



NEWSLETTER



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Observations, Insights, and Lessons

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CENTER FOR ARMY LESSONS LEARNED

SUPPORTING THE WARFIGHTER



Understanding Afghan Culture

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Introduction

This newsletter contains a collection of previously published articles that focus on Afghan culture and provides insight into effectively communicating with Afghans in order to achieve positive results. More specifically, the articles contained in this newsletter highlight methods to initiate and improve relationships with Afghans, the difficulties and challenges leaders and Soldiers experienced in communicating with Afghans, what worked and did not work, and how to foster and improve meaningful relationships with Afghans to achieve the desired outcome.

The articles in this newsletter cover a range of topics centered on developing an ability to quickly and accurately comprehend Afghan culture, then appropriately and effectively engaging Afghans (Individuals, groups, tribes, organizations, and military) to achieve the desired effect, despite not having an in-depth understanding of the Afghan culture.

The specific intent of the newsletter is to provide a situational awareness of some aspects of the Afghan culture and best practices and lessons learned to facilitate improved relationships with Afghans in mitigating challenges to achieve desired results. The articles should not be considered as all-inclusive. More specifically, this newsletter is an effort to capture thought provoking articles published in recent professional journals to inform leaders and Soldiers on relevant Afghan culture observations, insights, and lessons to improve situational awareness and understanding when interacting with Afghans.

In many instances, the ideas presented in these articles are personal opinion, and in some cases, not approved Army doctrine. The recommendations in these articles should always be validated with the latest approved Army and joint doctrine.

The Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) acknowledges and thanks the professional journals and authors who permitted the reprinting of these articles.

CALL editors note: Minor modifications to format were made by CALL editors to support the CALL newsletter format and in some instances pictures that were not referenced in the narrative were deleted to save space. Additionally, biographies were eliminated to avoid release of personal information.

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Strategies for Developing and Practicing Cross-Cultural Expertise in the Military

By Louise J. Rasmussen, Ph.D. and Winston R. Sieck, Ph.D.

This article was originally published in the March-April 2012 issue of Military Review, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20120430_art012.pdf.

Cultural understanding doesn't just help you achieve your objectives—it helps you discover what your objectives should be.

— General Anthony Zinni

In the current operating environment, mission success relies on the ability to improve relationships with foreign individuals, organizations, or militaries. Service personnel tend to deploy to a variety of areas in the world throughout their careers and are only assigned to certain jobs and locations for relatively short periods. They need efficient, effective ways to acquire a culture and language capability. The notion of cross-cultural competence (3C) has been developed to reflect this requirement.¹ One definition of it is “the ability to quickly and accurately comprehend, then appropriately and effectively engage individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds to achieve the desired effect, despite not having an in-depth knowledge of the other culture.”²

In the last few years, we have undertaken a number of research projects aimed at understanding 3C in the military. We have had the privilege of interviewing many warfighters from the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force, warrior-diplomats who spent years interacting and building relationships with their foreign counterparts in different parts of the world as a part of their assignments. (Henceforth, we refer to them as “cross-cultural experts.”) Reflecting on our research, we noticed that cross-cultural experts develop certain *mental strategies or habits that help them learn about new cultures quickly*. Such mental habits can be adopted and practiced by anyone, at any level of military command. In the spirit of Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the primary intent of this article is to provide practical descriptions of these mental strategies, illustrated by operational examples and supported by the research literature.³

The seven mental habits organize around three metacognitive strategies—i.e., strategies for thinking about and reflecting on one's own thinking: adopting a cross-culturalist stance, seeking and extending cultural understanding, and applying cultural understanding to guide action. In the following, we will discuss each of the seven habits (see Figure 1-1) and how they relate to metacognitive awareness.

Adopting a Cross-Culturalist Stance

1. Know yourself and how you are different. Cross-cultural experts are aware that they see the world in a particular way because of their background, personal history, and culture. They anticipate that, in an interaction with someone who has a different background, the perspectives each person brings to the situation will likely not match. General Zinni, an exceptional warrior-diplomat and cross-cultural expert, noted in an interview:

The natural instinct for us is to see a fact and interpret it in our context, and not to say, my understanding of this—my context might not be the right one to interpret this fact. And that may be the most significant thing—that fact, that act, that decision, or that response—how do you do the interpretation? That’s the real cultural question. Do I do it through my prism, or do I try to understand another prism which will give me more clarity and [bring me] closer to truth?

Recognizing this mismatch leads cross-cultural experts to explore commonalities and differences between themselves and the people within their area of operations. Experience living in multiple locations often leads them to develop theories about how Americans differ from other people in the world.

Cultural researchers seek to frame such differences objectively.⁴ Cross-cultural experts instead learn to frame these differences in terms of how *they themselves* are different. For example, they note that most of the world does not operate on the same timelines as Americans do. A Marine Corps colonel told us—

When I would ask about the Taliban to try to find out when was the last time they had been intimidated by them, received a night letter or whatever, they would say, “Well, it was a while ago.” And getting the clear sense for how long ago that was, in relation to time, was difficult; they still remembered it like it was yesterday and they don’t have calendars; *you can’t go in there and ask what day of the month it was*. But, I knew they were very agricultural so I used crop-cycles as a reference. You walk through the villages and they’re all out there planting or growing stuff so I figured that would be the one way to communicate. Based on that, I estimated it to be about two years before.



Figure 1-1: The seven habits of highly effective warrior-diplomats.

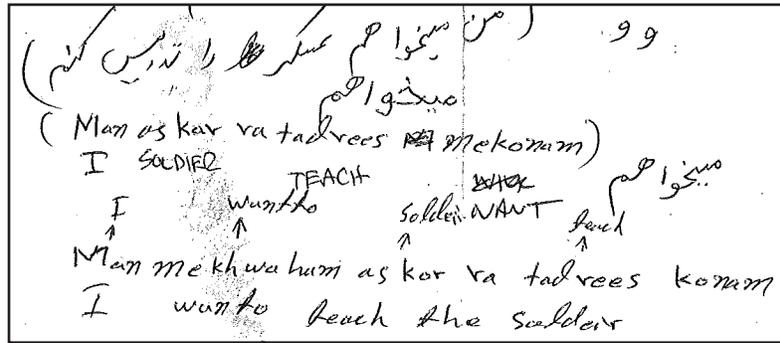


Figure 1-2: Excerpt from an Air Force major’s library of English-to-Dari translated words and phrases that he produced in collaboration with his Afghan National Army soldiers.

Cross-cultural experts understand that their personal and cultural background influences their view of the world. A Marine Corps lieutenant colonel described how this supports an innate motivation for learning:

I temper myself with a dose of humility by reminding myself that, “Hey, you don’t always see things right or know things.” If I do that, I may put myself on a false precipice, or pedestal, from which I could fall. So, what I say with that is, even though I’ve been to Japan a few times, I say . . . “What more can I learn?”

...learning some things about a culture “peels away the unknown.” It reduces the uncertainty inherent in interacting with people who are very different...

Some researchers believe that certain kinds of cultural knowledge are more important than others in promoting further learning. The cross-cultural experts we have studied use their own personal interests as the starting point for learning about new cultures. Their self-defined learning objectives can come from long-term interests or from the need to improve or adapt action. Some of the experts we interviewed had a life-long curiosity about human social, cultural, and psychological dynamics. However, this was not always the case. Many had deep, intrinsic interests in history; some were interested in religion, others in sports, and still others in weapons. All used these areas of interest as a basis for formulating questions about a new region or culture. They sought answers through research before deploying, or through conversation with locals once on the ground. For example, one expert we interviewed was particularly interested in knives, and would take every opportunity to discuss knife-making practices with local Afghans. In this way, he used his intrinsic interest to establish a personal connection to the culture.

2. Know the value of a little cultural understanding. Experts operating in different cultural environments understand why meeting mission objectives requires learning about the local culture. All the cross-cultural experts we interviewed had independently developed clear rationales for the value of cultural understanding. These rationales motivated learning each time they entered a new culture. One Marine Corps colonel noted that learning some things about a culture “peels away the unknown.” It reduces the uncertainty inherent in interacting with people who are very different and thereby increases confidence.

It may not be that you need to read 15 books to know certain facts; it's just that the act of reading builds your confidence. I mean if you practice for a sport . . . if you go, if I put you right now in front of a stadium of 10,000 people and say do this sport, are you going to be nervous? Or, if I give you a chance to practice for a year to where you get really good at it, and then put you there, are you going to be more comfortable? That's what your training is doing.

Almost without exception, every expert we interviewed told us he used cultural knowledge as a foundation for building relationships with natives by demonstrating interest.

As one Army captain put it, "when you show that you know something about their culture . . . to them it's kind of like a check, it's like, oh okay, you know a little bit, hey? And it's like, I'm not very good with languages so it does help break the barrier in a way I can't do through language."

Some experts go as far as noting that full language proficiency is not a requirement for successful interaction. It can be sufficient to learn a few key words and phrases to help facilitate social interactions.

So I supplemented the pointy-talkie-cards with about a sheet of paper or two . . . with a bunch of Iraqi phrases that were more like social lubrication than anything else. Like sayings like, "see you again tomorrow," or there was one which, essentially translated to, "this is frustrating and useless," which turned out to be "yapsi tibir," it's "rice over beans," or "beans over rice," just let it get done.

In this way, the experts in our sample themselves identified the words and phrases *they wanted to learn in order to achieve specific goals which were important to them*.

Most frequently, their goal was to build relationships. However, their primary motivations for building relationships were to *stay safe* and to *accomplish the mission*. Some experts provided specific examples of ways in which cultural knowledge can be employed to assess risk.

When you're first meeting your interpreters, you have to figure out where they're coming from, what they believe. My feeling is I don't want to get blown up . . . so what is it going to take and can I trust him? Is he a suicide bomber? I have to figure these things out. And, you can't just ask that question, "are you Taliban?" You have to weasel your way into it somehow, and maybe throw some hints out there . . . I know some nuggets of information that I think would kind of call your bluff-type of information. Like "what do you think of Massoud?" I'll just throw it out there and see what happens. Then I look for indicators, looking for any reason to doubt, and I guess that is the bottom line . . . So the more I know, the more I can roll in certain situations and test the water.

General Zinni noted, "*The amount of risk isn't as great as it might appear when you have an understanding of who you're with and what you're doing.*" Once the risk is lower, it is easier to create learning and relationship-building opportunities, such as hanging out with interpreters during down time and talking to them about their language and culture.

3. Frame intercultural interactions as opportunities to learn. Cross-cultural experts expect to continue to learn new things about a culture the whole time they are in it. As one Marine Corps colonel told us, they tend to regard the knowledge and skills they acquired in training as a springboard for continuing learning.

I think that all that operational culture that you're given and all those briefs and stuff, it's good just to kind of put you on your guard that when you go downrange it's going to be different. Don't think of it as an absolute and this is the way it's going to be. But these are some of the typical things that we've experienced. When you get there be open to the fact that there are going to be differences and to try to educate yourself as quickly as you can when you're in that environment to those differences. A famous research study reviewed the way experts learn from experience in a wide variety of domains and concluded that in order to effectively use experiences as opportunities for practice, one must explicitly frame the experience as an opportunity to learn.⁵ The cross-cultural experts we interviewed indeed sought out experiences and relationships that they could learn from.

Numerous warfighters described to us how they deliberately establish relationships with “cultural insiders” to support learning. Cultural insiders are members of the culture and can provide a wealth of information. Most used their interpreters as cultural mentors in order to vet and improve their knowledge of a region's history, culture, and language. At times, they even sought feedback from interpreters on how they performed in specific interactions, after the fact. However, many were also creative in taking advantage of ad hoc mentoring relationships. An Army captain said:

To speak to a 70-year old Afghan is incredible. You do not get to be 70 years old in Afghanistan by being dumb. There was this guy who we kept running into and he sounded really intriguing. He didn't want to talk to us. But I guess I finally sort of wore him down out of curiosity on both parts. We just sort of ended up sitting on the side of the street, propped up against the building, having some tea, and talking to each other. I pointed to his beard and I asked him, “You're a very wise man, how did you get to be so old and wise?” and he sort of looked at me like, “Wow, you're asking me that question?” I could just see this whole, sort of cog screeching, “Wow! No one has ever asked me that question.” So, that's when we sat down. He says, “Well, let's sit down, and let's talk about that.”

Just as demonstrating basic knowledge about a culture can serve to build bridges—the very act of showing interest in learning about it can too. Several experts cite both wanting to learn more and wanting to strengthen local relationships as a dual motivation for identifying and interacting with cultural mentors.

A month into my tour I had my [Afghan National Army] soldiers teach me the letters of the alphabet. In five minutes there was a crowd of 12 people around us. I could tell that it did something to them that someone cared enough to learn their language. It was important to them that I respected their culture and language. After that I was really able to start a dialogue with a lot of the soldiers. With a few in particular, our relationship changed from that point on.

Ample research demonstrates that seeking this type of feedback is essential for developing expertise.⁶ However, mentors at times provide biased perspectives. Several of the experts we have interviewed talked about how they often checked up on the information provided to them by native mentors by seeking a second opinion:

There could be a slant there or a hidden agenda there that I don't know of. So take it with a grain of salt. He says something, then I go back and get online and say, "All right, let's see what this is," and verify and check.

Seeking a second opinion on specific issues, either from another informant or online, also helps assess the overall credibility of the first informant.

Seeking and Extending Cultural Understanding

4. Pay attention to surprises. Cross-cultural experts are alert to discrepancies and puzzling behavior and inquire into their causes. The surprise caused by encountering unexpected situations motivates them to make sense of the situation, sometimes by trying to consider the world from the point of view of people raised in the other culture. An Army major described being in charge of a U.S.-Afghan team conducting a poppy clearing operation. His team had started building a road so the local farmers could get their goods to market more easily and were working with a local mullah who helped them connect with the locals. He added:

At the end of the operation, we were packing everything up . . . It was me and four or five trucks with the Afghans. My interpreter came up and said, "Hey sir, there's a lot of [humanitarian assistance] stuff left over." I said, "Really? They said they distributed it all." And he said, "They kept some; they're hiding it in that truck." The Afghan leader there at that time was the mullah. I went to him and said, "I understand we have lots of supplies left over." He said, "No, we don't have any more supplies—they're all distributed." I knew he was lying. If this had happened in the U.S., if he had been a member of my unit, I'd have pulled a weapon on him, said you're guilty, read him his rights and put him into custody.⁷

The Army major was surprised to find out that the mullah, whom he had found to be helpful and agreeable, would not only take things that didn't belong to him, but also lie about it. However, he forced himself to assess the situation from the mullah's point of view:

He wasn't a U.S. officer, he was an Afghan. From our perspective, he was stealing supplies. But in his book, he was supporting his troops. He was taking what was deserved for doing his work. You can't take a black and white perspective that it's right or wrong. My way of handling it was not to be accusatory. I wanted to point it out and let him know that we knew, but I wasn't going to stick my finger in his face. In the States, it'd be a different matter. If I created a situation here where I was the bad guy, embarrassed the mullah, it would've been bad. Instead, I recognized that he was trying to do the right thing by his troops.

We found that cross-cultural experts consistently adopt the perspective of culturally different "others" as a strategy for developing a deeper understanding within situations they initially experience as surprising or confusing. Research suggests that "perspective-taking" is indeed an

effective strategy within social and intercultural situations and that individuals who frequently tend to take others' viewpoints are able to describe their own positions in a manner more easily understood by others.⁸ Perspective-taking also increases the ability to discover hidden agreements and reach desired outcomes in negotiations.⁹

5. Test your knowledge. Cross-cultural experts do not have a firm expectation that everything they know (and everything they have been told) is true. They continually question their understanding and have well-developed strategies for finding out when and how they are wrong.

Adopting a scientific mindset, including formulating and testing hypotheses, is associated with cross-cultural competence. For example, one study found that the types of questions cross-cultural experts ask in order to make sense of cultural surprises are similar to the kinds of questions scientists ask in order to test their hypotheses.¹⁰

Trying out different strategies and directly seeking feedback are two ways of testing cultural hypotheses. A Marine Corps lieutenant colonel provided us with a good example of how he used both strategies in Iraq to test a hypothesis about a cultural rule he learned in training:

I remember going through training; they'd tell us, "If they see the bottom of your feet, that's automatically an offense." I thought, "Well okay, that's pretty extreme." So, I asked my interpreter, "I always was told if you show the bottom of your feet it's an egregious sin." He goes, "It depends, if your legs are tight and all that. They know that you don't mean to be disrespectful, but just don't automatically show the bottom of your feet, if you're sitting down cross-legged." So, I would make an effort out of it when I sat cross-legged, I would apologize, and the people would say, "No, we know, you Americans . . . we don't take this as an offense." So, *I inquired and I tested it out* and sure enough, no big problem."

A second Marine Corps lieutenant colonel's experience in Somalia provides a great example of using cultural mentors to test a hypothesis. In this case, the lieutenant colonel was surprised to see men with red hair and beards in local crowds, in a country where the population generally has black or brown hair. He developed a hypothesis and vetted it with his interpreter:

In Somalia, if you see a man in the crowd with a red beard, and it is usually just a small little goatee-type of beard, or his hair dyed red as well, then that tells you he is the leader or the tribal elder. I actually learned it when I got into country. And the way I learned about it is there would be a crowd, and people would be talking to me, but instead of answering me, they would look towards the man with the red beard. So I just kind of put two-and-two together to figure out, "This is the guy in charge because every-body keeps looking to him for answers." I confirmed it with my interpreter. I said, "Why is his beard red? I mean obviously there are no redheads over here. Is this man a leader?"

6. Reflect on your experiences. Cross-cultural experts continue to learn from experiences after they happen. During an intercultural interaction, there is little time to reflect on what one is seeing, hearing, and thinking, but afterwards, one can think back over the experience and perhaps uncover signals not noticed at the time or assessments and assumptions made that turned out to be incorrect. It is even possible to identify missed opportunities.

The power of reflection as a learning strategy is evident in the following account of the first meeting between a Marine Corps lieutenant colonel and an Afghan battalion commander in charge of mentoring. Present for the meeting were all the Afghan commander's officers, about a dozen or so. The Marine colonel went around the room introducing himself. Suddenly, one of the Afghans stood up, pointed at the colonel, and said (in front of all the other Afghan officers), "*This man is a jerk.*"

The Marine remembered—

Now, I'm leaving a family behind. I'm deployed, and part of me is thinking, "I don't need to take this crap." I wanted to say, "Hey buckaroo, I'm here to help you guys, you're not doing anything for me here." But I bit my tongue and swallowed it. *I didn't know where he was going at the time . . .* But, I understood that to be effective I could never show that I had lost my temper. So I said, "Clearly, you are a wise man, for my wife, too, thinks I'm a jerk." And a cacophony of laughter broke out. . . . The Afghan officer became my biggest advocate through the whole deployment. *Later on, I was able to deduce* that he was trying to demonstrate in front of his peers that he was a man of importance and was using me as a way to demonstrate that by calling me a jerk.

...the types of questions cross-cultural experts ask in order to make sense of cultural surprises are similar to the kinds of questions scientists ask in order to test their hypotheses.

In a later interaction with the Afghan officer, the lieutenant colonel aired his hypothesis about the officer's intent, demonstrating to the Afghan officer that he had thought about the exchange and allowing the Marine to set the stage for the development of a deeper relationship.

The strategy of reflecting on experience as a way to develop expertise is well documented. Chess masters, for example, do not spend all their time playing against each other. In fact, they spend most of their time studying past positions and games.¹¹ Reflection can either occur internally or as part of a dialogue with a colleague or, even better, with a mentor. Reflection in the form of dialogue is an especially effective learning strategy because the process of formulating thoughts in order to express them to others is in and of itself a very useful learning activity that leads to meta-cognitive development.¹²

Applying Cultural Understanding to Guide Action

7. Adapt what you express and how you express it. Cross-cultural experts use their cultural knowledge and understanding to determine what they want to achieve and how to express themselves to accomplish it. Cross-cultural experts set communication objectives by visualizing how they want the other person to see them. Then they engage in disciplined self-presentation to meet those ends. For example, the Marine lieutenant colonel who the Afghan called a jerk thought carefully about how he wanted his response to be perceived:

I understood that for me to be effective I could never show that I had lost my temper. I had to consistently remain calm, cool, and collected under any circumstance. If the Afghans saw me come unglued, they would probably say, "He can't control his emotions." And I had learned in training that a Pashtun man

always keeps his emotions under check. So if I could not control my emotions there, how could they trust me in a firefight? So I tried to demonstrate that not only could I remain cool, but I could turn this around and show that I can influence others and be in control. What I wanted to do was be humorous without being crazy-looking.

Considering the context means considering *all* the messages communicated: through words, body language, posture, dress, social context, and actions (e.g., showing up early or late, showing up alone or with a security detail). It also involves anticipating that one might not achieve all one's objectives in a single conversation. As General Zinni observed in the quotation at the beginning of this paper, "*Cultural understanding helps you discover what your objectives should be.*" In our interview, he went further to describe the key to developing such understanding:

We [Americans] come intent to convey a message. It's in our nature, and it's our cultural thing that we don't listen. We come with the message precooked. You know, it's the way we do business. And so, they shut down. I mean that can be disrespectful. You know, I really shouldn't form a message until I listen.

The notion that one should "seek first to understand, then to be understood" (formulated by Covey in his original *7 Habits*) is a valuable recommendation for human interaction in any cultural context. Covey himself described the universal usefulness of the strategy: "Unless people trust you and believe that you understand them, they will be too angry, defensive, guilty, or afraid to be influenced."

How Can Military Leaders Foster Cross-Cultural Expertise?

The above are seven mental strategies that highly experienced warrior-diplomats use to develop and practice cross-cultural expertise. Our research suggests that these mental strategies have implications for effective mission performance and mission readiness: preparing for deployments overseas, gaining traction within a new culture or environment, and learning from experiences (Figure 1-3).

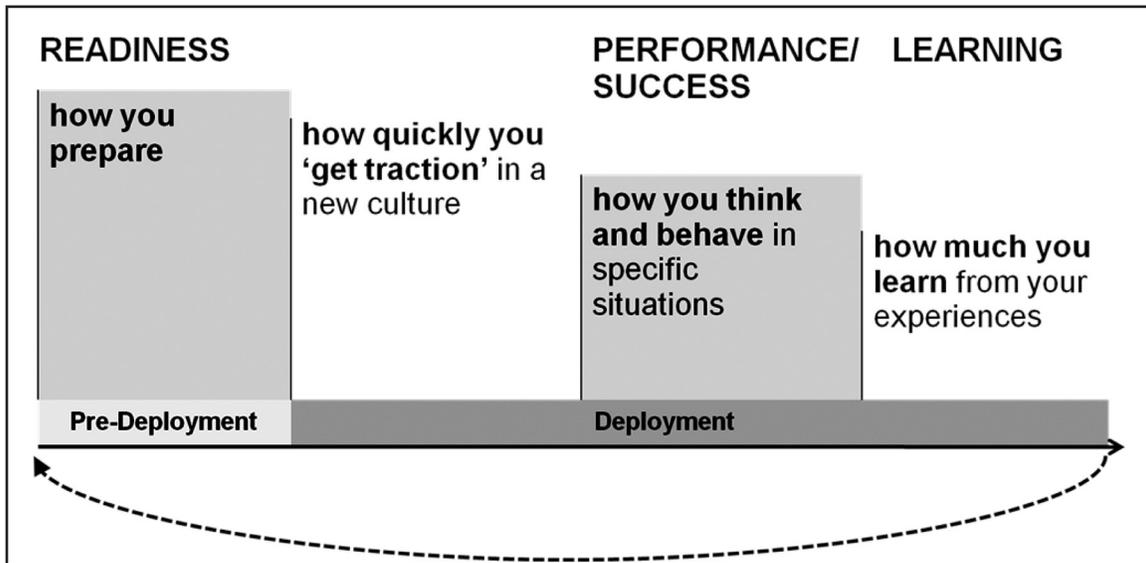


Figure 1-3: Cross-cultural expertise has implications for mission-related performance, mission readiness, and ongoing learning.

Mental strategies for 3C are often discussed as the results of a great deal of experience, and clearly experience helps.¹³ However, it is possible to foster effective mental habits early in one’s career path, setting the stage for ongoing cultural learning beginning with the first overseas assignment.

Many leaders likely already engage in some of the practices described in this article. We hope that presenting an inclusive set of strategies will help leaders advance their own cross-cultural competence and perhaps enhance ongoing training and development of junior staff.¹⁴ One way for leaders to enhance cultural skills and knowledge is to deliberately foster dialogue with and between subordinates around cultural issues. Many of the experts we interviewed participate in ongoing discussions about culture and intercultural experiences online in the military blogosphere or on Facebook.

To open discussion, leaders can share this article with subordinates. Further, to begin fostering development of the seven habits, one might organize a discussion of cultural issues or experiences around the following activities:

- Get members of the group to report on cultural surprises.
- Discuss them as a group.
- Try to take the native’s perspective.
- Formulate some hypotheses.
- Locate cultural mentors and ask them questions.
- Compare their answers.

Such discussions can help seasoned practitioners set or define a positive vision. By describing and providing examples of possible outcomes produced by handling intercultural interactions wisely, leaders encourage acquiring important cultural knowledge and skills before, during, and after deployment.

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Battered Spouse Syndrome How to Better Understand Afghan Behavior

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“We cannot come closer to you. We have no security. The Afghan forces and ISAF [International Security Assistance Force] come occasionally and only stay for a little time. When they leave, the Taliban come in and hurt us because they think we are cooperating with you,” the village elder explained.

“What if we arm your men and pay you to protect yourselves?” the young American captain asked.

“Ridiculous. They would kill us.”

“How many Taliban come in at a time?”

“Ten to twenty.”

“How many men could we arm, who could fight and protect you?”

“Two hundred and fifty.”

“So, why do you say we can’t arm you to protect yourselves? [250 is a lot more than 10 or 20]”

“Because the Taliban will kill us.”

This discussion between a village elder, Afghan district chief, and a U.S. Army captain was similar to others that members of Provincial Reconstruction Team Zabul would have throughout our time in Zabul Province in southern Afghanistan in 2010. Village elders had convinced themselves, despite facts to the contrary, that the insurgents possessed almost superhuman capabilities. While the elders’ words and actions signified broad, passive support for the insurgents, the shame and humiliation they felt at the hands of insurgent treatment was also evident. We were not seeing the fiercely independent and aggressive Afghan. Could this really be the “Graveyard of Empires”? We were not seeing great men of honor. Could this really be the land of *Pashtunwali*—the unwritten code of conduct that places such an emphasis on honor?

Clearly, significant gaps existed between Afghan behaviors described in books and in our training and how Afghans actually behaved. Furthermore, the books presented cultural and historical perspectives, but they did not provide useful psychological insights or ways of interpreting behavior. As a result, they ignored the effects that decades of conflict and rampant poverty had on the people.

In a counterinsurgency environment, both sides fight for the allegiance of the local population. Without it, success is unlikely. In Afghanistan, the government, supported by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), is on one side of the conflict; the Taliban and other insurgent groups are on the other. How can ISAF and the Afghan government help break the insurgent-population connection and improve the relationship between the people and government? How do we answer the many *if/then* questions? (*If the Afghan government or ISAF does this, then the population will behave as follows. . . .*) The counterinsurgent must understand how the population makes decisions, such as why it decides to passively support the insurgents. The interpretive lenses that U.S. military personnel use influence their understanding of Afghanistan and Afghans and, more important, shape their future decisions on tactics, strategy, and policies for the war in Afghanistan.

Current literature and various training curricula for deploying organizations offer ways to interpret and understand Afghanistan. However, they neither satisfactorily explain how Afghans make decisions nor offer much help in predicting how they will behave in the future. Cultural lenses currently in vogue focus on the roles of the Pashtunwali code and Islam, as well as family and sub-tribal relationships (as opposed to broader national commonalities). Historical lenses focus on the British, Soviet, and other military failures inside Afghanistan. Applying these lenses, and with some generalization, we would expect to see Afghans rebelling against centralized government or foreign influence, unwilling to be marshaled, and quickly engaging in violent exchanges when conflict arises. The current training and literature would have you see the population's decision to passively support the insurgents as a function of familial connections, a cultural aversion to being controlled, and wariness toward outsiders, especially non-muslims.

This does not sufficiently explain why the population behaves the way it does. It does not explain the obvious anger felt by the population, especially the elders, toward the insurgents. It does not explain the inaction of the population or the sense of hopelessness that is so prevalent.

Battered-Spouse Syndrome and Southern Afghanistan

Battered-spouse syndrome refers to the medical and psychological conditions that can affect a spouse who has been repeatedly abused, physically and/or mentally, over time.¹ Three components of battered-spouse syndrome provide insights into the behaviors of Afghans abused by insurgents:

- The cycle of abuse has created an environment of persistent fear for the victim.
- Over time, the victim gives the abuser more power by perceiving him as omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient.
- As the abuse continues, the victim's behavior increasingly becomes one of "learned helplessness."²

Persistent Fear

“Three years ago you came here and brought us a well. The day after you left, the Taliban came in and destroyed it. Two years ago, you came here and fixed our irrigation system. The next day after you left, the Taliban came in and destroyed it. Last year you honored our request and did not come here. We pooled our money and bought a small tractor. The Taliban thought you bought the tractor for us, so they destroyed it. Please do not come here anymore. It makes it harder for us.” — Village elder from the Shah Joy District, Zabul Province, talking to the provincial deputy governor.

Fear can become the dominant factor that drives the behavior of a battered spouse, and the climate of fear can have such a distortive effect on judgment that the battered spouse’s behaviors become shortsighted and seemingly contradictory. Take, for example, a battered spouse who calls 911. The pain is so intense and the fear of further harm so great that the battered spouse calls for help. It is a decision with an immediate time horizon—stop the pain right now. Once the police arrive and the abuse has stopped, the battered spouse’s decision making remains the same—to minimize the pain inflicted by the abuser—but the victim’s behavior does an about-face. As a result, a particularly dangerous time for the police is when they arrest the abuser. At that moment, the battered spouse may actually attack the police, the very people she called to help protect her. Although her behavior has changed dramatically, the decision making remains the same—fear drives behavior designed to minimize pain. In this case, she hopes her attack on the police communicates her support and commitment to her abuser so that he will return home less angry.

Persistent fear similar to that of a battered spouse was evident throughout Zabul Province among the village elders.

Persistent fear similar to that of a battered spouse was evident throughout Zabul Province among the village elders. They often made shortsighted decisions and then engaged in contradictory behaviors that made making a connection between the leaders and their government more difficult. Additionally, the elders’ behaviors were often contrary to the villagers’ best interests, insurgent retribution notwithstanding. For example, slightly more than half the villages refused any governmental assistance, including basic humanitarian aid. Had they been pro-insurgent, one would expect them to take as much from their government and ISAF as possible in an attempt to cause economic injury, an explicit goal of Al- Qaeda.³

A climate of persistent fear was also evident at the approximately 75 shuras we attended. Elder turnout was often low. In one instance, only six elders showed up for the shura. One explained to the deputy governor that the Afghan security forces had not told them about the shura, so most of the elders were out working the fields several kilometers away. Deftly engaging the elder during a 20-minute dialogue, the deputy governor gently prodded, pushed, and cajoled him into calling the larger group of elders out from an adjacent compound where they had been hiding. At another shura, seeing low turnout, one enterprising district chief then drove through the bazaar, with a police escort, and ordered stores closed and shop keepers to report to the nearby school for the shura. Soon the attendees’ numbers swelled to over 400.

In the majority of shuras, the initial remarks made by elders were critical of the government, ISAF, or both. Their comments often focused on civilian casualties, continued neglect, corruption, inability to stop the insurgents, or some other negative angle towards their government or ISAF. These political announcements were designed to ward off insurgent retribution. This behavior was critical for the insurgents, because keeping the population disconnected from the Afghan government increased the insurgency's chances for success. Some elders even refused government gifts (typically turbans or prayer rugs) because they were afraid of what might happen if they returned to their villages bearing gifts and the insurgents found out.

The elders' fears also had the effect of denying basic services to the population through closing medical clinics and schools or refusing aid. The nongovernmental organization Ibn Sina operated a number of the medical clinics in Zabul. Ibn Sina was considered capable and credible by the population and maintained a good connection with the government's public health director. Despite a demonstrated track record of courage, when insurgent intimidation became too strong, Ibn Sina would relent and close the clinic, with the option of either keeping it closed, reopening in a nearby area more firmly controlled by the insurgents, or relocating to another district. A schoolteacher in one district had his ear cut off as a warning for him to close the school where he worked. In another district, village elders opted to run unregistered home schools to avoid insurgent retribution rather than registering the schools with the government and receiving government assistance.

The elders' fears also caused high levels of mistrust. Conversations involved only what would supposedly produce the least pain in terms of insurgent intimidation and retribution. Body language shifted abruptly and conversations stopped when young men approached them. One village elder developed an elaborate authentication procedure for use by the government and ISAF when they called him on his cell phone.

One of the insurgency's central messages was straightforward and brutish: "We have the power. You do not. The corrupt government does not. The inept foreigners do not. We come and go as we please. They do not. Because we have the power, you will listen to us."

At shuras in four different districts, elders asked, "How can you expect us to stand up and fight the Taliban, when you have 46 countries here fighting them and you can't win?" (Because the number "46" was mentioned in each of the four districts, we concluded it came from an insurgent talking point that had resonated with the elders.) The insurgents also restricted villager mobility, often by emplacing IEDs to prevent villagers from leaving via local roads. This parallels the predicament of battered spouses when abusers restrict their mobility by denying them access to a car, seizing their credit cards, and so on.

This had the effect of—

- Emasculating the elders.
- Limiting information and social connections available to the villagers.
- Reducing economic activity—absent insurgent permission and assistance.

Other uses of violence—beatings, kidnapping, and murder—typically had two purposes—to punish the offender and to sustain the climate of fear to promote compliance with insurgent decrees. An instance of this occurred when insurgents kidnapped an off-duty police officer along with several family members. The insurgents killed him, and told his father, also a government employee, that they would kill his remaining family members if he did not immediately quit his government job and leave the province. The next day, the government employee had resigned his position and left the area. The insurgents released the remaining family members they had held captive.

The All-Knowing, All-Powerful Insurgent

“If you need to call my mobile, we need to have a code to make sure it is me you are talking to. If you call, you will ask for me by name. If it is me, I will say ‘which Haji Sahib are you calling for.’ You will say, ‘the one with the ID.’ If it is me, I will reply, ‘This is he.’ so you will know it is me, and we can talk frankly with each other.”—An elder, worried that an insurgent informant would answer his cell phone and know he was working with his government.

Trapped in a cycle of abuse, her judgment impaired, a battered spouse can ascribe attributes to her abuser that almost elevate him to superhuman or god-like status. This significantly increases the power imbalance between the abuser and victim and reduces the victim’s ability to make sound decisions.

Elders and mullahs asked to attend shuras often displayed a similar fear of “all-knowing” insurgents. They expressed interest in attending shuras with their government, but simultaneously exhibited extreme fear. They were worried that someone would report their attendance to the insurgents.

The elders and mullahs frequently proposed one of two alternative strategies. Those close enough to the provincial capital often requested shuras be held at the governor’s compound or at a director’s office near the bazaar, since a visit to the bazaar was a legitimate behavior. If that failed, they would say the governor had ordered them to his compound. This was a legitimate excuse to attend because they had no choice in the matter. (It was also an ironic acknowledgment of government legitimacy.) The elders and mullahs also frequently asked the government to send security forces into the villages a day or two ahead of the scheduled shura and have the security force leaders “order” them to attend the meeting. The insurgents typically did not seek reprisals against attendees in these cases.

The insurgents used informants to keep tabs on the population. The tactic caused people to fear that the insurgents would soon know about any public act and even some private ones, and large segments of the population became hostage to their inflated perceptions of what the insurgents knew.

For the insurgents, this had two primary benefits. First, it increased the return on their investment, because every report from an informant and every act of violence filled the people’s minds with the possibility of many more. Anyone could be an informant, and an attack could occur at anytime. This destroyed a classic Afghan trait, pragmatism. Second, it eroded the population’s psychological strength. Hope evaporated. The implications were profound and corroborated General Petraeus’ observation that human terrain is the decisive terrain in

counterinsurgency.⁴ As the importance of the human terrain increases, so does the importance of human psychological factors such as confidence and hope. We understand the importance of morale during high-intensity conflict. Why do we ignore the importance of the population's morale in an insurgency?

Learned Helplessness

Learned helplessness is the most disturbing component of battered-spouse syndrome and likely the most important one for commanders, trainers, and COIN operators to understand. It occurs as the victim increasingly believes he is unable to control the outcome of his situation. Over time, the victim will become passive and accept painful stimuli, even though escape is possible and apparent. Low self-esteem, depression, and hopelessness often result. As an Italian proverb darkly observes, "Hope is the last thing ever lost." By the time victims lose hope, they feel all else is lost to them as well. It is not surprising, then, that battered-spouse syndrome is often considered a form of post-traumatic stress disorder.

In this current fight, one of the key goals is for the population to choose the government while rejecting the insurgents. *Choosing and rejecting* both require the population to act. Future stability and any degree of progress in Afghanistan require an enfranchised and participative population. This can only be accomplished by a population confident that its government will both represent it *and* exist in the long-term.

In Zabul, learned helplessness was expressed in many ways: the elder who was convinced 250 armed villagers would be overrun by 20 insurgents, the men in the bazaar who found fault with everything despite concrete evidence of improvements, and the consistent refrain of "no, that's impossible" from government officials and elders alike whenever ISAF encouraged them to solve their own problems. Learned helplessness is beneficial for the insurgents: sustaining it does not cost very much, while restoring a sense of hope, confidence, and action requires a substantial, consistent investment from the government and ISAF.

Implications for Commanders, Trainers, and Operators

Five implications follow, listed in order of potential impact. Some of these implications reinforce previous findings regarding the fight in Afghanistan.

Nothing builds hope, and breeds success, like success. In Zabul, Americans needed to create and lead projects and programs in the initial stages, then transfer control to the Afghans, with the United States moving into a mentoring role. While a majority of Zabuli government officials and elders were initially skeptical of success, they soon found that Afghan ownership and leadership were both possible and necessary for long-term growth.

For example, when we arrived in early 2010, the norm for both government officials and elders was to come directly to the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) with project requests. The only Afghan involvement in the process was to make the request, then sit back and wait for the Americans to get it done. An enterprising young captain succeeded in reinvigorating a project coordination process. He sold the governor's office on the concept and then led the first meeting. Two people did most of the speaking at the first meeting. The young captain said everything constructive, and the other primary speaker, a senior Afghan leader, spent all of his time berating the other government officials present. The process was similar throughout the first month of meetings, but eventually, the Afghan dialogue became more constructive: the

participants discussed prioritizing limited resources, identifying focus areas for the province, and identifying the key districts for development. A month and a half into the initiative, one of the governor's advisors took over leadership of the process and the captain became his deputy. Five months into it, both the lead and deputy were Afghan government officials. The captain now quietly advised from the third position. Afghan participation in project design and quality assurance for reconstruction and development projects had increased from five percent of the total to 28 percent, and no medium- or large-sized project began in the province unless it had first gone through the Afghan project coordination process, maximizing the government's role while minimizing ISAF's.

We need to know the human terrain better. As General Petraeus noted, human terrain is the decisive terrain. The population is the prize for which both sides are fighting. The population will decide the winner. Therefore, the population's decision making is of paramount importance. Just as the American military has done an admirable job training and educating the force on the culture and customs of the nations where it fights, it must train and educate the force on the psychological aspects of populations. There is no curriculum to apply across every nation, but the populations of weak and failed states share a number of psychological attributes brought on by persistent instability and insecurity. More specific theories (such as battered-spouse syndrome) may also be appropriate to teach our warfighters to help them better understand how Afghans interpret data and make decisions. In addition, the military should request academia and think tanks to pursue research in this area.

We should not give the insurgents free advertising. The typical approach to information operations when insurgents commit atrocities is to inform the population as quickly as possible and address as broad an audience as possible. This approach certainly makes sense from a Western perspective because it evokes outrage over the killing of innocents. However, it incorrectly presumes that the Afghan population was not already outraged by insurgent atrocities. More important, this focus on broadcasting insurgent atrocities unwittingly gives the insurgents free advertising. They are intimidating the population, and our broadcasting information about their atrocities ensures news of each event reaches an even larger segment of the Zabul population, exacerbating the population's persistent fear and belief in the insurgents' superhuman capabilities. The population is like a battered spouse enjoying a breath of fresh air at work among friendly co-workers, only to receive periodic email reminders that when she gets home her husband will be drunk and violent. Disseminating the news aids the abuser and further weakens the battered spouse.

...failed states share a number of psychological attributes brought on by persistent instability and insecurity.

Eternal optimism and a "can-do" attitude are transferrable. The American belief that no problem is too big and every problem has a solution gets Americans into trouble periodically, but that optimism and "can-do" attitude have also served us well and have a magnetic appeal for others. They reinforce the COIN best practice of American and host nation citizens working side-by-side in the belief that the more integration, the better the outcome will be. For example, a government district chief represented 10,000 to 30,000 constituents. Typically, PRTs, with ISAF's government expertise, are centrally located in the provincial capital. As a result, PRTs visit chiefs of outlying districts only one to three hours every week or two. To augment this, our PRT sent four small teams to live in the districts fulltime and partner with district chiefs. The results were significant: mentoring time with district chiefs rose 677 percent, which in turn

drove an increase of 1,150 percent in the time district chiefs spent with the population. Initially, none of the district chiefs were rated as effective with advisors. After several months of the full-time PRT presence, four were assessed as effective with advisors. As their effectiveness and time spent with the population increased, so too did the number of services and job opportunities delivered to the people. Our experiences suggested that an American presence was necessary to create forward momentum, but that after this initial success, Afghan leaders could sustain and improve the process.

We should encourage roles for the youth. Mostly, the Afghan teens and young adults seemed less like battered spouses than their middle-aged and elderly counterparts did. They appeared to have higher self-esteem and greater confidence in their ability to control events than the older population. Two programs in Zabul capitalized on this point. The first was the United Nations Development Program, which funded advisors for the provincial government. These young college graduates brought significant energy and capability to the governor's office, took the lead and deputy positions for the project coordination process discussed earlier, played a role in the increased shura schedule for the government with village elders, and developed the vetting process and training program for the provincial intern program.

The second was an intern program envisioned by an Air Force technical sergeant, who developed the concept and presented it to the governor for approval. Once approved, the governor's advisors quickly assumed responsibility for administering the program. The advisors developed an interview process and written test for high school students and recent graduates, as well as a one-week training curriculum. In round one, 57 young men competed for 25 slots across the governor's office and 10 governmental agencies. In round two, four young women interned with the education department. As we redeployed, more than 200 young men were competing for an additional 50 government intern slots in round three of the program.

The intern program connected the participants' families to their government. Interns were paid a stipend, which drew a positive financial linkage between their families and the government, and the interns' physical presence in the respective government offices communicated a symbolic linkage to the undecided population and insurgents alike. In addition, the interns provided capable manpower to the government. Zabul had an abysmally low-literacy rate of only one to ten percent, which was countered, in part, by the literate interns.

Conclusion

To succeed in counterinsurgency, the military must become masters of the decisive terrain—the human terrain. To this end, the military has focused on providing training on host nations' cultures and customs. The training provides a number of lenses through which to interpret the behaviors of a host nation population and better understand its decision making calculus in order to predict future behavioral choices. In Afghanistan, the current lenses do not sufficiently explain behaviors. More research and a stronger focus on teaching the psychological factors associated with living in weak and failed states would help significantly. In the case of Afghanistan, understanding the battered-spouse syndrome would aid in understanding Afghan behaviors and help predict the population's responses to future actions and policies, reduce ISAF frustration, and facilitate the transition of power and authority to the fledgling Afghan government.

End Notes

1. For further discussion on battered-spouse (woman) syndrome see the works of Lenore Walker such as *The Battered Woman* (1979), *The Battered Woman Syndrome* (1984), and “Battered Woman Syndrome: Empirical Findings” in the *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* (2006).
2. For further discussion on learned helplessness see the works of Martin Seligman such as “Learned Helplessness: Theory and Evidence,” “Learned Helplessness,” and “Depression and Learned Helplessness in Man”; as well as Neta Bargai, et al., “Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Depression in Battered Women: The Mediating Role of Learned Helplessness,” at <<http://www.springerlink.com/content/c701v11523313865/>>.
3. Comments from Osama bin Laden, such as “We are continuing this policy in bleeding America to the point of bankruptcy,” from a 2004 videotape, accessed 1 Jul 11, accessed at <http://articles.cnn.com/2004-11-11/world/binladen.tape_1_aljazeera-qaedabin?_s=PM:WORLD> (1 Jul 11).
4. Opening Statement of General David H. Petraeus, Confirmation Hearing: Commander, ISAF/US Forces–Afghanistan, 29 June 2010, accessed at <<http://graphics8.nytimes.com/packages/pdf/world/2010/petraeus-opening-statement.pdf>> (6 July 2011).

Understanding and Communicating Neutralizing the Arghandab River Valley Insurgency

By LTC Michael J. Simmering

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Observations from the Field

Over ten years after the United States and our coalition partners intervened in Afghanistan to prevent the country from remaining a terrorist safe haven, there is some debate whether progress has truly occurred. In reality, the coalition's military and civilian efforts helped forge a strong central government with representation from throughout the country. Villager by villager, the coalition worked hard to forge enduring political solutions around a framework of governance the people of Afghanistan could accept. In certain areas, Afghanistan National Security Forces maintain security independently. While some may hesitate to guarantee mission success at this point, progress in select areas is undeniable. The Arghandab District in Khandahar Province is one such area of marked progress. Over the last year, we witnessed a 90% reduction in enemy activity despite drawing down the number of ISAF and ANSF Army units in the valley by almost 50%. Achieving progress and the prospect of enduring stability here has not been the result of happenstance but instead is a direct result of an ability to understand the human terrain and to effectively communicate and implement a system for governance that ties the villagers to the District using a vision they helped create.

“The fractures in political and social dynamics of the country serve as a basis for the insurgency in Afghanistan...”

Over the last thirty years the Arghandab District has been home to some of Afghanistan's most fierce fighting and its most infamous leaders. During the Soviet invasion, the people of the Arghandab soundly defeated a Soviet Division's onslaught that left the region badly scarred. Osama Bin Laden walked the streets of the Arghandab at one time during the Taliban regime. The Taliban's seat of government (and Mullah Omar's house) lies a mere thousand meters from the Arghandab's southern boundary. In 2001, key personalities in the area negotiated the withdrawal of the Taliban from Khandahar City. Regardless, an insurgency developed in the region that forced the coalition's hand, resulting in a surge of forces into the region. As recently as last year, Arghandab District found itself garrisoned with nineteen different company-sized U.S. and Afghan Army elements along with almost 400 Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) and 170 Afghan Local Police (ALP).

Today, the Arghandab District records the lowest number of attacks per month tracked since 2006. The number of units positioned in the area has been cut in nearly half from the height of the surge in October 2010. The people of the district largely support GIROA, and the security forces and government officials demonstrate to their partners on a daily basis that Afghans are preparing to assume the lead for both security and governance. This massive change in both

the attitude of the populace and the capabilities of the ANSF is a direct result of two factors – understanding the area and communication between all parties to achieve enduring stability. This progress was a result of the ability to listen and communicate with the people, the ability to understand grievances, and the ability to negotiate, arbitrate, and compromise to achieve an enduring Afghan solution that resolves the root causes of instability. We followed basic COIN doctrine (focus on the population, enable indigenous forces, etc.); however, our attention to specific aspects of COIN doctrine tailored for the Afghan environment allowed us to make unexpected inroads more quickly than expected. Although we learned some hard lessons along the way, we followed some simple guidelines. In our opinion, broad application of these guidelines to each contentious district in Afghanistan could result in a decrease in violence.

Understand the People

As with all insurgencies, the fractures in political and social dynamics of the country serve as a basis for the insurgency in Afghanistan. The failure to achieve an adequate long term political settlement at the conclusion of major hostilities continues to serve as the basis for grievances at the strategic and operational levels. Whether ideologically, religiously, or politically motivated, hostilities will ultimately end through political means. In the Arghandab, these longstanding and unresolved grievances served as the basis for tensions and violence among the tribes, villages, and various political factions – some related to the mujahideen rivalry period of the early 1990s. Until recently, we did not understand the implications of these long standing grievances at the tactical level in the Arghandab; we underwent a massive effort to understand the human terrain and the history of the district.

As a military force, the tendency of patrols outside the wire is to ask “where are the bad guys?” Others will say “please come to the next shura” in an effort to strengthen governance at the lowest levels. However, our approach differed somewhat. Our primary questions were “tell me about your village...tell me about the people...tell me about the history of the area.” Done on a massive scale, the development of a true, deeper understanding of the local history allowed us to piece together the social and political dynamics of the District, map the human terrain below the village level, and more clearly understand the various competing factors that needed to be balanced to achieve enduring stability.

Foster a Sustainable Government System at the District Level

At its very core, a government exists for one reason: to maintain security for a collective group of people. After mapping the human terrain, understanding the grievances of the populace, and placing the people at the center of the solution, we created a system-based solution for enduring governance that kept grievances to a level such that the indigenous security forces would be able to combat the residual violence independently. With the help of district leadership, we mapped the human terrain into thirty three village clusters (or sub districts) of people who identified themselves as a distinct area. Within each of the 33 areas, we convinced these clusters, through negotiation, to formally (through village shuras) choose a malik (district representative) whom the District governor approved. We further grouped the 33 village clusters into 11 police sub zones that divided security responsibilities for the entire area. The AUP appointed an Afghan police commander for each area to settle grievances at the lowest level. From there, we created a representative council at the district level, with leaders from the 33 different sub-districts. This enduring governance mechanism provides a forum for communication and dispute resolution that helps maintain security.

“By focusing on the political and social dynamics of the region, we were better able to understand the underlying causes of insurgent activity in the area...by focusing on enabling the Afghan to settle these differences, the insurgency within the region quickly dissipated.”

Enable the Afghans to Settle Internal Grievances

After 30 years of war, no one understands the implications of violence more than the Afghan people. By focusing on the political and social dynamics of the region, we were better able to understand the underlying causes of insurgent activity in the area. Further, by focusing on enabling the Afghans to settle these differences, the insurgency within the region quickly dissipated. Given that the Arghandab has an effective District Governor and an effective District Chief of Police, we focused heavily on creating solutions that put them at the forefront. While we used our human terrain maps to create a system for sub-district governance, we used the district leaders to ultimately tie the villages to the district level. Routine visits to remote villages by our district leaders slowly built momentum in governance and security.

Enable the Population to Protect Themselves

The ALP program served as a basis for allowing the people of the Arghandab to secure themselves. This CJSOTF-run program is too often left up to the SOF community to execute unilaterally due to the sheer size of the country. In our district, the approach differed. All Battlespace owning units had a responsibility to execute Village Stability Operations (VSO). All units had the responsibility for establishing a shura, malik, and village counsel in each of the village clusters. When the opportunity presented itself, all units had the responsibility for coordinating the growth of ALP and enabling this SOF-run, MoI-driven program. Currently, the Arghandab has nearly 300 ALP established in the district. Additionally, these ALP were subordinated to the existing police force through the sub-zone check point commanders. This approach allowed the locals to select those who secure their villages, but legitimized those selected by partnering them under the district police leadership.

Where the Population Can't Protect Itself, Enable the Afghan Security Forces

Police were positioned into areas where we anticipated that the creation of ALP would ultimately not happen because of the social dynamics of the region. Where the 383 man police force for the district could not maintain security unilaterally, we positioned ANA forces. US forces were positioned to enable partnered operations between all indigenous forces with a focus on training the ANSF to lead operations. During lulls in enemy activity, ISAF forces sacrificed security patrols to train the ANSF. The ANSF, in turn, understood that the departure of ISAF from the region was inevitable, and they needed to be prepared to maintain security in the area. While enabling ANSF can prove difficult because of continuing sustainment challenges, the gains made from legitimizing them in the eyes of the populace only served to strengthen our governance efforts.

Everything is Geared Towards Transition

ISAF forces will remain in Afghanistan for a finite amount of time. Given the time constraint, our team established a long term campaign plan that, based upon the desires of the district leadership, worked towards a vision of enduring stability. Primarily, we are not here to combat the Taliban or Haqqani networks. We are here to help the people combat their enemies until a political solution can be achieved. Using the human terrain as a basis, we established a final vision of security in the Arghandab where the 383 police and 400 ALP maintain security in the area on their own. We sold that plan to the Afghan leadership, and then we sank all of our effort into enabling transition towards this enduring vision rather than on the enemy. By focusing on strengthening governance and enabling the ANSF, the people began to slowly view GIRoA as an alternative to the days of violence that litter Arghandab's past. Even key figures that freely admit supporting the Taliban only two years ago now openly interact with the District Government on a daily basis.

Enable Communication Between Everyone to Build the Team

In the end we are all trying to create a self-functioning Afghan sustainable team that we can leave behind for the Afghans to perpetuate of their own accord. The Afghans must do this together. Unity of the population became the theme for everything. "One Team" serves as the motto for all of the security forces – ISAF, AUP, ANA, and ALP. Making the local people identify with successes in the Arghandab became the focus for the entire district. By settling differences, by having the Afghans communicate the need for unity, by creating the governance and security mechanisms for them to do it by themselves, and by the constant drumbeat of inclusiveness, we brought tribes and villages together that had fought for years.

None of these aspects of our unit's counterinsurgency operations differ from the COIN doctrine that the US Army has learned over the last decade. Our application of the doctrine differed in the emphasis placed on understanding the people, creating a long term mechanism for stability at the district level and communicating that vision to bring people together.

The enemy is out there. To us, he presents a challenge, but is not the greatest threat we face. Focusing on alleviating the conditions throughout the battlespace that allow the enemy to exist and operate is the key to long-term stability. If a political solution is to be achieved in Afghanistan, then mechanisms to allow a political solution to take hold must be created at the grass roots level. Long term, inclusive and representative governance must be created at the village and district levels using the Afghan leaders to do it – that is a key to Afghanistan's future success.

Our experiences in the Arghandab have taught us that significant progress is possible...with the help of the population. We continue to focus on enabling the Afghan government and Afghan security forces to maintain this fragile peace. We aren't perfect. There are still attacks here, although we believe that the solutions we have achieved to secure peace will hold over time if the district government and security forces remain on their current course. With a 90% reduction in enemy activity in a one year period, it is evident the effects of our operations and the operations of units before us have begun to set the conditions for enduring stability in the Arghandab District.

A Failure to Engage Current Negotiation Strategies and Approaches

By MAJ Aram Donigian, U.S. Army; and Professor Jeff Weiss

This article was originally published in the May-June 2012 issue of Military Review, http://usacac.army.mil/CAC2/MilitaryReview/Archives/English/MilitaryReview_20120630_art009.pdf.

During a lunch with Afghan government officials not long ago, one of the Afghans, an attorney with 35 years of experience, passionately described the never-ending challenges he faced in reducing tax evasion at Afghan borders and customs depots. For more than five minutes, he described the thousands of papers and receipts that his team had to review to determine whether exemption paperwork was legitimate or counterfeit.

When the Afghan attorney finished speaking, a young Army major who had just been assigned to work with him simply responded, “Thank you for having lunch with us. It is a pleasure to break bread with you. I look forward to working together.”

This response was both odd and predictable. It was odd in the sense that the major did not respond at all to either the emotion or the substance of the attorney’s remarks. Anyone putting himself in the attorney’s shoes might well have thought, “I’m sorry, young man, but did you hear anything that I just said?” Yet, the major’s response was predictable. It was word for word, a textbook example of what military training centers and schools teach U.S. officers to say in such situations.

Later in the conversation, the Afghan attorney boldly ventured to set forth a possible solution to the problem: eliminate all tax exemptions, enforce payment by everyone, but also reduce U.S. support. While, of course, this was neither the time, place, nor level of authority for such a discussion, the Afghan’s action was an encouraging sign—an Afghan leader volunteering to offer a solution for a problem, without seeking a commitment of funds or other U.S. action. Unfortunately, the Army major was quick to tell the attorney, “No, we would never do that.” This essentially ended any further discussion on the subject. The response discouraged the attorney and made it less likely that he would share his ideas with us in the future or that he and his countrymen would believe any U.S. official the next time one asked them for their ideas and solutions.

The incident was yet another lost opportunity to ask “why” (to understand the needs and motivations driving the proposal). Alternative responses might have been, “That is an interesting idea worth discussing in another venue,” “We likely could not commit to your proposal, but I think the reason you are asking for that is because of ‘these concerns,’” “I’m not positive we could do that. What other ideas do you have?” or almost anything else that would have recognized the attorney’s concerns, kept the attorney engaged, and enabled a continuation of the dialogue.

This incident shows a U.S. failure to effectively engage and problem-solve with other people. While some positive, constructive interactions exist, they are diminished by more frequent debilitating actions (e.g., transactional engagements, use of threats, or giving little thought to measures of success).

A Faulty Mindset

While we should not throw out current negotiating procedures and techniques that are effective or positive, we must improve engagement effectiveness by addressing an inherently faulty mindset that arises from ignorance, unawareness, and untested assumptions about negotiation.

Although there have been many improvements over the past 10 years, military leaders have failed to shift their mindset to engage Afghans and, for that matter, other international, joint, and interagency partners. The following is just a sampling of statements by senior officers that demonstrate a concerned way of thinking:

- *“Looks like we have some horse trading to do. We’ll give a little on night raids, and they’ll give a little on Kandahar City.”* This statement demonstrates an inability to apply sophisticated problem solving approaches to complex, multiple issue discussions.
- *“That’s life in the bazaar—you’ve gotta walk away. Just for a little while.”* This extremely tactical approach is evidence of a game of offers, counter-offers, and threats: a game that leads to either a spiral of threats or a series of concessions and compromises, and a result that leaves both parties unsatisfied.
- *“The problem is that we’re not negotiating from a position of strength. That’s how you really influence people—hold back what they want until they do what you want.”* This demonstrates a belief that there are only two ways to negotiate—be tough or be weak—a faulty assumption about where power comes from in negotiation.
- *“We need to call those chips in.”* This statement indicates a “favors and ledgers” approach without necessarily understanding the limitations and problems with playing this game: it does not develop the long-term relationship, does not guarantee good communication, often results in unequal perspectives of the ledger, and ignores underlying concerns and fair standards.
- *“It was a successful engagement. Our messages were delivered.”* This demonstrates a belief that the primary purpose of an engagement is one-way communication. The application of talking points—originally a public affairs/media term—to engagements perpetuates this assumption.
- *“The key message to send is not that we have a problem, but that the Afghans have a problem, and we’re helping them out.”* One of the first assumptions that we ought to question is whether a problem is “theirs, ours, or both of ours.” If tested, typically one finds that the problem is “both of ours” and requires a joint approach to an effective process and substantive outcome.

These examples demonstrate why the military is so poorly prepared for and ineffective in negotiations. In reality, few agencies—including business, government, and not-for-profit organizations—are much better unless they have deliberately committed time and energy to developing negotiation as a core competency. Military engagement thinking lacks a disciplined framework for systematically working through people problems, resulting in ineffective results in the critical “last three feet” of interaction. A deliberate change in mindset is necessary, and the only way to achieve that change is through changing assumptions.

Unfortunately, most officers are unaware of their assumptions and ineffectiveness; many others seem convinced that they know what they are doing. Given the critical importance of being able to engage with people, an analogy about a more familiar system seems appropriate. Any officer would tell you that firing weapons to engage *effectively* with the enemy involves much more than just handing someone a weapon and telling him to throw rounds down range. Marksmanship and live-fire training are deliberate and sequenced events, beginning with basic drills and advancing to live-fire exercises. Why the need for focused training and skills? The answer is effectiveness! If leaders chose to not be deliberate in the training of key weapon systems, would anyone be surprised if effectiveness in employing those systems declined? Of course not. Why, then, are leaders surprised that ineffective approaches are used in engagements, knowing that very few officers have had exposure to the concepts, tools, and processes that could make them more effective?

Current Assumptions		New Assumptions
The keys to a successful negotiation are compromise and concession.	Versus	The key to a successful negotiation is creativity.
My best tools are statements of "Yes or No," "I'll give X if you give Y," and "Or Else."		My best tools are the questions, "What's driving that?" "How would we defend that and based on what standard?" and "What are some ways you think we might solve this?"
My main job is to get our message across.		My main job is to fully understand their perceptions and interests and engage them in joint problem-solving.
I am most persuasive when I know and show that I am right.		I am most persuasive when I think and show that I am open to persuasion, and when I truly believe I have at least a 1% chance of being "wrong" or can learn something from them.
Power comes from using force or financial and material leverage.		Power comes from driving understanding, creativity, and a fair process.
The only way to get something is to give them what they want.		If we can understand "why" they want something, we can discover more and likely better possible solutions.
If we give now, we can get later.		Creating fair, equal agreements that manage both parties' abilities for follow-through is more effective in the long run.
Failure is their problem.		Failure is a joint problem.
There are only two choices in negotiation: be a hard (anchor positions and make threats) or a soft (give in to build the relationship) negotiator.		The most effective negotiator knows his / her walk-away and has it in his / her back pocket, builds the relationship (develops trust on actions, not concessions), and negotiates substance on the merits (making use of interests, options, and legitimacy).
If they behave badly, I should too.		I should behave in a way that will move us toward where I want to go.
This negotiation is an isolated, transactional event.		The purpose and desired outcome for this event builds upon and sequences with past and future engagements.

Figure 4-1: Negotiation Assumptions

The military is missing opportunities in its engagements because it does not understand the process or the choices available, resulting in poor decisions focused on immediate outcomes. In some cases, officers eventually get the desired agreement but not the behavioral result, long-term change or follow-through. Evidence of this is that leaders continue to have the same difficult conversations multiple times. Over the past seven years, we built a list of the reasons why we believe military officers struggle with negotiations:

Officers lack formal education in how to engage. Current engagement methods are primarily based on experience and inadequate training, leading to unintended results. Officers rarely have the opportunity to see the long-term consequences of their actions, so experience tends to reinforce a short-term mentality for negotiations. “If I can use force to get something done now, why do I care about the conditions that I create for the person following me?” Abbreviated educational opportunities teach a process of understanding the other party’s needs in order to give him things to build trust to exploit later or make threats to get something now. These tactics have proven ineffective in long-term situations involving reoccurring, complex interactions. Officers need a common, robust vocabulary and framework for negotiation taught at all levels of officer education.

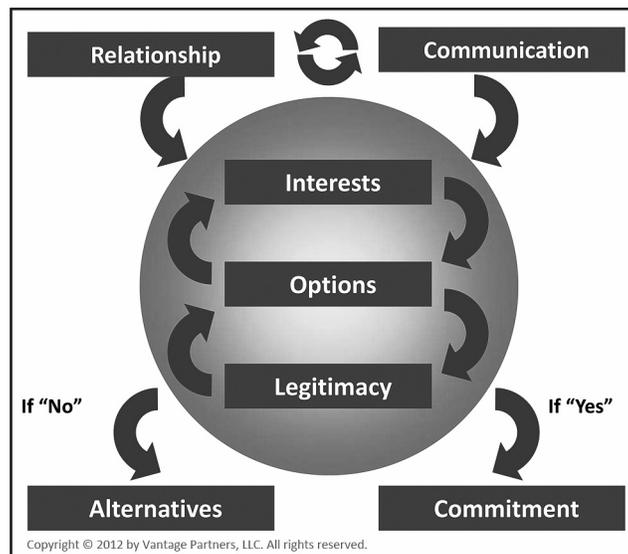


Figure 4-2: In-the-Circle Negotiation

Assumptions are not tested and, in many cases, officers are not even aware they are making them. These assumptions are about the problem, the process, the other people, ourselves, possible solutions, and the appropriate measure of success. A very common and debilitating assumption is that the other person is not helping you because he does not want to help you. A good way to challenge this assumption would be to think about the many possible obstacles that person might be facing that would prevent his cooperation. If you can assist him in dealing with those obstacles, or just recognize that they exist, you will have a greater opportunity to achieve success.

Officers see negotiation as a “yes or no” transaction versus a discussion of possibilities. They believe their choice is to be either strong or weak. They forget that the key is to be effective. This is because most officers start from the premise that they must give either everything or nothing. Instead, an entirely different process, known as “principled negotiation,” “joint-problem solving,” or “in-the-circle negotiation,” emphasizes understanding your and the other party’s interests, being creative in finding joint solutions, applying standards of fairness to the selection of solutions, working to establish clear communication by managing perceptions of all parties, building genuine working relationships, managing alternatives (yours and theirs), and making realistic, actionable commitments. This approach (“In-the-Circle Negotiation”) is a more constructive starting point for negotiations.

Officers tend to treat engagements as singular events rather than as part of a sequential and cumulative process. The term “key leader engagement” sounds like a transaction. This may explain why leaders so rarely define the purposes of meetings (beyond “messaging”) or sequence their engagements. They do not see how a negotiation with Person X sets up a following meeting with Person X, or see how meeting with Person Y might set the conditions for engaging with Person Z, and build success incrementally as part of an intentional engagement strategy.

The most common problem is a strong desire to commit or not commit early to a solution. The Army trains officers to be decisive; they want to be fast and efficient, so they are quick to dismiss ideas as infeasible. They are actually happy to take a non-optimal solution rather than working jointly to create value. Officers are often impatient with the process, yet the process may actually be the most critical thing in Afghanistan, owing to the power of perception, a lack of existing systems, and the vast corruption problem.

Officers fail to engage effectively because of a lack of consideration for the other party’s perspective. Many officers are either unaware of biases they possess or simply do not want to understand their counterparts’ viewpoints. This is in contrast to the COIN idea of “getting over your own mountain and falling in love with the other guy’s mountain.” Soldiers often make disparaging remarks depicting Afghans as “backward” or referring to them as “those other people.” In addition, some officers are actually afraid that building understanding means agreeing, which is not true.

There is a belief that money is the critical source of power. Officers ought to rely on a firm understanding of interests, the ability to brainstorm elegant options that meet persuasive criteria of fairness, effective communication, well-crafted commitments, and a positive working relationship. They should understand that money is not the sole driver of behavior. You can recognize other levers of persuasion that exist and ought to be considered through the use of a “Currently Perceived Choice,” or CPC, tool. It is designed to help negotiators understand why the other party may say “no” to a proposal based upon how the other party currently hears the choice presented to him (typically not how we believe we are asking the question) and their perceived consequences to a “yes” or “no” commitment.

By deliberately working to understand the situation from the other party’s perspective (what we call, “walking a mile in their shoes”), you can understand their motivations, needs, fears, and concerns. Rather than trying to change their interests, you can create better options that satisfy their motivations, help them understand the short- and long-term aspects of their decisions, or deliberately weaken their ability to satisfy these needs without your involvement (what we call their alternatives).

Currently Perceived Choice	
Decision Maker: Afghan Leader XYZ	
Concede to international, external demands, sacrifice autonomy, and	
Decision: Shall I today give up my only source of security, prosperity and status?	
If "yes" <i>I might experience the following consequences</i>	If "no" <i>I will likely experience the following consequences</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I lose control over subordinates. - I lose support from key tribes. - Someone else will seize the opportunity and I will have another rival with whom to compete. - I lose the ability to sustain power following international departure. - I lose influence during upcoming elections. - A cascade of uncontrollable changes may result. - Media will report information inaccurately. - <u>However, we also may experience:</u> + Satisfaction of taking action that I believe in. + Send a clear message of effective government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Maintain status quo. + Force international partners to continue coming to me. + I still have my current position and territorial base of power. + I keep pace with other rival leaders. + I can keep the enemy at bay in my area. + There will not be any penalties for not cooperating. + I can still say "yes" but do nothing. <u>However, we also may experience:</u> - Enemies will continue unhindered funding. - Stability may erode anyway.
<p>The Currently Perceived Choice Tool was introduced by Roger Fisher in <i>International Conflict for Beginners</i>. HarperCollins Publishers (1969). The tool was further developed by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton in <i>Getting to Yes: Negotiating Without Giving In</i>. Penguin Group (1981, reissued in 1991 and updated in 2011) and by Roger Fisher, Elizabeth Kopelman and Andrea Kuper Schneider in <i>Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict</i>. Harvard University Press (1994)</p>	

Figure 4-3

There is a tendency to mix substantive issues with relationship issues. Officers are not prepared to disentangle the two and to deal with each along separate lines of merit. Attempts to buy a relationship through concessions make Afghans see us as “shadowy.” They are likely to reject our proposals or our efforts to negotiate with them in good faith.

The military fails to properly define success in a way that makes sense. Success should be defined in a sophisticated, graduate-level way that matches the complexities faced in counterinsurgency and stability operations. By failing to refine how we measure success, we experience lost opportunities, frustration, damaged relationships, unwanted precedents for doing business, and poor agreements that are doomed to fail. Success could be improving communication, enhancing the relationship, refining each other’s interests, brainstorming solutions without commitment, or researching acceptable and applicable standards. Unfortunately, officers typically have a short-term view of success and do not understand how to strategically sequence or build subsequent engagements to achieve long-term effects. Officers are constantly seeking the “60-minute” or “12-month” win.

Many officers are not creative. Military officers are good at obeying orders but far less capable at being creative and finding solutions to problems without guidance from higher echelons. Rather than systematically researching and then making recommendations based on an understanding of the person, situation, and problem, staff officers tend to ask the leader what he wants to talk about. This insufficient analysis hinders both the preparation for and conduct of the

negotiation, placing the entire success of the outcome on the ability of the principal negotiator rather than on the entire team. When officers do get “creative” they tend to make “creative offers,” which are significantly different from “creative options.” Offers are still looking for immediate commitment and, typically, are not fully tied to interests. Options, rather, derive from interests and standards for recognizing fair, reasonable solutions.

Recommendations for Success

Negotiating success requires a fundamental shift in behaviors. What we previously described, our last seven years of research on military negotiations, and that of our colleagues with over 30 years of research and applied work at the Harvard Negotiation Project and beyond, suggests that we need negotiators who are able to:

- Be aware of and question assumptions in negotiation.
- Define a good outcome and systematically measure negotiated success against it.
- Choose between positional and principled negotiating.
- Effectively apply positional bargaining.
- Effectively apply principled negotiation.
- Deal with a hard bargainer (spot, diagnose, and change the game).
- Walking in the other party’s shoes.
- Manage perceptions.
- Build working relationships in negotiation (separate from, and in addition to, effecting strong substantive outcomes).
- Effectively pre-negotiate over process.
- Manage group negotiation process.
- Form, manage, and break apart coalitions.
- Align multiple parties.
- Adapt negotiation approaches to cultural differences.
- Systematically and thoroughly prepare for negotiations.
- Review, extract, and share key lessons from negotiations.

Another way of summarizing this is that we need negotiators who can make a fundamental shift in their mindset.

To develop these kinds of negotiators, we recommend the following actions:

Training. Run leaders and staffs through highly applied three-day training sessions to develop the core skills of the circle-of-value model shared above. In these sessions (which we have successfully run before with military officers) we share proven strategies and tools for how to measure success; provide instructions; prepare, conduct, and change the game; and review and learn from negotiations. We provide lots of time for practice and reflection through opportunities to apply the strategies and tools to current operational negotiation challenges.

A CRITICAL SHIFT IN NEGOTIATIONS APPROACH Taking a purposeful approach to negotiations, rather than a combative one, requires a shift in mind-set.	
From	To
What do you want?	Why do you want it?
Will you accept/give up?	What are some different possible ways we might resolve this?
How about we just split it?	By what criteria/legitimate process can we evaluate (and defend) the best answer?
Saying, "I understand"	Showing I understand
Thinking my strength comes from knowing I am right, anchoring well, and effectively using threats	Thinking my strength comes from being open to learning and persuasion, being skilled at figuring out their motivations, and being extremely creative

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Figure 4-4

Run Afghan leaders and ministerial staffs through similar training. The more skilled our counterparts are in principled negotiation, the more successful both parties will be in achieving their goals. The more our counterparts have the same picture and language and use the same preparation methods and tools for negotiating, the easier it will be to build understanding, break through roadblocks, and engage in joint problem solving. Worth considering are joint, out-of-country military and Afghan training sessions in which expert facilitators help leaders train together and practice working on current negotiations.

Discipline. Build a discipline around preparing for negotiation. Negotiators should only engage in negotiations after thorough preparation. They should understand their interests, have hypotheses about the other party's interests, have a range of possible options for negotiations, be armed with standards of legitimacy for determining what options make the most sense, understand their alternatives, and have taken steps to improve them. They should have considered the other party's alternatives and possible ways to worsen them, planned the purpose of the upcoming negotiating session, and considered how to build trust and understanding based on merit (not substantive concessions). We should meet any negotiation escalated to a higher level with a request for this information before advice or help is given. Even when negotiations happen at the spur of the moment, negotiators should run through the above items. We should expect to do this, model this process consistently, and reward those who succeed at it.

Also build a discipline around reviewing negotiations. Task a committee or team to coach individuals. Enable military leaders to see negotiation not as a binary, "yes or no" transaction but a process for jointly discovering possibilities and creating value. We should revise our current debrief from strictly an intelligence document to an actual learning document, capturing what worked and why and what to do differently next time and why. Developing actual prescriptive advice helps improve actions and results in follow-on engagements.

Organizational support. We must not see a negotiation as a transaction or "engagement" but a process, a sequence of interactions that build on one another. To do this, we must discuss and plan for negotiations through a series of phases: internal alignment, preparation, pre-negotiation over the process, negotiation, mid-course correction, closure, and review. An essential step is defining activities, outputs, and roles for each phase and ensuring coordinated execution of each, as we would with any other operation. In addition, we must develop a system and roles that allow for systematic planning for how to position and message the overall negotiation on any key issue:

- Sequence each meeting with our counterparts with defined purposes and outputs.
- Carefully map and define all key parties to engage, who will engage them, how, on what issues, and at what time.
- Coordinate this through a central team that can monitor progress, leverage lessons learned from meeting to meeting, plan mid-course corrections, and manage the interconnectedness of all of the parts and parties.

Brainstorming sessions. Consider facilitated joint brainstorming sessions between selected military stakeholders and Afghans. (Our colleagues at Vantage Partners and Conflict Management Group have used this method for years in highly complex governmental and corporate negotiations.) Focus these sessions on thoroughly understanding the underlying interests of all key parties regarding a set of issues that need a negotiated solution, and then (with no commitment or critique) jointly brainstorm possible solutions that might meet core interests of all parties. To get true out-of-the-box thinking, consider inviting people who are highly knowledgeable and creative, but have no authority to commit. Focus subsequent sessions on jointly defining evaluation criteria so you can narrow down the options, identify likely critics and their critiques, and improve the possible solutions to address the key critiques. Provide the output to the formal "negotiators" or "negotiating teams."

Changing Negotiation Behavior

A leader's skills must be at their sharpest when the situation is the most challenging. Given complex challenges, diminished resources, an aggressive timeline, and the many alternatives that Afghan leaders have to working with us, officers must be able to think, learn, and be systematic in their negotiation approach if they hope to achieve their objectives. Officers must adopt the tools to systematically prepare for and conduct negotiations that entail joint problem solving, value creation, securing alignment, and defining real commitments.

Changing negotiating behavior is not a simple matter of conducting a few training sessions and admitting that negotiation is an important competency. It requires broader organizational support, from the top down, and an effort to change the way we approach all of our negotiations. Senior officers must set the conditions for negotiation success through the instructions they give, demanding thorough preparation, providing coaching, measuring success, and insisting upon extracting and sharing lessons from key negotiations, and they must do each in a way that is consistent with an "in-the-circle" negotiation approach. To drive real behavior change, they will need to model this same behavior in their own negotiations, and in what they request of, reward in, and reinforce with subordinates.

The military's evolving mission, context, and power to get things done require a change in how our officers negotiate. In Afghanistan, without real investment and focus in making this change, we will continue to underachieve in key leader engagements. Furthermore, we will miss critical opportunities to work with Afghan leaders to establish necessary conditions for a successful transition and an independent, sovereign Afghanistan.

For more information on negotiation training, tools, and organizational support, please contact the West Point Negotiation Project at wppn@usma.edu or visit www.wppn.org.

Toward a Better Way to Engage: Insights from the Field of Negotiation

**By MAJ Aram Donigian (CJIATF-Shafafiyat Engagements);
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“My Soldiers are starting to hate Afghans and I am looking for help.

Why am I not surprised? After all, many ANSF seem to care less about succeeding than we do; most of the people are ‘fence sitting’ and not DOING anything to fix their country; and it seems that all the elders and GIRoA officials in my districts are corrupt.

What can I do to shape my Soldiers’ attitude? Is it a lost cause? I’m out of options, and I’m hoping that others have experience and ideas on how to help Soldiers stay positive toward Afghans over the long haul of this deployment.”

A recent post to the U.S. Army’s platoon leader forum

Italicized text marked by *** are from field observations of former West Point Negotiation Project (WPNP) students.

The challenge of influencing Afghans to take action is real, and the resulting frustration, and even resentment, is certainly understandable. Soldiers working tirelessly to help Afghans rebuild their country are faced far too often with a people unwilling to engage, never mind take any action. Worse yet, the more nothing happens, the more the tendency there is to push harder, coerce and even, at times, to try to use threats to convince Afghans to make change. This, in turn, causes even more pushback from the Afghans, taking the form of ignoring recommendations, agreeing to consider them and then doing nothing, or just rejecting them out of hand. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately, the answer to the platoon leader’s post above lies in the reasonableness of the perception that “they don’t care” and the strategies employed to try harder to change that. No Soldier is going to change an Afghan’s feelings or approach because they simply tell or lecture an Afghan on why they should. A Soldier is only going to change an Afghan’s feelings if they develop a new – and different - understanding of why Afghans often choose not to take action, and if the Soldier has a new set of strategies for persuading them to do otherwise.

The solution begins with the most basic tenet of negotiation – people do what THEY perceive to be in their best interest. If they believe a proposal is less satisfying than the benefits derived from their walkaway (doing nothing, stalling, doing what they have always done before, waiting for someone else to take action first, etc.), they will always say, “No.” They are not evil, nor crazy. They are simply acting in their perceived self-interest. Our job, then, is to first understand how they view our proposal, and then find a way to change their choice. To do this effectively involves skillfully implementing five strategies.

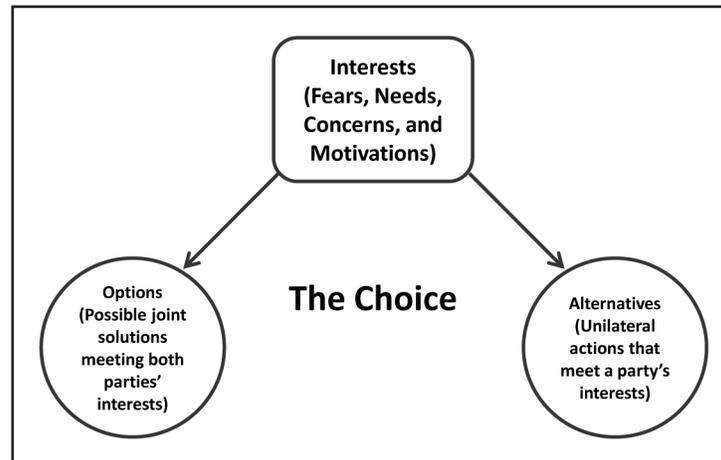


Figure 5-1

Strategy #1: Understand their choice and why it's in their interest to say "No"

The most effective way to make people take action is to fully understand their choice. If you can put yourself in your counterpart's shoes and understand the question they believe they are being asked, and the perceived consequences of saying 'yes' versus the benefits of saying 'no,' you will be able to better understand why he is making a certain choice, and how you can influence his decision.

*** *"The major project for several months was the building of a new school. It was just about finished when it was destroyed one night. We engaged with the villagers to understand who had destroyed the school. At first, I tried offering food and clothing in exchange for information. They gladly took these items but offered no credible leads. I then tried being extra persuasive by explaining how this school would be beneficial for their children. They seemed to understand and even agree, but still would not give me any information. Finally, in frustration, I yelled that any additional help for this village would be conditional on their cooperating with us. At this, they walked away. We never found out who had destroyed the school and could not get the funding again to build a new one. The enemy achieved their goal; we did not. After some reflection, I realized that my offer had not met their true fear: protecting their families from the enemy that operated in their village. Because I did not inquire about or creatively work to meet this concern, nothing else that I tried to do mattered. Their alternative (not angering the enemy and risking harm to their families) to working with me (taking the food and clothes in exchange for information that might result in death) was clearly the better solution from their perspective."*

Leaders are often unaware of the choice the other party has, as well as how to manage that choice. Had this leader spent the time to consider why the villagers were saying 'no' to his proposal, the outcome may have been different. The Currently Perceived Choice (CPC) Tool can enable leaders to systematically think about why their counterpart might be saying no to a proposal.

Currently Perceived Choice	
Decision Maker: <u>Villager</u>	
Decision: <i>Shall I today</i> <u>Tell the ISAF soldiers who destroyed the school?</u>	
If "yes" <i>I might experience the following consequences</i>	If "no" <i>I will likely experience the following consequences</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those that burned the school will inflict harm on my family - The enemies of the soldiers will kill me for turning them in - The soldiers will eventually leave our village and the new school will be burned down then, anyway - The soldiers' reaction will escalate to conflict in our village - Even if the new school opens, nobody will feel safe sending their children there <p><u>However, we also may experience:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + The people that destroyed the school may be punished and justice can be served 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + ISAF will continue to offer more (possibly better) goods in exchange for the information + My family and I will be safe when the soldiers leave + Those who destroyed the school will see me as loyal and will protect my family + They may not rebuild the school, so I have nothing to gain + I can always say 'yes' tomorrow <p><u>However, we also may experience:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The soldiers may leave and take with them the food and clothing
<small>The Currently Perceived Choice Tool was introduced by Roger Fisher in <i>International Conflict for Beginners</i>. HarperCollins Publishers (1969). The tool was further developed by Roger Fisher, William Ury, and Bruce Patton in <i>Getting to Yes: Negotiating Without Giving In</i>. Penguin Group (1981, reissued in 1991 and updated in 2011) and by Roger Fisher, Elizabeth Kopelman and Andrea Kuper Schneider in <i>Beyond Machiavelli: Tools for Coping with Conflict</i>. Harvard University Press (1994)</small>	

Figure 5-2

Strategy #2: Develop options that meet their interests well

If you understand the reason your counterpart might say ‘no’ to a proposal and are able to recognize his concerns, you can then develop options that address those concerns and meet both of your interests. In the CPC above, the left column contains the interests and concerns of the villagers that are not met by the proposal. To change their choice, any option would need to meet those interests well. The best approach to developing good options is by engaging with your counterpart, acknowledging his or her concerns and interests, and jointly coming up with solutions that meet his interests and yours. Developing creative solutions and asking ‘what would be wrong with this?’ allows for a productive conversation that can lead to jointly beneficial agreements.

Strategy #3: Test their alternatives and find ways to weaken them

Of course, you would never agree to an option that was not better than your walkaway - your alternative to an agreement. In the CPC, the right column lists the villagers’ alternatives to working with the platoon leader. When the walkaway is better than the perceived option, the choice is easy. Understanding and testing the villagers’ walkaway would have provided an opportunity to weaken the alternatives, thereby making the option to work with the Soldiers more attractive. In the example above, would the Soldiers leaving lead to the Taliban continuing to terrorize the village? Would their families likely be more at risk? What other negative consequences might there be to this alternative? What if the Soldiers created a fading

opportunity and said they would leave the village if no information was turned in by a hard deadline? If we do not test our counterpart's alternatives, we lose the chance to weaken their perception of them. Only when the left hand column of the CPC looks like a better situation than the right can we know that the option of engaging with us is better than the alternative, and that is what we need to get them to make a choice aligned with our interests.

Strategy #4: Make it easy for them to defend the agreement

Just as you would not agree to an option that your boss and colleagues would disapprove of, your counterpart will not commit to something that he cannot defend to his commander or constituents and, even if he does, it is unlikely that he'll be able to follow through with it.

****“Prior to our arrival in the district, the local government had very little presence. Tribal elders and the sub-governor no longer met on a regular basis. Strong enemy pressure in the area had prevented the weekly shura from occurring. Our initial engagements with the sub-governor and chief of police were aimed at improving governance in the district by getting the Afghan National Security Forces to patrol on their own through the neighboring villages.*

Previous efforts to achieve this outcome had proven unsuccessful due to the lack of confidence on the part of the Afghan forces to patrol on their own. They wanted coalition forces' support at all times. It took some effort to understand their concerns and to then brainstorm ways that we might meet what initially appeared to be conflicting interests. One solution we eventually decided to try was that the Afghans would patrol on their own to the village, while my platoon patrolled to the east approximately 2-3 km away. We were far enough away so they would have to deal with immediate issues on their own but close enough that we could quickly support them if needed. We also agreed to a communications plan involving a star cluster to signal us in case they made contact. We were both able to defend the solution to our commanders because not only did it meet both our needs, but it also served to demonstrate to the local population that the Afghan forces had the capability of patrolling alone.”

In the case above the platoon leader engaged his counterparts in a meaningful dialogue, worked to understand their concerns, and asked them for ideas about how those concerns could be met. Just as importantly, he recognized that his counterparts could only agree to an option that they could defend. As you put options on the table, it's important to discuss how they can be defended to you and your counterpart's teams, bosses, and constituents. If you are not able to do so, you may end up with an agreement that you will not be able to implement, and there is really no point to coming to an agreement if it does not lead to the necessary action.

Strategy #5: Take the time to understand their perspective and share yours

Having this type of productive conversation is not necessarily simple. It requires an open mind and curiosity. It is not enough to understand your counterparts' answer – you need to understand their story. Even if you do not agree with their conclusion, learning how they came to it can uncover important interests and concerns and allow you to come up with better options. It also gives you an opportunity to explain your story and how you have reached your conclusions, thereby helping them understand the interests that are important to you. At a time when our ability to coordinate with our Afghan partners is both challenged and increasingly essential, it is critical to explore their perceptions and put yours on the table. The Ladder of Inference is a tool for exploring your counterpart's reasoning path and perspectives and explaining yours.

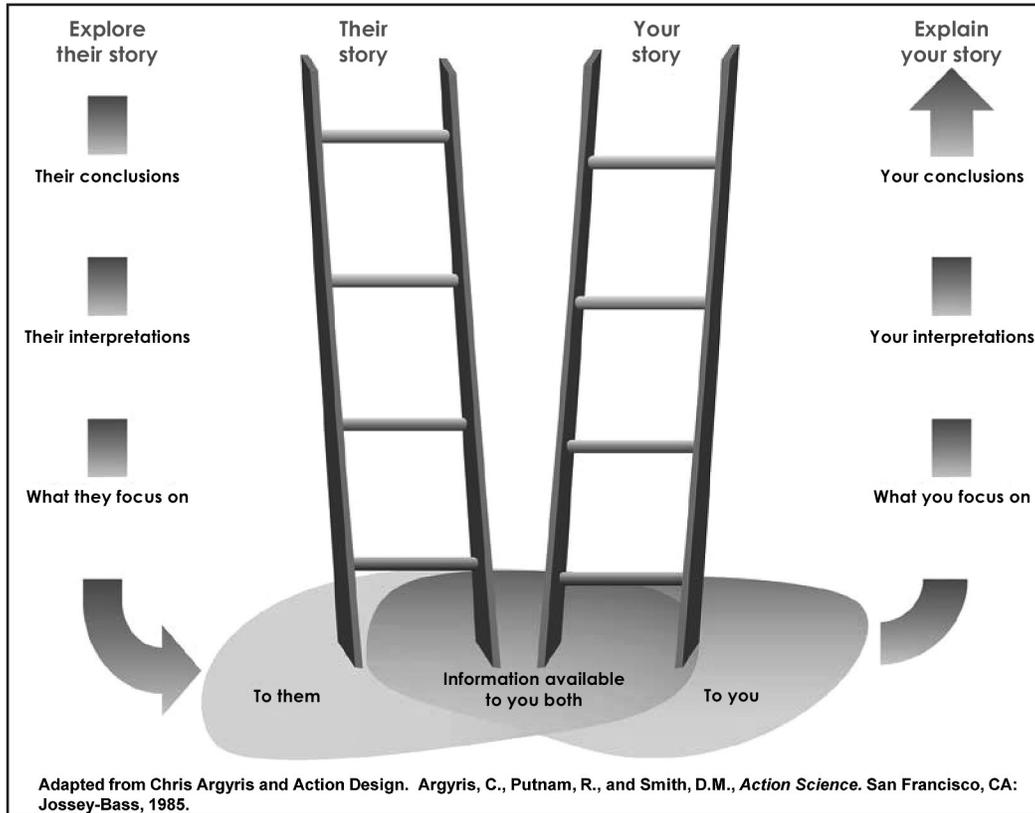


Figure 5-3

Conclusion

Frustration leads to resentment, and resentment to anger, and there is plenty of frustration when faced with what feels like an untenable choice – pushing harder and harder on the Afghans to take action, when this strategy has so often failed in the past, or giving up, declaring it “their problem” to fix, and failing the mission. There is, however, a third choice. This choice is rooted in making it our problem to understand theirs (their perspective, diagnoses, goals, etc.), and using those insights to persuade. The leader needs to stop trying to figure out the answer to sell to the Afghans, and instead work to fully understand why they are rejecting our recommendations, proposals or assistance. Once our leaders do, they can use what they have uncovered (Afghan interests, fears, and objectives) to build new proposals that better meet those interests, while providing ways to help the Afghans assess and defend saying ‘yes’ to one or more these new options, and at the same time demonstrating to the Afghans that their walkaway (doing nothing, keeping the status quo, etc.) is far less satisfying than these potential agreements. Building and testing understanding with the Afghans while taking each of these steps is not only critical for success, but also has the very real potential of leading to Afghans taking on a new role in “the conversation” – from one of acceptor or rejecter of requests for change, to one of working jointly with leaders to invent, critique, select, defend and implement new ideas.

Strategies for a Better Way to Engage	Key Pieces of Advice
Understand their choice and why it's in their interest to say, "No"	<p>Try to look at the proposal from your counterpart's point of view</p> <p>Use the Currently Perceived Choice (CPC) Tool to understand the question they are hearing and why they might be saying "no"</p> <p>Test your filled-out CPC with an Afghan friend to get an additional perspective</p>
Develop options that meet their interests well	<p>Use the left hand side of the filled-out CPC to identify the interests and concerns that the current proposal does not meet</p> <p>Brainstorm options and ask for criticism—"What would be wrong with this?"</p> <p>Ask your counterpart to jointly brainstorm options—"What other solutions might meet your concerns and my objectives?"</p>
Test their alternatives and find ways to weaken them	<p>Use the right hand side of the filled-out CPC to identify the walkaway alternatives that your counterpart believes are better than the proposal</p> <p>Suggest ways that the alternatives may not actually be so attractive—"It seems to me that the implications of that are X, Y, and Z. Am I missing something?"</p>
Make it easy for them to defend the agreement	<p>Jointly identify the people that need to agree with the solution in order for action to be taken</p> <p>Consider people who may be against the agreement, and determine what their concerns might be and how you could address them</p>
Take the time to understand their perspective and share yours	<p>Explore their story and understand their perceptions and how that is leading to their conclusion</p> <p>Stay curious—even if you don't agree with them, you can always benefit from understanding their story and hearing their interests and concerns</p>

Figure 5-4

End Notes

For more information on negotiation training, tools, and organizational support, please contact the West Point Negotiation Project at wphp@usma.edu, Major Donigian at aram.donigian@us.army.mil, Professor Weiss at jweiss@vantagepartners.com, or Mr. Petitti at ppetitti@vantagepartners.com. You may also visit the WPNP website: www.wphp.org or read "Extreme Negotiations" by the authors in Harvard Business Review, November 2010.

The authors would like to give a special thanks to West Point Cadet DJ Taylor who highlighted the platoon leader's question and asked the critical questions of "What would be your insight and response to this problem; how would you move your platoon past this?"

Influencing the Population Using Interpreters, Conducting KLEs, and Executing IO in Afghanistan

By CPT Michael G. Cummings

This article was originally published in the May-August 2010 issue of Infantry magazine, https://www.benning.army.mil/magazine/2010/2010_2/MAY-AUG%2010.pdf.

Before deploying to Afghanistan with the 173rd Airborne Brigade Combat Team, I was trained to plan and lead combat missions during training courses such as the Infantry Officer Basic Course and Ranger School. Whether I was attacking an enemy patrol, bunker or logistics center, the task was always the same: destroy. But when I deployed, I didn't get to destroy things on every patrol ... far from it. In Afghanistan I attempted to *influence the population*.

When I first heard the phrase *influence the population* I thought, "How does that help me?" How does that vague term help a small unit leader — either platoon leader or company commander — on the ground?

Every leader needs to understand that in a counterinsurgency, destroying is not as important as influencing. Field Manual (FM) 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, describes an insurgency as a struggle between two fighting minorities for the "uncommitted middle." Doctrinally, we call this Information Operations (IO). IO is the set of tools that influences that "uncommitted middle." IO drives all our operations from security to training local security forces to distributing humanitarian assistance.

Still, to help the small unit leader, we need to move from the vague sounding "Information Operations" to actionable tips. This article hopes to provide those tips and to act as a short resource for developing a platoon or company-level IO campaign focused on the Afghanistan Theater. First, I will give advice for using an interpreter — your lifeline to local Afghans. Next, I will give tips and techniques for conducting key leader engagements (KLEs) — the most used tool in IO. Finally, I will give tips on developing an IO campaign at the platoon level.

My experience is a deployment to Konar Province, Afghanistan during OEF VIII. Therefore, the majority of my advice centers on Pashtun culture and may not apply to Iraq or other ethnicities in Afghanistan. I wrote this article as a guide for platoon leaders who have never deployed, but it could assist any Soldier in Afghanistan.

Interpreters: Your Lifeline to Afghanistan

U.S. dignitary created a mini-controversy last summer when he made a gaffe in Afghanistan. While meeting with local nationals, the official made a comment about one man's daughter — "She is very beautiful." While the comment is perfectly harmless in America, in Afghanistan he crossed the line. I don't blame the official, though. His interpreter should never have translated that comment.

Before you can influence the population, you must communicate with it; your interpreter is your only connection to the Afghan population.

An interpreter can do one of two things. On one hand, he can simply translate what you say into Pashtun or Dari. On the other hand, he can *interpret* what you say into the local language, phrasing it as accurately and appropriately as possible. He can also act as a cultural advisor, a subject matter expert on Afghanistan, a lie detector, an intelligence source, and an IO theme coordinator. The interpreter is an underutilized resource; try not to make this mistake.

Working With Your Interpreter

Treat your interpreter as if he were your own Soldier. This means providing him with food, shelter, and security. Make sure he gets paid on time, is fed regularly, and has a place to sleep.

The interpreter occupies a special place in the platoon. He isn't just a new addition, he is a new addition who works directly for you. He reports to you the way a squad leader reports to you. Therefore, you must counsel and mentor him.

Counsel your interpreter on a regular basis. When he arrives, give him an initial counseling. Let him know your standards and all the tasks you expect from him. Let him know he does not merely translate your words, but that he interprets them for the audience. Emphasize how busy he will be, but that you will reward him for his work. Perhaps the best reward for interpreters is a letter of recommendation from you. Be prepared to give him one, but make him earn it. After every patrol, provide specific feedback for him. Bring him to rehearsals and after action reviews (AARs). Demand that he perform every day.

As your relationship develops with your interpreter, you will learn how much you can trust him. He most likely will not have a security clearance, but you will rely on him for many sensitive subjects. If at any time you question his integrity, replace him. Open communication is the key to trusting your interpreter.

Use Your Interpreter in a Variety of Roles

Once you have laid down the ground rules to your interpreter, get as much use out of the interpreter as you can. He is not just your mouthpiece or translator — he is your guide to Afghan culture.

An interpreter knows more about Afghan culture than you ever will. Therefore, ask him for feedback about your IO themes. Ask him how well you are respecting Afghan culture. Ask him to explain when you don't understand a local's response to a question or comment.

Use your interpreter to set up shuras on your forward operating base (FOB) or combat outpost (COP). He can provide recommendations on food, and he can set up your shura room.

Have your interpreter act as a lie detector. After meetings, he can tell you who seemed trustworthy and who did not. He'll probably pick up on cultural cues that you may miss.

Your interpreter will run your local cell phone. In most cases, he will answer calls for you. He can also set up meetings with locals. If he knows your IO themes and respects you, he will do this in a heartbeat. My interpreters ran my cell phone towards the end of deployment. Instead of having to have a 10 minute conversation to set the time of day of the next shura, my interpreter would handle the conversation.

Share your interpreter with the platoon. When your Soldiers give a class to Afghan National Army (ANA) or Afghan National Police (ANP) counterparts, have them rehearse with the interpreter.

Your interpreter can also teach your entire platoon basic Dari or Pashtun. Armed with this knowledge, your platoon can then wage IO at the personal level with local Afghans.

Additional Tips for Using Interpreters

When talking with a local national, speak with him, not the interpreter. Have your interpreter stand to your side, or slightly behind you. He is interpreting your conversation, but the conversation is between you and the local Afghan.

Tell your interpreter to stop you if what he is translating will offend the recipient. It seems simple, but if an interpreter does not like you then he will go ahead and translate inappropriate conversations. When he stops you, provide positive feedback.

Encourage him to ask for clarification about things he does not understand. This will keep him engaged in the conversation. Encourage your interpreter to clarify your points to any locals who misunderstand them. It will save you time.

When writing or assembling patrol debriefs, PMESII (political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, information) reports or target packets, use your interpreter's knowledge. He will remember much more than you. He will also have insights on a local national's body language and subtext.

Get as many interpreters as possible. Even if you have one or two who you work very well with, have more for complex operations. For example, a simple traffic control point (TCP) operation needs a minimum of four interpreters: one to run a KLE with the checkpoint commander, one at each end of the TCP, and one assisting with the Biometric Automated Toolset (BAT)/Handheld Interagency Identity Detection Equipment (HIIDE) system. Imagine more complex missions like a cordon and search with the ANA. Get as many interpreters as your unit can afford.

Do not treat interpreters like dirt. I have seen this, and it is disrespectful to the uniform.

Do not think they are inhuman, evil, or any other base stereotype. Stamp out this attitude in your platoon. Afghans can spot insincerity a mile away. Bad attitudes will drive local populations to the Taliban.

Key Leader Engagements: The Bread and Butter of the Small Unit Leader's Soft Skills

KLEs are the most common patrol in Afghanistan or Iraq. Despite their frequency, most young leaders are unprepared to lead them.

Key leader engagements occurred on roughly 90 percent of my platoon's missions. On most of my patrols I conducted more than one KLE. As time went on, I found these patrols were also the best way to distribute IO themes to the locals. No single skill will separate the locals from insurgents like well planned and executed KLEs. As the most effective tool in the IO tool box, a small unit leader must do them well.

The single biggest tip for a successful key leader engagement is to give more than you get. You give support, build relationships, and provide the resources of the U.S. Army so that you may one day get intelligence. Be prepared to talk, talk, and talk some more. An effective KLE respects Afghan culture. The elders of Afghanistan, not the coalition representatives, are the important actors. Therefore, devoting your time, energy and resources to KLEs will not pay off at first, but over time you will see dramatic results.

Next, study and prepare for a KLE as if it were any other type of combat patrol. Large operations have rehearsals at several levels and so will KLEs. Conducting them systematically will teach you how to respond better to local issues. By studying information about locals, your area of operations and past meetings, you will gather more effective intelligence and make better decisions.

Background

First, some terms. Our battalion referred to KLEs as any meeting with Afghans, locals, or security forces. I will call any meeting between a platoon leader and one to three other locals a key leader engagement. I use the Pashtun term *shura* to describe large meetings (over a dozen attendees) designed to address district issues. These are usually scheduled on a regular basis and will have the same participants. Finally, my battalion also conducted larger *megashuras* (several dozen attendees). These were multi-district events that the provincial governor and battalion commander attended. As a PL, you will mostly attend mega-shuras but will not participate in them.

Second, I would like to caution against assuming that training at mobility readiness exercises (MREs) will adequately prepare a small unit leader to conduct KLEs downrange. MREs have a two-to-three week window to simulate an entire deployment. A platoon leader must meet, introduce himself, develop a relationship and then gain resolution on issues within two weeks. When downrange, meeting all the key leaders of your AO will take two weeks alone, if not more. Further, developing relationships and solving local issues will occur throughout a deployment, not in a set timeline as in an MRE.

Third, to explain a typical KLE experience I will describe some of the engagements I conducted in Afghanistan. On our three-day patrol cycle, I visited two district sub-governors to discuss district-wide issues. At these meetings, I would also conduct a separate engagement with the district chief of police. About once a week, we conducted a larger shura or humanitarian aid distribution with elder somewhere else in the district. Once a month on average, my company commander ran a tri-district shura, which brought together GIROA (Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan) officials and key leaders in our AO.

In the three-day period, we would also conduct security patrols. During the day, we conducted TCPs at ANP police checkpoints. My Soldiers also conducted training with ANA and ANP soldiers. I would meet with the checkpoint commander to discuss security issues. At night, we conducted coalition force-only movement to contacts. At the end of one of our routes, we checked on ANP checkpoints. I also conducted joint KLEs with ANA soldiers and their Marine trainers at our FOB.

Fourth, I conducted KLEs in a region heavily influenced by the Pashtun-Wali code. This influences many of my recommendations throughout the article. However, understanding the local culture is vital to success no matter what region or country you're operating in.

Before the Key Leader Engagement

The work begins before you even depart for a key leader engagement. To start, identify a KLE/IO/intelligence team. These are the members of your platoon or company headquarters that will join you on most of your meetings with local nationals. This includes yourself, your RTO (recorder), your forward observer (FO — or whoever coordinates intelligence and IO with you), your interpreter, your platoon sergeant (senior advisor to the platoon leader), your ANA counterpart, and, if possible, your allies in the local Afghan government. Before any KLE you will conduct a rehearsal with these elements to prepare and ensure all participants are on the same page.

Next, study all the relevant information of your AO. At a minimum, review notes from the last KLE, your IO themes, and your AO-specific priority intelligence requirement (PIR). Either before every KLE or at a regularly scheduled meeting, review with your KLE team the environmental situation, atmospheric of the area of operations (the mood or feelings of the village from human collection teams), and battalion IO themes.

After reviewing the background information with your team, brief your team on the specifics of the KLE. Describe who you expect to be there and the specific objectives of the meeting. Have your interpreter back brief your intended IO themes to ensure he understands them. Answer any questions from your interpreter or your team. Get their opinions on your talking points. Ideally, at the end of the rehearsal, you will have a 3x5 card with the objective of the meeting and your talking points. Finally, spot check your team to make sure they have note pads, pens or pencils, a camera, and any gifts you are bringing.

If you plan on having the KLE at your FOB or COP, set up the shura area. Design it according to Afghan custom with rugs on the floor and pillows. Find funding to provide food at regular shuras. In Afghan culture it is expected to eat food and drink chai. You should provide soda, too (I found that Mountain Dew was popular). As I mentioned above, your interpreters know how to set up an Afghan meeting room. Charge them with this task and make sure it happens.

At the Key Leader Engagement

If appropriate, bring gifts. Ask your interpreter what he recommends. Simple gifts include weapon lubricant (CLP) to Afghan police checkpoints or school supplies to village elders. For people who often live on a dollar a day, simple gifts can mean a lot. To build up a supply of gifts, find a Web site that adopts Soldiers and tell them you want gifts for the Afghan people, such as toys, school supplies, etc. American citizens want to support our troops; all you have to do is ask. Don't be shy about bringing cigarettes either; cigarettes are a cross-cultural conversation starter.

Expect to be bored, and then fight through it. In the long run, the hours of talk will develop the local government and make your life easier. The best cure against boredom is to know your IO themes and hit them. Know the information you want and ask about it when it is respectful. Know the point you are trying to get to and work towards it. Show interest in the village and concern for its people. Ask questions about the village's history and culture. Remember their answers to demonstrate that you care.

In a shura, minimize the number of Americans who speak. In Afghan culture, only the most respected person speaks. Sometimes, the speaker is not the key elder but his chosen representative. Treat him as if he were. Your FO, RTO and any other coalition force members should allow only the unit leader to speak. It is not a group discussion, but a conversation between two people that everyone watches. In larger meetings, expect several people to speak but in turn and slowly. I had a forward observer who did not understand this. Whenever he spoke out of turn, it slightly disrespected me.

... every operation is an Information Operation. Every patrol, every battle, every discussion is a chance to persuade the population to support the government, or a chance to turn the population against the government and the coalition.

Acknowledge the awkward situation your presence puts on the elders of Afghanistan. As a 20-something-year-old platoon leader, you will probably be the youngest person at the meeting. You will probably never meet with someone your own age; they are not invited. Accept that you will violate Afghan customs, and then do what you can to be respectful of their culture. This will make your KLEs run smoother.

Expect little progress initially. You will get answers to simple questions (such as how many people live in certain villages) but very little definite support. They will offer assurances but little else. Expect that you will conduct dozens of these over deployment and expect progress to take time.

Taking notes shows you are paying attention and responsive. Even if you have an RTO doing this task, have a notepad ready and use it for your own notes.

After the Key Leader Engagement

This is a patrol like any other, so conduct regular AARs. Conduct informal AARs directly after small KLEs, then conduct regularly scheduled AARs to brief larger points. The same audience will attend the AAR as attended the rehearsal. Provide feedback to your interpreter, FO, and RTO at these meetings to improve their performance. Use this time to clarify any questions about Afghan culture. Get your interpreter to give you feedback on your performance.

After every patrol, write a patrol debrief covering the KLE. Do not write this in a vacuum. Have your interpreter, FO, RTO and any other relevant sources write up what they saw, heard and experienced. This will fill in gaps in your memory.

Finally, update any relevant data sources. If locals provided intelligence, pass that to the next larger level's collection system. Update your intelligence on your area of operations. If part of a larger mission or a significant meeting, then write a "good news story" for larger publication.

What not to do

Do not focus solely on your needs or wants. If the only question you ask is, "Where are the Taliban?" the elders will see you as arrogant. If you only demand for attacks to stop, the elders will view you as powerless. If elders lose respect for you, they will not provide for you.

Do not expect to gather intelligence at a meeting of more than two people. Afghans consider that disrespectful. Don't demand, "Where are the Taliban?" at every meeting. That will not yield results. Build rapport, and intelligence will come slowly over time.

Do not make promises or assurances. Afghans know American rank so they will understand the limits of what a squad leader, platoon leader, or company commander can realistically provide to an AO.

Do not demand a specific resolution to specific problems. Be open to Afghan solutions. Have objectives but not the solution to that objective. If you want to end improvised explosive device (IED) attacks in your AO, ask for their help and see what they can provide. Ask for their solutions. They might provide ANP soldiers or better intelligence. But don't demand they follow your course of action.

Do not strong arm or insult your guests. Calling Afghans liars, cheats, or Taliban will ruin your relationship. They will still seem cordial, but you will have destroyed your relationship.

Afghans do not lie. If questioned, they will try to answer your question as best they can and believe they are not lying. If you put them into a position where they must lie, they will lose respect for you.

Great Information Operations at the Platoon Level

Too often, we think IO involve pamphlets to hand out or billboards to post. If I can convince you of one thing, I would like it to be this: every operation is an Information Operation. Every patrol, every battle, every discussion is a chance to persuade the population to support the government, or a chance to turn the population against the government and the coalition. Too often IO is considered a battalion function. In the decentralized nature of Afghanistan, every unit that controls an area of operations must conduct its own IO campaign.

To develop a great IO campaign, start with the basics. When you get on the ground, find the previous battalion's IO themes. After touring the AO and getting a feel for the ground, revise them to your needs. Based on your talking points, plan your patrols. If you claim that the government can provide security, then plan security patrols. If you tell elders the government can provide economic benefits, then plan humanitarian assistance deliveries and bring the provincial reconstruction team (PRT) into your area of operations.

Once you have your patrols planned, craft your specific messages. After you conduct your patrols, conduct AARs to determine how well you put out your message. Most importantly, use your patrols to create future IO themes and messages. As you can see, the cycle continues.

The following are additional tips for conducting your intelligence operations at the small unit level:

*** Honesty really is the best policy**

The only times that you will lose the IO campaign is when you are being dishonest. Honesty might not seem like a big deal, but little white lies will slowly eat away at your message. The best example of exaggerated IO that I have seen concerned Afghan national security forces. We

wanted them to take the lead so we tried to put them in as many good news stories as possible. But since they relied on coalition firepower to survive, the message was not as effective as others. Over time, people could see through that embellishment and that may have done more harm than good.

So, for example, if you want to write a good news story about how the ANP took the lead in arresting a known Taliban operative, ask yourself, did they really take the lead? If the locals know that ANP only do joint operations with the U.S., then a story in the local version of the newspaper won't change that. It will be harder to change their minds in the future.

I had this experience as I wrote stories that verged on ridiculous concerning the ANA and ANP. I slowly learned that the more effective stories were true stories. So, I began an IO campaign in both print stories for our battalion — and more importantly via key leader engagement to village elders — about an ANP checkpoint commander who stood up to the Taliban and supported the government. The locals knew he did as well, so I just amplified what they already knew. Over time, the elders gave him and coalition forces more support because we told the truth.

*** Get allies in the local community**

When I first started IO operations, I acted like the typical brand new PL: I tried to do everything all by myself. Eventually, the district governor and I started communicating. He began coordinating our efforts with the local community and working with me. He introduced me to locals I had no idea existed. Once we started working together on messages, we began communicating a coherent message to the district. The result was much stronger.

I had the same result with the local police chiefs. I distributed a thousand pamphlets to the checkpoints saying, “Don't be corrupt and fight back,” but that didn't work. The best technique was having one powerful and honest checkpoint commander influence the rest. He helped me persuade them to conduct better TCPs and to participate in joint operations with ANA. They weren't perfect, but they got better.

*** Information Operations is not a one-man job**

I made this mistake early, planning Information Operations by myself. The jobs are too large to do by yourself, especially when controlling your own area of operations. Invite your IO team to offer advice and help you craft your message.

Likewise, on patrol your men will interact constantly with locals. Brief your maneuver unit (be it platoon, section or company) on the vital tasks of Information Operations before you leave and do so on a regular basis. Develop platoon-internal IO themes, and then distribute them in nightly meetings. Whenever your patrol stops, have your men prepared to communicate with locals and do whatever they can, no matter how small, to influence the locals.

*** Include your interpreter**

We pay them plenty, so use them. You aren't from Afghanistan, they are. Get their opinions and your IO will be that much stronger. When I wrote letters of recommendations for my interpreters, I put joint Information Operations planner in their job description.

Ask your interpreter for themes. Have them brief you on what they think you should say. Discuss the nuances of the words.

Conclusion: The New Way of War

Like Adam and Eve after tasting the forbidden fruit, as a military and as an Army, we cannot go back to the days of simple high-intensity warfare. Killing the enemy will no longer suffice; we must also influence the population that allows those enemies to exist.

Further Reading

“COIN: On the Job Learning for the New Platoon Leader” by 1LT Robert Baird, January-February 2009, *Infantry* magazine

“The Counterinsurgency Cliff Notes: Techniques for the Conventional Rifle Platoon, in Layman’s Term” by CPT Craig Coppock, July-August 2008, *Infantry* magazine

“An Important Weapon in COIN Operations: The Key Leader’s Engagement” CPT Joe Curtis, July-August 2008, *Infantry* magazine

“Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency” by David Kilcullen, May-June 2006, *Military Review*

“The Way of the Pashtun: Pashtunwali” by MAJ Richard Tod Strickland, Vol. 10.3, Fall 2007, *Canadian Army Journal*

Marine Corps Intelligence Activity Afghanistan Micro Mission Guide

FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*

Combat Advisor 101

By CPT Matthew Swain

This article was originally published in the January-March 2011 issue of Infantry magazine, https://www.benning.army.mil/magazine/2011/2011_1/JAN-MAR11.pdf.

Mentoring and advising a foreign officer that is at least one rank higher than your own and has been fighting since he was a teenager can seem like a daunting task. In addition, a combat advisor (CA) may attend several weeks of training to be an advisor and still may not have a clear vision of what he will actually be doing once he is in theater. This article will attempt to give simple and direct advice on what a CA can expect in the relationship with his counterpart based on actual CA experiences, with a focus on key leader engagements (KLEs) in Afghanistan.

Relationships Will Make You or Break You

The most important measure of success as a CA is your professional relationship with your Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) counterpart and with your coalition counterpart. Your relationship with your Afghan counterpart will be the determining factor on how much progress you will make during your deployment; however, do not take for granted your relationship with other coalition leaders. You will certainly have your own U.S. chain of command for reporting, but you may have a dual reporting requirement to another coalition military. Your CA team may be responsible for an Afghan brigade commander, but the division-level CA team may be from a coalition nation. For example, the CA organization in western Afghanistan in 2009 included U.S. Army battalion-level CAs and an Italian Army brigade-level CA team. Those responsible for Afghan National Army (ANA) battalion commanders and staff had a dual reporting chain. They reported to their U.S. chain of command as well as to the Italian CAs at the Afghan brigade. If a coalition CA team is responsible for a higher or adjacent Afghan unit, you must make sure your chain of command understands the goals and operations of that coalition team.

Build Rapport to Get the Best Results

To teach, coach, and mentor your counterpart, you must be able to influence his decision-making process. The best way to do this is to build a solid rapport with him. There will be vast cultural differences between you and your counterpart. You may have nothing in common with him, but you must first build rapport to start developing your professional relationship.

Get to know your counterpart personally. He will definitely invite you to lunch, so have lunch with him and do it often. Talk with him about subjects not related to work. Don't be afraid to socialize.

Another great and often overlooked technique used to get to know your counterpart better is to debrief your interpreter after each KLE. Your interpreter will tell you if your counterpart liked what you said, got upset, what he said to his staff during the KLE, or even what kind of Dari accent he has.

Once you get to know your counterpart on a personal level, the process of building a professional relationship becomes much easier. When you have a good professional relationship, advising will be much more effective. It all starts with building rapport.

There Will Be No Short Meetings with Your Counterpart

There are rarely “quick meetings” or engagements, either at home station or while deployed. As Army leaders, we are all experienced in attending meetings. The KLE is the crux of what a combat advisor does, and your KLEs with your Afghan counterparts may take twice as long as a meeting with your American peers. The reason for this is obvious and simple — the language barrier. All of the discussion in a KLE is literally said twice — sometimes several times. Everything you want to say to your Afghan counterpart must first be understood then translated by your interpreter. Your counterpart’s response must also be understood and translated by your interpreter. Some words simply don’t translate from English into Dari (or whatever language your counterpart speaks) and vice versa.

Besides single words not translating, oftentimes entire phrases, the nuances of different languages, and the complex intent behind what we want to say to our counterpart don’t translate well. Just trying to convey one idea to your counterpart can bring the KLE to a standstill. Another example of the cumbersome translation process is trying to get a simple piece of information from your counterpart and having to ask multiple times to get a simple answer.

Another reason a KLE will take longer than originally anticipated is that your counterpart will agree on a topic of discussion but have an ulterior motive and will direct the conversation in an entirely different direction. For example, you may go into a routine KLE with the agreement that the topic will be mundane details about a weapons and personnel inventory, and your counterpart will talk about his fuel needs for most of the meeting.

He may talk for extended periods of time while you sit patiently and quietly and listen. This is simply a cultural difference — your counterpart is not intentionally being rude. Afghan officers can, and will, go into an extended monologue during a KLE, talking about not only the issue that prompted the KLE, but every other issue he may have at the time. Usual topics of discussion include: ammunition, food, transportation, and the Afghan resupply system. He may not expect you to provide realistic solutions for him on the spot, but he is usually venting his frustration about his challenges.

Don’t Assume Your Counterpart Knows or Cares What You’re Talking About

What is important to you isn’t necessarily important to your counterpart. American staff officers spend countless hours building and refining ingenious slide presentations and various other correspondence. Conversely, Afghan officers can request aviation support with a three-sentence, hand-written memorandum on a plain white piece of scrap paper with no letterhead. The ANA and the Afghan National Police (ANP) do not use the same staff processes and products as U.S. Soldiers. The lesson here is when you tell your counterpart in a KLE that one of you has to prepare slides for an upcoming briefing or operation, he will not necessarily know or care about what a professionally built presentation looks like.

Another example of the cultural difference in priorities is the importance of formal sensitive items accountability. In the U.S. military, accounting for weapons and sensitive items is a no-fail, command-directed activity. If a sensitive item isn’t accounted for, everything stops and it’s a unified effort to search for the item until it is found. The ANA and ANP don’t necessarily have the same systems and emphasis on this.

This doesn't imply that they negligently lose weapons and equipment, but they are satisfied if their soldiers and police have enough weapons and equipment on hand to accomplish the mission. This will affect your KLE in how much command emphasis your counterpart should place on the inventories that he must conduct, and the timeliness and accuracy of the inventory.

Don't Hold Your Counterparts to a U.S. Standard

Some combat advisors try to make their counterparts and their Afghan units perform at the same level as an American unit. No matter how hard you try, this will not happen. The cultural and social differences and priorities are enormous, and Afghan units simply will not conduct operations the way we do. An example of this is the staff process. For U.S. Army units, an operation order (OPORD) for a battalion mission can be a major document to include multiple annexes. An OPORD for an Afghan infantry battalion (kandak) can be a two-page hand written document with no annexes, if the kandak staff produces an order at all. For example, the embedded training team (ETT) in Farah Province, Afghanistan, has mentored the kandak on the military decision-making process (MDMP) and OPORD production several times over the years. For security operations during the 2009 presidential election in Afghanistan, the kandak staff produced a two-page, hand-written OPORD. The kandak would not have produced one at all if the ETT had not coached them to do so.

In addition to the differences in staff processes, general soldier and military conduct is vastly different from the American military. A striking example of this is the general appearance and cleanliness of Afghan unit areas and buildings. To put it simply — there is trash everywhere. There is trash inside the offices, conference rooms, outside the buildings, and in the parking areas. A unit in the U.S. Army would never have an area like this. However, this is commonplace in Afghanistan. As a CA, you may want to address this with your counterpart, but don't be disappointed if no progress is made. Afghans simply do not place the same emphasis as we do on area beautification and cleanliness. It is yet another example of different priorities in their culture.

Don't Try to Be Your Counterpart's Boss

As a CA, you give advice and mentor your Afghan counterpart. You are not in a supervisory position in relation to your counterpart. A potential pitfall in the CA relationship with a counterpart is attempting to dictate tasks. Your counterpart does not work for you. You are there simply to advise, relay information, mentor, coordinate, support, and whatever else may be needed. If your counterpart does not prioritize a mission or tasking that you as a CA need him to, then you will certainly think you are not accomplishing your mission. In this case, you may want to "order" him to do the mission or else! This absolutely will not work. A CA may try to emphasize the importance of a task to his counterpart, but the counterpart simply does not plan to accomplish the task in the time frame or manner the CA wants or expects.

A great example of this is the ANP weapons and personnel inventory. This is a routine and recurring tasking that the ANP must complete and have completed for the past several years. The CAs report the results through their chain of command to measure ANP development.

In the spring of 2009, there was a KLE between the Heart Regional Police Mentor Team and the ANP commander for western Afghanistan. The topic of discussion was the upcoming weapons and personnel inventory. The ANP commander was not in the mood to discuss the inventory and was making excuses about why it would not be completed. The discussion went back and forth

for a few minutes between the senior CA and the Afghan commander with no agreement. Finally, the CA gave the Afghan commander an absolutely brilliant response just because of its honesty and simplicity. He said, “General, this is not my inventory; this is your inventory. I really don’t care if you do it or not. I can only report that you didn’t to my chain of command which will report to the Ministry of the Interior. That’s all I can do.”

The CA remained calm and professional throughout the entire meeting even though his counterpart was not agreeing to their terms. The CA told his counterpart his role as a CA and why it’s important for the inventory to be completed. This method will work much more effectively than attempting to bully or coerce your counterpart. The response should be one of the guiding principles for a CA: “This is your mission, your unit, your country. Not mine. I’m just here to help.”

Don’t Assume Your Counterpart Needs Your Advice for Anything

As a CA, you’ll most certainly be providing advice and mentoring to a counterpart that outranks you and possibly has been fighting since he was a teenager. The Afghans are not naïve, they realize that they outrank you and probably have at least as much combat experience as you, if not more. However, they will always be polite, friendly, and gracious. They will listen to everything you have to say. Whether or not they take that advice is up to them, but they will at least listen.

Afghan leaders are not necessarily incompetent. They have their own methods and visions on how they lead their companies, battalions, brigades, and corps. The advice your Afghan counterpart wants to hear from you during combat is where you are placing your crew-served weapons and that close air support (CAS) and medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) are available. During garrison operations, your Afghan counterpart will almost certainly want you to help with his supply and logistics problems, primarily by personally delivering the supplies and equipment he wants and needs. This is rarely, if ever, possible, but you can facilitate the process for him. More often than not, this will be perfectly acceptable.

You Can’t Solve All Your Counterpart’s Problems, but You Can Facilitate

A common negotiation pitfall among salesmen and customer service representatives in the civilian world is telling a client that “it’s not possible” or “that’s against policy” or simply, “I can’t do that.” An effective technique to use when dealing with a difficult client in this situation is “don’t tell people what you can’t do; tell them what you can do.” This will apply to you as a CA more often than you think and will make your life much easier.

Your counterpart will almost certainly tell you that he needs ammunition, building materials, fuel, computers, printers, or any number of items or equipment. He will expect you to deliver these items because his supply system isn’t working well, and more importantly, that you are an American.

“As a CA, you are an advisor and facilitator. Your job is to make your counterpart’s system work for him, not to do the work yourself.”

Do not tell your counterpart that you will make sure he gets his supplies and equipment as soon as possible. He will expect you to personally deliver everything he requested to his headquarters within the week, which almost certainly will not happen. When you fail to deliver on an obvious promise to your counterpart, you will lose credibility and your working relationship will suffer.

A good method to use in this situation is to honestly tell your counterpart what you can do, not what you can't do. You can't deliver his requested supplies within a week, but what you can do for him is to facilitate the process. You can report to your CA chain of command that your counterpart has ordered supplies and to have your higher level CAs check into the supply request with their counterparts. You can arrange a meeting with your counterpart's logistics officer and the next higher level logistics officer. You can deliver the supply request forms to the next higher level logistics officer, or his CA, and make sure he understands the order and what he must do to fulfill it. As a CA, you are an advisor and a facilitator. Your job is to make your counterpart's system work for him, not to do the work yourself.

Check, Recheck, and Double Check Everything with Your Counterpart

As previously mentioned, cultural differences between you and your counterpart can be vast. They can and will have different priorities than you and your CA team. For example, you and your counterpart's focus for the week is planning for the security of an upcoming event. Your focus may be on creating a slide show for a briefing, and you desperately need input from your counterpart on how his unit will accomplish the mission. Your counterpart may be focused on the troops to task for the plan and making sure his soldiers have food and water while they are on the mission; he could care less about your PowerPoint slides. No amount of badgering from you will convey to your counterpart the importance of a slide show, even though to you it is critically important. To appease you, your counterpart may eventually give you a simplified concept of the operation, a troops to task analysis and anything else you may need, but you must make him understand that the information he provided will be briefed to your boss, his boss, and up several levels of the chain of command. You must absolutely verify that the information and the plan he provided is what his unit will actually do for the operation because that is what will be presented.

Don't Assume Your Counterpart Doesn't Speak English

As a CA in Afghanistan, you may be pleasantly surprised by how many ANP and ANA officers speak English. Some Afghan officers speak fluent English. Other Afghan officers, even enlisted, will have a working knowledge of English but will not speak it to you. It is very important to know this because you will need to be aware of what you and your team members say while among your counterparts and their soldiers. The language barrier won't mean that you can have a private conversation with your team members during a KLE. Make absolutely sure that you, or anybody else with you, don't say something in English to insult your counterparts during the meeting; it's highly likely they will know what was said. Also make sure you don't have semi-private sidebar discussions with your team members during a KLE. What you say will probably be heard and understood by your counterparts.

Don't Think That a CA Assignment is a Non-combat Job

Although your primary mission as a CA is to teach, coach, and mentor your counterpart, this is not necessarily a combat or lethal mission in all cases. A lot of your time will indeed be spent creating slides, gathering information for higher headquarters, conducting various inventories, planning training, and other administrative functions. However, it is highly likely that you will eventually be in a combat situation with your counterpart or his subordinate units. As previously mentioned, the enablers (CAS, MEDEVAC, crew-served weapons, etc.) you bring to the fight are highly valued by your counterparts. Don't underestimate how much value your counterpart will place on your enablers — they can and will be a determining factor in your counterpart's mission accomplishment. For example, an entire Afghan kandak will postpone or cancel a mission if the

American CA team can't join them. In many instances, your counterpart will insist that your CA team accompany them on missions. If your counterpart's unit conducts a mission without you, chances are high that your counterpart will contact you during the mission requesting quick reaction force (QRF) support from you. You may be answering e-mail in the morning and providing support by fire by lunch.

Conclusion

Being a combat advisor is certainly one of the most challenging, frustrating, and rewarding assignments an Army leader can have. As a CA, you are the face of the American military and the American people and part of the long-term exit strategy. You are responsible for teaching, coaching, and mentoring a foreign military. The rapport you build with your counterpart will pay big dividends in building relations between the two militaries and in defeating the insurgency.

The Real Challenge in Afghanistan: Toward a Quantum COIN

By A. Lawrence Chickering

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Pessimistic stories are everywhere in the media about the war in Afghanistan, now in its tenth year. The military war seems to be going well, but political pressures are increasing to withdraw, driven by stories on doubts about the sustainability of our development programs to promote “nation-building”.¹ The *real* challenge in Afghanistan often gets lost. One can get a sense of it from soldiers’ accounts from the field there. Here is Phat Doan, a Vietnamese-American, writing recently in the Small Wars Journal. He enlisted to go to Afghanistan, trying to redeem the failure in Vietnam:

[My military compatriots] had frustrations with their counterparts, mostly to the apathy. Many of the Afghanistan National Army [ANA] soldiers showed an indifference [sic] attitude toward the American training efforts.² The ANA soldiers didn’t take trainings seriously and even joked around in serious situations. If the ANA soldiers die, it is Inshallah [Allah’s Will]. The ANA soldiers saw the war as the Americans’ responsibility. Hence, they referred the ANA soldiers as “creatures”, a kind that lives off others’ efforts, not as “human” counterparts.

The author tries to imagine the response of American soldiers to the Afghans’ apathy, their lack of commitment, if not their active hostility. (He refers to Taliban insurgents as “the Taliban man”—individual insurgents who blend with the locals, invisible to us, but well known to the locals.)

It is hard to understand what they [the American soldiers] go through. . . . [H]ow would you explain the feeling of telling your family you just got hit, suffering traumatic brain injury, on Christmas Eve, all thanks to the Taliban man? How would you explain the feeling of watching the dust cloud of an exploding IED swallows [sic] your brothers, *knowing the locals standing nearby have prior knowledge of the buried IED but fail to warn you?* How would you explain the feeling of losing your love one and *seeing the locals with smirks on their faces?* Only your brothers in arm could share those feelings and bear with you through it. [Italics added.]

Most of the concern expressed about psychological traumas suffered by returning soldiers is grounded in condemnations about the general brutality of war—about war being hell. Yet Phat Doan encourages us to reflect on a much more devastating issue, which overwhelms general statements about war. Doan asks us to imagine the impact on soldiers who return from a year in hell, fighting for people *who don’t deserve our help and don’t want it*—people *who actively support our enemies*. He continues:

To them, the majority [most American soliders], it was madness. Why should they smile and wave at the *locals that secretly support the Taliban man?* Why should they care if the locals have foods, clean water, medical clinics and schools *when*

the locals secretly signal the Taliban man of their coming? Why should they hand out care packages to the local children when it is their dad the Taliban man? To them [American soldiers], it didn't make sense. [Italics added.]

“[I]t was *madness* [italics added]”. Their whole experience was madness. And we are surprised at their psychological trauma? The only thing surprising is that many more do not suffer it. One can imagine their trauma is not, essentially, about the general hell of war, but about sacrificing for people who are helping their enemies.

Doan's words set off a rage that we are doing this to American boys and girls who are making these sacrifices. Most people who understand this immediately decide that we need to get out—the sooner, the better. This isn't about whether the war is “worth it”; it is about making sacrifices for people who don't want us and are actively helping our enemies.

The conclusion that the Afghans “don't want us and are actively helping our enemies” oversimplifies the reality. The challenge is to understand that “apathy” is a *central element in the traditional concept of self*, and it does not mean the same thing in a tribal society as it does in the advanced industrial democracies, with our individualistic concept of self. Understanding this leads to a very different conclusion. I do not, in fact, think we *should* just “pull out”. If we continue, however—possibly for years—we need to be much clearer about the issues we are facing there than we are.

Rethinking Afghan “Apathy”

The mainstream view of Afghan motivation, which runs through the *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (CFM), is that although people in countries threatened by insurgencies may appear apathetic, they are actually *afraid*, and they are unhappy with the performance of their government. Thus, the twin objectives of COIN: *to protect the people and to strengthen the government's ability to earn their support by providing them services*, including security.

These objectives respond to only a small part of the real challenge there and provide limited guidance about what we need to do.

We need to rethink the problem of “apathy” and how to respond to it.

Consider the security and services explanations for the problem. Where is the security concern of the soldiers Doan describes in the Afghan National Army (ANA)? If “Allah's will” governs, and if they are surrounded by soldiers (including Americans), what is there to fear? What services are Afghan soldiers missing to explain their alienation from the Afghan government? There is *nothing* in the security and services explanation that explains why Afghan soldiers show “indifference” “toward the American training efforts”—or why they don't “take trainings seriously”—or why they think the war is “the Americans' responsibility.” What is wrong with the training that allows them to refer to ANA soldiers as “creatures”, “a kind that lives off others' efforts, not as ‘human’ counterparts”?

Training of the Afghan National Army is running far behind schedule. This concern goes back so long that it should be obvious something is wrong with our understanding of how to motivate people in a tribal society, promoting the sense of intention that is necessary for effective fighters. (The Taliban, incidentally, do not suffer this challenge because its revolutionary, messianic narrative sustains followers' commitment.)

This perspective suggests we should be skeptical of optimistic claims about progress in building the Afghan army, which now has 400,000 soldiers and is growing. Stories of heroism of individual Afghan units do not trump the point I am making. Descriptions such as Doan's as well as the general difficulty building an effective Afghan army suggest that "apathy" is retarding efforts to train an effective army. Our training reflects very little understanding of how to motivate Afghan soldiers; we need to understand the problem, and we need to address it.

And what about Afghan villagers, who are always described as "terrified" by the Taliban's brutality? So terrified that they have found no way to warn U.S. soldiers when they have prior knowledge of a buried IED? So terrified that they punctuate their failure with smirks on their faces?

The security and services explanations do not ring true in relation to these real life descriptions. What else might be going on?

Doan reports on his experiences and those of people with him. They are reporting from the most "difficult" places: the south and east. Are there places in the south and east that are *not* so difficult—where, perhaps, people are not apathetic and where the Taliban man is not welcome?

There *are* such places, places that show a very different reality. We need to learn from them.

The Problem of Stake and the Challenge of Empowerment

Motivating Afghans, both in the army and in rural communities, is essential for any kind of progress. There has been little serious debate on this subject because there is little understanding of it. Public policy and public policymakers—and academics in general—are most comfortable when issues are *objective*. (I agree with David Brooks's observation that intellectuals are "emotional avoidants"—comfortable when dealing with the objective, but uncomfortable when conversation moves from head to heart.)

When concern shifts to issues of culture and psychology (e.g., motivation), the conversation becomes *subjective*; and policymakers usually address them with throwaway lines about the importance of culture, nothing more. They avoid these issues because subjective issues are beyond their expertise and comfort zone. (A dramatic example of this appeared in a huge, cover-page feature in *Foreign Affairs*, in which the lead author argued there *are no general [subjective] issues across the greater Middle East*; there are only complicated differences in [*objective*] political conditions in different countries.³ This broad view invites us to ignore as irrelevant any and all subjective issues, while surrendering to the reality of objective complexities we cannot influence. This position, which is built into our mechanistic intellectual idiom, runs throughout all discussions and debates about the region. It is the seminal, underlying assumption that animates the fatalism and passivity in our entire debate about foreign and national security policy.)

To address the continuing conundrum of Afghanistan—and of all tribal societies—we must move away from our objective and mechanistic idiom and look seriously at issues of culture and psychology, which means focusing on subjective issues.

The issue of motivation is of course central to increasing the role of other people in COIN and reducing our own role. When we are the only significant actors, it is obvious that little can be achieved—which is where we have been for ten years in Afghanistan.⁴

Our current, mechanistic policies operate from a “Newtonian” concept of motivation.⁵ The common sense view, which comes from mechanistic Newtonian physics, is that everything that happens happens because *we* do something (we train Afghan soldiers, we “help” Afghans). This local causation makes everything we do essentially about *us*, no matter how we protest that of course the challenge really needs to be about them.

We maximize impacts when we shift from a Newtonian to a *quantum logic* and empower people to have a stake in their own societies and encourage them to take responsibility for both development and security. Such empowerment becomes a quantum force as it connects them and they start to promote both, *independently of us*. When they become actively and *independently* involved, the total resources supporting COIN increase exponentially.⁶

How to do this?

When GEN Petraeus was a lieutenant general deployed in Iraq in 2006, he wrote an article laying out fourteen basic principles of COIN.⁷ His first principle is about the importance of *ownership*, promoting a *stake* in a society for people who have no stake. He referred to a frequently-quoted statement of T. E. Lawrence, writing in 1917: “Do not try to do too much with your own hands,” Lawrence wrote.⁸ “Better the Arabs do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly. . . . [T]he work . . . may take them longer and it may not be as good as you think, but if it is theirs, it will be better.”⁹

Part of his point is about *ownership*, ownership from *what they do*. Their ownership becomes even greater when they have a role in *deciding what to do*. If the issue is building a school, local people are empowered and get ownership by building the school. They get even more ownership when they participate in deciding to build the school.

Lawrence’s insight about ownership and empowerment is important to build social capital, and it is also important for maintaining the school: when people are just given things, they rarely have ownership, and they will often not maintain them. (The development field is flooded with stories about unsustainability because recipients of help, lacking ownership, do not maintain what people give them.)

Most people embrace Lawrence’s insight abstractly but ignore it in practice because the insight conflicts fundamentally with almost universal philanthropic and donor norms and practices. Focusing on ownership rather than on the school or well focuses on the psychology of the recipient of help rather than on the help itself. The help is about the present; the internal state of the recipient is about the future. While philanthropists are nearly unanimous in embracing Lawrence’s insight, their *practice*—no matter what they say—is about the *objective*: concrete, measurable help in the *present*. Having a stake and ownership—which are about the *subjective*—is about the future. It is the key to sustainability.

Helping is about creating a perfect present but (often) no future. Sustainability and the future come from accepting an imperfect present for a powerfully sustaining future. The key is giving people a *stake* in the society.

This insight is essential for development and also for recruiting people out of their apathy, engaging them to *care*. This is the great challenge that Doan describes—the most difficult challenge we need to overcome in Afghanistan and in any traditional and tribal society.

Motivating the Afghans

Empowering people rather than helping them would make an important difference in motivating them—in encouraging them to care. *Consciousness* is the other subjective issue that is important for motivation, moving traditional people beyond tradition and habit to conscious (rather than role-driven) connections, promoting (for example) the importance of educating girls.¹⁰

On the issue of ownership, it is obvious what we should be doing: everybody agrees about it. If we did it, perhaps combined with a really serious communications strategy communicating to people throughout the country, we could probably start to change realities on the ground very quickly.¹¹ Yet what we should be doing—empowering rather than helping Afghans—conflicts so fundamentally with basic philanthropic and donor norms and practices, and even with important elements in our *nature*, that it is hard to be confident we could do it with the consistency that would influence perceptions widely and would really start to change Afghan's apathy and indifference.

We are an archtypically *practical* people, and “accepting an imperfect present for a powerfully sustaining future” is just not in our nature. Helping people puts all focus on the helper. Helping is what moral and religious teachers implore us, every day, to do for the disadvantaged. It makes the privileged *feel good* to help people less fortunate.

Unfortunately, helping them also disempowers them because it fails to honor their capacities and resources. It treats them as having only needs, no resources. And the result is the appalling spectacle of what Doan observes in Afghan soldiers and in the Afghan people. We can see the same spectacle in many other disadvantaged communities that are beneficiaries of massive forms of “help”.

We need to take the focus off *ourselves*, the helpers, and put it on the people we want to help. We need to see that unless they are empowered, unless they have a stake in their societies, they will be disempowered “creatures” who look to us to do everything. It is terrible for them, and it is terrible for us.

Some readers are probably thinking that with all of the billions of dollars we are spending on nation-building in Afghanistan, we *must* be empowering at least *some* people. We undoubtedly are in many places. And in those places one may suppose that apathy is a greatly reduced problem. We are not, however, empowering many others, including those Doan observes. There the problem of apathy dominates people's lives.

Although it is theoretically easy to solve this problem, it is hard to see solving it in practice. First of all, there is little understanding of these issues among senior policymakers in the government; and where there is no understanding, nothing tends to happen. Without understanding, there will be no capacity—because of poor policies and misaligned institutional structures—to do anything, systematically, about it. There are just too many stories about real experiences, where the “helpers” talk about empowering but are in fact helping and disempowering, to believe there is any consistent understanding guiding our nation-building programs. (By “helpers”, I am referring to Provincial Reconstruction Teams [PRTs] run by soldiers who lack adequate training for nation-building, and even to civil society organizations [CSOs] that should know better, which are systematically disempowering and intensifying apathy, indifference, and even active hostility.)

Conclusion

Widespread “apathy” among the tribal people in Afghanistan may be the most important impediment to any reasonable outcome there. It is certainly a major impediment to any exit strategy for us, and reducing it is also crucial for our fighting men and women, encouraging them to understand we are not fighting a hopeless and undeserving cause.

“Apathy” is a largely correctable problem if one understands its sources. Whether it comes from a lack of a stake in the society or from a preconscious concept of self, —apathy freezes everyone in place and makes it hard to get anything done. It is likely, in fact, that widespread “apathy” is an important factor encouraging the widespread corruption that is the subject of so much comment. Corruption facilitates action that is problematic in tribal societies, with widespread “apathy” and low social trust (which limits cooperation between people).

The antidote to apathy is empowerment. Empowering Afghans or other tribal people is a difficult and complex challenge. If we cannot bring ourselves to understand and address the complexities, we should really start dismantling our operation and prepare to withdraw from Afghanistan. The consequences of this, I believe, would be horrendous—resonating across the region. One can only hope that we have the moral and spiritual resources to embrace this challenge and see it to a positive conclusion.

End Notes

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**TAQIYYA:
Protective Dissimulation Practiced by Afghanistan’s Ethnic Groups
(Taqiyya–Dissimulation or Plain, Right-out Lying)**

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We smile for some people, while our hearts curse...¹

Abu al-Darda’

Their honor, if such a word can be used at all in relation to them, seldom extends beyond the vindication of their own rights and has little in it of an altruistic or national character. Plausible and specious in their arguments, they often succeed in imposing upon Europeans with their protestations of good faith and honorable intentions, but experience of a very positive nature impresses on us the fact that no Military Commander should ever rely on their good faith alone for the fulfillment of any promises they may make.

Handbook of Kandahar Province, 1933

Westerners tend to accept at face value the often repeated assertion that Pashunwali, the Pashtun code, is honor-based, requires individuals to keep their word, and to follow through on their promises made. While there are individual Pashtuns as honor-bound as the members of any other culture, circumstances exist through which they may circumvent their own code. Solid evidence exists to the contrary and those doubting this analysis have only to conjure up the spirit of Habibullah Kalikani, the Tajik ruler of Afghanistan who was able to gain control of the country for approximately nine months. Assured of good treatment and leniency, Kalikani “reconciled” to the Pashtuns supporting Nadir Shah’s attempt to regain the throne, but he and his lieutenants were soon executed.²

How is this done in an Islamic “honor” society? There is a special dispensation that exists to allow for dissimulation by individuals to protect themselves from discrimination and potential harm and even outright trickery during battle. The little known but widespread use of taqiyya, or protective dissimulation, allows for fabrication, falsehoods, and betrayals under nearly any circumstance and many Afghans excel at this, Pashtunwali code or not. This paper is not intended to be a general denigration of Afghans, especially Pashtuns, but is a warning to be cautious in dealing with them. Many, if not most, are excellent people. Some are not.

While the concept of taqiyya is well documented among the Shi’ia, Afghan Sunnis also rely upon dissimulation to protect themselves. This is especially prevalent in Afghanistan where Persian culture has had such a wide impact and conflict for in excess of thirty years has created so many casualties, destruction, and continuing animosity that learning to lie creatively was a survival mechanism. It would be incredible for the average Afghan not to adopt some form of taqiyya to protect his family and to ensure his personal survival. There are portions of their holy writings

that excuse the use of falsehoods for personal protection and Afghans are better at dissimulation than other Muslims. This occurs as they normally deny that they rely upon taqiyya in their interrelationships, particularly those with the infidels – like the Americans and Coalition soldiers fighting the insurgency.

Afghans and the Pashtun tribesmen are warm, loyal friends once the confidence building between members of two different cultures is completed. As might be expected, building trust in a relationship with someone who has gone through two and in many cases three generations of experiencing potentially savage violence is often a slow process. As westerners enter into this process, they need to remember that like Westerners, Afghans of all ethnic groups have different personalities and varying degrees of personal honesty. Most are capable of becoming close personal friends within warm personal relationships that may last a lifetime, but there are some members of this culture who have generally sociopathic tendencies and can be quite traitorous. Learning how to separate these two groups is difficult, but must be done. Those individuals who have negative personality traits can be very self-serving, dangerous, and may be among the best fabricators in the world. Perhaps their ability to clearly recount their “observations” in great, verifiable detail is based on the religious training that requires a great deal of rote memorization and their fabrications are very difficult to uncover, but their ability to recall that they are in a “battle” that provides religious justification for lying to an potential adversary is unmatched. Some Afghans excel at lying.

Background

An Islamic scholar explains:

“The word ‘al-Taqiyya’ literally means: ‘Concealing or disguising one’s beliefs, convictions, ideas, feelings, opinions, and/or strategies at a time of eminent danger, whether now or later in time, to save oneself from physical and/or mental injury.’ A one-word translation would be ‘Dissimulation’.”³

Taqiyya, dissimulation or plain, right-out lying is often believed to be a Shiite Muslim concept. An example is the Iranian revolution of 1979 where Ayatollah Khomeini presented his struggle as one against the Shah as he invited all Iranians to participate in his “revolution.” However, his primary agenda was the introduction of a theocratic Islamic state based on a vicious interpretation of Sharia, Islamic law. Within a year or so his former “allies”, democrats, Marxists, Communists, and Baha’i were being executed. But taqiyya is not just a Shi’a tradition. Far to the west, the Sunni Moriscos⁴ once rode out the Spanish Inquisition by hiding their true views. They would openly conform with church requirements to avoiding punishment by going along to mass and then they washed off the “holy water” when they got home. This is a widely accepted religious doctrine that is not well documented because taqiyya allows for dissimulation when this is discussed.

Sunni references clearly indicate that al-taqiyya is acceptable to them:

- Ibn Abbas said: “al-Taqiyya is with the tongue only; he who has been coerced into saying that which angers Allah (SWT), and his heart is comfortable (i.e., his true faith has not been shaken), then (saying that which he has been coerced to say) will not harm him (at all); (because) al-Taqiyya is with the tongue only, (not the heart).”

- It has been narrated by Abd al-Razak, Ibn Sa'd, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Abi Hatim, Ibn Mardawayh, al-Bayhaqi in his book "al-Dala-il," and it was corrected by al-Hakim in his book "al- Mustadrak" that: "The nonbelievers arrested `Ammar Ibn Yasir (RA) and (tortured him until) he (RA) uttered foul words about the Prophet (PBUH&HF), and praised their gods (idols); and when they released him (RA), he (RA)... went straight to the Prophet (PBUH&HF).

The Prophet (PBUH&HF) said:

"Is there something on your mind?"

`Ammar Ibn Yasir (RA) said:

"Bad (news)! They would not release me until I defamed you (PBUH&HF) and praised their gods!"

The Prophet (PBUH&HF) said:

"How do you find your heart to be?"

`Ammar (RA) answered:

"Comfortable with faith."

So the Prophet (PBUH&HF) said:

"Then if they come back for you, then do the same thing all over again."

Allah (SWT) at that moment revealed the verse: "...except under compulsion, his heart remaining firm in faith.... [16:106]"

- It is narrated in al-Sirah al-Halabiyyah, v3, p61, that: After the conquest of the city of Khaybar by the Muslims, the Prophet (PBUH&HF) was approached by Hajaj Ibn `Aalat and told: "O Prophet of Allah: I have in Mecca some excess wealth and some relatives, and I would like to have them back; am I excused if I bad-mouth you (to escape persecution)?" The Prophet (PBUH&HF) excused him and said: "Say whatever you have to say."
- It is narrated by al-Ghazzali in his book, "Ihya `Uloom al-Din," that: safeguarding of a Muslim's life is a mandatory obligation that should be observed; and that lying is permissible when the shedding of a Muslim's blood is at stake.
- Narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari, v7, p102, that Abu al-Darda' said: "(Verily) we smile for some people, while our hearts curse (those same people)."
- The (Sunni) commentator of this volume of Sahih Muslim, Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, provides the following commentary: Telling of a lie is a grave sin but a Muslim is permitted to tell a lie in some exceptional cases, and this permission is given especially on three occasions: in case of battle for bringing reconciliation amongst the hostile Muslims and for bringing reconciliation between the husband and the wife.⁵

- “On the battlefield” (dealing with non-Muslims) outwittings are necessary. Hadrat Ali said that in the battlefield one could not observe the highest standard of truth as a Muslim has been exhorted to do in matters of religion. For example, in the battlefield one has to hide facts and outwit the enemy.” (Hadith Sahih Muslim, Vol. 2, ft. #1446)⁶

The battlefield commentary is the connection to the situation found in Afghanistan for generations, if not centuries. With their lives at risk when Shi’a tribes were confronted by larger more aggressive Sunni tribes, as in the Pashtun attacks on the Hazara population at the end of the 19th century, some Hazaras likely claimed to be Sunnis – denying their actual faith – in order to save their lives. It may be al-taqiyya that caused some Shi’a Hazaras to accept the Sunni interpretation of Islam during that period in Qal-e Naw and in the Panjshir Valley region where they are still believed to be Sunni Hazaras⁷ but in reality may still be practicing al-taqiyya after a full century of living under the domination of nearby warlike Sunni tribes. The Qizilbash descendents of Shi’a warriors arrived in Afghanistan during Nadir Shah’s invasion. Later, they supported the British during the 1939-42 war and were forced out of Kabul or practice al-Taqiyya in order to be able to stay.⁸

Louis Dupree understood that taqiyya was present in the Afghan population and explained how it functioned within the Afghan Shi’a population:

“A definition of taqiyya, as it applies to Afghanistan, might be “protective dissimulation.” Rather than precautionary dissimulation... Afghan Shi’ites use taqiyya in a number of situations and may continue to do so for more than a generation. Taqiyya is practiced to save life and protect one’s property against discriminatory taxation, to obtain and hold government jobs, or simply to prevent unpleasant situations from arising... It may be prudent to define taqiyya in two distinct ways: the way local religious leaders interpret it, and the way it functions in the day-to-day lives of the people involved.”⁹

Those “day-to-day lives of the people involved” shifted dramatically not long after Louis Dupree wrote about taqiyya in October 1979. It had been bad enough under Taraki and Amin, Afghanistan’s first two Communist presidents, but their aggressive neighbors to the north, the Communists of the Soviet Union were to invade in late December 1979. Their arrival brought even greater conflict that generally pitted the traditional rural Muslim population against the urban Afghans and their Soviet supporters. Violence and depopulation of entire regions resulted and the rural population must have relied upon taqiyya to survive hostile encounters with one side or the other. The Afghans have long had a character that was essentially centered on survival and they were well prepared to adopt whatever means were needed to live through the conflict that was occurring around them. Taqiyya was something that kept them alive when confronted from their enemies. The Ismailis, in particular, rely upon taqiyya to protect themselves from persecution by their Sunni neighbors and the various governments in Kabul over the centuries.¹⁰

The British wrote of their view of the Afghan character in 1933:

“The Afghan character is a strange blend of virtue and vice. Hardy, brave, proud, simple in their mode of living, frank, prepared to die in accordance with their code of honor yet faithless and treacherous; generous to a degree yet devoured by greed for money; capable of great endurance and of feats of great energy but

constitutionally lazy; merry, cheerful, humorous and fond of music yet inclined to be austere. Cupidity, instability, a suspicious nature, intense jealousy, bitter vindictiveness, excitability, impatience, want of self-control and a complete disregard for truth form the chief characteristics of the Afghan nature. They are capable of strong personal attachments but never forget a wrong. Grossly credulous, superstitious, fanatical and bigoted yet knowing little of their religion. Tribal feuds as seldom allowed to be forgotten but on the threat of a common danger widespread fanaticism kindled by “mullahs” and other leaders would have the immediate effect of uniting all the tribes to meet the emergency. Severity and harsh justice are understood and are not resented but nagging merely acts as an irritant. They appreciate justice, an open hand, firmness, patience, good humor and the English disposition to punish and be friends again. They are great travelers and keen observers, shrewd men of business, good traders indefatigable in pursuit of gain, intellectually wide awake, of mental ability and avaricious to a degree. The race is in short a mass of contradictions, which are accentuated by the strong individuality of the people. Though brave almost to recklessness, they are easily discouraged by defeat or failure. Hospitality is part of their creed. A host will defend a guest at the risk of his own life. On the other hand, a host has no scruples against revealing his guest’s future movements to others, who may have the avowed intention of waylaying and murdering him. Their honor, if such a word can be used at all in relation to them, seldom extends beyond the vindication of their own rights and has little in it of an altruistic or national character. Plausible and specious in their arguments, they often succeed in imposing upon Europeans with their protestations of good faith and honorable intentions, but experience of a very positive nature impresses on us the fact that no Military Commander should ever rely on their good faith alone for the fulfillment of any promises they may make. It is in short useless to make any terms with them unless the observance of such terms can be enforced. The treachery and guile of the Afghans in their dealings with foreigners and enemies are but a phase of Afghan patriotism, of an unscrupulous character, doubtless, according to our own standards, but nevertheless practical in its methods, and not wholly unsuccessful in its results, as we know it to our cost. Afghan races show as much aptitude as the Indian for continuous and conscientious application to their duties, provided that respect for their superiors is maintained. “¹¹

Key Points:

- The warnings from the lessons learned the hard way by the colonial British should be remembered. Caution must be used when negotiating with Afghans. Enter into only the agreements in which you have the capability to enforce the results of negotiations. Rely upon total Afghan goodwill and compliance from the Afghan side of any unverifiable agreement made at your peril.
- Afghans, particularly Pashtuns, view concessions as a sign of weakness, not fairness or compassion. Be aware that they often interpret kindness as timidity and weakness. It is wise to demonstrate resolve and force concessions from them rather than become the conciliatory party.

- Design any agreements as a series of “tests” to be successfully achieved to ensure the gradual compliance within larger agreements. Afghans should complete the initial phases of a trust-building agreement before moving forward to any second stage. Never provide money until the product is received unless basic start-up funding is required to initiate a program or project. Divide all projects into phases and fund each subsequent portion once the initial stages are satisfactorily finished.
- Be very cautious with Hazara interpreters and translators, especially when dealing with matters related to Pashtuns. The more powerful Pashtun tribes, especially the Ghilzai, have been preying upon the Hazara population for centuries and they have good reasons to “dissimulate” when translating or advising coalition forces to put their hereditary enemies in the worst possible light. There is an ancient hatred between these two ethnic groups that is the result of multiple Hazara raids and at least one Hazara rebellion against Kabul’s authority that developed into an ethnic cleansing war that decimated the Hazaras. Many of the surviving families were subsequently enslaved and not released from bondage until the period following World War I. Nadir Shah, an Afghan monarch, was assassinated by a Hazara teenager in 1933 and the animosity between these two groups is both recent and continuing. Having a second language-capable officer present to monitor translations during this type of situation may be very useful. The Hazara are primarily Shi’ia and have very good reasons to dissemble when they have an opportunity to create problems for their Sunni enemies. There are many other Shi’ia tribes in the region, especially in Pakistan’s Kurram Agency, and the “Kabuli” population has many Shi’ia present. The Qizlbash and those individuals identified as “Farsiwans” may also be Shi’ia.
- Afghans were described in a 1933 British Army Handbook: “Cupidity, instability, a suspicious nature, intense jealousy, bitter vindictiveness, excitability, impatience, want of self-control and a complete disregard for truth form the chief characteristics of the Afghan nature.” Caution is indicated in all dealings with Afghans until trust relationships are formed.
- During early meetings with Afghans, experienced individuals develop sound relationships by being pleasant, polite, but firm in their approach to the Afghan. Eye contact is necessary, but staring may be seen as being overly aggressive. A low, calm voice shows the Afghan in the relationship that his visitor is confident, wise, and this demeanor may convince the Afghan that his new relationship involves a respected “elder” from another culture. Nothing should be “promised” to an Afghan that cannot be delivered shortly after the “promise” is made. Loud talking and demanding behavior may have an opposite result to what is desired and the westerner exhibiting this behavior may regrettably learn how effective an Afghan can apply the doctrine of al-taqiyya.

“Taqiyya is obligatory in the realm of Taqiyya, and there is no sin for a man who embraces it in order to ward off injustice from himself.”¹²

Excellent relationships frequently emerge between Americans and Afghans, particularly the more egalitarian Pashtuns who are as independent in their views as are their American counterparts.¹³

The American is involved in attempts to manipulate the Afghan into doing something they are reluctant to attempt while the Afghan side of the relationship is manipulating the American. Frequently, they manipulate us into doing something positive and intelligent within a complex culture that few Americans will ever understand, but their manipulation can be understood as reluctance on their part to listen to reason. The gift is developing the ability to sort this complexity out.

End Notes

1. Narrated in Sahih al-Bukhari, vol. 7, pg 102.
2. A review of Kalikani's demise is documented in Amin Saikal's *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*, I.B. Taurus, 2006. The comment on page 97 is revealing "... surrendered to Nadir, who promised him a complete pardon and his life. He should have known better the value of such an oath: on 2 November 1929 he was executed."
3. <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter6b/1.html> accessed 13 March 2010.
4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Morisco> accessed 13 March 2010.
5. <http://www.al-islam.org/encyclopedia/chapter6b/1.html> accessed 13 March 2010.
6. <http://www.danielpipes.org/comments/12309> accessed in 2008.
7. <http://hazara.no/hazaras.html> accessed 13 March 2010.
8. Dorronsoro, Gilles, *Revolution Unending: 1979 to Present*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2005, pg. 32.
9. Dupree, Louis, "Further Notes of Taqiyya: Afghanistan," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 99. No.4, Oct., 1979, pg. 681.
10. <http://www.gl.iit.edu/govdocs/afghanistan/Religion.html> accessed 13 March 2010.
11. _____, *Handbook of Kandahar Province*, 1933.
12. McEoin, Denis, "Aspects of Militancy and Quietism in Imami Shi'ism," *British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 11. No. 1, 1984, pg. 20.
13. In the writer's 45 years experience with tribal societies, the most helpful, honest individual encountered during this very long period was an Ishaqzai Durrani Pashtun from Kandahar, a member of a tribe that is generally estranged from the central government. Generalizations about members of a particular tribe are often incorrect.

Mad Mullahs, Opportunists, and Family Connections: The Violent Pashtun Cycle

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“Their superstition exposes them to the rapacity and tyranny of a numerous priesthood – “Mullahs,” “Sahibzadas,” “Akhundzadas,” Fakirs,” – and a host of wandering Talib-ul-ilm, who correspond with the theological students in Turkey, and live free at the expense of the people.”

Winston Churchill, *The Story of the Malakand Field Force: An Episode of Frontier War, 1897*

“He is forbidden colourful clothes or exotic music, for they weaken the arm and soften the eye. He is taught to look at the hawk and forget the nightingale. He is asked to kill his beloved to save the soul of her children. It is a perpetua surrender – an eternal giving up of man to man and their wise follies.

Ghani Khan, *The Pathans, 1947*

Invariably, when there is an emergence of extreme violence within Pashtun society, their clergy will be deeply involved. The exact opposite is true when the Pashtuns are at peace: the mullah class is quiet and remains within its mosques and madrassas. There is a long modern history of a pattern of opportunistic mullahs suddenly taking advantage of local or regional unrest to advance themselves over the traditional sources of tribal governance, maliks and khans. It is this pattern of conflict between opportunists and traditionalists that lies at the foundation of much of the violence seen among the Pashtuns. This violence appears to take the form of a cycle that repeats itself when local social and political circumstances permit the opportunist mullahs to gather enough followers to take control of their region. The period of the cycle depends on the underlying social or political stimulus that created the unrest in the first place. One thing seems sure: the displaced maliks eventually recover their status at the expense of the generally weaker mullah class and gradually restore order. In normal times, there seems to be a symbiotic relationship between maliks and the mullahs with the clergy often being responsible for announcing and implementing the decisions made by secular jirgas headed by maliks. Violence emerges within this time-tested system when mullahs attempt to gain power and authority over the traditional secular leadership of the Pashtun tribes.

It had made little real difference if the political or social instability the mullahs used to gain power resulted from the occupation of tribal lands by Sikhs, annexation by British and Indian soldiers, coups that overthrew the last of the traditional Durrani Pashtun rulers of Afghanistan, a series of assassinated communist rulers, a Soviet invasion, or the arrival of Americans and western Coalition forces charged with restoring order – and installing the maliks and khans to their proper positions as the ruling class. In all cases, the tension and instability resulted from resistance to the goal of imposing centralized secular control – maliks and khans – over a rural, tribal periphery where the uneducated population could be rallied quickly to the support of the emerging opportunistic mullahs claiming to represent God’s Will to people prone to believe their messages. Added to the susceptible population, these practiced orators frequently claimed a heritage derived from religious, respected ancestors and claimed an ability to perform miracles to demonstrate that they were the “instruments of God’s Will.” While focusing their supporter’s

attention on the external factors threatening their tribal way of life, their first targets were the traditional, secular khans and maliks whose normal authority restrained the mullah class and kept them in their mosques and madrassas. The secular side of Pashtun governance stood in the way of the opportunists seeking to elevate their status and gain both funds and the power new positions would provide.

A current case study: Sufi Mohammad, his Son-in-Law, and His Pupil

Currently, this historical pattern is repeating itself during the unrest in Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and its Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Lying adjacent to the chaos of Afghanistan, three of Pakistan's previously autonomous regions, Dir, Swat, and Chitral, were combined in 1975 into the current Malakand Division under the laws of Pakistan instead of the old local Sharia and Pashtunwali legal systems. Along with the new laws came the government's responsibility to resolve problems that were soon in coming. In 1975, a dispute between the national government and powerful local commercial interests over forest royalties led to demonstrations, violence, and negative local views of the national government emerged that soon allowed local religious groups to begin to assert themselves.

Into this volatile mix came Sufi Mohammad, a veteran of the Afghan Jihad against the Afghan communists and their Soviet allies after he returned to the region after the last Russian combat units departed Afghanistan in 1989 and he created the Tehreek- e-Nafaz-e-Shariat-e-Mohammadi (TNSM, or Movement for the Enforcement of Islamic Laws). After his experience with the successful war in Afghanistan – in most cases, led by mullahs –, Sufi Mohammad, a Maulana , (or senior cleric), appears to feel that the political environment in the NWFP was ready for expansion, but not necessarily for the Islamic law that he preached. Sufi Mohammad may have also seen that the time was ripe for personal advancement – and this was at the expense of the secular authorities of the region. While his overt agenda was obvious, Sufi Mohammad soon used his jihadist reputation, combat experience gained in opposing Afghanistan's communists and Soviet troops, and resources available through the Islamist network to build his organization into a regional power.¹ The question must remain open regarding his motivation. Was it to bring Islamic law to the region under his family's control or an opportunity for personal advancement?

These mullahs seldom act completely alone and generally draw trusted aides from their family and "student network" into the fray. In the case of Sufi Mohammad, he had nearby help who ran his TNSM organization following his his arrest by Pakistani authorities. His son-in-law, Maulana Qazi Fazlullah, is a 28-year old radical cleric who recently managed to rally sufficient support to force the Pakistani military to negotiate a truce in the Swat region of the NWFP.²

Sufi Mohammad's second-in-command, Bajaur's Maulana Faqir Mohammad, has managed to hold Sufi Mohammad's TNSM together and actually enlarge its power base during Sufi Mohammad's imprisonment. He and Fazlullah have entered into truce agreements with the new Pakistani government, but neither is trusted to follow through with commitments made. Both are expected to send portions of their forces into Afghanistan to fight, regardless of truce agreements made with Pakistan.³

With this current set of mullah opportunists, there is an additional factor to be considered. All need funding, arms, and training to continue to expand and with their clerical training, they all learned to speak Arabic. This allows them to tap into the same funding networks that allowed Afghan Wahabbi Jamil al-Rahman and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to conduct operations against the communists and other jihadi networks. The money trail led back through Pakistan to Kuwait

and Saudi Arabia and TNSM is suspected of having similar connections. And given the presence of al-Qa'ida in the region, TNSM leaders are suspected of facilitating their movements and providing sanctuary in return for money, training, and weapons.

Because of their international connections, these mullahs are suspected of belonging to a large extremist conspiracy seeking to force Sharia law throughout the Muslim World. But it equally possible that they are still Pashtun opportunists, simply using al-Qa'ida in an effort to retain control of the region where they are located as they enrich themselves. Clues to their motivation may be found in the parts of Afghanistan's violent history.

A case study from the recent past: the Alizai's subtribe, the Hasanzai, and the "Akhundzadas."

Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, his father and uncles, also used their connections to religion to gain control of a similarly broad region, this time in Afghanistan's Helmand province. The confusing term, Akhundzada [son of a religious scholar]⁴ is an honorific used essentially as a surname by these members of the Hasanzai, an Alizai sub-tribe, as they rallied rural supporters to take control of most of Helmand province – and its lucrative opium trade.

Coming from Musa Qala district in northern Helmand Province where traditional tribal influences – and the maliks and khans – remained strong, Mullah Mohammad Nasim Akhundzada, Sher Mohammad's uncle, set the tone for Helmand's religious opportunists as he became a prominent commander in Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi's Harakat-e-Inqilab-e Islami resistance group that opposed the Soviets and the Afghan communists. Anecdotal information suggests that he fought harder against other jihadi parties, particularly the guerrillas affiliated with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, than against the Soviets. But the opportunity to assert the power of the "Akhundzadas," his religious family descended from a notable Islamic scholar, an Akund, came with the arrival of the first of the communists.

The communists, or Khalqis, began to pressure the traditional land-owning class in 1978 soon after the last of the Durrani rulers, Mohammad Daud Khan, was overthrown. Under communist pressure, the khans left the region and their role was gradually usurped by the Akhundzada family and their tribal allies. As the communist government began to lose control of the countryside, Mohammad Nasim Akhundzada's mujahedin assumed more and more control.

A general analysis of this period done in the West looked at the families opposing one another, their jihadi party membership, but managed to miss the crucial variable – that scholars routinely ignored or misunderstood its significance. The contending leaders connection to their subtribe and the status of each in the Alizai hierarchy were critical variables seldom entered into the analytical calculus. Here is an example of excellent work – to a point:

"...Over the following years, three families from among the Alizais of northern Helmand led the jihad. Apart from the Akhundzadas, the two other families were that of Abdul Rahman Khan and of Abdul Wahid, with the one important survivor among the khans being Abdul Rahman, whose family of well-established traditional khans was locked in a conflict with the Akhundzadas leading Abdul Wahid and Abdul Rahman Khan to join forces against the rising star of the Akhundzadas..."⁵

At the basic foundation of this conflict were the subtribe differences within the Alizai tribe. The Akhundzadas were responsible for driving out the khans, the traditional and secular powers within their particular subtribe, the Hasanzai, as this religious family took control of their subtribe and began to expand their “fiefdom” southward into parts of Helmand occupied by a wide variety of Afghan settlers having no local tribal affiliation. The growing power of this opportunist family began to threaten the position of two other northern subtribes with Akhundzada goal of undermining the subtribe of Abdul Rahman Khan and the Khalozai of Abdul Wahid Rais al-Baghrani. Unfortunately, the available literature fails to list Abdul Rahman Khan’s Alizai subtribe⁶, but it definitely was not Hasanzai or Khalozai. His power center was the town of Girishk and his followers later made a final stand there against the powerful Akhundzadas following the Nasim’s assassination near Peshawar, Pakistan, as powerful forces contended for the wealth of the opium trade.

The control of most of the opium trade provided the funds Mullah Nasim needed to control much of Helmand province. Mohammad Rasul, Sher Mohammad’s father, provided the religious justification for the Akhundzada participation in the opium trade:

“Islamic law forbids the taking of opium, but there is no prohibition against growing it. We must grow and sell opium to fight the war.”⁷

But others were also interested in obtaining the opium profits. Abdul Rahman Khan, in seeking support, allied himself with Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Hezb-e Islami (HIG) even though Hekmatyar had shown no desire to support traditional leaders, such as the land-owning khans. Fight after fight occurred over this “strategic material” and Mullah Nasim was eventually assassinated, presumably by Hekmatyar’s fighters. This resulted in a bitter battle between the Akhundzada supporters and Abdul Rahman Khan’s fighters at Girishk where Abdul Rahman Khan’s forces were defeated. Abdul Rahman subsequently left Afghanistan for France where he lived as an exile.

The conflict between the Akhundzada family and Abdul Wahid Rais al-Baghrani is much like that with Abdul Rahman Khan. Both Abdul Rahman and Abdul Wahid were traditional subtribe leaders at the head of their loyal followers as the religious “opportunists” challenged yet another traditionalist who viewed himself as the “rais,” or “director” of Helmand’s Baghran District. In this case, there was yet another, more important, tribal factor in operation as these two Alizai subtribes continued to fight. Abdul Wahid’s Khalozai subtribe was the “Khan Khel” or leading subtribe of the Alizai tribe and its status was being challenged by the Hasanzais under the Akhundzadas.

The “Khan Khel” is an important concept within the Durranis, if not all of the Pashtuns. In the case of the Barakzai, their Khan Khel, the Mohammadzai, provided Afghanistan’s most recent kings. The Saddozai, the Khan Khel of the Popalzai, also provided kings in the country’s earliest days. It is only natural to see conflict develop between Mullah Nasim Akhundzada’s family that took control of the Hassanzai subtribe and Abdul Wahid Rais al-Baghrani, the leader of the Alizai tribe’s Khan Khel, the Khalozai, as mullahs attempted to displace the last of the secular, traditional controls over the entire Alizai tribe.

The “warlords” of the Alizai tribe were also divided in the Jihadi parties they supported during the fighting against the Soviets. The Akhundzada family joined Mohammad Nabi Mohammadi’s Harakat and Abdul Rahman Khan allied his followers with HIG, but Abdul Wahid went in a third direction by entering the Jamiat-i Islami party of Professor Burhanuddin Rabbani, a

party dominated by Tajiks. Their reasons for the choices made remain unknown, but it may be as simple as opposition to the selection made by the others as they joined separate parties because of their inter-tribal animosities – further splitting the Alizai tribe. But at the bottom of the animosities lay a single factor as religious “opportunists” challenged the secular dominance of the traditional khans, represented by both Abdul Rahman Khan and Abdul Wahid Rais al-Baghvani.

Curiously, the emergence of the “Akhundzada” family as religious opportunists appears to be an isolated occurrence within the region of Afghanistan dominated by the Durrani Confederation. While serving to illustrate the malik vs. mullah theme very well, these opportunists may have emerged from the chaos of the early communist period due to the presence of Helmand province’s lucrative opium industry. Opium was probably the reason for the fighting between Mohammad Nasim’s Harakat and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s HIG, represented in Helmand province by Abdul Rahman Khan. It was far more common to see religious opportunists challenging the authority of secular khans and maliks in regions of Pashtun territory where confederations did not exist, such as Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province and its Federally Administered Tribal areas.

Historical background: A pattern begins to emerge.

The periodic emergence of religious “opportunists” within Pashtun society frequently resulted in open warfare as this pattern of mullah vs. malik was repeated. Generally, there was a “provocation” that justified the mullah’s calls for violence, such as the rescue of the young Hindu girl who eloped – or was kidnapped – with a young Muslim man that provided a reason for the Faqir of Ipi to declare Jihad against the British. Similarly, Usama Bin Ladin followed a nearly identical pattern with his complaints about the presence of American forces in Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Gulf War to establish his “provocation.” There were other opportunists who took immediate advantage of events to press forward their claims to leadership and the power that followed their success. Interestingly, the current problems seen within Pakistan’s Pashtun population developed long ago.

“About the year 1823 appeared one of those religious impostors on the arena of Yusufzai politics who have at all times and seasons beguiled the incredulous and simple Pathan race for their own ends, and have been the means of creating discord, up-heaving society, and fomenting rebellions which have been checked and crushed with the utmost difficulty. The career of Pir Tarik in the 17th Century, and that of Sayad⁸ Ahmad of Bareilly and the Akhund of Swat in the 19th century, show but too clearly what single men are able to perform amongst the credulous Pathans. This man was Sayad Ahmad Shah⁹, a resident of Bareilly, who, after visiting Mecca-Kabul, suddenly appeared in the Peshawar district with about 40 Hindustani followers, and gave out that he had been commissioned to wage a war of extermination against the Sikhs and other infidels. It was just the time to raise the spirits of the Yusufzais and other Pathans, which had been lowered by the crushing defeat they and the Peshawar sardars had received from Ranjit Singh at the battle of Nowshera, by religious exhortations. Followers speedily surrounded the new prophet, who was aided by Mir Baba of Sadum and the Khans of Zeyda and Hind. A numerous army, animated by a zeal of fanaticism, though wanting in discipline, was now at his disposal; his own Hindustani band had been increased by recruits till it numbered 900 men. In addition to this the Peshawar sardars, feeling the influence of the movement and hoping to break the Sikh rule, joined in the crusade against their oppressors.”¹⁰

The people the British referred to as “Hindustani Fanatics” in their reports had arrived in what was to become northwest Pakistan and they brought something with them that took deep root in the immediate region: Wahhabism. The British records continue:

“Sayad Ahmad had now seated himself so firmly as to take tithes from the Yusafzais, and his power was independent of the khans who derived their authority from him, amongst whom was Mir Balm Khan, of Sadhum. His army was not very numerous, composed chiefly of Hindustanis and fanatics, but when-ever [sic] required he could summon a host of Pathans. Looking upon the Durránis as enemies, he kept them constantly under alarm by threatening Hashtnaggar, and inciting the Khaibaris to annoy them on that side, many of which tribe took service with him, being inimical to the Barakzai sardars, who had stopped the allowances formerly made them by the Saddozai Princes.”¹¹

At this point in Afghanistan’s history, the “Saddozai Princes” – from the Popalzai tribe that ruled the nation from its inception – had been replaced by the Khan Khel of the Barakzai tribe, the Mohammadzai. Interestingly, some of the hostility currently seen between the Government of Afghanistan where Popalzai Hamid Karzai serves as president and receives considerable support from the Durrani Confederation may have developed through the long ago influence of the leader of the “Hindustani Fanatics.” Soon they moved from Swat after settling in the remote village of Sitana.

“Sitana¹² is a village on the right bank of the Indus river, at the east foot of the Mahaban mountain, 13 miles above Topi. The village was originally made over by the Utmanzai to Syud Zanian, from Takhta-band in Buner. His descendants allied themselves to Sayad Ahmad, who settled in Sitana, and they aided him in all his ambitious struggles to establish a Wahabi empire of Muhammadan reformers on the Peshawar border. The ablest of the Sitana Syads was Syad Akbar, who, in 1849 or 1850 was chosen to be badshah or king of Swat.”¹³

Sayad Ahmad Shah established similar centers of supporters in British-ruled India before departing for the border region adjacent to Afghanistan. Patna¹⁴ was one of his most important centers and he received reinforcements from India during his campaigns against the Sikhs¹⁵ and as long as he remained the local spiritual authority he was accepted. Insisting that his puritanical Islamic orders be followed, he soon entered the secular domain by giving orders outside his religious authority:

“It is impossible to say how long this priestly rule and anomalous power of the Sayad might have existed, or to what extent it might have swelled, holding in restraint a wild, brave and independent people, and overpowering, with its undisciplined hordes the regular armies of ruling chiefs in a manner which served to give some color to the popular superstition that he possessed the faculty of silencing guns and rendering bullets harmless, had he not, in the pride of his success, forgotten to be moderate, and ventured to impose upon his subjects a strict and oppressive regime, from which even their superstitious reverence revolted.

“Attended by but few followers at Panjtár, he avoided all stately pretensions, and maintained the appearances of a life passed in devotional exercises, fastings and prayer; but, with all this affectation of pious zeal, his mind was bent on intrigue and ambitious scheming. His paid retainers were scattered over the country, collecting fines and dues, and reporting the most trifling incidents to their master. Even the exactions and insolence of his soldiery might have been borne, but he now began to interfere with Pathan customs, and found too late that he was thereby exceeding his bounds. The Afghans have retained many peculiarities contrary to

Muhammadan law and usage, and the strictly orthodox have been shocked at the open sale of their daughters carried on by them. Sayad Ahmad ordained that this practice should cease; and, to assist in its abolition, decreed that all Patháns should give their daughters in marriage at an early age, without receiving money, and if not then betrothed they might be claimed by their nearest relatives. This domestic interference, combined with the sayad's growing demand for wealth, determined the Yusufzais to throw off the yoke, and at a secret council a day was appointed for the slaughter of his soldiers and agents throughout the country. The proposed massacre was spoken of in the interval under the phrase of threshing makai¹⁶, and a signal was concerted of lighting a bonfire when the work was to commence. It seems probable that the Peshawar sardars [Barakzai Durrani] were associated in the plot, for on the stated Friday, whilst the fires of Yusufzai notified the carnage enacting there, they slew Maulvi Mazhar Ali, the agent left with them, and Faizulla Khan, Hazárkhaníwála, who had aided the sayad on his visit to Peshawar, and by whose abandonment of them they had been compelled to make terms.

“Several thousands were slain on this occasion, and the excited Ahmad Shah escapes....”¹⁷

The new religious leader exceeded his religious authority by placing demands that had an impact on Pashtun culture and the Yusufzai tribe turned on him. But the violent Wahabbi sect had arrived among the Pashtuns of future Pakistan and more would be heard from them. Later, Sayad Ahmad Shah was killed fighting the Sikhs and punitive operations and raids conducted by the British forced the “Hindustani Fanatics” to retreat further into more inaccessible areas in Dir, Swat, and Bajaur. Driven from Sitani, they moved their colony to Chamarkand¹⁸ in Bajaur.

A British intelligence assessment on the “Hindustani Fanatics” prepared in 1895 concluded:

“...[I]t will be seen that during the past half century the Hindustanis have come into collision with us on no less than six occasions; each time they have suffered severely and been obliged to shift their residence, but, as was stated at the beginning of the report, they still remain a factor for mischief, although in a less degree than formerly, in any complication which may arise with the independent tribes on this part of the Punjab frontier.”¹⁹

The report was correct, except the part regarding “in a less degree than formerly” and within two years the British would have yet another uprising. The population of the Lower Swat region had been cooperating with local authorities and trade had developed between nearby Bajaur and adjacent areas. The Swatis were described as “contented.” A reporter for “The Times” reported on an abrupt change in their attitude:

“Yesterday, without the least warning, the attitude of the population of the Lower Swat Valley underwent a sudden change. The first news which reached Malakand was that a disturbance had taken place at Thana, near Chakdara bridge. A few hours later further news was received that the “mad mullah,” a priest who is apparently known locally, had gathered about him a number of armed men with the view of raising a *jihad*.”

The reporter concluded: “Malakand, which is a fortified position, is too strong to be stormed, but the garrison must be reinforced in order that the Swat Valley may be kept clear and that Chakdara may be relieved. Unless this be done, the rising may spread among the neighboring clans. The news of the attack quickly became known along the frontier, and it may possibly have an effect in Waziristan, stimulating the tribesmen there to action....”²⁰

The Times' reporter made a very accurate prediction and the tribesmen were soon "stimulated." The "mad mullah," or Lewanai²¹ Faqir, claimed to have "been visited by all deceased Fakirs" and relied upon the usual assertions that bullets would be turned to water and that a pot of rice would feed multitudes. Mobilizing the Pashtuns against the British was a comparatively easy task for Saidullah²², the Lewani Faqir.

Adopting a page from the Shi'a, the Hindustani Fanatics remained together in spite of the loss of their charismatic leader by insisting that Sayad Ahmad Shah was not dead and he became their equivalent if the Persian's "Hidden Imam." Soon, Saidullah would be positioned to take advantage of this belief within a highly superstitious population and utilize the legend of the Fanatic's Hidden Imam to good effect against the British, much like Sayad Ahmad had done against the Sikhs 70 years earlier.

Saidullah, the Lewanai Faqir, reappeared in the Swat region after an extended absence to proclaim that he had been visited by Sayad Ahmad, the Fanatic's Hidden Imam, and that he had been instructed to drive the British from Swat and the Vale of Peshawar. But in failing to accomplish these goals, Saidullah was able to start a process that is still present in the region as he managed two accomplishments that remain imbedded within the Pashtun population. He was able to introduce the Hindustani Fanatic's fanaticism into the region's Pashtun population in what is Pakistan's Northwest Frontier Province and its Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA. Second, Saidullah managed to inoculate the Pashtuns living there with the belief that their homeland was a special "domain of Islam" requiring defense against occupation by Infidels.

No one knows the reason for Sayad Ahmad Shah, his sons, and his Fanatic followers to depart from Patna in eastern India to return to the Yusufzai tribal region near the border with Afghanistan. But there had to be a particularly good reason for them to emigrate into a situation that was certain to include violence. Whatever this was, their motivation to return to what was probably their original homeland was sufficiently powerful to mobilize a logistics and reinforcement system that remained in Patna to sustain the Fanatics in the west. Periodic reinforcements and funds were sent from Patna to support the Fanatics for decades.²³

Specific locations may have great significance for primitive, tribal peoples and for the Hindustani Fanatics and their supporters, some place in the Swat region may have been viewed as a "Promised Land," possibly an area from which they had been forced to migrate centuries before. There may have been a specific geographic location, possibly "Black Mountain," involved in the Fanatic's leadership being able to mobilize their followers. Special places rooted in tribal legends have been significant in past migrations, as the movement of the Fanatics probably had a similar attraction.

For example, the route the Jews took to their "Promised Land" included a segment from Mount Nebo to Jericho, a route that required the migrating Jews to cross the Jordan River. The straight route between Mount Nebo and Jericho passes through the location on the Jordan River where John the Baptist lived as a hermit and where Jesus was probably baptized. The reason this particular location on the river drew this level of religious significance? This was probably the crossing point where the Jews entered into Israel with the Arc of the Covenant, making this location special to many, if not most, Jews – much like the unknown "something" that drew the Hindustani Fanatics to Swat.

Charles Allen, in his book *God's Terrorists*, explained another possible connection. During a period between his religious studies, Sayad Ahmad joined the mercenary cavalry band of Amir Khan of Tonk, where he may have functioned as a "chaplain" rather than a cavalryman. Given his future, it is equally possible that he served with a military group in order to gain experience and training for what he had planned for later in his career. His connection to the hill tribes in the vicinity of the Afghan border may be the subject of speculation, but Amir Khan was from the region near Bruner and Sayad Ahmad may have learned about the Yusefzai tribes from Amir Khan.²⁴

Regardless of their motivation, the courage of the Fanatics in the face of overwhelming odds when in battle and their fiery sermons to the indigenous Pashtuns appear to have made a lasting impact on the Pashtun residents of the region, making it relatively simple to invoke the name of the Fanatics' "Hidden Imam" to initiate a significant revolt against the British.

Prayer, however, generally fails to turn British bullets into water, bread is seldom in an endless supply from a single basket, and Lewanai Faqirs seldom succeed in the long run. But in this case, he set the stage for yet another of the rebellious, opportunist mullahs. In order to connect this mullah to the 1897 fighting, the circumstances of the original Hindustani Fanatics must be reviewed.

Following the demise of Sayad Ahmad Shah, his lieutenants continued to feud with local Pashtun leaders and into the squabble stepped a well-intentioned religious student named Abdul Ghaffur who attempted to mediate and get negotiations started. The Pashtun leader agreed, but in the first meeting his throat was cut by the Fanatics who viewed him as an Apostate. Under these circumstances, negotiations quickly broke down and Abdul Ghaffur was soon discredited and shunned by his people.

After additional years of training, Abdul Ghaffur returned to Swat in 1840, was proclaimed an Akhund, or "saint," and he used his piety and knowledge of Islam to become the most respected leader in Swat, the Akhund of Swat. He soon anointed the secretary of the late Sayad Ahmad Shah as the Badshah, or King of Swat, and made him the ruler of the Swatis and the nearby Bunerwals in an attempt to stop their feuding. This connection was difficult for many people to comprehend as Abdul Ghaffur was a Naqshbandi Sufi and he had proclaimed the Fanatic, Sayad Akbar Shah, now to be the local ruler.

The context of the period helps understand this political move by Abdul Ghaffur. According to the Akhund's grandson, the tribes wanted a ruler capable of preventing a British take-over, but if the Akhund had selected any local the other tribes would have resented this. As a result, an outsider was selected to lead the feuding tribesmen against the British.²⁵

The results of this "alliance" initiated a system of belief that the Lewanai Faqir reinforced a generation later as he also opposed the British. The Swat region was shown to be a special place for Muslims, dar ul-Islam²⁶ – an abode of peace – from which a great jihad would be launched against the infidels occupying Muslim lands. Following a period of calm, war was soon initiated again as the Fanatics and their allies lost again, but their Pashtun supporters continued to absorb the concept of "jihadism" and reinforced the belief that their land was uniquely suited as a base for the expansion of true Islam.²⁷ These were facts that the Lewanai Faqir used to great advantage a generation later in Swat as the Hindustani Fanatics and the local Naqshbandi Sufis began to blend into what appears to be a hybrid branch of Islam – a very violent one.

David Edwards provides a warning for today's politicians in his review of the Lewanai Faqir's insurgency:

“A number of the local chiefs who were on the British payroll spoke out against him, but their exertions seem to have helped rather than hindered his cause. The recent introduction of a policy of providing allowances for local leaders seems to have created resentment and suspicion in the populace, and the efforts of allowance holders to detain the Fakir appear to have crystallized these resentments and suspicions and drawn the people to a leader who stood ready to oppose all aspects of colonial intrusions into the region.”²⁸

Enter Hadda Mullah

The Akhund of Swat had a special student, a murid named Najmuddin and later known as the “Hadda Mullah,” and he would oppose the Afghan king, a man referred to as the “Iron Amir,” Abdur Rahman, as he also fought the British. Najmuddin picked up where his student, the Lewanai Farir, also referred to as the “Sartor Faqir,” left off after fighting the British in previously described conflicts.

David B. Edwards, in his excellent “*Heroes of the Age: Moral Fault Lines of the Afghan Frontier*,” described the Hadda Mullah: “The Mulla of Hadda was portrayed as an exemplary figure of a kind rarely encountered anymore.”²⁹

After receiving the Akhund's permission, Najmuddin began to teach all four Sufi orders at his center near Jalalabad. It was through his connection to the Akhund that Najmuddin, the future Hadda Mullah, would become well respected in the region. Edwards noted that the son of a nameless Akhund, Najmuddin, was soon viewed as the spiritual son of the Akhund of Swat.³⁰ Connected to all four Sufi orders in the region, as well as to the remaining Fanatics, the Hadda Mullah was soon positioned to influence a very large number of people.

As with the original Hindstani Fanatics, Hadda Mullah selected the location where he would establish his religious center for maximum impact. In this case, the connection is known. Hadda is located a short distance from the city of Jalalabad in an area controlled by the Afghan government, and its Iron Amir, but Nasmuddin could easily relocate eastward a short distance into British India and the friendly Pashtun tribes living there. Additionally, his Sufi center was built on the remains of an old Buddhist temple and Hadda Mullah demonstrated that he had power over idols used to build his mosque and religious center.³¹

Eventually, Hadda Mullah was involved in a dispute with Amir Abdur Rahman – who tried to convince members of the Afghan clerical establishment to declare Hadda Mullah a Wahhabi – and the besieged Mullah fled east into Shinwari territory and later into Mohmand tribal lands. He was soon to play a role much larger than did his student, the Lewanai Faqir, who lacked the resources required to spread the insurgency beyond the span of control represented essentially by his voice. Hadda Mullah was far better prepared to act than was his murid.

As Hadda Mullah, Najmuddin was located near a large city, Jalalabad, and he had access to a continuous flow of visitors seeking religious advice and guidance. In his role as leader of the Sufi center where all the schools of Sufi thought in the region was presented, he had access to a

broad swathe of tribal members on both sides of the Afghan-British India border. Whether this was Najmuddin's original intent or serendipity will never be known, but Hadda Mullah was able to move against British interests with an insurgency having an organizational structure not seen previously in the Pashtun tribal region.

Najmuddin capitalized on his religious reputation and personal charisma to rally distant tribes to his war, but the "Sufi network" between distant religious centers allowed him to rally even the most distant tribes to his standard.

Mohmand tribal territory was ideal for his centralized strategy. While there, he was safe from British reprisal operations and he could communicate freely with his "spiritual cousins," the descendents of the Akhund – the Mianguls – and other former Students of the Akhund of Swat. Again, David Edwards provides the necessary insight:

"In addition, the Mulla also maintained contact with several leaders who, like himself, had some prior connection with the Akhund of Swat, including the sons and grandsons of the Akhund, the so-called Mianguls of Swat, and the Palam Mulla of Dir who, like Hadda Sahib, was one of the deputies of the Akhund. The Mulla also drew heavily upon his own deputies (the name of Sufi Sahib of Barikot is mentioned most often and prominently in British dispatches) for assistance in rallying support from inside Afghanistan, and he also kept in frequent communication with other religious leaders like himself, such as Mulla Said Akbar and the Akka Khel Mulla (the principal religious leaders of the Afridis) and the Karabagh Mulla, the dominant religious figure in Kohat District."³²

Like the other mullah revolts, Hadda Mullah's violent campaign against the British, however, soon fell apart. There were a variety of reasons, most of which were logistical, as tribal expectations of the Mullah's promises to "provide" food in the quantities he promised his followers failed to develop. Ammunition was also a problem. Military defeat was followed by monsoon rains that damaged the food and other supplies – as well as Hadda Mullah's reputation as his followers drifted away. But the "opportunist mullah network" was far from relinquishing their goals.

Hadda Mullah's aggressiveness in his effort to consolidate his control into areas adjacent to Swat, and into Swat, was to have a lasting effect within the region. Once he supported the claim of a local leader, Umra Khan, to the throne of Chitral, the descendents of the Akhund of Swat, the Mianguls, began to separate themselves from the Hadda Mullah's supporters. According to the excellent analysis by Sana Haroon:

"This split ended the possibility of a Swat amirate controlled by Hadda Mullah and a religious base in that area. But Hadda Mullah still managed to successfully consolidate his authority in the Tribal Areas."³³

This separation remains in effect today and the region surrounding Swat seems to be an entirely distinct operational area than in South Waziristan.

Haji Sahib of Turangzai Takes His Turn

As has been explained, the opportunist mullahs need some form of foreign provocation to rally the tribes to a common goal. Following the end of World War I, the Greeks and their western allies provided evidence of their enmity toward the Muslim World and, once again, mullahs began to rally their followers.

The final treaty of the First World War was between the Greeks, formerly a vassal state of the Ottoman Empire that won its independence around the time that Sayad Ahmad Shah was relocating his Hindustani Fanatics to Swat, and Turkey – all that remained of the Ottoman Empire and the seat of the Caliphate that loosely held the reins of the Muslim Ummah. While the Turks fared better than the Greeks in this final series of negotiations, they made no attempt to claim their former Arab provinces and the seat of the Caliphate was lost due to the modernizing Turks. This perceived attack on the Muslim religious establishment created a reaction among the Pashtuns, as the opportunist mullahs began to work their followers into the usual frenzy and one of Hadda Mullah's lieutenants was in the epicenter of the developing unrest. An explanation in special English is provided at Khyber.org:

“The detachment of Greece from the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey resulted in wide-scale reprisals from Muslims in Afghanistan, the Frontier, and India. Widespread protests were made throughout the region. An open rebellion was launched against the British by all the tribes from Chitral to Waziristan. Haji Sahib Turangzai also took part in an armed struggle under the leadership of Hadda Mullah Sahib when British cantonments at Malakand and Chakdarra were attacked in 1897. He fought the enemy at the fronts of Malakand, Batkhela, Pir Kali, and Chakdarra. After the demise of Hadda Mullah Sahib in 1902, *Maulana Muhammad Alam* was appointed his Khaleefa [Caliph]. Maulana Muhammad Alam was also known as *Sufi Alam Gul*. After this great loss, Haji Sahib Turangzai gave a renewed pledge to Hadda Mullah Sahib's new Khaleefa. In return, Sufi Sahib gifted [presented] him with his sword and turban and appointed him his Khaleefa as well.”³⁴

In addition to Sufi Alam Gul, a key mullah from Bajaur, the Babra Mullah, who was another murid of Hadda Mullah, was instrumental in convincing the Haji of Turangzai to oppose the British.³⁵

The Haji of Turangzai, actually named Fazal Wahid, participated in the successful revolt against the British that was initiated by the Lewanai Faqir and continued by Hadda Mullah. In spite of the size of the general uprising of the tribes supporting these latest revolting mullahs, their efforts failed.

By 1908, the Haji of Turangzai was back in Mecca a second time and when he returned to the frontier he had a new strategy to oppose the British. He began to open schools – madrassas – in order to keep the British colonial authorities from indoctrinating young Pashtuns.

His grandson, Ghani Khan, stated in an interview:

“...[T]hey had founded about 30 or 40 schools with the Haji of Turangzai. There was a crowd of them, and the Haji of Turangzai was one of them, my father was one of them, they were mostly priests (mullahs). And they said that we have to educate the children to be anti-British from childhood. In school they used to make us read ... Ye Badsha Hamara (this King of Ours, a pro-British chant), this sort of thing. They said that from childhood they (the British) teach them

loyalty and everything. But we should make a school where we can produce revolutionaries and workers. They made this one big school in our village and little schools here and there and everywhere, usually in the mosques. And the British attacked them, so my father and the Haji of Turangzai, everybody ran away (to the tribal areas of NWFP, outside British jurisdiction). The Haji of Turangzai was a very handsome man. There was a Pir (holy man) who had died in the tribal territory, and as usual in his old age he had taken a beautiful young girl, and he died, of it I suppose. So then he left this Sajjada (inherited landed estates belonging to a holy man), his whole Pirhood and everything, to this beautiful young widow. And there arrived the Haji of Turangzai. They were related to us. He was a dacoit and that sort of thing in those days. Very violent as it was usual in those days with Hashtnagar Khans at that age. These people had nowhere to stay, these political refugees. So they told Haji Sahib to marry the girl. She fell in love with him as soon as she saw him. They said become a Pir here and we will have at least somewhere we can stay. So Haji Sahib married her. Then he really gave up all the evil deeds when he saw all these people coming and kissing his hand and feet and offering him gifts. He went to Mecca, and became a Haji, and became famous as the Haji of Turangzai. Everytime we started a civil disobedience or something here against the British, he would tell the Mohmand tribesmen whose Pir he was, "Come on, the doors of heaven are open!" And they would come and start shooting in all this area. And then the Afridis (in Khyber District) might also get infected and they would start shooting, popping here and there."³⁶

By the end of his activities, he had opened 120 madrassas for young Pashtuns. Later he was arrested by the British, released for a lack of evidence against him, and in 1913 the colonial authorities attempted to gain his support by having him preside over the dedication of what is now Islamia College in Peshawar.

Again and again, the Haji of Turangzai was involved in violent acts against the British. In 1927 he called for a large jirga at his home in Ghizaibad where he hoped to draw the more peaceful lowland tribes into attacks, but they were receiving British subsidies and were warned that they would be bombed like the Haji's Lashkar of hill tribes if they participated in the latest revolt.³⁷

But the Haji of Turangzai was the key node on history's time line when the Afghan-Pakistan frontier is considered. While originally a dacoit, or a member of a robber gang, his travels were the key to his life – and much of the continuing extremism within Pakistan's Pashtuns.

Trained in the Naqshbandiyya-Mujaddidiyya tradition initially, he went to Deoband and subsequently traveled with a group from there in their trip to Mecca. In Mecca, he met with Haji Imdadullah, a Wahhabi leader, and promised to take up the movement of Sayyad Ahmad to continue to oppose the British. But when he returned to the border region and sought a spiritual teacher, he found Hadda Mullah. Having sworn *bayt*, or fealty, to both Imdadullah and Hadda Mullah and having been exposed to the Deobandi approach to Islam while he was in contact with Maulana Mahmudul Hasan at Deoband, the Haji of Turangzai became unique in the religious lines that created so many "disturbances" on the Frontier.³⁸ In addition to his contact with Deobandi and Wahhabi trends in Islam, he was taught the broadest of Sufi approaches by Hadda Mullah who received permission from the Akhund of Swat to teach all four prominent Sufi schools from Hadda. The Haji of Turangzai became even more of a "hybrid" than was Hadda Mullah and he was under the influence of Wahhabi Sayyad Ahmad and the Deobandis. And so were the people who followed him, those same superstitious Pashtuns Winston Churchill commented on during the Malakand campaigns.

Haji's Three Sons and a "Son-in-Law?"

The Haji of Turangzai had three sons, also political activists who were identified by confusing identical names, Badshah I, Badshah II, and Badshah III.³⁹ Of the three brothers, Badshah I appears to have been the most active and he participated in Lashkar formation and fighting on numerous occasions. Information is available to suggest that he was supported behind the scenes by the Afghan monarch and was active in working against the rulers of Swat and their allies. The Haji of Turangzai died in 1937 and his movement gradually began to lose its potency. It began to fail politically following the formation of Pakistan, but it left behind a unique legacy of Sufism blended into both Wahhabism and Deobandism that persists in the region.

One aspect of the Haji of Turangzai's campaign against the British continued following his death and remains active in the Northwest Frontier Province. His reported "son-in-law," Abdul Ghaffar Khan, was active in the Pashtun Peace Movement that he created. While he was widely reported to be the son-in-law of the Haji of Turangzai, this was likely the result of effective British propaganda during the period.⁴⁰ But regardless of the connection, Ghaffar Khan was a highly effective leader and his Red Shirt Movement has had a continuing impact on Pakistani and regional politics.

Hussain Haqqani provides a good summary of the Red Shirts:

"Although Muslim, Pashtuns generally sided with the anti-British nationalism and were late, and reluctant, in embracing the Muslim separation of the All-India Muslim League's campaign for Pakistan. Pashtun leader Abdul Ghaffar Khan launched the Khudai Khidmatgaar (Servants of God) movement, known as Red Shirts because of their uniform, and supported the Indian National Congress. So close was the association between the Red Shirts and the Congress that Ghaffar Khan became known as the "Frontier Gandhi." Even in the 1946 election that led to the emergence of the Muslim League as the representative of the Muslims throughout British India, Ghaffar Khan's Red Shirts and the Congress remained the dominant political force among Pashtuns and controlled the elected provincial government on NWFP.

"When the creation of Pakistan appeared inevitable, Ghaffar Khan demanded the Pashtun areas be allowed independence as Pashtunistan, a demand that was not accepted by the British. A referendum on whether to join Pakistan was subsequently held in NWFP – a referendum that Ghaffar Khan and his supporters boycotted – and participating voters chose inclusion in Pakistan."⁴¹

And while Ghaffar Khan's Pashtun movement chose poorly by retaining its association with one of India's early political parties and pressed for an independent Pashtunistan rather than join Pakistan, his legacy is also nearly as powerful on the frontier as is that of his relative, the Haji of Turangzai. Today's Awami National Party is the direct descendent of the Red Shirt movement and its leader, Asfandyar Wali Khan, is Ghaffar Khan's grandson and leader of the party.⁴² The party recently gained control of the Northwest Frontier Province's parliament and has displaced the coalition of religious parties that controlled the province prior to the election.

The Faqir of Ipi Appears on the Scene

His real name was Mirza Ali Khan and he was a Pashtun from Waziristan. His religious studies were unremarkable for the period, but he was soon to emerge as a crucial figure in the long, lingering revolt against the British. Additionally, he seemed to emerge from a background that was unaffiliated with either the near-hereditary resistance that emerged through either Hadda Mullah or the Akhund of Swat. In that regard, Mirza Ali Khan was quite unusual.

A careful evaluation of his religious training, however, revealed an interesting connection. His *Pir*, or religious guide, was Naqib of Chaharbagh who operated a madrassa in the vicinity of Jalalabad, Afghanistan, and was one of two Jalalabad-area madrassas affiliated with the Naqshbandi-Mujeddediyya school that was also connected with Hadda Mullah.⁴³ Mirza Ali Khan was also connected to the Hadda Mullah, but more indirectly than those opportunist mullahs preceding him.

Like the other revolting mullahs, Mirza Ali Khan, now the Faqir of Ipi, reacted to a provocation that allowed him to focus the anger and frustration of the region's Pashtun tribes against the British colonial authorities. In February 1937, a young Hindu girl was kidnapped by a young Pashtun and taken to Waziristan where she converted to Islam, took the name "Islam Bibi," and married her abductor while the British Political Agent in Waziristan pressed the tribes for her release.

Troops from the Frontier Corps Tochi Scouts surrounded the village where the girl was held as an additional show of force in the form of British attack aircraft circled overhead. While the tribal elders were negotiating with the British, the British were able to gain access to the girl and moved her to safety. But the implied insult created by rescuing the girl while negotiating with the elders was too much for the tribesmen who soon raised two large lashkars that attacked the British and their supporters. Into this tribal anger appeared an equally enraged Faqir of Ipi and his cries for jihad.

Soon the British forces at their Miram Shah and Mir Ali forts were surrounded and air strikes were ordered against the tribesmen to break the pair of sieges. The revolt continued and by June 1937 it had spread through all of Waziristan as combined air and ground attacks were required to break Pashtun insurgent formations.

The Faqir's insurgency continued year after year as neither side could find a way to win, but like Ghaffar Khan's political secession movement and its Red Shirts, support for the Faqir of Ipi's revolt began to recede once Pakistan became a reality. After 1947, Pakistani Air Force formations replaced those of the British to conduct bombing attacks as sporadic outbreaks of tribal violence continued into the 1950's.

But the Faqir of Ipi never surrendered – nor was he reconciled with the new rulers of Waziristan, Pakistan. His supporters eroded gradually over time as the Waziristan rebellion slowed to an end. The Faqir remained in hiding near the border with Afghanistan where he died on April 16, 1960 – bringing an end to the direct link to the Hadda Mullah and his connections to the Hindustani Fanatics who created the religious culture where the northern Pashtuns accepted an environment that allowed religious violence and fanaticism to thrive.⁴⁴

Conclusion: There are two diverging trends within the religious extremists in northwestern Pakistan and, once again, the general future might be predicted from the past. The separation of the two groups began long ago with the Hadda Mullah's goal to absorb Swat and its allied "statelings" into an enlarged base of operations at the expense of the descendants of the Akhund of Swat. Currently, one line of these extremists, Sufi Mohammad, Fazlullah (his son-in-law), and Faqir Mohammad seem to be seeking to re-establish the control of Swat once held by the Akhund and his family. They are also planning to institute Sharia, rules that will gradually come into conflict with Pashtunwali that is administered by secular authorities, the khans and maliks.

To the south, Baitullah Mahsud is seeking to capture the legacy of the extremist mullah line that separated from the Akhund of Swat and coalesced through the Hadda Mullah and to the Haji of Turangzai and his three sons. It was not an accident of geography that placed Baitullah's deputy in Ghaziabad and inside the Haji of Turangzai's mosque and shrine to state conditions for negotiations with the Pakistani government. His goal involves the mobilization of additional Pashtun followers through invoking the legacy of a dead mullah who opposed the British and foreign rule for much of his life.

But in the end, both Sufi Mohammad and Baitullah Mahsud will see their causes advance as long as they only invoke religion. As these religious extremists seek to gain control over tribal activities normally regulated by tribal custom and Pashtunwali, they will gradually lose support of their followers and begin to follow the pattern set by Sayad Ahmad Shah and the Hadda Mullah as their power starts to erode. The population will slowly shift back to malik and the government control over time. This process may be delayed by through the presence or threatened presence of "infidels" – American and Coalition forces – and can be hastened through the delivery of rural development projects channeled through the maliks while disguising the source of the support.

The current "opportunist" mullahs learned lessons well from the success of Mohammad Nasim Akhundzada and the rest of his family – to include his nephew, Sher Mohammad Akhundzada, who moved close to the secular government of Hamid Karzai and recently served as Helmand Province's governor. The opportunist's strategy remains simple: Rid the region of the traditional leaders, the maliks and khans that normally suppressed their power, and they can control the tribes themselves. It is no accident that Sufi Mohammad, his "religious cartel," and Baitullah's Mahsuds are attacking maliks and khans in rural Pakistan.

References

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2. http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2007/07/swat_joins_talibanis.php
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5. Antonio Giustozzi and Noor Ullah, *Tribes and Warlords in Southern Afghanistan, 1980-2005*, Crisis States Research Centre, pg. 10.
6. A careful review of open source and classified materials revealed very little information regarding the subtribe affiliation for Abdul Rahman Khan. He was probably from Kajaki District and is reported to be either Ibrahimzai or Khalozai. This important factor has not been clearly determined during the last 20 years.
7. Orkand Corporation, *Afghanistan's Southern Provinces*, 1989, pg. 165.

8. This paper uses the original rendering of this name.
9. Allen, Charles, *The Hidden Roots of Wahhabism in British India*, *World Policy Journal*, Summer, 2005. Allen wrote “The man credited with importing Wahhabism into India is Syed Ahmad of Rae Bareilly (1786–1831), who returned from pilgrimage in Mecca in 1824 to begin a holy war against the Sikhs aimed at restoring the Punjab to Muslim rule. But the argument that Syed Ahmad picked up his ideas of Wahhabi intolerance and jihad while in Arabia is untenable. The reality is that he had already accepted the basic tenets of Wahhabism long before sailing to Arabia, as a student of the Madrassa-i-Ramiyya religious seminary in Delhi and as a pupil of its leader, Shah Abdul Aziz, son of the reformer Shah Waliullah of Delhi. Shah Waliullah is the key figure here— a man as much admired within Sunni Islam as a great modernizer (the historian Aziz Ahmad rightly describes him as “the bridge between medieval and modern Islam in India”) as Abd al-Wahhab is reviled. The one, after all, was a follower of the tolerant, inclusive Hanafi school of jurisprudence and a Naqshbandi Sufi initiate, while the other belonged to the intolerant, exclusive Hanbali school, was viciously anti-Sufi and anti-Shia, and deeply indebted in his prejudices to the notorious fourteenth-century jurist of Damascus, Ibn Taymiyya—the ideologue whose reinterpretations of militant jihad are today cited by every Islamist. Yet these two key figures have far more in common than their respective admirers are willing to accept. Not only were they exact contemporaries, they almost certainly studied in Medina at the same period—and had at least one teacher in common.”
10. Cavagnari, P.L.N., *Selections From the Records of the Government of the Punjab*, 1875, pg. 44.
11. *Ibid*, pg. 44.
12. Allen, *God's Terrorists*. Sitana is located at Tarbela Lake and is nearly submerged.
13. Balfour, Edward, *The Cyclopedia of India and Southern Asia*, 1885, pg. 206.
14. There is a Pashtun connection here, as well. Hafizullah Emadi wrote in *Culture and Customs of Afghanistan*, pg. 29, that “The Indians referred to the Pashtuns as Pathans, a derivative of the word Patna, where a small number of them had settled in the Patna Region of India in the Fourteenth Century.” This curious connection puts Patna’s Pashtun population into a supporting role for the “Hindustani Fanatics.”
15. Spain, James W., *The Pathan Borderland*, pg. 88.
16. Makai is a grain that is milled into flour.
17. Hastings, G.G., *Report of the Regular Settlement of the Peshawar District of the Punjab*, 1878, pg. 49.
18. Spain, pg. 88. Chamarkand is situated in Bajaur, FATA., Pakistan, its geographical coordinates are 34° 41’ 23” North, 71° 13’ 20” East and its original name (with diacritics) is Kūz Chamarkand.
19. Mason, A.H., *Report on the Hindustani Fanatics*, Simla. 1895, pg. 15.
20. Edwards, David B., *Heroes of the Age*, pp. 173-175.
21. Edwards, pg. 187. Edwards points out that the term *Lewani Faqir* also translated to “mad faqir,” but to the Pashtuns indicates a madness that is more of an “intoxication” while in close proximity to God.
22. Edwards, *Heroes of the Age*, pg. 187.
23. Allen, Charles, *God's Terrorists: The Wahabbi Cult and the Hidden Roots of Modern Jihad*, pg. 14, has a discussion of support received from Patna.
24. Allen, *God's Terrorists*, pp. 35-36, 81.
25. Allen, *God's Terrorists*, pg. 114.
26. The “Abode of Peace” is a location where Muslims can practice their faith freely. The lands outside of this “Abode” is the “dar ul-Harb,” the Land of War. The Fanatics and their Pashtun allies led by opportunistic mullahs would make the most of this contrast.
27. Other opportunist leaders, such as Osama Bin Laden, would later notice the religious aspects of the tribalism among this particular group of Pashtun tribes and their view of “jihadism” and that their lands were the dar ul-Islam from which the great jihad would emerge. This mindset appears to remain deeply ingrained within the independent Pashtun tribes.
28. Edwards, David B., *Heroes of the Age*, pg. 185.
29. Edwards, *Heroes*, pg. 129.

30. Edwards, *Heroes*, pg. 137.
31. During recent history, another opportunist mullah took control of Hadda. Yunis Khalis lived where Hadda Mullah taught and Hadda Mullah's legacy brought recognition to Khalis he might not have attracted in a lesser known location.
32. Edwards, *Heroes*, pg. 194.
33. Sana Haroon's *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland*, pp. 50-51.
34. <http://www.khyber.org/people/sarfarooshan/HajiSahibTurangzai.shtml>
35. <http://www.khyber.org/people/sarfarooshan/SyedAmeerJanBabrhayMullah.shtml>
36. <http://www.afghanan.net/poets/ghaniinterview.htm>
37. See Sana Haroon's *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland*, pg. 142, for a detailed study of this phase of the Haji of Turangzai's life.
38. Haroon, *Frontier*, pg. 55.
39. Haroon, *Frontier of Faith*. Sana Haroon has a good review of the Badshahs throughout her book.
40. Khan, Abdul Ghaffar, *Tendulkar, Dinanath Gapal*, 1967, pg. 237; see <http://www.afghanan.net/poets/ghaniinterview.htm> for corroboration that the Haji of Turnagzai was a relative of Ghaffar Khan.
41. Haqqani, Hussain, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military*, 2005, pg. 161.
42. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asfandyar_Wali
43. According to Asta Olesen, *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*, pg. 163 and Sana Haroon's *Frontier of Faith*, pg. 59, the Hazrats of both Chaharbagh and Butkhak were affiliated with the Hadda Mullah. This connects the Faqir of Ipi to Hadda Mullah through one of the mullah's affiliates, Naqib of Chaharbagh.
44. There are numerous books and articles available regarding the Faqir of Ipi. See Alan Warren's *Waziristan, the Faqir of Ipi, and the Indian Army: The North West Frontier Revolt of 1936-37* (Oxford, 2000).

Religious Leader Engagement in Southern Afghanistan

By Alexs Thompson

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Interaction with religious leaders and institutions in Afghanistan has been inconsistently addressed by foreign military, diplomatic, and development officials. Recent efforts to correct that trend in southern Afghanistan make it clear that a sustained, consistent, well-thought-out religious leader engagement program supports and advances the traditional components of counterinsurgency (security, development, and governance). Systematic engagement of religious leaders at the provincial, district, village, and farm levels created another line of communication whereby the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) promoted its mission of stability and Afghans voiced their needs and commitment to a stable future.

One of the most pressing observations made about U.S. military efforts in the 21st century has been the need to leverage culturally specific factors in support of counterinsurgency (COIN) efforts. One of the most important—and underemphasized—aspects of Afghan society is the importance of religious leaders in countering anti-Afghan rhetoric.¹ This article examines the role of religious leaders and institutions in Afghan society and identifies them as a crucial dimension to stability operations in Afghanistan. It is argued that religious leader engagement is a core factor for expressing U.S. objectives, mitigating the effects of kinetic operations, and legitimating the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) through specifically Afghan modes of discourse and participation. The observations and conclusions presented are informed by the author's personal experiences in Afghanistan and his interviews with others who have implemented religious leader engagement programs in southern Afghanistan. Religious leaders, and especially those at the district and village level who are regarded as representatives of their communities, are powerbrokers whose position and authority situate them as key partners for stability and who should not be ignored by the United States or ISAF.

Roles of Religious Leaders

Religious leaders and institutions play a significant role in how the legitimate GIROA describes itself; the same is true for the enemies of Afghanistan.² The primary question, then, is not whether religious leaders will continue to play a significant role in the future of Afghanistan, but rather how those leaders and the institutions they represent can be fully integrated into stable, effective political processes. The highest priority is not simply to provide counter “-religious” ideology, but to counter specifically “violent” religious ideology that quells the voice and will of the Afghan people.³ Undermining the impact of violent religious rhetoric, however, is primarily the responsibility of Afghans; they should encourage, publicize, and sustain the incorporation of religious language, individuals, and institutions in their own vision of the future. One of the ways that the U.S. Government/ISAF can support Afghans in this endeavor is to promote sustained programs of religious leader engagement.

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As a starting point for engaging religious leaders, it is prudent to envision a future Afghanistan where religious institutions and leaders are promoted as essential aspects of the social fabric—not eliminated or begrudgingly accepted. Even those religious leaders who currently support the enemies of Afghanistan find themselves seeking reconciliation with GIRoA from time to time, and pursue full participation in the political process.⁴ If religious leaders will be prominent in Afghanistan’s future, it behooves the U.S. Government and ISAF to identify religious leaders who are amenable to dialogue and integration with GIRoA; this will set the conditions for the marginalization of radical religious leaders in favor of those who support stable political processes. It is of tremendous importance, then, that religious leaders from all dogmatic, geographic, and linguistic communities be engaged in consistent public dialogue so that Afghans can responsibly choose how they wish to advance a narrative that preserves their religious heritage and ensures long-term, sustainable political processes. Such a wide-ranging program would require coordination across the security, development, and governance spectra with reliable leadership from GIRoA and ISAF. While it may be clear that engaging religious leaders is a critical component of stability operations, what is less clear is how those engagements can be conducted in a way that does not undermine key ISAF objectives or alienate large swathes of the population. What follows are several examples of religious leader engagement in Helmand Province and recommendations for how religious leader engagement can be broadly conceptualized so that it respects local variations and supports stability operations.

Engagement in Southern Afghanistan

Beginning in October 2009, Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Carroll, USMC (Ret.), and Patricio Asfura-Heim began to develop a religious leader engagement program for II Marine Expeditionary Brigade (IIMEB) that addressed the tendency for religious leaders to be ignored in military and diplomatic engagements. Carroll explained that in the early period of his deployment, he traveled to six districts in Helmand Province to assess the effectiveness of local government structures. He went on to write, “My conclusion was that we were thoroughly partnered with the Afghan district governor and some of the officials from his tashkiel [organization] or other provincial line ministry tashkiels. . . . When I asked about the engagement with influential religious scholars, such as mullahs or ulema [experts in Islamic doctrine] . . . I heard comments like ‘The mullahs are not that important.’”⁵

In the wake of such prevalent dismissal of religious leaders, Carroll observed that even if mullahs served only a religious role, the primary argument of the Taliban is that they are pious individuals fighting foreign infidels, and therefore “the most credible voices to counter the Taliban’s rhetoric were moderate mullahs themselves; i.e., Islamic religious leaders who did not believe in the Taliban’s extremist interpretations of the Qur’an, who would support . . . GIRoA and who were at least neutral—possibly positive—to the presence of ISAF.”⁶ Carroll highlighted one of the most important aspects of religious leader engagement: it is not necessary that religious leaders support ISAF (but they must at least be neutral toward it) so long as they support GIRoA and legitimate governmental processes. Such an attitude reflects the necessity for Afghans to conceptualize and implement the future of their country; how religious leaders and institutions function in Afghan society is an Afghan question.

...religious leaders were key powerbrokers whose input should be included in discussions about economics, security, and development projects.

In support of his observations, Carroll and Asfura-Heim began a project to reintegrate religious leaders in their provincial religious organizations such as the Helmand Ulema Council and the office of the Helmand Director of Hajj. Carroll and Asfura-Heim found that religious leaders in southern Afghanistan were open to direct engagement and had specific grievances that could be addressed through greater integration of religious leaders. Primary among the concerns of these religious leaders was that they had been marginalized by the central government and had been sidelined in community discussions that did not directly address religious issues.⁷ Given their personal experience with religious leaders at various levels of Afghan society, Carroll and Asfura-Heim concluded that religious leaders' impact was not confined to religious issues; religious leaders were key powerbrokers whose input should be included in discussions about economics, security, and development projects. Integrating religious leaders at the provincial level proved fairly simple with Carroll and Asfura-Heim's ability to travel to provincial headquarters; what was lacking, however, was consistent interaction with religious leaders at the subprovincial level.

Attention to subprovincial religious leaders was further strengthened with the arrival of a U.S. Navy Muslim chaplain in February 2010. Chaplain "Salam," whose name has been withheld, is a naturalized U.S. citizen and a naval chaplain who was serving in the Washington, DC, area when he was asked to come to Afghanistan.⁸ Based on his past experience with the U.S. military and foreign Muslim officials, it was determined that Chaplain Salam would be the ideal person to extend the reach of the religious leader engagement program. Chaplain Salam and Chaplain Philip Pelikan did not act alone, however; they had the support of the IIMEB commander. In recognition of the important role that religious leaders and institutions play in the overall COIN effort, then-Brigadier General Lawrence Nicholson, commanding general of IIMEB, inquired whether it would be possible and beneficial to facilitate the visit of a Navy Muslim chaplain to Afghanistan. Chaplain Pelikan knew such a person and undertook a 6-month process to bring him to Afghanistan.⁹

In an article he wrote for *Small Wars Journal*, Chaplain Pelikan summarized Nicholson's intent:

*By order of the Commanding General, 2^d Marine Expeditionary Brigade (MEB), Afghanistan, the Command Chaplain and a Muslim Chaplain (if obtainable), along with appropriate political specialists, governance advisors, and necessary security, were to engage with Islamic leadership in Helmand and Farah Provinces in discussions to enhance the relationship with key religious leaders and the communities in which they serve in order to convey the good will and otherwise positive intentions of U.S. Government and ISAF (International Security Assistance Force)/ NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] forces operating in the region in conjunction with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and its military and police forces.*¹⁰

In effect, Nicholson called for a systematic engagement of local religious leaders with the knowledge that these leaders are key nodes in the social network and have increased capacity to spread the U.S. Government/ISAF message of support for GIROA and rejection of violent religious ideology.¹¹ Command support is yet another crucial factor for successful reintegration of religious leaders. The logistical support requirements and the sometimes prevailing attitude that religious leaders are not of central importance to building stability can hamper the attempt to engage religious leaders. Afghan religious leaders primarily serve the role of a mediator; as trusted leaders of their local communities, they are local advocates to ensure that ISAF projects and intentions match those of the community. Concomitantly, as trusted partners to ISAF, Afghan religious leaders transmit and reinforce the ISAF message of security and effective governance.

In addition to calling for a systematic engagement plan with religious leaders, Nicholson offered a paradigm for understanding that their target audience was “little ‘t’ Taliban.” “Little ‘t’ Taliban” were those who were lured into the Taliban with promises of power, money, and stability—for financial and social, not religious, reasons. If, Pelikan offered, local Afghan religious leaders could explain the ways that ISAF and GIRoA were working to bring stability and clarify the opportunities for local Afghans to participate in those programs, then it would be possible that Taliban rhetoric would be undermined. If U.S. military chaplains, and Muslim chaplains in particular, could engage with religious leaders, then those religious leaders could act as trusted partners for participation in legitimate political, commercial, and religious institutions.¹² What Nicholson and Pelikan brought to the growing focus on religious leaders in Helmand was the value of military chaplains. It was not enough for provincial-level IIMEB individuals to meet with provincial-level religious leaders; there was a need for both groups to reach to the district and village levels where the message of stability has the most impact. The ability to extend to subprovincial levels was brought about most effectively through the work of military chaplains.

The introduction of a Muslim chaplain served as an “icebreaker” for many religious leaders in southern Afghanistan and fostered trust between ISAF and the tens of Afghans who traveled from remote villages for the engagements.¹³ In particular, the religious leader engagement team would schedule their religious leader engagements such that the Muslim chaplain would open with brief remarks that were followed by an open discussion with local religious leaders. As one example, the effects of these discussions had significant positive effects in Golestan District, Farah Province: “[the engagements] enhanced the ability of the Marine Company Commander at the Golestan Forward Operating Base (FOB) to communicate with the locals, determine better ways to assist the community with their many ‘quality of life’ issues, and helped empower the local mullahs by connecting them with GIRoA through the Farah Provincial Director of Hajj.”¹⁴ There was certainly an atmosphere of religious camaraderie in the reports about these meetings, but the most important aspect was the ability of local IIMEB commanders to open new channels of communication through religious leaders and ensure that the needs of Afghans across the entire spectrum were being considered.

Other Perspectives

Rajiv Chandrasekaran, who reported on these events for the *Washington Post*, noted that IIMEB was one of just a few units in Afghanistan that made a concerted attempt to engage religious leaders as part of its campaign plan. Such a feat by the Marines stands as a testament to the religious and nonreligious impact of mullahs and other religious leaders in small, remote villages in southern Afghanistan. Chandrasekaran pointed out the impact of bringing one of only a few Muslim chaplains to southern Afghanistan: “At his [the Muslim chaplain’s] first session with religious leaders in Helmand, the participants initially thought the clean-shaven [chaplain] was an impostor. Then he led the group in noontime prayers. By the end, everyone wanted to take a picture with him.”¹⁵ The benefit of involving a Muslim chaplain in this religious leader engagement program is undeniable: it bolstered existing relationships, weakened barriers to communication through shared language and ritual, and fostered new and enduring relationships with religious leaders at every level of Afghan society.

The U.S. contingent in Helmand was not the only group to consider the role of religious leader engagements, however. The United Kingdom (UK) delegation at the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team also constructed a religious leader engagement program in late 2009 that was intended to undermine Taliban propaganda by having religious leaders act as reliable mediators between ISAF and the Afghan people. As part of their efforts, the UK delegation

invited a group of Afghan religious leaders to Great Britain; in response to their visit, one mullah said, “The Taliban tell everyone that Britain is an infidel nation hostile to Muslims, but the mullahs were able to see for themselves that in fact Britain is a tolerant country in which Muslims can build mosques and practice their religion peacefully.”¹⁶ The UK efforts, similar to those of the United States, aimed at discrediting the Taliban by addressing the dominant source of their claim to legitimacy: piety.

By engaging religious leaders at every level, UK and U.S. representatives were able to disseminate the message of Afghan stability to the farthest reaches of their areas of responsibility with the face and voice of Afghans. For example, while visiting Bakwa District, Farah Province, the religious leader engagement team was approached by a mullah who wore the mark of the Taliban—a crescent moon and star tattooed on the right hand—who was deeply moved by the presence of Afghans and Americans praying together: “He told us that he was a Taliban *Mawlawi* [religious scholar] who taught in a Madrasa . . . just outside Bakwa. So tremendously impressed by our message, he stated, ‘Before today I just thought that all Westerners were infidels and I was against you. But today I saw something that I’d never seen before. And I have changed my mind about Americans. I will work with you from now on.’”¹⁷ In this way, Afghan religious leaders acted as force multipliers, strategic communicators, and trusted allies in the fight for stability. As more Afghan religious leaders are engaged, Afghans themselves will carry the message of responsible development, effective governance, and sustainable security.

...the most important aspect as the ability of local commanders to open new channels of communication through religious leaders and ensure that the needs of Afghans were being considered.

Role of Chaplains

The involvement of chaplains was central to the success of the religious leader engagement program in southern Afghanistan, but the historic and doctrinal role of chaplains presents certain challenges for how these types of programs can be expanded. Chaplains have traditionally been charged with providing for the morale and spiritual well-being of their troops. As military operations have evolved in the 21st century, so have the responsibilities and expectations of chaplains; whether by personal abilities or requests from various partners, chaplains have been regularly involved in stability operations through engagement and support of local populations. Chaplains may represent an ideal nexus for religious leader engagement programs because of their intimate knowledge of religious matters: “In the general conduct of counterinsurgency operations the religious aspect is often either overlooked or is simply thought of as something to shy away from because many people feel unqualified to discuss religion. We chaplains, however, are never ashamed to talk about religion. And our experience in this operation proved that the direct approach with the Afghan religious leaders was the right one.”¹⁸ Chaplains’ commitment to religious ideals is an invaluable asset for developing relationships with local religious leaders, but that religious basis is a means by which to develop relationships that channel legitimate Afghan concerns from the lowest to the highest levels of Afghan society.¹⁹ The designation of chaplains as noncombatants is another consideration for how they can participate in stability operations: “A potential controversy exists when a chaplain is asked for specific information from commanders or intelligence officers related to his interaction with local mullahs. Chaplains, as doctrinal noncombatants, could be placed in the awkward position of providing targeting

information to commanders, a combatant task.”²⁰ The designation of noncombatant has its limitations, but it is also a contributing factor to presumptions of good-faith interactions that allow chaplains to develop relationships that can ensure the faithful transmission of the true objectives of ISAF and GIRoA in the face of anti-Afghanistan rhetoric.²¹

Military doctrine is continually adapting to more effectively describe and empower chaplains at every level. Army Field Manual (FM) 1–05, *Religious Support*, appendix A, “Religious Support in Civil Military Operations,” for example, describes specifically how U.S. Army chaplains ought to support civil-military operations. While reaffirming that the primary duty of chaplains is to support religious needs of Soldiers, the appendix goes on to encourage chaplains to advise commanders on the religious dynamics of the local population and reinforces that chaplains ought not to be the sole participants in negotiations with host nationals or in human intelligence collection.²² In this way, chaplains are seen, primarily, as part of a larger engagement team; where chaplains are restricted in their behavior, other members can take the lead.

FM 1–05 represents the growing awareness that chaplains can play a leading role in engaging local religious leaders of host nations, but there still remain certain limitations to how chaplains can be involved in stability operations. For example, Chaplain William Sean Lee proposed that military doctrine be changed to include the title “religious liaison” for chaplains. In that role, chaplains would be formally tasked with engaging “indigenous religious groups and leaders” to support stability operations; were such a change to be implemented, chaplains could be identified as the primary partner for religious leaders, with those relationships occurring in concert with security, governance, and development objectives.²³

...ISAF is a short-term solution to a long-term set of complex issues that can only be addressed by Afghans and the individuals they identify as legitimate powerbrokers.

Thus, while chaplains are uniquely prepared to engage Afghan religious leaders because of their sensitivity to religious issues, there are certain factors that should be borne in mind to maximize their effect. While chaplains are a vital tool in the fight against a jihadi narrative, they are not the sine qua non of religious leader engagements. As seen with IIMEB, chaplains can help open dialogue, lay a foundation of trust, and demonstrate ISAF commitment to the Afghan people, but the sustained work of religious leader engagement comes through continued involvement with religious leaders within the communities where they enjoy positions of authority.

Religious leaders and religious institutions play an undeniably important role in Afghan society, and it is in the best interest of the U.S. military to design, implement, and effectively sustain engagements with those leaders. Religious leader engagement programs in southern Afghanistan demonstrate that well-thought-out plans of action can have tremendous impact on GIRoA’s intent to counter anti-Afghanistan propaganda and address the legitimate needs of the Afghan people. In short, ISAF is a short-term solution to a long-term set of complex issues that can only be addressed by Afghans and the individuals they identify as legitimate powerbrokers. Ultimately, no amount of foreign savvy can account for the credibility and sustainability of driving the religious leader engagement process through legitimate GIRoA-affiliated individuals and institutions.

To ensure the continued integration of religious leaders at every level of Afghan society, religious leader engagement programs should be routed through official GIRoA channels to ensure that the process can be sustained once GIRoA takes full control of its affairs. In Helmand, for example, the director of Hajj and Religious Affairs, Sayed “Mullah” Mukhtar Ahmad Haqqani, was a key partner in the fight to discredit Taliban ideology because “he was a dynamic and engaging man who immediately grasped our plan and intentions and took [Salam and Pelikan] ‘under his wing’ as we circulated throughout the province together.”²⁴ As Afghans determine how, when, and which religious leaders are actively involved in the process of their own stabilization, ISAF and the U.S. Government will accomplish their goals.

From the perspective of ISAF and the U.S. Government, it should be kept in mind that religious leader engagement is a distinct type of engagement that has benefits and limitations that differ from other types. Engagement with religious leaders should rest on a long-term, sustainable plan that specifically considers the role that religious leaders play in village-level to national-level operations. U.S. military chaplains are key to the creation and sustainment of religious leader engagements, but their role does not need to be constant and should respect their status as noncombatants. There is reason to believe that the doctrinal elements of chaplain responsibilities ought to be reconsidered and adjusted to meet the rapidly changing needs of military operations in the 21st century. One of the most beneficial aspects of religious leader engagement in southern Afghanistan was the involvement of a Muslim chaplain; his presence broke down barriers between local religious leaders and allowed for more honest discussions about stability operations.

One of the difficulties associated with the religious leader engagement programs was the availability of U.S. military Muslim chaplains. The U.S. military may wish to consider reaching out to nonmilitary chaplains (at hospitals, universities, and prisons, for example) who would be willing to support religious leader engagements around the world. A robust chaplaincy that can minister to U.S. troops as well as host nationals will boost U.S. military stability operations around the world. In fact, sustained religious leader engagement programs need not be confined to conflict zones; American foreign policy, in general, can benefit from recognizing the role of religion in societies throughout the world.

The enemies both of GIRoA and of stability in Afghanistan have waged a war based primarily on violent ideology shrouded in religious language that cannot be bombed into submission. The most effective method of dealing with ideology is to provide viable rhetorical alternatives. Active, sustained, and consistent engagement with religious leaders cultivates meaningful relationships and empowers local leaders to articulate ISAF and GIRoA commitment to stability. The primary effect of religious leader engagement has been to bring greater legitimacy to GIRoA. By connecting local religious leaders with their district political and religious leaders, district officials with provincial officials, and provincial officials with national leaders, ISAF was able to undermine some of the most frequent causes of instability: political alienation, religious extremism separated from mainstream society, knowledgeable religious leaders operating outside legitimate institutions, and the allure of violent narratives.

End Notes

1. William Sean Lee, Christopher Burke, and Zonna Crayne, *Military Chaplains as Peace Builders: Embracing Indigenous Religions in Stability Operations* (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University, 2004), 5, available at <www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?Location=U2&doc=GetTRDoc.pdf&AD=ADA425869>.
2. “The enemy has succeeded in establishing jihad as their pervasive, overarching narrative. Consistently over time and space, all of their remarkably sophisticated information operations uniformly hammer home this religious message of jihad. Virtually all Taliban leaders, from senior military and political leaders down to sub-commanders at the district level, are *mullahs*. The implications of this have not yet sunk in. We are fighting a counterinsurgency; the enemy is fighting a jihad. But the intersection of how insurgencies end and how jihads end is historically nil.” Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template,” *Military Review* (November–December 2009), 2–14, available at <http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/militaryreview/archives/english/militaryreview_20091231_art004.pdf>.
3. Jeffrey Cozzens, “The Culture of Global Jihad: Character, Future Challenges and Recommendations,” The Future Actions Series, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, October 2008, available at <www.scribd.com/doc/16073473/The-Culture-of-Global-Jihad-by-Jeffrey-B-Cozzens>.
4. Johnson and Mason, 2–14.
5. Patrick Carroll and Patricio Asfura-Heim, “Victory in Afghanistan Part 2: Countering the Taliban Narrative Through Credible Religious Voices,” Marine Corps Association Web site, available at <www.mca-marines.org/gazette/article/victory-afghanistan>.
6. Ibid.
7. Author interview with Patrick Carroll, February 7, 2011.
8. Carroll and Asfura-Heim, “Victory in Afghanistan Part 2”; Carroll commented on the importance of bringing this Navy chaplain to the religious leader engagement program: “Our efforts received an additional boost in early 2010 when the G–3 Fires and Effects Coordination Cell/Information Operations and the MEB chaplain’s office arranged for a U.S. Navy Muslim imam to come out to the AO [area of operations].”
9. Author interview with Chaplain Philip Pelikan, January 10, 2011.
10. Philip Pelikan, “Mullah Engagement Program: Helmand and Farah Provinces, Afghanistan 15 February–15 March 2010,” *Small Wars Journal* (December 28, 2010), 1–10, available at <<http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/journal/docs-temp/631-pelikan1.pdf>>.
11. “An example of a senior Army chaplain who properly balanced his roles as a religious leader and a staff chaplain was CH (LTC) Larry Adams-Thompson, the CJTF [Combined Joint Task Force] 76 Chaplain in Afghanistan from March 2004 through March 2005. Continuing the work of his predecessor CH (LTC) Ken Sampson, CH Adams-Thompson organized monthly meetings with local mullahs. The intent of these meetings was to discuss religious issues, moral concerns, and to build clergy-to-clergy relationships.” Kenneth Lawson, “Doctrinal Tension: The Chaplain and Information Operations,” *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 35, no. 2 (April–June 2009), 24–31, available at <www.fas.org/irp/agency/army/mipb/2009_02.pdf>.
12. Interview with Pelikan.
13. Author interview with Patricio Asfura-Heim, February 14, 2011.
14. Pelikan, “Mullah Engagement Program.”
15. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, “At Afghan Outpost: Marines Gone Rogue or Leading the Fight Against Counterinsurgency?” *The Washington Post*, March 14, 2010, available at <www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/13/AR2010031302464.html>.
16. Ministry of Defence, “Former Afghan Refugee Returns to Helmand with UK’s Stabilisation Unit,” available at <stroicar.com/eng/news_detail.php?id=2634>. These engagements were headed by Pamir Patang, who fled Afghanistan for Britain in 2000. See also Stabilisation Unit, “Salaam Aleikum—SU’s Pamir reflects on his Afghan experience,” available at <www.stabilisationunit.gov.uk/index.php/our-people/stories-from-the-field/429-salaam-aleikum-sus-pamir-reflects-on-his-afghan-experience>.
17. Pelikan, “Mullah Engagement Program.”

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Lawson; Department of the Navy SECNAV Instruction 1730.7b, October 12, 2000, prohibits chaplains from being assigned compromising collateral duties or (in section 6g) being forced to reveal sensitive information.

21. See, for example, SECNAV Instruction 1730.7b, section 5e (4).

22. See also FM 1-05, section 5-40, G-13, and G-18.

23. Lee, Burke, and Crayne.

24. Interview with Pelikan.

A Patchwork Strategy of Consensus Establishing Rule of Law in Afghanistan

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The gavel strike of justice in Kabul does not echo far in the Hindu Kush Mountains. The need for rule of law and legal reform in Afghanistan could not be more urgent given the recent successful offensives in the southern provinces. Despite 9 years of efforts by a number of organizations and governments, however, the equitable dispensation of justice in the South and throughout Afghanistan remains an unattained aspiration. Not surprisingly, many Afghans believe that because of corruption, the national government is incapable of resolving disputes arising from the population. Most alarming is that while 67 percent of Kandaharians—a crucial population as capacity develops—believe that the government cannot provide justice because of corruption, 53 percent believe that the Taliban are incorruptible.¹

Combined forces have successfully staged military operations but have not made much progress in establishing the rule of law because unifying leadership and comprehensive rule of law strategic plans are lacking. As a result, the rule of law remains elusive. Moreover, time is running short to effectively establish the principal elements of a system of justice—in particular, a criminal justice system with an integrated network of police, courts, and correctional institutions connected to traditional forms of justice. Without focused leadership and an overall strategic plan, sustained with increased numbers of advisors, the extension and credibility of a functional justice system both in and beyond Kabul will remain ephemeral. As a consequence, the Afghan people will continue to look elsewhere to obtain justice—even the ruthless but efficient justice administered by the Taliban.

Raising the Bar

On the surface, the history of Afghanistan is a narrative of invasion and internal strife among kings and warlords. The list of would-be rulers both internal and external is well known. Yet one aspect often over-looked—in the past as now—is that regardless of the application of arms, ruling Afghanistan and its mosaic of ethnicities hidden within a rugged landscape requires a firm establishment of the rule of law—that is, access to a dispute resolution process and a system of criminal justice that impartially determines guilt and imposes sentences. Without the establishment of the rule of law, force of arms can provide only temporary stability and the illusion of governmental legitimacy.

Despite the noticeable lack of leadership and a strategic plan in the larger sphere of legal reform, not all legal efforts are falling short in Afghanistan. Courts at various levels do function, if imperfectly, and a measure of formal justice is accessible to some of the population. One of the more promising areas of legal reform resides within the Afghan National Army (ANA). The military judicial system includes functioning courts, judges, prosecutors, defense counsel, and appellate review. Furthermore, there exists the capacity for pretrial detention and long-term post-trial confinement. As a measure of the maturing military justice system, in the last 3 years, the ANA has adjudicated approximately 400 cases per year.²

The ANA military justice system has many of the advantages that the civilian justice system lacks—chiefly, the leadership and strategic planning support provided by the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A). In addition to the ANA prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges who exist in every ANA corps headquarters compound, courthouses built on secure ANA installations provide justice officials with a level of protection from attack that is lacking in most civilian courts. This security allows prosecutors and military judges to function with less concern for acts of retribution. Most important, the military legal system benefits from focused, well-resourced international advisors under an organized and unified command and control scheme. A direct result of this focused leadership is the ability to capitalize on indigenous training capacity: Afghans training Afghans.³

The ANA military justice system is operated and led by Afghans but places a strong emphasis on partnering with CSTC–A advisors. Presently, three full-time CSTC–A advisors are dedicated to the General Staff Legal Department in Kabul. Outside of Kabul, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Intermediate Joint Command, in cooperation with CSTC–A, provides U.S. and coalition military judge advocates to advise the ANA prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges at each of the corps headquarters.⁴ Focused, well-resourced partnering and training are evident in the ministries of defense and the interior.⁵

Each day, CSTC–A sends hundreds of military and contract advisors to mentor their Afghan police and military counterparts in these security ministries. These advisors help their counterparts develop the support systems and institutions necessary for these ministries to function independently and well into the future. However, improvements in the police and army, without significant progress in the other sectors and ministries relevant to the overall rule of law, will not achieve the goal of ensuring that the government has the legitimacy and stability to survive without substantial foreign support. To achieve the overall rule of law goal, a nationwide rule of law strategy, under a unified command structure and with more resources, is needed in order for the attorney general’s office, ministry of justice, and supreme court to mature at the pace needed to win public trust and confidence.

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Analyzing the strides made in the past 3 years of manning, training, and equip-ping the remodeled ANA and to a lesser degree the police forces, it is clear that they benefited from one plan and the identification of a responsible lead agency—CSTC–A. That single, accountable lead agency guided development of the legal system within the narrow venue of the ANA. Likewise, aggressive, accountable leadership with a plan and resources can create change from Kabul to Kandahar.

In stark contrast to the CSTC–A effort, development of the civilian court system lacks a primary leader and a systematically applied strategy to develop a coherent structure to reach the vast majority of Afghans.⁶ In Afghanistan today, coordination meetings, with few accountability mechanisms, have been substituted for leadership. Moreover, whatever plans do exist do not establish or claim control over the entire problem in either geographic or conceptual terms.⁷ Rule of law development and execution are the responsibility of the Department of State.⁸ However, in Afghanistan, U.S. Government rule of law initiatives are carried out by a host of agencies with staffs in Kabul, but outside the purview of the Ambassador. While the U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan may have ostensible authority for U.S. rule of law activities, Federal agencies

often remain loyal to their respective funding sources, in part because agendas and funding are controlled largely from Washington rather than Kabul. To be most effective, agency personnel and budgets for Afghanistan might be placed under the direct control of a single diplomat, perhaps an Ambassador whose sole focus is the rule of law arena.⁹

Bureaucratic pitfalls further plague rule of law efforts. Agencies, governments, and nongovernmental organizations have yet to create a mechanism to coordinate their activities or to expedite the establishment of contracts to create the supporting programs to facilitate needed reforms. The reformers have failed to adequately harness the efforts of the World Bank and the Independent Directorate of Local Governance designed to link the central Afghan government to the regional and provincial levels. In this vacuum, the military commanders in some regional commands have had no choice but to take the initiative and build physical infrastructure for courts and, where necessary, partner with police units. Thus, while all well intentioned, they create the illusion of progress, but do not create a lasting, well-structured architecture for the justice system.

The lack of problem ownership and planning contributes directly to the endemic problems in the Afghan courts. They suffer from the absence of competent and honest prosecutors to lead investigations, and a police force of multiple capabilities that is structured to support national defense efforts more than civil policing duties. The court system remains Kabul-centric, and it is difficult to move attorneys to the rural areas to establish a physical representation of law and order. Low pay for judges and prosecutors institutionalizes corruption. A court prosecutor earns approximately \$70 per month. Not surprisingly, some officials take bribes to earn a subsistence living that the present Afghan administration cannot provide. In contrast, an Afghan National Police patrolman can (based on location and duty) earn up to \$200 per month. With this disparity, the level of risk the patrolman faces and the quality of legal advice and service rendered by the courts vary widely.

Bridge to the Future

Afghanistan is at risk. The time for vigorous leadership in the civilian justice sector is long overdue. The development of the police continues in parallel with the detention and corrections systems. Meanwhile, the connecting institution between the police and the prisons—the courts—languishes in a precarious gray zone. If no single leading entity steps up to oversee all the facets of the rule of law, a compromise or bridging effort will most likely be needed. Two options could provide a link to the future.

If no single leading entity steps up to oversee all the facets of the rule of law, a compromise or bridging effort will most likely be needed.

One option would be to utilize the overall command structure provided by the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF), which contains the links to the command elements and civil institutions of the larger international community that participates in the coalition. In practical terms, ISAF has nationwide reach through its subordinate command and control structures: the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan and Intermediate Joint Command. These could serve as viable conduits to extend the central Afghan government’s ability to establish the law in remote and contested areas. Of equal importance, ISAF has access to the resources: financial and human capital. The current flagging efforts of the United Nations could be reinvigorated by the security provided by NATO forces. The intertwining of leadership, security,

and an international effort of court establishment would do much to stabilize the country and provide needed credibility to the government. It would also ensure that all stakeholders in Afghanistan's development are accountable and that it is not an exclusively American enterprise.

A second opportunity expands existing structures. The newly established Task Force 435 provides corrections oversight, in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces, of the national security detention facilities for Afghanistan. This organization could provide a more tailored and systematic approach. Task Force 435 will eventually expand to become a combined joint inter-agency task force (CJIATF), and it could (if properly developed) provide the command and control that is lacking with regard to the court system. For U.S. efforts, a CJIATF would include senior civilian and military leadership accountable directly to the U.S. Ambassador as well as to the presidents of Afghanistan and the United States for progress in developing rule of law institutions.

The recent State Department decision to establish a rule of law CJIATF is long overdue but at least is a step in the right direction. The question of how well funded and manned the task force will be remains unclear. Indeed, it should be spared no expense and monitored closely. One possible vision of the development would include working from the corrections systems, linked to the courts and then to the police forces, and the respective ministries (Justice, Interior, and so forth) would establish the needed conduits for connecting the respective elements.

There is not a lack of effort or good intentions supporting rule of law development in Afghanistan. There is, however, a lack of strategy, resources, and, most important, accountable leadership. Without accountability, rule of law development efforts will continue to be executed slowly through a host of meetings and draft strategies that accomplish little in terms of real coordination or progress. For the United States, a unified, combined joint interagency task force would address this shortfall by providing one commander—civilian or military—accountable to national leadership for success in this critical area.

Without accountability, rule of law development efforts will continue to be executed slowly through a host of meetings and draft strategies that accomplish little in terms of real coordinatin or progress.

For international efforts, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan must assert more authority on donors to coordinate their efforts. The United Nations and government of Afghanistan must similarly be more assertive in demanding that international organizations unify their efforts in alignment with the priorities set forth in the Afghan National Development Strategy. Without concerted efforts effectively orchestrated, the tragic saga of Afghanistan's violent history will continue.

End Notes

1. *Human Terrain System: Kandahar Province Survey Report* (Burlington, MA: Glevum Associates, March 2010). Since 2001, no fewer than four conferences have been held and at least one strategy has been created and published affirming the need for and the importance of the rule of law in Afghanistan. The United States has created a strategic plan for developing this rule of law. This strategy, however, does not have authority to force other organizations, groups, or nations to conform to one single effort. The United Nations (UN) initiatives include the mandate of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was renewed by UN Security Council Resolution 1917 (March 22, 2010). The annual resolution by the Security Council forms the mandate for UNAMA and defines priorities. Additionally, Resolution 1917 (2010), which was unanimously adopted by the 15-member Security Council, mandated UNAMA to continue to lead international civilian efforts in areas such as rule of law, transitional

justice, and combating corruption; to promote the country's development and governance priorities through the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board; and to strengthen cooperation with International Security Assistance Force and NATO Senior Civilian Representatives to improve civil-military coordination. See UNAMA Web site, available at <<http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1742>>. Resolution 1917 (2010) calls upon all international parties to coordinate with UNAMA in the implementation of its mandate (Resolution at 5). UNAMA, through the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board, has served as largely a coordinator, rather than a commander or firm director, of rule of law development.

2. See Afghan National Army (ANA) judicial records, 2006–2009. In addition to the Afghan army courts, others aligned with the security sector are more or less functioning under a heavy cloak of mentorship. They include courts such as the Counter Narcotics Court and the Anti-Corruption Tribunal.

3. The ANA have been full partners with the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (NTM–A/CSTC–A) in conducting a Basic Legal Officer Course, paralegal course, and criminal investigative training. A schoolhouse for legal instruction recently opened, with space planned for a law faculty in the new national defense university in 2012.

4. The NATO Intermediate Joint Command (IJC) is responsible for partnering with ANA units at the level of corps and below. However, the IJC currently lacks the judge advocates needed to partner/advise at this level. Consequently, NTM–A/CSTC–A has retained this mission until the IJC is properly resourced. CSTC–A attorneys have recently established training for ANA investigators, including contracting with experienced U.S. investigators to travel throughout Afghanistan as trainers and advisors of ANA criminal investigators. The ANA court system holds promise, but it too struggles to deal with crimes committed by senior officers (colonels and generals) who believe they are above the reach of the legal system. Changing the culture of entitlement, spoils, and cronyism will take time.

5. The Ministry of the Interior is charged with development and oversight of the National Police. This structure contains the locally fielded Afghan Uniform Police, Border Police, and Afghan Civil Order Police. In terms of defending and stabilizing Afghanistan, the police are intended to provide the stabilizing authority after targeted areas have been cleared by the army. However, in reality, the police often must fight in the role of light infantry to defend themselves in the isolated outposts scattered across Afghanistan. These postings make ideal targets for the Taliban.

6. Afghan law has both a formal and a traditional justice system that operate together. This article suggests ways to improve development of the formal justice system but recognizes that the traditional system is a legitimate part of Afghan justice that is relied upon by the population.

7. There is no overall coordinator, but rather a network approach by the international community. This approach is not unusual for developing countries. Given the rapid evolution of the Ministry of the Interior and the police forces, the developing country model is not sufficient to meet the legal reform needs of Afghanistan.

8. *U.S. Government Rule of Law Strategy for Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2010).

9. As of April 12, 2010, U.S. Ambassador and U.S. Senior Representative to Afghanistan Richard C. Holbrooke announced that Ambassador Hans Klemm (former Ambassador to Timor/Leste) would oversee the development of the rule of law.

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