prepared to take painful decisions...replace them with effective administrators who both enjoy the confidence of the population, including tribal and religious leaders, and display a capacity to manage security, development, and reconstruction processes in their provinces and districts."

The Uncertain Course of the Fighting in Pakistan in 2007

Even less detail is available on the course of the fighting in Pakistan. It does seem clear, however, that the Pakistani Army has lost ground in dealing with Al Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, and Pakistani tribal and Pashtun forces since the beginning of 2007. Moreover, there are few indications that various efforts to improve security along the 2,430-kilometer border between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and Afghan-Pakistani security cooperation, have had a major impact on the ability of the Taliban and the other two Afghan Islamist extremist movements to move across the border and operate in Afghanistan.

The peace agreements signed in the tribal agency areas in February 2005 and September 2006 did not bring peace, and collapsed after the Red Mosque incident in July. The Pakistani Taliban are actively involved in anti-Pakistani government and army operations in substantial parts of Waziristan, and Pakistani government claims that the Army deployed 100,000 troops and 1,000 border posts along the Afghan-Pakistani border seem to have had no practical impact on transborder movements and operations.

A separate UN report released in September stated that over 80% of suicide bombers were recruited or trained in North or South Waziristan. Many of them were young Afghan males indoctrinated by the Pakistani madrassa network.^{xxiii}

Pakistani government sources claim about a 3:1 advantage in killed in army battles with Taliban and other hostiles, but this is still a high level of casualties, and Pakistani forces have limited counterinsurgency training and capability – which may explain why the Taliban could take 250 prisoners in an ambush. Suicide attackers have also been able to penetrate into sensitive army posts and attacked a bus killing 22 workers from Pakistani Interservices Intelligence (ISI) in September.^{xxiv}

The Pakistani government did step up operations in North Waziristan before the Musharraf coup in early November and began to make more use of combat jets and heavy artillery. Insurgent attacks aimed at Pakistani military forces led to the recent crackdown that killed as many as 250 militants in Northwest Pakistan between October 6-10, 2007. On the other hand, it admitted to losing at least 250 soldiers in the fighting during August-October, and it was not able to extend stable government control over any contested town or area in the Tribal Agencies.^{xxv} Moreover, it faced new Islamist resistance in Swat.

At this point, it is not clear what will happen in the future. The Musharraf coup has raised serious questions as to how the Pakistani government will deal with the Tribal Agencies and the Afghan-Pakistan War in the future.

The Uncertain Course of the Fighting Against Al Qaeda in 2007

It is unclear that the combination of Afghan government, Pakistani government, US, and ISAF operations have had any major impact on the ability of Al Qaeda to influence and support Islamist extremist operations in either Afghanistan or Pakistan. In broad terms, Al Qaeda seems to have significantly improved its influence and base in Western Pakistan during the course of 2007, and has been able to profit from Pakistani military weakness, Pakistani political instability, and the strengthening of Taliban influence in “Waziristan” and other areas along the Afghan-Pakistan border.

More broadly, Al Qaeda has suffered significant reversals in Iraq, and public opinion polls in the Arab and Islamic world show that it has not gained a significant popular following. It continues to lose leadership cadres outside Pakistan. What is less clear is that this matters. The net impact is often to create martyrs while enough experienced cadres exist to train new cadres and maintain a steadily improving body of experience and expertise.

Winning Armed Nation Building versus Counterinsurgency

There is no way to calculate how long it will take the Afghan government and Afghan forces to be effective, or how long it will take NATO/ISAF and the US to “win” in Afghanistan. Pakistan remains a major wild card in predicting the outcome, and one where the recent Musharraf coup has made the Afghan-Pakistani war even more unpredictable. The sheer survival of Al Qaeda’s top leadership is a problem in itself, and there are few indications that the attrition of some of Al Qaeda’s leadership has so far had any serious effect.

Even if one focuses solely on Afghanistan, progress is far from clear and victory is anything but certain. Many of the security, governance, and aid efforts during 2002-2006 were poorly organized and coordinated, lacked focus on key security and stability problems, and were badly underresourced in money and manpower. Some improvements have taken place in these areas since 2006. NATO/ISAF has increased in strength and fighting capability, the Afghan National Army is making gradual progress, and the US has made a major increase in its economic and security aid budget for 2007.

At the same time, improvements in virtually every aspect of Afghan governance have been grindingly slow. The rate of real-world improvement in the Afghan National Army falls far short of claims that it can somehow assume most of the combat burden by 2009, and progress in the Afghan National Police, the Afghan Auxiliary Police, and every aspect of the rule of law falls far short of the pace needed to bring security and stability to troubled areas. The counternarcotics effort has failed to reduce supply, given the Taliban new influence and access to resources, and done more to alienate than aid the Afghan people. New increases in aid money have yet to have a major impact in the field, and serious questions exist about the ability to use aid effectively in high risk and conflict areas.

The most serious question affecting the ability to “win” in Afghanistan is also what will happen in the future. It is whether the US, NATO/ISAF, and Afghan government can carry out a prolonged campaign that is likely to extend long beyond 2009 -- probably by at least half a decade. The Afghan-Pakistan War is an ideological, political, economic, and military war of attrition where the Taliban may be able to either “win” or at least “defeat” the US and NATO/ISAF simply by surviving and outlasting the willingness of outside powers to sustain the conflict. In a war between time and technology, time is likely to be decisive, and the key issue may not be past and current mistakes, but the patience of Western powers.

The quality of Afghan leadership and governance at the national, provincial, and local level is equally uncertain. No outside effort can hope to win unless the Afghans acquire the capability to take the lead over time. If they do not, the Taliban will be able to capitalize on the failures of the central government and foreign aid process, and

NATO/ISAF's limited strength and lack of unity on the battlefield, and ability of anti-central government forces to dominate political and economic space in the countryside.

At present, far too much of the Afghan central government not only is ineffective (and often simply not present), it is corrupt and making little progress in providing services and effective governance.

Afghanistan remains a drug economy, with little other income in rural areas, and where eradication destroys small farmers and does virtually nothing to affect serious dealers and distribution. While the Taliban is not popular in many areas, and is not winning tactically, it is expanding its presence and areas of influence. Suicide attacks in Kabul and more recently in Baghlan, have led analysts and military commanders that have warned the insurgent threat is spreading north.^{xxvi} Security also seems to be deteriorating in Western Afghanistan with the Taliban temporarily seizing three districts (Khaki Safed, Bakwa, and Gulistan) in Farah province in early November.^{xxvii} At the same time, Pakistan increasingly threatens to become a second front. Internal instability is growing and it can (or will) do far too little to secure its tribal and border areas with Afghanistan.

The US, NATO, and the Afghan government still have solid opportunities for victory, but only if they treat the campaign in Afghanistan as a major exercise in armed nation building rather than as a counterinsurgency campaign. Lasting success requires the US and its allies to succeed in every key dimension of armed nation building, not simply in fighting open battles and clashes with the Taliban and other violent Islamists.

Victory requires the US and other Western states to sustain the funding of the recent major increases in aid to the Afghan forces, Afghan economy, and Afghan governance that the Bush Administration requested in the FY2007 supplemental and FY2008 budget request. It requires a more unified NATO and the full participation of "stand aside" forces like those of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain. It also requires a broader and much better coordinated effort in nation building and winning hearts and minds, particularly in the Pashtun areas in the East and South.

The Need for Better Metrics and for Measures of Effectiveness

Providing better measures of progress, and more realistic and transparent indications of the extent to which the US and NATO are really winning, is only one aspect of ensuring victory in the Afghan-Pakistan conflict. Again looking only at the Afghan aspect of the conflict, the key needs are better programs, effective long-term plans and suitable resources, more unity among the NATO allies, and realistic programs to build up Afghan governance and security capabilities.

At the same time, it is all too clear that Afghanistan presents the same broad problems in finding the right kind of metrics to establish progress and priorities that exists in Iraq, and that governments and NATO/ISAF rely far too much on hope and spin, rather than competence and transparency, in their efforts to obtain sustained public and legislative support.

Far too many current measures of progress have little or no value, report meaningless nation-wide data, quantify the unimportant, or are more designed to "spin" immediate success than win real victory over time. The true complexities, uncertainties, and risks involved in dealing with a host of ethnic, sectarian, tribal, and regional problems are

downplayed or ignored. The threat is assumed to be unpopular, and the US, NATO, and Afghan government are assumed to have large-scale support.

In short, Afghanistan raises the same broad issues regarding what metrics to use in judging progress in Afghanistan that exists in Iraq. Like Iraq, the answers are complex and involve analysis and judgment down to the local level rather than bean counts at the national level.

This need for better metrics and measures of effectiveness has been addressed in depth by a number of experts, including work by members of the Post Conflict Reconstruction Project at the CSIS and USIP.^{xxviii} Many of these studies focus on the aid and construction aspects of nation building, and highlight the need to shift from “input” measures -- projects begun or completed, money spent, people employed, etc. -- to measures of actual effectiveness -- performance relative to requirement, local perceptions and satisfaction, self-sustained growth and performance, etc.

The quality of governance and economic development remain key measures of success, but measuring performance in war fighting can involve different metrics, and ones that can potentially provide a far more accurate picture of what is happening in the fighting in Afghanistan and Pakistan:

The Nature and Intensity of the Fighting

Basic measures of combat activity can have great value if they are properly grouped, defined, shown as trend analyses rather than as “snapshots,” and provided in sufficient geographic detail. The history of such reporting from Vietnam to Iraq has shown, however, that much depends on the quality of data collection, the transparency of the definitions used, and the integrity with which international organizations and governments report.

As is the case with all of the following measures, it is more valuable to have detailed data on what is happening in combat areas than national totals, and to provide partial coverage rather than demand that all data be provided for all areas and regions covered:

- *Numbers of attacks by type and area:* While national totals have some value, these data need to be broken out by type of attack, by attacker, type of target, and at the provincial and local level to provide real detail. Breakouts that show activity by major combat area are far more useful than national averages. As is the case with all such data, numerical trends need to be put in the context of average and medians over time. Graphs need to be supported by numbers. Definitions of what are and are not included need to be explicit.
- *Friendly casualties:* Such data should include subtotals for killed and wounded, show figures for the different military forces and categories of civilians involved. They are most meaningful when provided in the same detail as described above. Breakouts of the key causes of casualties and suitable trend lines are often the key to measuring success in dealing with the most effective measures of enemy attacks.
- *Enemy casualties:* Such data should again include subtotals for killed and wounded, show figures for the different military forces involved, and show the attacker and method of attack to indicate what role given forces are playing and their level of effectiveness. Such data are most meaningful when provided in the same detail as described above. Breakouts that distinguish key cadres and casualties by enemy group or threat provide a much clearer picture of the dynamics of the fighting than total casualties.

- *Economic and government facility attacks and sabotage:* Trend analysis of attacks on key facilities and economic centers or targets provide a further perspective, and can be particularly revealing of problems in aid, economic development, and governance. Such data are most meaningful when provided in the same regional and type detail as described above. They also need to be related to their impact over time on services and economic activity.
- *Conflict/attack chronologies:* Chronologies of tactical encounters or clashes, whether they are friendly or enemy initiated, the nature of the attack or major weapons used, and their outcomes provides a summary pattern analysis that goes beyond “bean counts” and provides a picture of who is winning and who is losing.
- *Displacements and ethnic and sectarian cleansing; soft or lower level attacks and levels of violence.* Low-level insurgency, terrorism, and wars of intimidation depend heavily on provoking civil conflict by displacing or intimidating populations and creating an overall climate of violence. Providing accurate data can be extremely difficult, but limited public opinion polling of how local populations see such levels of violence can partially substitute.
- *Supporting chronologies:* It is useful to accompany such trend analyses with chronologies of key attack patterns by attacker, method of attack, or target. For example, chronologies of attacks designed to provoke sectarian and ethnic strife showing the suspected attacker and the political identity of the target, the casualties, and the reason a target had special sensitivity.

Tailoring such counts, trendlines, and chronologies to the specific conditions in given parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan address the key issue of producing counts that are relevant to local political, military, and economic conditions. Relevance is far more important than consistency on a national or historical basis.

It should be noted that counts of major acts of overt violence and numbers killed are always uncertain measures of insurgent activity and success. The Taliban, for example, should have learned in 2006 that it couldn't succeed by attacking NATO/ISAF forces in a head-on fight. This may explain why it has focused on occupying and dominating rural areas and populations, and the use of destabilizing bombings, suicide attacks, atrocities, and ambushes can create a broad climate of violence – and the image of success – and it has reduced its losses in open battle.

Like other insurgents who fail in efforts to take on conventional forces, the Taliban may find it has more to gain from seeking to quietly expand its control over the Afghan population and over areas where NATO and Afghan government forces can “win” but not “hold” or “build.” It has every reason to avoid tactical clashes it might lose – a point that has permeated insurgent literature since Mao, if not Sun Tzu. As was the case in Vietnam, it also will effectively have won if it can operate in a given area at night, successfully intimidate the population, and provide “governance” at the village level.

“Mapping” Control of the Population and Area

Most insurgencies and asymmetric struggles are wars for control of economic and political spaces, and populations. The insurgent or terrorist can win without defeating a conventional army if he can control enough of the area and population and deny it to the government or opponent. Control is also relative.

As Vietnam and Somalia showed, being able to move an armed force through an area is not control. The key test tends to be who can stay in a given town or area, and especially can they do it without troops and at night. No one should forget the famous exchange between the late Colonel Harry Sommers and a Vietnamese officer after the war in

Vietnam. Summers argued that the US had won every major tactical clash. The Vietnamese officer replied, "Yes, but it was irrelevant."

In 2005 and 2006, the Taliban and the other less important Islamist movements won in both Afghanistan and Pakistan in terms of expanded control of population and territory even though they lost virtually every tactical encounter with US/NATO/ISAF forces. In 2007, it is still too early to tell in Afghanistan, at least from unclassified reporting, although the UN reports mentioned earlier indicate that the Taliban has increased its overall level of control and influence. There is much less doubt in the case of Pakistan – the Taliban is expanding by its area and level of control in Western Pakistan.

The battle for control of the population and space makes a different kind of metric more important. Are the Taliban and other hostile elements winning or losing control of towns, tribal areas, and given parts of the country? Who actually governs and provides security in given areas, and who can pass the Creighton Abrams test developed in Vietnam? (The side that controls an area at night is the real winner.)

Mapping control, security, ANA and ANP presence, government and court presence, aid and NGO presence, and Taliban/threat activity down to the local and village level provides a key picture of what is happening – particularly when monthly and annual maps are compared and there is some simple metric of the intensity of activity. (The red, yellow, green "stop light" coding may seem simplistic, but usually does a surprisingly good job.)

Wars are won where people fight, and reporting by area of combat rather than nationally, and making judgments about the relative level of Taliban or other hostile control versus friendly local control can also be far more relevant than numbers of attacks or casualties *when the maps are accurate*.

As with all other metrics, everything does depend on objectivity and integrity. The intelligence analyst who provides results to please, the military officer that falls in love with the mission, the public affairs officer who only reports good news, and the official who tells his or her political master what they want to hear are all potential problems and unofficial members of the "threat." Oscar Wilde once said that it was cynics that "knew the price of everything and the value of nothing." The history of counterinsurgency and armed nation building, however, indicates that it is governments that "know how to report success but do not know the value of truth." No one can exaggerate, omit, or lie their way to victory in this kind of "long war."

Governance and Services

Another key metric that is critical in armed nation building is to analyze and map whom actually governs where and what services they provide. In broad terms, in a conflict like this, every area where the government does not actually govern or provide key services at best is vulnerable and often should be counted as lost. This is particularly true in Afghanistan, where central government has always tended to be distant, ineffective and corrupt. Even if the Taliban or some hostile element is not actively in charge, those who live in such areas have no reason to be loyal and good reason to see themselves as excluded.

It is equally critical to be able to trace whether there is an effective hierarchy of governance from the national to the regional to local government. Far too often, the focus is on national government and particularly on high-level political and legislative activity. It is regional and local governments, however, that provide key services in threatened areas, whose quality of governance determines loyalty, and whose actions underpin security. In general, the day-to-day presence and quality of governance at the local level is a vastly more important indicator of true legitimacy, than how a government is chosen and whether it is “democratic.”

The same is true of governance at the regional and national level. Even popular elections do little to create popular governments. Election metrics are often a far better warning of sectarian and ethnic divisions than a sign of national unity. What does count is how effective given ministries, services, and functions of the national government are in both the capital and in reaching out to provincial governments in the field.

The other side of this coin is to map the areas where there is no government and/or ANP presence, where either or both are corrupt or ineffective. It is also to map or develop chain of command and hierarchy charts to show where the government and/or ANP are tied to warlords, narco-traffickers, the Taliban or other hostile elements, and particular tribes, sects, and ethnic groups.

Similar reporting in previous wars (and today in Iraq) has shown that this kind of reporting provides key warnings about the inability of the national government to function, critical failures and corruption in given areas of government activity, and real-world priorities for aid and political pressure to improve governance.

Aid Coverage, Aid activity, and Actual Development

Economic development and security are as important as governance and military security, and dollars are as important a weapon as bullets. This raises a critical failing in most of the economic and aid reporting on both Afghanistan and Iraq: The almost total lack of meaningful unclassified metrics and reporting on the effectiveness and warfighting impact of aid activity by the US, allied countries, and Afghan government.

Most economic aid reporting focuses on money and projects. Spending has never been a meaningful metric. Neither has reporting on projects started or completed -- particularly if the definition of completion is a building or some other aspect of construction rather than on a sustained level or activity and a comparison of the resulting level of services provided by region relative to need.

The allocation of aid by activity and area is equally critical, and showing who gets what kind of aid where -- particularly in combat and high-risk areas -- is another important measure of success. Completing showpiece and demonstration projects and aid efforts do not win hearts and minds. In fact, they can lose them by telling those who are excluded that they lost and someone else won. This is particularly true in a country like Afghanistan that is 85% rural, tribal, and deeply divided both geographically and ethnically. It is compounded in many areas by drought, wartime damage, civil disruption, and narcotics. People in true need inevitably see a lack of aid and government presence and services (often accompanied by local corruption) as effectively hostile.

The key metrics are also the economic status of ordinary people – particularly men of fighting age -- at the local level. Macroeconomic data on GDP, per capita income, inflation, unemployment, etc. have little meaning in understanding the pressures that must be dealt with in troubled or combat areas. Traditional economic development reporting that talks about GDP. Economic growth, and national investment has uncertain value at the best of times, and is little more than statistical rubbish in cases of armed nation building. (Virtually all major Western interventions come at a time when national economies are a near nadir and then flood in military spending and aid money.)

Even if “ppp” estimates of GDP growth and national per capita income could be relied on, the resulting progress generally is superficial to non-existent in warfighting terms. Figures that ignore national, regional, and local income distribution and equity disguise the forces that encourage insurgency and national divisions. The same is true of numbers that ignore the profiteering impact of wartime spending or the fact that GDP and per capita incomes often rise in nation building efforts simply because a failed state is now getting funds.

What counts is credible analysis of the economic conditions and services available to real people at a level of reporting where it is clear what the key priorities are for action, and what problems can drive civil violence, anger against the government, and support for insurgents.

One key test of both wartime aid and development is whether such activity is actually funded at the level needed to achieve quick and then sustained results, activity is actually in progress, and there are suitable accounting measures and barriers to corruption. It is also whether a combination of aid and ongoing economic activity are actually succeeding in meeting key needs in ways that help a given area and/or have a direct impact on warfighting and the security situation.

Far too often, this metric quickly reveals no activity or plans that may take months or years to begin. In many others, it is quickly apparent that the level of aid is too small to have a major impact, is not focused on meeting immediate short term needs, or is being planned and executed without any serious analysis of local perceptions and needs.

Metrics that show whether relevant aid activity is actually underway in the field, and can actually be sustained, are equally revealing. Allocating money and contractor reports and promises have never been measures of action. Anecdotal report after report has shown this to be the case in Afghanistan, and the work of the Special Inspector General for Iraqi Reconstruction (SIGIR) has shown just how vital it is to have a systematic outside audit of wartime aid activity.^{xxix}

Another key test of aid activity is the location, strength, skill levels, and activity pattern of the aid team, and summary reporting on freedom of movement. This, in turn, should be related to an assessment of whether the aid team is large enough to cover its area of responsibility and can go into hostile or high risk areas. One of the key problems with the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) effort is that capability, adequate resources, and freedom of movement have often been assumed when they did not in fact exist. It has also become increasingly clear in both Afghanistan and Iraq that the aid teams in combat or high-risk areas must be embedded with the military, and receive direct security and transport support. At least until recently, the real world performance of most PRTs

is far too few people and resources to really cover the area of responsibility (AOR), decoupling from adequate military support and from warfighting needs, limited skill levels, and a lack of any coordinated strategy and analysis of effectiveness.

While it should be obvious, a subtest is whether aid teams can operate either with suitable military protection, or without a military escort, and the level of security required; a key variation on the Creighton Abrams test. Even the simplest mapping efforts often show that aid money goes where it is safe to spend it, or is tied to efforts that only have mid to long-term benefits for a nation that somehow becomes stable and well governed.

Armed nation building succeeds by recognizing that threatened peoples, and areas in contention, have immediate needs. In wartime, even more than peace, “people do not live in the dawn of tomorrow, they live in the noon of today.” Most Afghans need simple aid efforts like water projects and light roads *now!*

The past underfunding of aid efforts, and confusion between showpieces and progress, has hurt almost as much as the lack of governance. This is a problem that the US FY2007 Supplemental and FY2008 budget requests tried to address, but which remains critically underfunded. As for other NATO countries, there is far too much emphasis on a few “feel good” efforts, and limited PRT efforts, with little broad coverage of the population.

Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, and Afghan National Auxiliary Police Development and Presence

There are several different elements involved in measuring the effectiveness of local security forces. As is the case in Iraq, the least important metric is how many people in each service have been trained and equipped. Training and equipment buys are a vital means to an end, but success consists of having actual forces active in the field. In general, whenever the US government or Coalition authorities issue estimates of the number of people who *should* be there, this is a confession of a major failure in managing and auditing what is actually taking place. Even at the broadest and most general levels of reporting, the real test is how many men in each service are actually present.

All these kinds of reporting have little value, however, without reliable reporting on whether individual unit elements and posts are properly paid, equipped, and facilitated, and is there a convincing reporting system to prove this. Only hard, reliable reporting of actual strength and capability is reliable enough to be relevant.

Moreover, case after case has shown that effective training requires the national force to be able to take over most of the training effort and tailor it to specific national needs, particularly in the case of police and security forces. Training also *never* develops capable forces unless the trained manpower flows into national military and police forces that already have proven leadership and effectiveness. It prepares officers and other ranks to form units only if they have strong embedded advisors and de facto leaders, inadequate officers and NCOs are purged when they fail, and strong partner units and force enablers are present until newly formed or restructured units are ready to act on their own. This makes the mapping and assessment of embedded advisors and partner units a key measure of effectiveness.

Force strength assessments must be related to combat capability. Orders of battle, which show actual manning levels and equipment, can be of value. The same is true of unit

strength and location maps, particularly ones that show whether facilities are adequate. Yet, ordinary order of battle data say little about unit progress and activity. What counts is what units do, how active they are, and how well they are led in actual operations. It is also whether they and their leaders are loyal to the government or to tribal, sect, ethnicity, or other faction. Far too much order of battle data assumes loyalty, in part because of a tendency to exclude the intelligence community from detailed data on advisory efforts, and from net assessments of friendly and threat forces.

What is really required are convincing and reliable activity reports or unit “diaries.” Quantifying readiness indicators, and summary readiness measurements, are almost always unreliable or hollow. Convincing reports of effective activity, describing what has actually been done, and unit history down to the battalion level actually measures something.

- In the case of military forces, it consists of the portion of the order of the battle actively in the fight and the kind of fighting a given unit actually does.
- In the case of the police force, it consists of regional and local elements that actually do effective police work, and what portion of such forces are tied to effective governance and something approaching a structure court and justice system.

Local Authorities and Militias

That said, the Afghan government is at least 3-5 years away from a mix of governance, military, and police capabilities that can bring security to much of the country. In the interim, is there a *friendly* local authority and security force? Is it really effective? Is it really *friendly*?

Reporting on the activity and success or failure of local or “gray” forces is as important as the analysis of openly hostile “red forces” or official “blue” forces. Once again, what such forces actually do is also far more important than creating formal orders of battle or estimates of strength.

Local Perceptions

Polls are only one metric, but past polls of Iraq by organizations like D3 have shown that they can be a critical one. If properly conducted, they show local loyalties and concerns. They correct the tendency to assume that enemies like the Taliban do not have strong popular followings in some areas, that NATO military action is not seen as hostile or a threat, and that people support a government that is not active simply because it was elected.

Last year’s poll results showed a distinct drop in support for NATO, little faith in the national government, the feeling aid and services were usually lacking, and a rise in support for the Taliban. This year’s trends are unclear.

It also is critical to break out polling results at the local level and distinguish sectarian and ethnic opinion. National poll results have little meaning in fragmented nations, and ones where much of the fighting, as well as aid activity and governance, are highly regionalized. National results are particularly meaningless when they are cherry picked to produce favorable results or provide a given view of events. As is the case in virtually every aspect of such reporting, providing full coverage of possible opinions and reporting the full results is essential to establishing credibility.

NATO/ISAF effort by NATO/ISAF Country by Region Affected.

No set of metrics is more useless in counterinsurgency and nation building than national totals and national averages. This is particularly true in the case of Afghanistan and Iraq, where regional and local differences are critical, and Coalition partners take different approaches to fighting and aid.

The situation is still worse in Afghanistan, where there are still “stand aside” forces, and civil activity by given counties often has little more than token impact. At this point, the only reporting on NATO activity that really matters has to be by a NATO country, and in a form that shows how much of given peoples and areas in Afghanistan are affected.

There are several additional areas where the US and NATO need to be far more sensitive to the negative impacts of their own actions and can carefully measure such impacts through field reporting, public opinion polls, and other tests that are not linked to those actually planning and implementing such operations. These include:.....?

There is often a tendency to confuse NATO military action with success. This is true when military activity hits targets that the local population sees as valid targets and their enemies. It is not when they do not. In broad terms, mapping air strikes that lead to serious claims of civilian casualties and collateral damage, and mapping broad sweep or search activity without solid supporting intelligence, will also map growing Afghan hostility.

Long time or Unvalidated Detentions

Afghan detentions are largely national, and have not been given the kind of publicity as in Iraq, but human rights reporting to date is scarcely reassuring. There is no iron rule that says a new enemy is bred for every detainee, any more than one is bred for every enemy casualty. In broad terms, however, large-scale detentions and random sweeps almost always breed more enemies that they find. Like military activity, they help map the seriousness of the security problem and are a warning sign.

There is a need to carefully monitor and report on detentions in terms of numbers, conditions, and rates of release.

Drug Eradication

The metrics for drug eradication are among the few that have been consistently quantified and reported. So far, they indicate that the counternarcotics effort does nothing to address the profiteering top of the drug problem and much to aid the Taliban. In broad terms, anywhere that eradication is taking place is likely to be hostile.

Long Term Strategies, Plans, and Budgets

At the same time, the creation of effective Afghan government, Afghan Army and Afghan National Police, and the development of the Afghan economy require meaningful long-term plans, programs, and budgets. The existence and quality of such plans, and their adequacy in terms of resources and probability, is a key metric. So far, it is also a warning of the severe limits to a US and NATO/ISAF effort that have sometimes acted as if the Afghan-Pakistan conflict would actually be over in February 2009.

Victory in Afghanistan –and probably in Pakistan as well – requires long term planning and commitment to providing the forces and aid efforts necessary to win a long war. So far, this has been lacking. In the case of the US, for example, the President’s FY2008 budget submission for Iraqi and Afghan security forces showed a massive leap from \$4.9 billion in FY2006 to \$12.7 billion in Fy2007 and then back to \$4.7 billion in FY2008.

It is hard to take any aspect of a strategy seriously that has a budget for the overall war in Afghanistan and Iraq that assumes that a one year surge can somehow create the Afghan forces needed to win. This lack of meaningful plans, programs and budgets is a critical problem and one that all the nations and international organizations active in Afghanistan need to correct.

Honesty, Complexity, and Transparency as the Price of Victory

There is no quick and easy way to win in armed nation building, although it should again be stressed that Afghanistan is only part of a broader conflict. This is particularly true in seriously “broken” states like Afghanistan, where an insurgency is only part of the problem, where sectarian and ethnic differences are often at least as important, and where the political structure, system of governance, and economy cannot begin to meet popular needs.

The only way to win is to have effective, enduring, and well-resourced efforts that deal with all of these issues, and provide honest measures of success in each critical area. Honesty and complexity are key tools in achieving any meaningful form of victory. Losing is much easier, as Iraq now threatens to demonstrate.

If the US and NATO/ISAF are to win in Afghanistan, which seems eminently possible, they need to establish valid ways of measuring both success and failure. They also need to transform these into detailed long-term plans for action, rather than try to rush success or get it on the cheap. NATO may already be making real progress in Afghanistan at the military level, but it needs more realistic “metrics” than have yet been reported.

Such metrics need to focus on war fighting and war fighting needs. There is no way NATO/ISAF or the Afghan government can succeed in long term goals unless military victory is achieved. It is, however, still important to provide better and more objective pictures of the level of success in nation building. Both the US and its NATO allies have badly under-resourced their efforts in developing governance, economic stability, Afghan force development, and the other key aspects of armed nation building, in the past. Like Iraq, many such activities cannot be rushed and are years away from success. Current failures cannot be blamed on the central government. It is going to take patience, persistence, and resources to fix this situation, as well as honest and meaningful measures of progress.

There also, however, is a need to build public trust and the willingness to sustain a long war and aid effort. This requires far more honesty about the length of the struggle, and the ongoing cost of victory. It creates an equal need for transparency, and for unclassified reporting of what may often be bad news. Spinning events and promising instant victory relies on sheer luck for success. The practical result, however, is to create impossible expectations, under resource the efforts underway, fail to make credible long-term plans, prepare for problems and failures, and build credibility. Trust is built on a foundation of

frankness and honesty, and so is legislative and popular support for sacrifice and sustained efforts. One can endlessly debate the nuances of leadership, but it is almost axiomatic that no one follows where no one leads.

ⁱ The NATO/ISAF web page does provide some useful factoids on troop levels, security developments, aid activity, but largely consists of analysis of activity levels rather than their effects, and is largely a public relations exercise. See <http://www.nato.int/ISAF/index.html>.

ⁱⁱ See "Securing Afghanistan," <http://www.defenselink.mil/home/features/2007/Afghanistan/index.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ The most useful reporting is in the data on the annual and supplemental foreign aid requests. The website for the Afghanistan country page -- <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/> -- is a series of public relations puff pieces. Some additional data is available on the Afghan country page of USAID -- <http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/> -- but it is virtually all aid spending and activity data unrelated to warfighting, measures of effectiveness, or clearly defined measures of effectiveness.

^{iv} Based on a web search of the White House web site -- <http://www.whitehouse.gov/query.html?col=colpics&qt=Afghanistan&submit.x=0&submit.y=0>. Also see the data (or lack of them) in "Rebuilding Afghanistan," <http://www.whitehouse.gov/infocus/afghanistan/index.html>.

^v See the Canadian government web site at <http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/cip-pic/afghanistan/menu-en.asp> and <http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/cip-pic/afghanistan/library/progress-en.asp#edu>. The report can be found at http://www.canada-afghanistan.gc.ca/cip-pic/afghanistan/docs/260207_Report_E.pdf.

^{vi} The JCMB Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) was established to provide overall strategic coordination of the implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. The three specific objectives of the JCMB are to:

- Provide high-level political support for the Afghanistan Compact
- Provide direction to address significant issues of coordination, implementation, financing for the benchmarks and timelines in the Compact, and any other obstacles and bottlenecks identified either by the government or the international community
- Report on the implementation of the Compact to the President, National Assembly, the UN Secretary General, the donors, and the public

The JCMB consists of 7 representatives from the Afghanistan government and 21 representatives of the international community. The 7 representatives of the Afghanistan Government are members of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy Oversight Committee. The 21 representatives of the international community are the Special Representative of the Secretary General (Co-chair), United States, United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, European Union, India, Pakistan, Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Russia, International Security Assistance Force, Coalition Forces, Canada, Netherlands, Italy, France, the World Bank, and Asian Development Bank.

The two co-chairs of the JCMB are:

- Dr. Ishaq Nadiri, Senior Economic Advisor to the President and Chairman of the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) Oversight Committee,
- Tom Koenigs, Special Representative.

Progress reporting is patchy and the metric is usually the terms of the compact rather than war fighting, but there are some useful data that provide measures of effectiveness. For reports, see <http://www.ands.gov.af/ands/jcmb/>.

^{vii} There are some notable exceptions, including work by the USIP, RAND, CSIS, RIAA, IISS, CFR, etc. Some groups also provide a neutral and useful mix of unclassified metrics. For example, see Poul Martin Linnert, "The Afghan Index," Dansk Institut for Militære Studier, October 2007, and Brookings, "The Afghanistan Index," <http://www.aed.usace.army.mil/faqs/Afghanistan%20Index.pdf>; and CFIP

^{viii} Titles in bold added by the author. Government Accountability Office (GAO), "securing, stabilizing, and Reconstructing Afghanistan," Report to Congressional Committees, GAO-07-801SP, May 2007

^{ix} Brooks Tigner, "Senior NATO Officials Say Incompatible C2 Endangers ISAF," *Jane's International Defence Review*, November 1, 2007.

^x Some of the most useful data in legislative reports can be found in the House of Commons, "UK Operations in Afghanistan," Thirteenth Report of Session 2006-2007, House of Commons, July 3, 2007.

^{xi} The author has provided several attempts to integrate status reporting on the war that are available on the CSIS web site. Also see Poul Martin Linnert, "The Afghan Index," Dansk Institut for Militære Studier, October 2007; and "Afghanistan, Fragile States Country Report No. 13," Country Indicators for Foreign Policy, Carleton University, September 2007, cifp@Carleton.ca.

^{xii} Report of the Secretary General of the UN to the General Assembly on the Situation in Afghanistan (A/62/345-S/2007/555, September 21, 2007.

^{xiii} ISAF, *Countrywide R&D Activity*, "Completed/Ongoing R&D by Province," as of 1 September 2007.

^{xiv} Agence France-Presse, "Afghan aid 'wastage' under the spotlight at London conference," January 29, 2006

^{xv} UN Department of Safety and security, Afghanistan, "Half-Year Review of the Security situation in Afghanistan," Topic Assessment, 02/07, August 13, 2007.

^{xvi} JCMB Secretariat , JCMB VI Status Update, Annex One, 3 October 2007.

^{xvii} JCMB Secretariat , JCMB VI Status Update, Annex One, 3 October 2007.

^{xviii} JCMB Secretariat , JCMB VI Status Update, Annex Two, 3 October 2007.

^{xix} Chart, Rick Atkinson, "Left of Boom," *Washington Post*, September 30, 2007, p. A14.

^{xx} Major Matthew D. Coburn, "It Takes a Village to Counter an Insurgency," *Special Warfare*, Vol. 20. Issue 4, July-August 2007.

^{xxi} Richard Norton-Taylor, "Paras to lead spring offensive in Afghanistan," *The Guardian*, October 6, 2007.

^{xxii} Jane's Online, "Talking to the Taliban," *Jane's Terrorism & Security Monitor*, October 11, 2007.

^{xxiii} UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, "Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)," September 1, 2007.

^{xxiv} Griff Witte, "Pakistan Seen Losing Fight Against Taliban and Al Qa'ida," *Washington Post*, October 3, 2007, p. A1.

^{xxv} Imtaz Ali and Griff Witte, "Pakistani Jets Bomb Insurgents," *Washington Post*, October 10, 2007, p. A10.

^{xxvi} Richard Norton-Taylor, "Warning Shots turn into Lethal New Development as Violence Drifts North," *The Guardian*, November 7, 2007.

^{xxvii} Associated Press, "Taliban Bikers Storm Afghan Region," *CNN International*, November 6, 2007.

^{xxviii} See: "In the Balance: Measuring Progress In Afghanistan,"

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^{xxix} See the Quarterly Reports, audits, and investigations available at the SIGIR web site: <http://www.sigir.mil/reports/Default.aspx>.