

THE CIVIL – MILITARY EFFORT IN AFGHANISTAN: A STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE

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Missed Strategic Opportunities

The international effort to bring stability and security to Afghanistan has been characterized by a growing list of missed strategic opportunities – both on the part of international military forces and the development community.

Driven by “transformational imperatives,” the US military strategy to depose the Taliban regime depended on a unique combination of airpower, Special Forces and local militias. However, the unintended, but totally foreseeable, consequence of the American reluctance to deploy major ground forces was that the power and prestige of some problematic warlords and commanders was reinforced. This was then exacerbated by American insistence that the UN mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) limit operations to Kabul. The ostensible reason for this was to allow US (Operation Enduring Freedom) forces to pursue counter-terrorist operations in the remainder of the country. This “dual” chain of command persisted, in violation of well established military principles and common sense, until late 2006 when NATO assumed command of operations throughout the entire country. Even now Special Operations and security transition activities remain outside of the NATO chain of command.

Since 2001, US strategy has essentially been an “economy of force” effort. The number of “boots on the ground” is still not sufficient to establish the level of security necessary to permit substantive development to begin and the tactics employed have failed to provide the population with a basic level of security. Further, the consequent security vacuum provided many warlords the opportunity to consolidate their regional power and to tighten their grip on poppy cultivation and other criminal enterprises.¹

From the military perspective, much of this lack of coherence can be attributed to one basic but critical mistake – the collective failure of American and NATO leaders to understand the true nature of conflict in failed and failing states. This failure led to the application of military force using concepts, doctrine, tactics and equipment optimized for “state–on–state” conflicts characterized by clashes between similarly organized military forces , but not well-adapted to the realities of warfare waged by non-state actors in failed and failing states.² As retired British General Rupert Smith explains, “war among the people”³ is, in essence, an effort by weaker adversaries (usually, but not always, non-state actors) to use tactics and weapons intended to minimize the advantages that a high-tech industrial age army brings to the battle. These adversaries avoid confrontations that could result in a decisive defeat, they adopt guerilla and terror tactics and achieve their *force protection* by blending into the population. In short, they fight “among the people.” This, in turn, forces industrial – age military forces to do the same, using structures, munitions and equipment optimized for a clash of armies.

¹ See Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Uncertain Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, MD, 2006) for a comprehensive discussion of the numerous strategic errors that have led to many of the problems faced by the Afghan Government in 2005 and 2006.

² General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (Allan Lane, London, 2005) pp. 394-398.

³ Smith uses this phrase throughout *The Utility of Force* to differentiate the kinds of conflict that have come to predominate in the post – Cold War era from more ‘traditional’ conflicts such as WWII and Korea that inform the public’s, military leader’s and politician’s views of war.

Smith concludes that this limits the utility of current Western armed forces in this kind of conflict and forces adaptation while engaged in the fight, and that the consequences are evident in Afghanistan.

The civilian effort has been plagued by a similar lack of strategic vision, an incoherent approach and a major failure in respect to the development of the instruments of good governance. Like the military effort, international support of the Afghan government, in terms of both governance and economic development, has been dominated by an “economy of force” attitude and a lack of consistent strategic vision. In a 2005 article in *World Policy Journal*, Carl Robichaud of the Century Foundation stated that “...the international community has pursued a minimalist approach, both in troop commitments and reconstruction funding.”⁴ A recent *New York Times* critique of the Afghan mission is even more scathing in its assessment of the American effort as evident in the following quote:

“When it came to reconstruction, big goals were announced, big projects identified. Yet in the year Mr. Bush promised a “Marshall Plan” for Afghanistan, the country received less assistance per capita than did postconflict Bosnia and Kosovo, or even desperately poor Haiti, according to a RAND Corporation study.”⁵

At its core, this failure to translate victory in the battle against the Taliban regime into strategic victory in the war for the future of Afghanistan is the end product of international incoherence and a failure to understand that winning battles is simply not enough to ensure strategic success. Despite the overwhelming historical evidence that military force alone cannot defeat an insurgency or stabilize a failed state, the

⁴ Carl Robichaud, “Remember Afghanistan? A Glass Half-Full on the Titanic.” *World Policy Journal*, Spring 2006, 17.

⁵ David Rohde and David E. Sanger, “How a ‘Good War’ in Afghanistan Went Bad,” *New York Times*, 12 August 2007.

international community's efforts in Kabul have been characterized by an apparent lack of strategic vision and strategic level coordination of the civil-military effort. Although the Bonn Process succeeded in its aim of establishing the building blocks of statehood, there was no agreed international strategy that linked the essential security, governance and development aspects of nation building until *The Afghanistan Compact*⁶ was approved at the London Conference in February 2006. Even after the promulgation of the *Compact*, implementation efforts have suffered from the same strategic incoherence that has been so evident throughout the Afghan mission.⁷

Establishing effective military – civil coordination measures to ensure that security, governance and development efforts are synchronized is only the essential first step in achieving coherence. International and Afghan efforts within each of these realms must also be fully integrated. In short, “unity of effort” must be the master principle of the Afghan mission and become part of the operating culture of every single entity involved.

The Military Concept

The American led attack against the Taliban regime was initially characterized as a validation of the Pentagon's transformational vision of warfare. High technology precision weapons systems, satellite communications and sophisticated command and

⁶ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *The Afghanistan Compact: A Strategy For Security, Governance, Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction* (Kabul, 2006) Also available at: <http://www.and.s.gov.af/main.asp>

⁷ See *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, International Crisis Group Asia Briefing No. 59 (Brussels, 29 January 2007) for a comprehensive and critical evaluation of *Compact* implementation.

control networks allowed the American military to defeat the Taliban regime without deploying large numbers of ground troops.

The Three Block War Concept

The term “Three Block War” was coined by General Charles C. Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the United States Marine Corps. He first used it in a speech to the *National Press Club* in Washington in December 1997 and never formally developed the concept in any rigorous fashion. General Krulak was among the most colourful Marine officers of his generation and is also credited with developing the phrase “Strategic Corporal” to capture the intellectual and ethical demands that even the most junior levels of leadership face in the “post-modern” battlespace.

Krulak described the Three Block War as follows:

“...our enemies will not allow us to fight the Son of Desert Storm, but will try to draw us into the stepchild of Chechnya. In one moment in time, our service members will be feeding and clothing displaced refugees, providing humanitarian assistance. In the next moment, they will be holding two warring tribes apart – conducting peacekeeping operations – and finally they will be fighting a highly lethal mid-intensity battle – all on the same day, all within three city blocks. It will be what we call the ‘three block war’. In this environment, conventional doctrine and organizations may mean very little. It is an environment born of change.”⁸

The Three Block War metaphor seized the imagination of military analysts and intellectuals and, like most metaphors, has been abused ever since. It is important to place Krulak’s imagery in the context of the times. In 1997 the US military establishment was still basking in the glow of the 100 hours of ground combat that

⁸ *Vital Speeches of the Day*, 15 December 1997, 139-141.

ended in victory in Operation Desert Storm. The “Revolution in Military Affairs,” precision weapons, information superiority and concepts like network-centric warfare and rapid decisive operations dominated American military thinking. The Marine Corps was the only service to resist this latest, high-tech interpretation of the attritional “American Way of War.” Officers like Krulak and General Anthony Zinni clearly understood that war is an essentially human event and that people – soldiers, political leaders, the affected population and the citizenry of our own nations, are far more important than technology as determinants of victory. Before most other military leaders and analysts, they also understood that the dominance of state-on-state warfare was in decline. In the aftermath of the Cold War, there was no peer competitor with sufficient military power to challenge the United States in any conventional military sense. They understood that, in the absence of direct military threats to the survival of Western states, most future conflicts would be “wars of choice” and the enemy would have to adopt “asymmetrical” strategies and tactics in the face of the “overwhelming force” represented by American military power. In short, while the rest of the US military establishment was building on the legacy of Desert Storm, Krulak and the Marines saw the future in the streets of Grozny and Mogadishu and they intended to be ready. The “three block war” idea was the shorthand that Krulak chose to use to describe this crucial philosophical fault-line in American military thinking.

Like most shorthand, the term “three block war” cannot be expected to convey the full-range of meaning intended by its author. The kind of conflict envisioned by General Krulak has been actualized in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and in the persistent civil wars in parts of Africa. Current military theory refers to this type of conflict as

Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW). One of the leading theorists in the field, retired Marine Colonel Thomas X. Hammes, describes 4GW as an “advanced insurgency” that uses “...all available networks – political, economic, social, and military – to convince the enemy’s decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.”⁹ 4GW is, at its core, strategic in nature as it targets the political will of its adversaries.

The Three Block War imagery is, on the other hand, tactical. It uses the idea of “three city blocks” as the basis of the model and conjures up a graphic image of small tactical units engaged in combat, peacekeeping and humanitarianism in a defined geographical area. The small unit image is further reinforced by Krulak’s idea of the “strategic corporal” and the reality that small unit actions can have serious strategic consequences. In my view, the tactical imagery of the Three Block War idea, although useful in the field, is one of the main conceptual obstacles that leads to a lack of clarity at the strategic level.

It is clear that the Taliban are pursuing a Fourth Generation model of conflict in Afghanistan today and it is equally clear that it has achieved a degree of strategic success in Kabul, in NATO capitals and, critically, in the minds of the people of troop contributing nations and Afghan citizens. Until now, the Government of Afghanistan and NATO nations have often ceded the information advantage to the Taliban and, critically, they have failed to apply a strategic level “Three Block” approach to the international effort. That said, the *Afghanistan Compact* provides an excellent strategic framework and a common language that must now be used to bring essential coherence to that

⁹ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2004) p. 2.

effort. In short, its three pillars: Security, Governance, and Economic and Social Development are an appropriate conceptualization of the “Three Blocks” and offer a model for achieving a coherent and comprehensive Afghan mission.

The remainder of this paper will describe how the *Compact* reflects Krulak’s “Three Block War” shorthand at the strategic level. In addition, I will make some comments concerning the reality of the insurgency and the problematic relationship between the military and development aspects of “state-building”.

4th Generation Conflict in Afghanistan

There has been intense political, media and civil society group criticism of a perceived “imbalance” in Canadian strategy resulting from the military’s involvement in combat operations in Kandahar. Some commentators have concluded that the mission has shifted away from state-building and reconstruction towards a purely military counter-insurgency role.¹⁰ This conclusion can only result from a fundamentally flawed understanding of the insurgency itself. The Taliban led terror campaign in the south and east is not a classical anti-colonial struggle, nor is it a simple battle of competing political ideologies. It is, instead, a battle between the forces of tradition and the advocates of modernity. The Taliban’s objective is not mere territorial control or political power – it is control of the population and the re-establishment of the perverse

¹⁰ For example, Linda McQuaig’s polemic in the 12 Feb 2006 edition of the *Toronto Star* is a particularly ill-informed critique of CF operations in Afghanistan. A more balanced view is offered in the Project Ploughshares Briefing #06/01. Entitled *Afghanistan: Counter-insurgency by other means*, Ernie Rehger asks a number of valid questions that should be resolved by a careful reading of the *Compact*, *ANDS* and Canadian Forces statements. The UNSC endorsement in its resolution 1659 (2006) should satisfy those who question the legitimacy of the Canadian commitment.

theocracy that ruled until late 2001.¹¹ To that end, they have formed any number of alliances with drug lords and other criminals who profit from instability, and with international and national networks that share a common interest in ensuring that the rule of law remains weak. This amorphous coalition of groups is more than willing to use extreme violence to achieve their aims and has demonstrated, time and again, that development in the absence of basic security is futile. Finally, the fact that the insurgent coalition is a collection of groups with different motivations and interests, and that much of its fighting power is provided by criminal gangs, renders discussion of a “comprehensive peace process” moot. There is, in essence, no coherent insurgent leadership to negotiate with, there is no will on the part of the Taliban to negotiate and legitimate governments simply cannot negotiate with armed criminal gangs – especially those that recognize no constraints on the use of violence against innocents.

The effect of this insurgency has been to retard both the establishment of proper governance structures and economic development in the southern provinces. To advocate “rebalancing” the mission effort in favour of the reconstruction effort while an active insurgency terrorizes the population is, at best, naïve. Defeating the insurgency is crucial to the overall success of the international effort in Afghanistan, regardless of the best intentions of those who would prefer to emphasize the development aspects of the mission.

The war in Afghanistan is, in essence, an “advanced insurgency” that meets the definitional standard of a 4th Generation conflict. Two elections and extensive social science research provide ample evidence that the majority of Afghans categorically

¹¹ Emily Hsu and Beth DeGrasse, USIPeace Briefing, *Afghan Insurgency Still a Potent Force* (Washington, Feb 2006).

reject the insurgents' world-view.¹² Recognizing the true nature of the insurgency, the UN Security Council endorsement of the *Compact* (including the Security Pillar) represents explicit approval of both the ongoing American led counter-insurgency operations and the ISAF transition concept.¹³ Further, the *Compact* and *Afghanistan's National Development Strategy* explicitly addresses the social, political and economic aspects of state building – an effort that must continue even while the security situation remains contested. In short, the international community, through the authority of the UN Security Council, has deliberately chosen to support the Afghan Government and eliminated any question of neutrality, or the traditional impartiality of UN peacekeeping, in respect to the battle that continues to put the future of the country in jeopardy – a future that depends on a renewed international and Afghan effort to fully implement the strategy agreed in London.

The *Afghanistan Compact* – The Strategic Civil-Military Concept

Almost three decades of insurgency, invasion, resistance, civil war, and ultimately, the American led attack on the Taliban, have left Afghanistan shattered. Despite this legacy of violence, the progress made since 2001 has been nothing short

¹² Charney Research, *ABC Poll: Life in Afghanistan*, 7 December 2005. Available at: <http://www.charneyresearch.com/> This poll found that 77% of Afghans support the current government's "direction" for the future and that 88% consider the US overthrow of the Taliban a "good thing." Similar findings were made by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. See Frederick Barton, Bathsheba Crocker, and Morgan L. Courtney, *In the Balance: Measuring Progress in Afghanistan*, Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, 2005).

¹³ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *The Afghanistan Compact: A Strategy For Security, Governance, Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction* (Kabul, 2006) p. 6. The *Compact* is very specific in terms of the role of the Government and all international forces in securing the security and stability of the country. UNSC endorsement is a clear expression of support.

of spectacular. The *Bonn Agreement*¹⁴ was, in essence, a political roadmap that has allowed Afghans to take control of their own future. Even with the pressure of an ongoing insurgency, Afghanistan has promulgated a constitution, held two very successful elections, opened the Parliament and restored a sense of normalcy in most of the country. Without a doubt, major problems persist – insurgency, opium, criminality and, most importantly, grinding and endemic poverty. Determined to overcome these obstacles the Government of Afghanistan, in partnership with the international community, is ready to take the next steps.

The “next steps” are mapped out in two crucial documents, *The Afghanistan Compact* and *Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy (ANDS)*,¹⁵ both presented and approved at the recent London Conference. The *Compact* is essentially the political “deal” between Afghanistan and the World that strives to achieve the Government’s vision stated here:

*“Our vision for the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is to consolidate peace and stability through just, democratic processes and institutions, and to reduce poverty and achieve prosperity through broad based and equitable economic growth.”*¹⁶

This mutual commitment, endorsed by a unanimous resolution of the United Nations Security Council (1659-2006),¹⁷ is best expressed in the *Compact* itself:

¹⁴United Nations, *The Bonn Agreement*, http://www.unama-afg.org/docs/_nonUN%20Docs/_International-Conferences&Forums/Bonn-Talks/bonn.htm

¹⁵ Both are available at: <http://www.ands.gov.af/main.asp>

¹⁶ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan National Development Strategy, Summary Report*. p 3 Also available at: <http://www.ands.gov.af/main.asp>

¹⁷ United Nations Security Council Resolution 1659/2006, 15 Feb 2006. Available at: <http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/244/75/PDF/N0624475.pdf?OpenElement>

“The Afghan Government hereby commits itself to realizing this shared vision of the future; the international community, in turn commits itself to provide resources and support to realize that vision.”¹⁸

Both the *Compact* and *ANDS* are built around three “pillars.” The first is *Security*. This includes the international military contribution, defeating the insurgency, reform of the National Army (ANA) and police (ANP), and the disbandment of illegal armed groups. The second is *Governance, Rule of Law and Human Rights*. It encompasses reform of the machinery of government, re-vitalization of the civil service, justice reform, the fight against corruption and the poppy economy, and making the institutions of the state work for the people. The third pillar, *Economic and Social Development*, is the real heart of the matter. It is under this pillar that the bulk of the reconstruction effort falls and it is, in essence, the real objective of the *ANDS*. In addition to the pillars, both documents describe *Gender Equity, Counter Narcotics, Regional Cooperation, Anti-Corruption* and the *Environment* as “cross cutting themes” as these issues need to be dealt with in the context of all three pillars and at the societal level.¹⁹

The result of extensive consultation and a very concerted effort by both the international community and, most importantly, all elements of the Government, the *Compact* and *ANDS* received an extraordinary degree of consensus at the London Conference as well as rare endorsement by a unanimous resolution of the UN Security Council. Together, these documents map the future of Afghanistan and, if properly implemented, they will establish the conditions necessary for Afghans to achieve their vision of a peaceful, just, democratic, stable and prosperous Islamic state. At the

¹⁸ Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *The Afghanistan Compact: A Strategy For Security, Governance, Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction* (Kabul, 2006) p. 2. Also available at: <http://www.ands.gov.af/main.asp>

¹⁹ See documents at 5 and 6.

strategic level, the *Compact's* pillars are, in essence, analogous to Krulak's "Three Blocks" at the tactical level. The *Security* pillar covers the war-fighting and peacekeeping aspects of his concept. Peacekeeping is also part of the *Governance* pillar and the *Economic and Social Development* pillar is an expanded version of the humanitarian aid block. This construct is a more appropriate conceptualization at the strategic level as it avoids both the tactical imagery and the spatial limitations of the original expression by Krulak.

The parties to the *Compact* (the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the 64 nations that signed on in London and the UN Security Council) clearly recognize the essentiality of coordinating their individual and collective efforts across all three pillars. Despite this recognition, implementation of the *Compact* is still problematic and effective civil – military coordination in Kabul remains weak.²⁰

There should be no doubt – the future of Afghanistan is still in the balance. Although a reasonable degree of security has been established in most of the country, there are areas in the south and east where the insurgency has prohibited major development projects. The institutions of the state are, for the most part, still weak and the government is not yet capable of protecting the population. The outcome is, by no means, guaranteed. Achieving the vision will require a cohesive, coherent and sustained international commitment to the *Compact* and *ANDS*. Canada and the CF have a vital role to play in this commitment as these documents represent a significant step forward in dealing with the 4th Generation warriors currently terrorizing the people of Afghanistan and preventing development work in large parts of the country.

²⁰ *Afghanistan's Endangered Compact*, International Crisis Group Asia Briefing No. 59 (Brussels, 29 January 2007). 10 – 13.

The Canadian Forces and the *Afghanistan Compact*

General

The three pillars of the *Afghanistan Compact* suggests that there is a neat division of labour among the three lead Canadian Government departments and agencies in Afghanistan in respect to their engagement. This is true in broad terms; Defence and the CF lead on security issues, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) leads on governance, rule of law and human rights and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is the focal point on the economic and social development front. Other Departments and organizations also contribute. For example, the RCMP has officers in the Kandahar Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) and in the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) headquarters, as does Corrections Canada. Despite this apparent clarity, the reality is rather more complex on the ground and no Canadian government agency can operate strictly in one pillar or another. Although not necessarily obvious, the CF plays a role in each of the three pillars as part of the cohesive “whole of government” approach that Canada is trying to apply as a means of achieving the best effects on the ground. In turn, Foreign Affairs and CIDA both have significant influence on, and are active in, the security sector. For example, the Ambassador and Head of Aid played key roles in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) Program, a function of the security pillar.

The remainder of this section will describe how the CF supports each of the pillars of *ANDS*. This discussion will be through a CF lens and it must be borne in mind

that each of the other committed departments and agencies has a vital role to play in the efforts of the others.

The CF has been engaged in Afghanistan since the deployment of a combat unit to Kandahar in late 2001 as part of the American led coalition (*Operation Enduring Freedom/OEF*). Although the number of troops has varied, the CF has made major contributions to both, mutually supporting multi-national forces in the country.²¹ From 1 March until 1 November 2006, Canada assumed lead nation status in Regional Command (South). This region includes some of the most unstable provinces in the country, including Kandahar, Uruzgan, Helmand, Nimroz and Kunduz. The commitment included the lead of the Multi-National Brigade Headquarters that exercises command over Canadian, British, American, Dutch, Romanian and Australian and Dutch units in the region. The Canadian commitment of around 2500 troops currently includes an infantry battle group in Kandahar Province, the Kandahar PRT and an Observer Mentor – Liaison Team (OMLT) embedded with Afghan National Army units in the Province. This commitment was initially part of *OEF* and, as a result, became conflated in some quarters with the more unpopular aspects of US foreign policy. The Canadian mission (and Regional Command South) came under the command of ISAF at the end of July 2006 and the Canadian led command structure was instrumental in establishing the conditions for the successful transition from US to NATO command.

In addition to the troops in RC(S) and Kandahar, the CF has a strong presence in Kabul. Canadian staff officers serve in both ISAF and the Coalition Headquarters and a 15 soldier training team works with ANA units to prepare them for deployment to the

²¹ Canada, National Defence Backgrounder, *Canadian Forces Operations in Afghanistan*, 25 Nov 05. http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1703

provinces. In addition, a small military-civilian team of planners (Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan/SAT-A) works directly with Afghan government agencies to assist in the development of the strategic plans necessary to achieve the objectives of the *Compact*.

The CF and the Security Pillar

It is clear that security is the non-negotiable pre-requisite for the success of the *Compact*. In the absence of security, economic and social development is almost impossible. In addition, the insurgency presents a direct threat to the development of good governance structures and practices. As a result, the security pillar will continue to be the main focus of CF effort in Afghanistan for some time to come. Despite this emphasis, the *Canadian Forces Campaign Plan for Afghanistan* has three lines of operation that mirror the *ANDS* pillars.²²

The battle group in Kandahar is organized and equipped to assist the Provincial Governor and the Afghan National Army and Police in their efforts to establish the legitimate Government's "monopoly on the use of lethal force" in the province. The PRT, with military members, police and corrections officers, diplomats and CIDA development specialists, is also heavily engaged in the security pillar. It "...reinforces the authority of the Afghan government in and around Kandahar" and helps local authorities stabilize and rebuild the region. Its tasks are to monitor security, to promote the policies and priorities of the national government with local authorities, and to facilitate reform in the security sector."²³ An analysis of this mandate reveals that the

²² Conversation BGen David Fraser (CA), Comd RC (S) and author, 11 Feb 06.

²³ Canada, National Defence Backgrounder http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/newsroom/view_news_e.asp?id=1703

PRT concept is illustrative of the reciprocity between security, governance and development.

With the exception of the Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan (SAT-A), in Kabul almost every other CF member in the Kabul area is engaged with the security pillar. Canadian staff officers and troops at *ISAF* and various Coalitions headquarters are fully integrated in those organizations. The ANA training team and the OMLT are also clearly fully committed in this pillar as their work is “hands-on “ tactical training of Afghan soldiers at the small unit level.

CF Support to Governance, the Rule of Law and Human Rights

In this *ANDS* pillar the most obvious examples of CF support are found in the PRT and SAT-A. The PRT is, by its mandate, intended to “...reinforce the authority of the Afghan government.”²⁴ Although its focus has been on security because of the prevailing situation in the Province, it has provided significant support to the Provincial Governor, the ANA, and ANP and, by virtue of its development work, the line-ministries of the central government. This level of support will continue to grow as the intent is to co-locate part of the PRT headquarters in the Governor's office.

SAT-A has a direct role in the Governance pillar as it has planning teams in direct support of a number of Afghan ministries including the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (the main Afghan Government agent for reconstruction outside of Kabul). The team has assisted in the development of the MRRD strategic plan. This includes the strategy for the establishment of the comprehensive governance structure for development that extends from the village to the national level. In all cases,

²⁴ *Ibid.*

the team has formed working partnerships with international organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Development Program. Those bodies bring expertise in governance to the table while SAT-A provides the skills to integrate their input and assist Afghan managers in the formulation of a coherent strategy. This work is a clear demonstration of the potential of military staff “skills transfer” to the civil sector in a post-conflict society that has had little time to develop viable public institutions and a culture of good governance.

CF Support to the Economic and Social Development Pillar

Within the security envelope provided by the Battle Group in Kandahar Province, the PRT is focused on development and reconstruction. This includes support to alternative livelihood programmes, rural rehabilitation and any number of public infrastructure projects. At the same time, ISAF in general, and the PRT in particular, have renewed their emphasis on good governance. For example, the PRT provides direct support to the newly established Provincial Development Councils and their district and village level equivalents. The unit is, by far, the best example of “whole of government” concept at the tactical level as it includes a senior diplomat, CIDA expertise (augmented by both the British Department for Foreign International Development and USAID) and RCMP officers. It is the CIDA component, not the military, which plans and coordinates development activities, while the CF provides the basic security envelope and the essential support framework.

In addition to the Kandahar focus in the Economic Development pillar, SAT-A in Kabul is directly involved with a planning team supporting the Afghan led ANDS

Working Group. Similar to the effort in MRRD, it is the ANDS Working Group and international experts who provide the substantive and technical content, while SAT-A applies military strategic planning methodology to ensure coherence, synchronization and sequencing in the same way that it would for a military campaign.

Security and Development

The original articulation of the “Three Block War” concept used tactical level language and imagery to make a very specific point about the changing character of “post-modern” conflict. Krulak was clearly concerned with the US military’s intense focus on high-tech solutions and his aim was fairly simple – to restore the soldier and small unit to their rightful place on the battlefield. In that the “Three Block War” is most often discussed at the tactical level, the idea of soldiers delivering humanitarian aid is the most contested part of the concept. Much of this discussion is a “dialogue of the deaf” and is rooted in military and humanitarian values that were developed and practiced in a far simpler world than the one that we face today.

Recent operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated that the “Three Block War” concept is not as simple as Krulak’s original articulation. Because there is, in any conflict, a clear moral duty for military forces to care for the population remaining in the combat zone to ensure that no further harm impacts innocent civilians, humanitarian aid delivered by military forces while fighting is still occurring must be, of military necessity, limited to the life-saving essentials demanded by the principle of the “duty of care.” In reality, tactical combat units have very little capacity in this area and will remain focused on fighting the battle or maintaining a tenuous security situation. As

soon as there is sufficient security in a specific area, traditional humanitarian organizations will commence operations and will, most often, provide the vast majority of aid using the values and principles espoused in the “Humanitarian Charter,” “Code of Conduct” and individual organizational guidance. Although this traditional construct carries risks, in that humanitarian organizations could find themselves providing medical care and food to the insurgents who are threatening the very same population that the organizations are trying to protect, military forces should still support this model as humanitarian NGOs are far more proficient and efficient in delivering this type of aid. Colonel Joseph Collins of the US Army War College has referred to this phase as “part one” of the “Humanitarian Assistance and Economic Development” block of the 3BW concept. In essence, it deals with the immediate humanitarian requirement to alleviate human suffering and, at least in my view, should be both impartial and independent as far as the security situation permits.²⁵

Collins defines “Economic Development, or “political reconstruction” as “part two” of the “block.” Given the UNSC endorsement of the *Afghanistan Compact*, programmes and projects under the “Economic and Social Development” pillar cannot be considered as impartial humanitarian aid. In short, the international community has chosen to support the Government of Afghanistan and has endorsed a comprehensive plan that is intended to secure the future of the country. That said, in the Afghan case, it is in this stage that the military – development interface has become problematic. There is any number of contentious issues in this regard, and most are the result of a lack of role clarity and questions of professional jurisdiction – on both sides of the relationship.

²⁵ Collins, Joseph “Afghanistan: Winning a Three Block War,” in *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Winter 2004, pp: 70-72.

Without a doubt, the PRT concept is a “work in progress.” Until 2006 NATO and American PRTs operated with very different guidance. National caveats have detracted from the ability of ISAF HQ to coordinate PRT activities at the national level and, most importantly, a number of well-intentioned PRT Commanders have initiated projects that do not reflect Afghan priorities and are of questionable sustainability. On the positive side, all of these issues have been recognized by the political-military chain of command in Afghanistan. In recent months the joint Afghan – International PRT Executive Steering Committee has been rejuvenated, ISAF HQ hosted the first NATO-US PRT Commanders Conference and has issued the first draft of a PRT handbook that is intended to provide more precise guidance. Crucially, ISAF and the Coalition have been making a strenuous effort to align PRT activities with *Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy*.

At the same time, there appears to be some unresolved issues in terms of the appropriate roles of official development agencies and NGOs. Clearly, official development agencies are arms of their parent governments, and their activities must support the national strategies and objectives of those governments. In other words, CIDA cannot and must not be viewed as either impartial or independent as its activities form an integral part of Canada’s overall strategy. However, most agencies, CIDA included, contract the delivery of programmes to private contractors or NGOs. This, in effect, makes the involved NGOs agents of the contracting government and cannot help but place their traditional impartiality in question. Only the NGO community can resolve the issues of principle that arise from this practice but, as a minimum, they cannot claim

that their traditional impartiality pertains when they are acting on behalf of a national government or international organization.

These issues are often discussed at the tactical level. However, it is at the international and national levels that coherence and the coordination of military and development efforts is most crucial. The “4th Generation” adversary uses all “...all available networks – political, economic, social, and military...” and it is clear that the Government of Afghanistan and the international community must seize the initiative and use the strategic framework provided by the *Afghanistan Compact* and *Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy* to counter those networks.

Strategic Level Civil – Military Coordination

In February 2007, after five years of almost continual Canadian involvement in Afghanistan, the Government finally formed an Afghanistan Task Force in the Department of Foreign Affairs to oversee all aspects of the 3D mission. Under the leadership of an experienced diplomat, David Mulroney, the task force has the mandate, authority and expertise to “develop the common narrative” and plans needed for success.²⁶ This national level initiative promises to offer a significant improvement over the *ad hoc* coordination processes that were, often by default, led by the Canadian Forces in the past.

Mulroney’s team is tasked to develop a “...single narrative, a single campaign plan for the three departments and all others who are engaged in Afghanistan.” That

²⁶ Interview with David Mulroney by Robert Parkins and Chris Thatcher in *Vanguard*, July/August 2007. Available at <http://www.vanguardcanada.com/CommonNarrativeMulroney> (Accessed 24 August 2007).

narrative will be based on the *Afghanistan Compact* and will include those areas and sectors that are of particular interest to Canada such as justice and the rule of law. According to Mulrone, other nations such as the UK have instituted similar arrangements to coordinate their own national efforts in Afghanistan. Even though the establishment of these coordination arrangements is a fairly recent initiative, it is clear that strategic level coordination of the civil – military effort in Afghanistan (or in any intervention, for that matter) is essential in the face of any adversary that uses “...all available networks – political, economic, social, and military – to convince the enemy’s decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.”²⁷ That said, experience in Afghanistan provides ample evidence that security is the non-negotiable pre-requisite for long-term economic development and the establishment of a governance structure that can deliver basic services to the population.

Although the Canadian national strategic level civil – military coordination structure (finally) seems to be a very important step in the right direction, a lack of coherence still characterizes the strategic situation in Kabul. In *Afghanistan’s Endangered Compact* the International Crisis Group has described the feeble international effort to coordinate its activity across all three pillars of both the *Compact* and *Afghanistan’s National Development Strategy*. A recent *Los Angeles Times* editorial claims that “(T) the setbacks in Afghanistan are fairly blamed on the Bush administration's decision to attempt nation-building on the cheap. It then slashed aid in 2006 and diverted military and intelligence resources to the worsening situation in

²⁷ Thomas X. Hammes, *The Sling and Stone: On War in the 21st Century* (St. Paul Minnesota: Zenith Press, 2004) p. 2.

Iraq.”²⁸ This lack of American strategic vision has been evident since the successful military campaign of 2001. Coupled with American dominance in Kabul, this lack of vision has been the main cause of continued international confusion in Kabul.²⁹

If Afghanistan is to be “saved,” the confusion in Kabul needs to be rectified – quickly. The International Crisis Group has made several recommendations pertaining to the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (co-chaired by the UN SRSG and an Afghan presidential appointee and charged with overseeing the *Compact*). Without debating the specifics, making this body effective must be an overriding international and Afghan priority in the short term. Accomplishing this will demand far greater cooperation among involved nations, the lead donors and international agencies than has been evident thus far. On the civil side only the United Nations can lead an effort of this magnitude. Simultaneously, NATO and UN need to find a way to align the military and civil efforts at the strategic level. A failure to achieve this alignment can only lead to failure.

It is now time that the military chain of command be totally unified. Since November 2006 most operations have come under NATO command. However, the development of effective Afghan National Army and Police units are under a separate US command structure as are Special Operations Forces. This situation is militarily untenable and must be fixed.

²⁸ “Don’t Fail Afghanistan,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 August 2007. Available at: <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-ed-afghanistan27aug27,0,3029831.story?coll=la-opinion-center> (Accessed 27 August 2007).

²⁹ See David Rohde and David E. Sanger, “How a ‘Good War’ in Afghanistan Went Bad,” *New York Times*, 12 August 2007 for a wide-ranging description of the strategic confusion that permeates the American effort.

On the international civil – military front it is long past time that the Secretaries General of the UN and NATO agree to appoint a high-profile and powerful joint Special Representative to coordinate all aspects of the effort. It is just as essential that the American administration recognize its state-building failures (magnified by its focus on Iraq) and actively support this Special Representative. At the same time a joint Afghan – International civil – military structure needs to put in place down to the provincial level. This structure would be responsible to the new Special Representative and the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and would have the authority to coordinate all aspects of *Compact* and *ANDS* implementation.³⁰

Finally, the structural solutions described here will not, on their own, result in strategic coherence. All actors – military, diplomatic and development – must subsume their individual national and bureaucratic objectives to the vision articulated in the *Compact*. The alternative is failure and, in the final analysis, the Afghan people will bear the costs of that failure.

Conclusion

Despite the pessimistic tone of much commentary, Afghanistan has seen some remarkable progress in the past four years. As part of the Bonn Process, the roadmap that established the basic political framework necessary for good governance, Afghans agreed a constitution, held very successful Presidential elections in October 2004, and Parliamentary Elections on the 18th of September 2005. These achievements should not be underestimated. Thirty years of conflict had not only destroyed the basic

³⁰ See Nagle, John A. *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup. with a Knife.* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2002) for a description of the Committee Structure used by the British civil-military chain of command during the Malayan emergency.

structures of the state and much of the physical infrastructure, it had also inflicted serious damage to the social fabric of the country. This is the kind of damage that is almost impossible to see but it is probable more significant than the kind of damage that can be photographed and measured. Massive population movements have all but destroyed many of the traditional methods of social regulation and conflict resolution, and constant fighting has left the population with a collective case of psychological disruption. The success of the Bonn Process, in effect, signaled the collective commitment of the Afghan people to democratic processes over the power of the gun. In addition to this impressive political process, Afghans and the international community have established basic security in about three-quarters of the country. Hundreds of thousands of children, including girls, have returned to school. Clinics, roads, irrigation systems and countless other development projects have been completed. Much of this work has been completed with little fanfare or media attention.

The Afghan state-building project is complex and complicated. The problems of criminality, corruption, poppy, poverty and weak state institutions cannot be “wished away.” Instead, they can only be resolved by the concerted joint Afghan - International effort that was committed to at the London Conference. State-building is a long and arduous process. Canada is one of 36 nations with military forces on the ground – even more countries are involved in development. Patience, resolve and perseverance are essential if the people of Afghanistan are to see the results of the promises made in the past four years. We should have no illusions. Much remains to be done in Afghanistan and the future of the country is, by no means, assured.

One of the major lessons of the Afghan experience is that economic development and good governance are essential elements of security and stability. Most military professionals have long recognized that military force alone is insufficient to defeat a determined insurgency and that security without sustained development and good governance will inevitably be transitory. Although Canada's 3D Strategy explicitly recognizes this reality as do the strategies of several other nations – establishing security and accomplishing the vision of the *Afghanistan Compact* demands that all of these strategies be unified at the international level in Kabul.