



WINNING IN AFGHANISTAN: HOW THE US WILL WIN OR LOSE THE WAR

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I. Conditions for Victory: Can the Mission be Accomplished?

No strategy for Afghanistan can be successful unless it answers the most basic question of going to war: can we win? *The answer is yes, provided that victory is defined in realistic and practical terms.* With the proper US leadership, it is still possible to create an Afghanistan that is stable and secure enough to ensure that it cannot again become a center for international terrorism, a threat to Pakistan and other nations in the region, or a center of Jihadist operations throughout the world. This will not be a victory that achieves the level of development, mature democracy, and Western concepts of human rights called for by the Afghan compact. It can, however, be a kind of victory that allows the Afghans to pursue their destiny in relative peace.

The answer is only *yes* under very demanding conditions. Years of chronic under-resourcing have allowed the Taliban and other insurgents to recover and seize the initiative. This has imposed a significant cost upon the efforts to garner peace. Additionally, failures by the Afghan central government, paired with corruption and waste on all sides, magnified such costs. Furthermore, the situation has been compounded by a lack of effective civil-military cooperation. Anything approaching a real-world unity of effort between the US team, NATO/ISAF, UN, and international agencies hasn't proven to be effective..

The Taliban, Al Qa'ida, and other insurgent groups like Hekmatyer and Haqqani have re-emerged as major threats that influence or control approximately a third of the country, with de facto sanctuaries in Pakistan. These gains are more the fault of the US and its allies, as opposed to a reflection of the strength of Jihadist insurgents. In fact, such developments are largely the result of the US failing to provide adequate resources, decisive leadership, or effective implementation of a coherent civil-military strategy.

The US has failed to commit adequate troops, civilian aid workers, and adequate funds. This lack of leadership, paired with a lack of adequate civil-military resources, has been to the detriment of effective Afghan governance and adequate Afghan security forces. Instead, the US has focused on Iraq, while trying to pressure its allies into assuming its responsibilities. The US has treated Pakistan as an ally despite Pakistan's posture being clearly divided. It covertly tolerates and encourages the Afghan Taliban and other insurgents. The end result has been a power vacuum that a skilled and adaptive set of insurgents has exploited to seize the initiative, and wage a war of political attrition that they are now winning.

Nevertheless, the US may well be able to reverse this situation. The Taliban and other insurgents are still weak and unpopular. The strategy of shape, clear, hold, and build that has had substantial successes in Iraq can be adapted to Afghanistan. Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal offer the kind of leadership that has the ability to win. A meaningful form of Afghan NATO/ISAF victory still seems possible—and even probable—if the US changes its strategy, commits the manpower and money needed to win, and works more effectively with the Afghans and its allies.

The US will fail, however, if the Administration and the Congress temporize and delay. Failing to fully implement a new strategy focused on a realistic effort to create true

Afghan partners, while allowing domestic politics to supersede the needed troops and funds, will lead to such a defeat. It is clear that the Obama Administration and the US Congress can decisively waste the last opportunity for victory over the coming months by not giving the US team in Afghanistan the authority, support, and resources needed to win. Accordingly, the question that the US and its allies must now face is whether they are willing to act decisively enough, while committing enough resources, to correct the failures of the last eight years.

The end result is that the US must now cope with war that has *six, not one*, centers of gravity. Winning this war requires effective action in dealing with all of them, and not simply with one or two key problems. Any realistic chance of victory requires the US to take the lead in:

Defeating the Insurgency by Eliminating its Control and Influence Over the Population.

The Taliban and other insurgent groups are waging a battle for control of the population and territory that is primarily a war of political attrition. The strategic outcome of clashes between insurgent and NATO/ISAF forces is not determined by who wins at the tactical level, but by which side controls or influences the population and has the best prospect of outlasting the other.

Many Afghans have reason to oppose and fear the Taliban and other insurgents – although they do have significant popular support in some Pashtun areas. The problem is that Afghans also have no reason to support a corrupt and ineffective Afghan government – particularly one that is not actually present and providing either security or services. They have no reason to support US or NATO/ISAF forces that fight in their areas and homes, but then leave the area open to the Taliban without providing security or any form of aid and governance. The insurgents can also win simply by steadily expanding their influence in areas where the Afghan government is not present and where they do not face active resistance. They do not need to win battles as long as they can establish or regain influence and control.

Any meaningful form of victory requires a fundamental shift in the way the US and NATO/ISAF assess the war. Tactical outcomes will always be important, but the key is control and influence over the population and territory. Intelligence must now focus on assessing this dimension of the war. Both military and civil operations must create conditions that can “*shape*” and “*clear*” key strategic areas, “*hold*” them on a lasting basis, and “*build*” at least minimal government services, justice, rule of law, and economic opportunity in each key area of the country.

In practice, NATO/ISAF and the US must work with the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP), as well as local officials, to secure the population. Together, they must systematically eliminate the remaining insurgent and Jihadist networks, and eliminate their ability to operate as a shadow government. They must work as partners with Afghan forces to eliminate their remaining ability to carry out significant violence over as long a period as is necessary to succeed. These are the shape, secure, and hold phases of the conflict.

At the same time, NATO/ISAF and the US must help the Afghans develop an effective mix of national, regional, and central governance; develop economic hope and security,

establish a functioning rule of law, and move towards development. Counterinsurgency cannot be won without fighting, but it also cannot be won without an integrated civil-military effort that focuses on popular perceptions and needs. As the current election crisis makes clear, much of this effort must be done at the provincial, district, and local level. It will be years before the central government can effectively perform these roles.

Creating an Effective and Well-resourced NATO/ISAF and US Response is Key to Defeating the Insurgency and Securing the Population.

Years of inadequate troop levels have created an environment where post conflict reconstruction, long-term aid unrelated to a growing war, and under-resourcing of aid at the local level have combined to steadily raise the price tag for any future success. As a result, a significant amount of more troops, more civilians, and more money over at least the next two years will be necessary to decisively take back the initiative and win the support of the Afghan people.

Years of sustained resourcing will be required at lower levels of effort to achieve lasting security and stability. For the US, this means fully implementing plans to greatly increase the number of civilians, while increasing the number of US troops and brigade combat teams. It also means adequately funding the war effort for the first time; for example, raising the budget of the US Embassy country team from some \$2.1 billion last year to some \$5 billion next year.

Partner states in the NATO/ISAF forces need to end their national caveats which restrict operations in many areas of Afghanistan. Due to risk-averse strategies by some states in the alliance, paralytic situations have been created where troops do not actively support their Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). As a result, these teams have been far too defensive and static to be effective, because they have been limited to areas of operation in small parts of the regions and provinces.

- *Creating an effective, integrated, and truly operational civil-military effort is important.. NATO/ISAF the US, UN member countries, NGOs, and international community efforts all claim a unity of effort they do not have, are wasteful and sometimes corrupt, and often pursue unrealistic and unachievable goals. They provide unintentional aid to both the insurgency and Afghan corruption and the abuses of power brokers. The time has come for the US and other Western governments to police their own efforts, demand integrated and coordinated efforts, and provide transparent accountability and reporting on measures of effectiveness.*

One of the worst kept secrets of the Afghan war is the fundamental dishonesty of NATO/ISAF governments in disguising their national caveats on the use of their military forces and aid workers. The lack of legitimate goals, accountability, and measures of effectiveness of aid efforts compound Afghanistan's problems. As such, the stark reality is a chronic lack of integrated civil-military effort, bureaucratic stovepipes, efforts decoupled from the priorities of war and Afghan needs, and dependence on corrupt contractors and power brokers.

NATO/ISAF cannot win without self-honesty and effective integration of its civil-military efforts. There is a great need to develop true unity of effort and face the reality that Afghanistan is at war. Until NATO/ISAF and the US can provide the people with security, and the ANSF can sustain it, the military must have civilian partners. They

must provide aid efforts in governance, economics, and rule of law that directly support or complement NATO/ISAF and US efforts to defeat the insurgency, while creating effective and legitimate levels of governance in the field.

At the same time, NATO/ISAF and the US must look longer into the future, and beyond the priorities of war. They must continue to implement longer-term development efforts to help the Afghan government and people move towards lasting security and stability.

Furthermore, NATO/ISAF must confront the weaknesses of the civil and UN aid efforts. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) needs a strong coordinator who recognizes that security is needed first, that the Afghan people need direct aid before medium and long-term development, and who will openly confront the corruption, lack of coordination, lack of valid requirements, and lack of meaningful measures of effectiveness in far too much of the UN, national, and NGO aid efforts. The corruption, incompetence, and irrelevance of the international economic aid effort are scarcely unique to Afghanistan, but this scarcely makes it less of a disgrace.

Creating an Effective Ally and Afghan System of Governance.

This will be as much a challenge as creating effective US and NATO/ISAF forces. No outcome of the current election can be a good one. Regardless of the final outcome, the corruption affecting the first round has discredited both the election and President Karzai. If he again becomes president for five years, he will always be seen as even more corrupt than before. Worse, the election process is only part of the story. Every Afghan knew before the election that President Karzai had already tried to rig it by selling out to warlords and power brokers—trading their ability to deliver bloc votes in return for promises of wealth and power. The worst corruption in the election began long before a single vote was cast.

The legitimacy of elections is also a petty issue compared to the legitimacy that can only be conferred by the ability to govern effectively and in ways that serve the people. If President Karzai remains as incapable of governing and actually serving the most basic needs of the Afghan people, the United States and its allies will have to work around him at the provincial, district and local levels to implement “shape, clear, hold, and build.” They not only will not be able to implement a strategy with the support of the central government, they will have to implement a strategy in spite of the central government.

If the former Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah somehow wins a second round of elections, the question will immediately emerge as to how a man who has never managed any major organization will be able to govern the country, how he can form a government without relying on the same power brokers or having to create new ones, and why Afghanistan’s grossly over-centralized structure of weak and corrupt ministries will be any more effective than under President Karzai. Afghanistan’s political structure is only part of the problem.

The efficacy of counterinsurgency operations is inexorably linked to good governance in Afghanistan. The creation of a system of government that ignores the lack of effective civil services, puts all power and money in the central government’s ministries, does not elect provincial governors and key district officials, and has no real presence at the local level obfuscates any strategy that seeks to both secure the population and

win the support of the Afghan people. Counterinsurgency is won or lost at the local level and by one population center or critical area at time. As such, good governance is key to garnering support from the local Afghan population which in turn is necessary to conduct a successful counterinsurgency campaign.

The fault scarcely lies solely with the Afghan government—many of whose problems are a direct result of the mistakes US advisors who created the governmental system. This is also a war that must be won after years in which member countries, particularly the United States, failed to react to the seriousness of an emerging insurgency. They failed to provide the proper level of resources and coordination, placed serious national caveats and limits on the use of their forces and resources, and let the enemy take the initiative for more than half a decade.

- *Giving the Afghan government the necessary capacity and legitimacy at the national, regional/provincial, district, and local levels will bolster efforts to stabilize the state.* The US, NATO/ISAF, UN, and other outside powers cannot rebuild or restructure all of Afghanistan, force unity upon it from the top, or create an effective central government that can somehow substitute for effective provincial, district, and local government. The present election crisis is at most the symptom, not the disease. If outside powers are not willing to work at the local level to create effective local governance and security, rather than seek impossible near-term improvements in the central government, the war is lost.

The US and its allies must act to develop governance and government services at the local level in key populated areas—often for the first time since the Afghan civil war. Every effort should still be made to improve the quality and integrity of the Afghan central government, but success will be slow and cannot win the war. The US and its allies must also directly enable provincial, district, and local authorities to meet the basic needs of the people by ensuring proper government services with a functioning justice system. As such, the US and its allies should reduce perceived and real corruption, while limiting abuses by senior officials and power brokers to levels the Afghan people can accept. In the end, it will be extremely necessary to create a level of governance that can ensure lasting security and stability.

Efforts can be aided by the cooperation of honest officials in the Afghan central government and by implementing reform legislation that Afghans have already developed to strengthen provincial and district governments. Electing provincial governors as well as councils, and the same for district chiefs and councils, would help such reform. So would ensuring that they had discretionary funds that did not come through the central government and have some ability to raise money on their own.

For at least 2-5 years, however, NATO/ISAF will have to work directly with provincial, district, and local officials to develop their capacity, provide immediate aid for the start of the “build” phase, create jobs and an alternative to dependence on the Taliban and narcotics, while ensuring some form of formal or traditional justice actually functions. As areas become secure, civil aid workers can take over more of the mission, but there will not be enough civilian PRTs or other aid workers to relieve the military of this function for some years—if it ever.

Creating an Effective Mix of Afghan National Security Forces

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

In order to create an effective ANSF, the US must take a far more realistic approach. The Afghan National Army already is a significant force and one of the most respected institutions in a country where few institutions have popular respect. However, the National Army must do more to lead in the “clear” and “hold” functions at the local level as soon as possible. Additionally, they must be seen as taking the lead in planning and executing operations. The fighting on the ground during “shape” and “clear,” and the initial part of the “hold” phase must be given an Afghan face as soon as possible. It must also be given the NATO/ISAF partners and aid to enable it to remain relatively free of corruption as well as ethnic and tribal influence.

The “hold” and “build” phases of operations require an honest and effective mix of police, with enough paramilitary capabilities to keep populated areas secure once they are “clear”. This will also require local forces where tribal conditions allow such forces to be effective. As such, major reform and improvement of the Afghan National Police, freeing it of the level of corruption and influence by power brokers that now cripples many operations, will be critical to success. Accordingly, there must be enough paramilitary capabilities to survive insurgent attacks, supported by the expansion of formal and informal justice systems that provide the full level of security against crime and tribal violence.

Deal With the Challenge of Pakistan and Neighboring States

The US and its allies must act as decisively as possible in dealing with a seventh center of gravity outside Afghanistan and NATO/ISAF’s formal mission. The actions of Pakistan, Iran, and other states will be critical to success in Afghanistan. The US cannot somehow force the integration of the war fighting and aid efforts, regardless of the fact that the “AfPak” theatre involves directly interrelated conflicts, sanctuaries, and cross border efforts. It must treat Afghanistan as a separate war—at least to some extent. At the same time, NATO/ISAF and the US must both work to help Pakistan achieve stability and put constant pressure on Pakistan to limit Taliban, Hekmatyer, Haqqani, and Al Qa’ida efforts in Afghanistan.

II. Provide Adequate Resources or Lose and Leave

Each of these steps requires significant US leadership and action, but providing adequate resources will be a critical condition for success. The war has been badly under-resourced over the last eight years, and NATO/ISAF and the US must now seize the initiative. Any credible chance of victory will require adequate manpower and funding for at least the next four to five years. In practice, most of the new resources will have to come from the US and they will have to include substantial increases in US forces beyond those that President Obama and the Congress have so far committed.

The Need for More US Forces

Even when current reinforcement plans are fully executed, the US will need a major increase in brigade combat teams to provide the level of strength needed to seize the initiative and create the overall level of NATO/ISAF forces needed to win. At the same time, the new strategy of *shape, clear, hold, and build* involve new forms of war fighting which will reduce these force requirements.

Past troop-to-task ratios would require far higher levels of US forces than the US is currently able to deploy, but such ratios ignore the impact of technology, new tactics, a civil-military approach to war, and the role of civilian partners. They also do not take account of the ability to build up major new ANSF reinforcements over the new two years.

The end result is that the Afghan conflict does not require classic troop to task ratios but rather an adaptive and experimental approach to force requirements. However, it is clear that more forces will be needed to support the “shape” and “hold” phases of the fighting. A substantial number of troops will also be needed to train, mentor, and *above all partner* Afghan security forces. Other new troops will be needed for civil-military operations. There simply is no credible prospect that the US can avoid added dependence on the military by recruiting adequate numbers of civilians.

Accordingly, the US must act now to meet Ambassador Eikenberry and General McChrystal’s immediate requirements and establish the contingency conditions to rapidly deploy additional troops and civilians if required.

Added Civil Resources

Added civil resources will be equally critical. More funds for civilian aid in the hold and build phases, while making every effort to get more qualified civilians than is currently planned, will be necessary. Even today, the civil side of the US country team has less than half the budget it needs (some \$2.1 billion versus a requirement closer to \$5 billion). The number of US civilians aiding in Afghanistan has also been far too low to be effective. For example, there were 336 State Department Foreign Service positions in Iraq (not including USAID) in the summer of 2009. The matching total of State Department Foreign Service positions in Afghanistan (not including USAID) was 159, and is only planned to rise to 315 during the rest of the year.

What some have described as a “civilian surge” will only add some 732 new US government civilian positions from all agencies by March of 2010. Some 410 of the 732 positions will be based in Kabul, and 322 of the positions will be based in the field. These hires are not a “surge,” but rather a step to correct years of understaffing. There will also be a need for substantial additional contractor and temporary staff.

Like more troops, more civilian resources need to be provided as soon as possible. Every US effort in the Afghan war is shaped by the tyranny of time and distance. It takes months to recruit and/or prepare qualified experts and personnel, create facilities on the ground that can allow them to operate at the local level. Compounding such difficulties, it takes more months to establish working relationships with the Afghans—even when military or civilians have prior experience in country. If the US fails to provide enough resources this Fall and Winter to credibly seize the initiative by the Spring of 2010, it will at best score largely hollow tactical victories during what is becoming a year round campaign season that begins to peak each Spring. Without

adequate civilian resources, the strategy of shape, clear, hold, and build will not be implemented, and the Taliban and other insurgents will gain ground in the war of political attrition. Thus, they will be able to gain a victory in the strategic core of this conflict.

Moreover, the whole US approach to civil-military operations must change—as must that of most NATO/ISAF countries. There needs to be a stronger and structured civilian presence throughout the country and a new level of civil-military unity of effort at the sub-national level. One such step involves the creation of a Senior Civilian Representative in Regional Commands (RC) East and South. These Senior Foreign Service positions are intended to create a new fusion of effort through the coordination and direction of work of all civilian staff under Chief of Mission authority within the region. In order to bring a value-added service, these Senior Civilian Representatives must tie together the political direction and developmental efforts, while serving as the civilian counterparts to the military commanders in the Regional Command. As such, at each level within civilian representation, a lead civilian will be identified to serve as the military commander's counterpart.

The Role of Our Allies

US efforts may be the key determinant as to whether this conflict will be either lost or won, but it should not bear the entire burden of adding funds and forces. Other NATO/ISAF countries may not be able or willing to make major new military contributions, but there is an urgent requirement for these nations to maintain their current force levels. Member countries can also play a significant role in funding and providing trainers for the expansion of ANSF forces as well as providing more economic and civil aid to support the “hold” and “build” phases of the campaign.

III. Improving Afghan Governance

NATO/ISAF and the US cannot achieve their mission unless they face the real world limits of the Afghan government. The threat does not simply consist of insurgent movements like the Taliban and Al Qa'ida. It consists of a central government and many elements of provincial and local governments that now lack capacity at many different levels.

Real and perceived corruption, ties to informal power brokers, and links to narcotics trafficking, as well as organized crime severely undermined the popular legitimacy of the central government long before the election. Nevertheless, the present election crisis has made it brutally clear that the US and NATO/ISAF cannot succeed unless the structure of Afghan government can be changed and supplemented in ways that reverse the steady decline in public confidence. In short, there is a great need to find ways of creating an Afghan capability to govern in the field.

Actively Fighting Corruption and Abuses

NATO/ISAF and the US must work with member nations, UNAMA, and members of the international community to use a mix of incentives, penalties, political pressure, and other levers to reduce perceived and real corruption and abuses by senior Afghan officials as well as power brokers to levels the Afghan people can accept, while creating the level of actual governance and government services necessary to sustain security and stability.

- *The US must deal with the real and perceived weaknesses, excessive corruption, and predatory behaviour that make Giro in the Ghazni Province a major problem and barrier to success. This does not mean trying to eliminate all corruption and power brokering. It does mean taking the action necessary to meet the immediate needs of the Afghan people for security and economic progress in the key population centers and making a broad effort at the local, district, and provincial levels in addition to the efforts of the central government. This effort must be conducted in ways that will rapidly give the Afghan people reason to support the government and the NATO/ISAF and US effort to give them security, without illusions as to the capacity and integrity of the current elements of the Afghan government.*
- *The US and NATO/ISAF must work with the UN and other countries to carry out a visible, aggressive, and transparent effort to restore and create Afghan popular support for the Afghan government. It must provide essential services where these do not exist and fight corruption and the dysfunctional, negative actions of power brokers at every level. Such an effort should take careful account of the political realities in Afghanistan. It should focus on meeting popular needs and shaping local perceptions. Anti-corruption efforts that deal with individuals should be limited to the most urgent needs of the Afghan people and the effort to defeat the insurgency. The US, NATO/ISAF, and other elements of the international community must clearly separate their actions from corruption and predatory actions by the Afghan government and other power brokers. This means they must:*
 - Use the full “tool box” of possible levers and incentives in ways that coordinate national activity at least within NATO/ISAF and hopefully UNAMA. Make the policy clear at

the highest levels of NATO/ISAF and national leadership. Act consistently in ways that focus on mission critical needs.

- Develop detailed national and provincial network analyses that trace the ties between senior officials, officers, and power brokers to excessive corruption, and to elements of the insurgency, narcotraffickers, and organized crime. Treat such actors, not the Afghan government as a whole, as part of the threat.
- Create similar models of the flow of government revenues, aid, contracts, and funds.
- Reward successful and honest ministries and officials at every level by giving them growing discretionary authority related to performance.
- Tie funding to audits and accounting systems that are transparent and public. Require performance standards and measures of effectiveness.
- Ensure that the flow of funds only goes through the central government, provincial and district officials when they have proven integrity and effectiveness.
- Bypass funding and contact with corrupt officials, contractors, and power brokers. Go directly to local officials and contractors with proven performance.
- Openly shift funds that are not mission-related to areas and officials with integrity and capability. Explain publicly that there will be penalties affecting ministries, provinces, and districts lacking in integrity and capability.
- Support carefully target anti-corruption efforts at every level, focusing on persons and activities that affect the mission. Where prosecution is not possible, provide unclassified reporting with a personal history. Actively blacklist worst cases. Deny visas to corrupt individuals and their families.

Creating Effective Governance at the Provincial, District, and Local Levels

The US and its allies must make every effort to reform a system that now puts control of virtually all government resources under ministries of a central government which are not staffed to act at the provincial and local level, which are sometimes corrupt or subject to pressure by power brokers, and often do not respond to local needs.

The level of Afghan government activity falls far short of what is needed to win the support of the Afghan people. Provincial governments are small, deficient in capacity and sometimes corrupt, lacking funds and funding authority, and have minimal justice systems at best. Afghan experts indicate that many of Afghanistan's 364 districts do not have enough staff, adequate facilities, or even transportation.

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

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

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

IV. Creating Strong Afghan Security Forces (ANSF)

NATO/ISAF and the US cannot succeed in isolation. Their success will ultimately be judged by how well and how quickly they build up a much larger and more effective ANSF first to support, then to take the lead, and eventually to replace NATO/ISAF and US forces or limit the mission of the remaining forces to an advisory role. They must make the development of fully adequate ANSF forces a much higher priority, and make them true partners, not simply an adjunct to US and NATO/ISAF operations.

NATO/ISAF and the US should immediately begin to support and resource NTM-A/CSTC-A plans and the baseline for further major expansions of the ANA and ANP as goals for 2014. These plans will nearly double the ANA and ANP, possibly leading to enough success to make full implementation unnecessary. Making a fully resourced start, however, will ensure that adequate ANSF forces will be available over time, and help ease the strain of maintaining and increasing NATO/ISAF and US force levels. Funding such expansion will also be far cheaper than maintaining or increasing NATO/ISAF and US forces.

The Afghan National Army (ANA)

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

- NATO/ISAF and the US must focus in the near-term on building up the ANA to carry out critical counterinsurgency tasks and to *hold* in threatened population areas. At the same time, they must improve the ANP and ANCOP forces so they can provide *hold* capabilities where there is a less serious threat but when, and only when, this is clearly within their current capacity. This effort can only succeed if adequate resources are provided, if adequate time is taken to provide force quality as well as force quantity, and if NATO/ISAF and the US are willing to support the resulting force not only during critical periods of combat, but in phasing it down to a post conflict size that GIRoA can fund and sustain.
- CSTC-A already is actively expanding ANA forces from an assigned strength of roughly 91,000 to 134,000, and from 117 fielded kandaks to 179. It is procuring improved equipment and raising the number of Commando kandaks from 6 to 8. A total of 76 of the 117 fielded units are already capable of leading operations. There are three additional areas where decisions must now be made about the future of the ANA.
 - *The first decision is to accelerate training and current force expansion goals, and to set a new goal for expansion of the ANA that will increase it from a goal of 134,000 to 240,000 in 2014. This will mean a major expansion in funding, in training facilities and trainers, in equipment, and in mentors or partner units. Resources to do this well should be identified and committed concurrently. Every regional and task force commander visited or interviewed indicated that such as expansion is now needed. If NATO/ISAF and the US are more successful, then this*

process can be slowed and/or the force goal can be cut. Given the lead times, however, it is necessary to act now to begin this force expansion process, particularly if it is to both be done at the pace Afghans can support and to maintain the necessary force quality.

- *The second decision is to end the shortfall in NATO and ETT mentors and resources.* There are no easy ways to quantify the present shortfall, but CSTC-A reports that the ANA had a need for a minimum of 67 OMLTs plus US trainers in July 2009. However, it had 56 OMLTs on the ground, of which only 46 were validated. American ETTs were also under resourced in the past, though ETTs are being replaced by the “two BCT” concept of providing mentors. The requirement for OMLTs also will expand along with the ANA. It will rise to 91 by the end of CY2010, and only a maximum of 66 OMLTs will actually be on the ground. This is a deficit of 25. Expert analysis is needed, but it may take the equivalent of a third new brigade combat team (changing the two-BCT approach to a three-BCT one) to correct this deficiency. Expanding to 240,000 troops would require substantially more OMLTs plus additional ETT mentors, many of which must be carefully chosen to help the ANA develop critical new “enablers” like artillery, engineering, C2, medical services, and logistics and sustainability.
- *The third decision is to create a full operational partnership, focused around the development of the ANA and key elements of the ANP, so that Afghans are a true partner in all NATO/ANSF and US operations and take the lead in joint operations as soon as possible.* It is not enough for NATO/ISAF and US units to partner with the ANSF. The ANSF must be made a full partner at the command level as well. Afghans should see Afghans taking the lead in the field as soon as practical, and as playing a critical role in shaping all plans and operations as well as in implementing *hold* and *build*. This often cannot be done immediately; however, it must be done as soon as possible. This can be accomplished by embedding a US brigade combat team into each ANA Corps to provide the expertise. Enablers can carry out joint planning, intelligence, command and control capabilities, fire support, logistic expertise, and other capabilities that the ANA now lack, but can acquire through partnership and joint operations with the US.

The Afghan National Police (ANP)

Improving the various elements of the ANP, while somewhat less time critical in terms of combat operations, is equally urgent due to the ANP’s central role in performing the *hold* function in population centers, without which COIN will not succeed. However, such improvement presents different challenges than improving the ANA.

The ANP currently lacks the ability to support the *hold* and *build* missions in the face of insurgent attacks, bombings, and subversion. In July 2009, the Afghan Uniformed Police had an authorized strength of 47,000 and 51,000 assigned. Strength, however, is only part of the problem. The ANP faces critical problems in winning popular support and acceptance. Unlike the ANA, which is the most

respected institution in the Afghan government, there is a wide consensus that many elements of the ANP are too corrupt, and too tied to politics and power brokers, to either be effective or win/retain popular support.

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

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

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

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

No ANP programs can succeed where political interference, corruption, and power brokers block effective ANP action or ensure it cannot be reformed. Power brokers have a clear need to disrupt this process, as it directly threatens their operations. This must be understood and be included as part of the planning for ANP improvement. The political dimension of ANP development is as critical as the military and civil dimensions.

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

and that additional attention is need to the quality of its leadership and facilities.

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

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

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

The Afghan Border Police (ABP)

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

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

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

The Afghan Public Protection Program (AP3)

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

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

The ANA Air Corps (ANAAAC)

The Afghan National Army Air Corps is already contributing to the COIN fight and further contributions – particularly lift and med vac – would relieve ISAF of some key requirements. ANAAAC development plans must be tailored to Afghan needs and capabilities. There is a clear case for giving the ANSF at least the currently planned mix of air lift, battlefield, mobility, RW attack, IS&R, and multi-role capability. This would expand the ANAAAC from a total of 36 aircraft and 2,500 airmen today to 139 aircraft by CY 2016.

There is a broader and more urgent role that the ANAAAC can perform. It can develop the skills to support NATO in targeting and managing air operations, and take on responsibility for vetting air strikes and air operations. Such a partnership would do much to assure the Afghan population that Afghan forces were true partners in all air

operations and played the proper role in reducing civilian casualties and collateral damage. Such a “red card” role presents obvious difficulties, but it will be applied to all NATO/ISAF and US operations, including ground operations, in time. Working to make it effective now, and a key partner as part of Afghan, US, and NATO/ISAF strategic communications could have major benefits.

National Directorate of Security (NDS)

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

Making Partnership the Core of Force Development

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

In practice, previous plans must be executed in ways that do more than produce more forces. They must produce motivated and effective Afghan forces that can operate in Afghan time and according to Afghan values. Some inappropriate proposals would rush Afghan training simply to get more Afghan forces in the field. The US, NATO/ISAF, and Afghanistan need force quality, loyalty, and retention more than they need force numbers. Afghan force development must also take account of Afghan perceptions and custom. As such, new policies should allow for leave time and family needs. It does not mean deploying Afghan forces too long, or deploying outside familiar areas. Policies should ensure proper medical care and death/disability benefits, etc. Proposals to accelerate training, deploy on a national level, and use forces in combat needs to be quietly vetted and evaluated by Afghans – not just outside advisors.

It also is more important to create real partners than have more forces. Far too often in the past, the treatment of the ANSF has been mixed. ISAF officers at different levels have used Afghan forces, sidelined them, or thrust them into secondary roles for short-term convenience. This does not develop real partners or effective forces. It also makes a strong case for having key officers in partner roles with years of repeated service and continuity.

The focus of future NATO/ISAF operations should be on creating ANA and ANP forces that can actually take the lead and replace NATO/ISAF forces. It means creating Afghan forces, that have reason to trust, and work with, NATO/ISAF on a sustained basis. This a top down approach to partnering that ensures that Afghan officers, NCO, and enlisted really are treated as partners, that they can count on the same support and enablers as NATO/ISAF forces, and they are listened to, play a role in operations, and become a key source of HUMINT.

The US and NATO/ISAF must never forget the civil aspects of Afghan force development that will become steadily more critical as operations shift to the hold and build phase. “Hold and build” require army and police forces that can adjust to providing security and the rule of law in civil terms. Police need to help in the clear phase, but their key function in hold and build be in providing day to day security and supporting the justice system.

This also requires a US and NATO/ISAF civil military effort that can create all of the elements of such a justice system. In some areas, this means creating or strengthening a functioning formal legal system with courts, trials, prisons, and civil law. In most of Afghanistan, it will mean working with the informal justice system to provide prompt justice and to replace the Taliban’s “justice” system almost immediately after “clear.” It will be a decade – if ever – before the formal justice system can do the job in all of the country. Far too much of the present rule of law effort is a top-down approach to the formal system. “Hold” and “build” can only succeed by building from the bottom up and through the informal system.

V. Dealing with Pakistan and the Role of External Powers

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

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

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

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

VI. Restructuring the US and NATO/ISAF Effort

Resources, however, are only part of the story. The US must decisively take the lead in changing the way it fights, and the character of civil-military operations. This means taking the following steps to create a more effective US and NATO/ISAF approach to defeating the insurgency and securing the population:

NATO/ISAF and the US must act as if they are in Afghanistan to win.

US and NATO/ISAF strategy and campaign plans will only be real to the point they are part of a detailed plan for implementation at the national, regional, and local levels which is shaped without regard to artificial and dysfunctional barriers like provincial borders. They must do everything possible to overcome the morass of national caveats and restrictions that divide and stove pipe military and aid efforts. They must provide the resources needed to win.

This must involve a series of detailed changes in the way the US and NATO/ISAF approach operations. A new strategy can only be effective if US and NATO/ISAF forces and commanders:

- *Face the complexity and uncertainty of this war and the overall exercise in armed nation building.* Prioritize and develop key lines of operation in each center of gravity, with the understanding that any campaign will be a moderate to high risk experiment with many dimensions and many unknown elements. While the US and NATO/ISAF do not have to deal with every aspect of the situation at once, they must understand every aspect and consistently react to the situation more quickly than insurgents. The side that adapts most quickly to change and the impact of reality with the best-focused resources will win.

The US and NATO/ISAF will lose if they pursue any line of currently planned operations without rapidly and constantly adapting. They will fail if they do not constantly focus on all aspects of the military, political, religious, governance, rule of law, and economic dimensions of the battle.

- *Provide a clear and fully operational definition of shape, clear, hold, and build; and create specific plans and objectives to show how it can be implemented and measured.* NATO/ISAF and the US must fully examine the extent to which its new focus on population centers -- and reliance on the doctrine of *shape, clear, hold, and build* -- acts on a functional definition that will achieve a strategic objective. It must also examine how *hold* and *build* -- and the necessary civil-military operation -- will be achieved.
- *Give every NATO/ISAF region, and every major NATO/ISAF military action, a clear operational definition of clear, hold and build that define how the US, NATO/ISAF, the ANSF, GIRoA, and civil partners will allocate resources, improve governance, and provide suitable metrics for progress and success.* One metric, the "Abrams test" should be applied to defining both the goal and progress in all cases: Any effort to claim that operations have reached the *hold* stage that fails to address whether local security exists at night as well as during the day, and whether freedom of movement is possible, is false. Any claim that

operations have reached the *build* stage where essential services like education, electricity, water, and effective justice are not available is equally false.

- *Restructure every aspect of NATO/ISAF and member country planning so that commanders, officers, and officials at all levels explicitly state the resources they need to perform their part of the mission, and when they must be available.* Plans must be directly coupled to specific resource requirements for combat forces, civilian advisors, and money. They must set forth clearly defined and specific objectives tied to near term and practical time lines. Resource gaps must be laid out in clear and specific terms and directly linked to well-defined risks.
- *Systematically improve and expand the present US and NATO/ISAF metrics to create integrated reporting systems based on best practices at the level of individual commands and components.* These should concentrate on portraying combat in net assessment terms, on portraying the actual flow of resources and activities, and on providing clear measures of effectiveness. A later section addresses this issue in detail.
- *Re-examine the present allocation of US and other NATO/ISAF forces, and ANSF forces, to focus on the most urgent areas in the east and south, with phased plans to secure all critical areas in ways where clear, hold, and build are not only prioritized, but also tied to resources that are actually and clearly available.* Explicitly decide on the extent to which plans should reflect the withdrawal of and/or real-world increases in given elements of US and NATO/ISAF forces. Make the provision of adequate local justice systems a key part of *hold* and *build*, relying primarily on traditional and existing elements of the formal and informal justice system, and ensuring that adequate pay is tied to effective anti-corruption efforts.
- *Shape the use of NATO/ISAF and US forces to properly reflect the local and regional differences that create a series of “microwars” requiring planning, intelligence, and operations tailored to the specific conditions necessary for success.* This requires a layered approach to national, subnational, community, tribal and geographic conditions. It also requires an approach based on full assessment of the human elements of threat, of local power structures, and of popular perceptions and needs.
- *Tie every aspect of this effort to clearly defined timelines, deliverables, and measures of effectiveness.* No aspect of the campaign plan should be defined in terms of open-ended concepts and goals. One of the most serious problems in US and NATO/ISAF efforts over the last seven years is an obsession with planning that effectively treats the situation as if it was the first year in Afghanistan for what is now approaching the eighth time. Many of the right concepts have been advocated for years but never actually put into full operational practice or given anything like the real world resources needed for success.
- *Avoid setting rigid deadlines, creating unrealistic benchmarks, and demanding success before it is really possible.* Never forget that the NATO/ISAF and the US must base their strategy on realistic and flexible timelines and schedules at

every level. Many aspects of the progress required can only move at an Afghan pace and must be achieved on Afghan terms. This will require lasting strategic patience if the US, NATO/ISAF, the ANSF, and hopefully Pakistan are to achieve the level of security that is the immediate priority.

Other Operational Tasks

At a different level, NATO/ISAF and the US must become more effective in dealing with several critical operational tasks:

- *Carry out more effective information operations* within the limits imposed by the fact that the US and NATO/ISAF are Western and that the present activities of GIRoA have actively aided the Taliban and other Jihadists. Understand that no such effort can be successful until fundamental reforms take place in the behaviour of the GIRoA, and a combination of the ANSF, NATO/ISAF, and the US have shown the Afghan people that they can get lasting security, while GIRoA and aid activities provide a real world demonstration that *hold* and *build* offer practical progress and hope.
- *Refocus the intelligence effort away from a narrow focus on the threat and its kinetic activities to one that addresses the full range of threat activities*, including its efforts to dominate and influence the population, and its ties to power brokers and narcotics.
- *Tie this intelligence effort to an explicit analysis of the threats and problems raised by elements within GIRoA and the network of power brokers which are the second major threat that NATO/ISAF and the US face in carrying out shape, clear, hold and build*. Create net assessment models that explicitly tie together analysis and reporting on the combined progress of threat activity, as well as links between power brokers and narcotics, GIRoA and ANSF activity, and NATO/ISAF and US activity.
- *Make the counternarcotics effort part of the shape, clear, hold and build effort, and focus it on activity that is directly and clearly Taliban related*. Focus on attacking narcotraffickers and related power brokers at the local, provincial, and national levels as part of the broader effort to reduce excessive corruption and predatory behavior and abuses within the formal and informal GIRoA and ANSF power structure. Delay broader eradication efforts until SCHB has reached the point where agricultural aid and alternative corps can rapidly be adopted.

VII. Developing an Effective Civil-Military Partnership

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

This means that NATO/ISAF and the US must:

- *Develop a tightly coordinated and focused civil-military effort in every area of operations against the insurgency, and create civil efforts strong enough and focused enough to support the shape, clear, hold, build effort.* This will require enforcing unity of effort as an operational reality rather than an empty slogan. It means providing adequate civilian support to the hold and build effort as the priority until near term goals for *shape, clear, hold* and *build* are achieved. Make a ruthless and systematic effort to create an effective unity of effort within the present divided and dysfunctional mix of US, other ISAF nation, or international civil efforts and remove ineffective and corrupt elements. The US Congress and every member government should demand to see monthly measures and reporting to show that there is real world, operational progress in these areas. The present level of stove piping, and lack of operational civil-military unity of effort, is unforgivable. So is the waste and ineffective caused by so many diverse and uncoordinated national efforts.
- *Work with UNAMA, other UN agencies, and the international community to develop more realistic aid plans.* These need to be linked to achievable real world economic objectives, and tailored to achievable levels of security, which find better ways to cope with GIROA's problems with capacity and excessive corruption, and make every feasible effort to ensure all aid funds go directly to meet actual needs and priorities of the Afghan people.
- *Create integrated civil-military plans to make the eventual transition from build to post conflict reconstruction, and to secure longer term aid efforts until the insurgency is defeated.* Aid needs to be refocused from Western priorities to those of Afghans and in ways that suit Afghan culture and values. It also needs to stay in Afghanistan and not be driven by waste, corruption, and national or institutional goals and fund raising needs.
- *Honestly and openly recognize that the excessive corruption, waste, and a lack of coordination that affects GIROA also affects far too many UNAMA, US and other national, and NGO aid efforts.* NATO/ISAF and the US, in particular, must get their own house in order in order to support the war effort. While improvements are claimed be underway, they are still largely in the planning or trial stage. The current level of activity in the US, allied, and international efforts that actually help win – and provide a vital level of security to the Afghan people -- are underresourced, stovepiped, uncoordinated, and oriented towards longer

term aid and not the population. Far too many are oriented towards specific projects or vague nation-wide goals and the overall aid process is barely operational in any sense relevant to the fact that the nation is at war.

- *Act directly in the field to ensure that the aid resources necessary to support the immediate needs of the shape, clear, hold, and build campaign are provided in the right areas in the right time with the needed flexibility, and that firm steps are taken to bypass corrupt organizations in both GIRoA and the international community.* If, as seems nearly certain, far too few civilians will be available, the US and other NATO/ISAF military forces must take up the slack until truly capable civilians are actually working effectively in the field, and must have full flexibility to use CERP or CERP-like aid funds to take immediate action to provide aid where it can help bring stability and security or defeat the insurgency.

VIII. Restructuring Aid Efforts

The US must also take the lead in creating a far better focused and more honest effort to provide economic and civil aid. At present, most of the aid effort is subject to waste and corruption which ignores the reality that the nation is at war, and focuses far too much on mid- and long-term needs:

- *Aid must provide immediate and sustained operational support in the field and battle areas to hold and build if there is to be a meaningful longer-term development phase.* Aid also needs to go to the Afghan people, not to activities outside Afghanistan, and not through institutions that are corrupt or that waste much of the funds provided.
- *Ensure that higher percentages of aid actually reach the people and serve their interests* to make the present levels of aid far more effective, to change Afghan perceptions that much of the aid effort is enabling corruption and does not help Afghans, and to provide powerful support to the broader goals of the NATO/ISAF and US campaign.
- *Redirect as much aid and assistance as necessary to support provincial, local, community, and tribal leaders and groups in the process of the shape, clear, hold, and build effort.* NATO/ISAF and the US must never lose sight of the fact that the excessive corruption and predatory behavior, cronyism, factionalism, and lack of capacity in the central government mean it will be at least several years before any combination of the central, provincial, and local levels can effectively take the lead in shape, clear, hold, and build.
- *Make the provision of adequate local justice systems a key part of hold and build.* Rely primarily on traditional and existing elements of the formal and informal justice system at the local level, and ensuring that adequate pay is tied to effective anti-corruption efforts. No form of *SCHB* will work without popular access to quick and responsive justice.
- *The Afghan government is, however, only part of the problem. There is an unforgivable lack of transparency and integrity in the US and international aid community, sometimes mixed with direct corruption.* Organizations, countries, and NGOs do not report full financial data, do not validate requirements and programs by showing they have Afghan support and meet Afghan needs, do not comply with Ministry of Finance reporting requirements, or have useful measures of completion or effectiveness – particularly in terms of overall regional and national needs. This lack of reporting ensures that there are no remotely reliable numbers in many critical areas. However, Matt Waldman of Oxfam estimated in March 2008 (*ACBAR Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan*, p. 5):
 - There is an aid shortfall of \$10billion – equivalent to thirty times the annual national education budget: donors committed to give \$25 billion in aid since 2001 but have only delivered \$15billion.
 - An estimated 40% of aid goes back to donor countries in corporate profits and consultant salaries – some \$6 billion since 2001.

- Largely due to lack of coordination and communication, the Afghan government does not know how one-third of all aid since 2001 – some \$5 billion – has been spent.
- The US military spends close to \$100m a day in Afghanistan; yet the average volume of aid spent by all donors since 2001 is just \$7million per day.
- Over half of aid is tied, requiring the procurement of donor-country goods and services.
- Over two-thirds of all aid bypasses the Afghan government.
- According to the latest OECD figures less than 40% of technical assistance is coordinated with the government and only one-third of donor analytical or assessment work is conducted jointly.
- Profit margins on reconstruction contracts for international and Afghan contractor companies are often 20% and can be as high as 50%.
- Most full time, expatriate consultants, working in private consulting companies, cost \$250,000-\$500,000 a year.

IX. Providing Transparency and Honest Metrics

NATO/ISAF and the US cannot succeed in their mission unless they are honest and transparent in dealing with the conflict. They also cannot win a prolonged military, political, and ideological struggle by down playing the threat, exaggerating short-term gains and achievements, and promising more than it can deliver. *There is a broad need for far more honesty at every level, and above all to under-promise and over-achieve.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

X. Planning for the Possibility of Failure: Developing a Conditional Exit Strategy

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

Critical Assumptions

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

- The Afghan government will come to actively support the major shifts in the NATO/ISAF and US approach to counterinsurgency warfare, working with the Afghan people, and developing improved command, control, and coordination. They will provide the forces, civilian manpower, funding, and political support necessary to aid necessary to succeed, and cooperate in executing an integrated civil-military plan and operation
- The US and NATO/ISAF countries will act decisively to improve the strength and capability of the ANSF. They will provide the necessary trainers and mentors to expand the ANSF, and additional forces necessary to fill critical gaps or delays in the availability of the civilians necessary to execute shape, clear, hold, and build.
- The US and NATO/ISAF countries will act to remove caveats and national constraints on the use of military and civil resources, their military forces and PRTs, and focus their resources on supporting the new strategy. They will move beyond hollow claims of unity of effort, and develop an effective, integrated civil-military approach to winning the conflict that is actually operational.
- The US, other NATO/ISAF member countries, UNAMA, and enough other elements of the international community will cooperate to ensure that excessive corruption and predatory behavior by power brokers does not interfere with successful execution of the NATO/ISAF and US mission, and prevent the Afghan people from supporting the government and ISAF.
- The US and other NATO/ISAF member countries, UNAMA, and other elements of the International community will continue to support and fund the longer-term development efforts necessary to give Afghanistan lasting security and stability.

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

Critical Risks

Failure can occur in many other ways. NATO/ISAF and the US need prepare contingency plans for the failure of their current efforts. This need for contingency planning, however, is driven as much by their own failures to deal with the political,

economic, and external conditions that shape the broader strategic conditions in Afghanistan. The key risks include:

- Instability in Pakistan or a hostile new Iran will create new levels of threat on Afghanistan's borders. The threat of instability in Pakistan would be particularly serious and could significantly raise the requirement for NATO/ISAF and US forces. Pakistan poses a key risk, and one that is unpredictable. Pessimism is as dangerous as optimism, and Pakistan can follow many different courses of events between the best and worst cases. It is, however, a risk that must be explicitly monitored in NATO/ISAF and US planning where every effort must be made to strengthen formal and informal cooperation at every level.
- Development of the quality and capacity of the ANSF will lag behind requirements; or have insufficient mentors, other trainers and resources. The corruption and problems in the ANP will leave it unable to perform either hold missions or routine law enforcement and security missions.
- NATO/ISAF will not receive adequate funds or resources. The US will not meet requirements for all the additional forces required. Allied countries will not make significant increases in their forces, and key countries will withdraw their forces from combat.
- The countries in NATO/ISAF will continue to ignore the need for an integrated civil-military plans, coordination within ISAF and by member countries, adequate capability to perform the civil aspects of the hold and build mission, and proper delivery of such capabilities to meet the operational timing of the shape and secure mission will not be provided. These problems will be compounded by UNAMA and national caveats and limitations on the use of aid and PRT resources.
- A failure to fully characterize the threat will limit the effectiveness of NATO/ISAF and US operations and there will be a far more resilient mix of insurgent networks, dispersed forces, and resources in various sanctuaries than NATO/ISAF and the US now estimate. The insurgent strategy of political attrition will outlast the US and NATO/ISAF's capability to sustain shape, clear, hold, and build.
- Insurgents will find a significant source of modern light surface to air, anti-tank guided, weapon, and other modern weapons.
- GIROA's corruption, predatory behavior, and failure to meet the needs of the Afghan people will grow worse after an election that many Afghans perceive as rigged to the point of being illegitimate or meaningless. NATO/ISAF will not provide sufficient leverage to limit the impact on operations or reverse the steady decline in support from the Afghan people. It will also seriously erode political support in ISAF countries for sustaining the mission.
- The scale of the operations and resources needed to implement shape, clear, hold and build will prove to be badly miscalculated, and the mix of problems in

GIRoA, a lack of adequate NATO/ISAF resources and ANSF, and underestimation of the threat will have a negative synergistic effect.

- The US and NATO/ISAF nations will continue is the tendency to deny the extent to which a crisis exists, to claim unrealistic successes, and promise more than NATO/ISAF and the US can deliver. As has been stated earlier, NATO/ISAF, the US, and member countries must learn to communicate with far more honesty and transparency, they must admit risks and problems, and they must focus on the perceptions and security of the Afghan people and not simply on the success of GIRoA. Above all, they must communicate that they have a valid campaign plan at every level, communicate its purpose and the reasons for that campaign, and adopt a communications strategy based on one central principle: *underpromise and overperform*.
- The US and NATO/ISAF will fail to deal with the broader uncertainties over how best to deal with the evolving center of gravity (or centers of gravity) in international terrorism. NATO/ISAF and the US are not at war to develop Afghanistan. They are at war to achieve its own security goals. The tradeoffs in pursuing the war in Afghanistan must constantly be reassessed and if new centers of international terrorism emerge in nations like Yemen or Somalia, or if other key threats emerge, NATO/ISAF and the US must be prepared for the reality that – dangerous as a power vacuum or Taliban take over of Afghanistan will be — this is a limited war fought for limited objectives.

The odds are still good enough in spite of all these risks to justify making the effort to win if enough of the criteria described earlier are met. It is also striking that the two most likely risks of failures are not a Taliban or insurgent victory coming resulting from their effectiveness or from the actions of outside powers.

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

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