

U.S. Marine with ISAF and Afghan border police shake hands after joint patrol in Helmand Province



24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (Andrew J. Carlson)

# Operational Design for ISAF in Afghanistan *A Primer*

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**A**fghanistan is at a tipping point, and the next 12 to 18 months will prove decisive in determining the country's future. This has become the view of many scholars, politicians, diplomats, and military leaders around the world. To tip the scale in favor of defeating the insurgency and thus toward improving stability and governance in Afghanistan, the international community will significantly increase the diplomatic, military, and economic resources dedicated to these efforts in the coming year. Part of this resource increase involves expanding the ranks of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) by adding at least four U.S. Brigade Combat Teams and potentially thousands more troops from other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries. The primary purpose of this article is to provide an operational design for how these units should execute a counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign once

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on the ground. This design accounts for the doctrinal principles of Field Manual 3–24, *Counterinsurgency*, yet adapts these principles in light of the current situation in Afghanistan and the hard lessons learned while fighting the insurgency over the years.

### The Mindset

Counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan have to involve a great deal more than fighting insurgents. They must also include combating terrorists, criminals, warlords, and drug lords; mitigating sectarian and inter- and intratribal conflict; and curtailing government corruption while building governmental capacity and setting the conditions for reconstruction and development. Accordingly, ISAF units must be ready to fight sporadic, high-intensity engagements, often of short duration, and simultaneously to combat criminals and terrorists using police or constabulary tactics. These same forces must also be prepared to operate as armed social workers while facilitating reconstruction efforts, and as referees when coordinating governance development efforts among warring religious, ethnic, tribal, and governmental factions.<sup>1</sup> This type of warfare is contrary to what most, if not all, we, as ISAF, have been prepared to execute. If we are going to succeed, the force has to understand the differences between our training and the realities on the ground in Afghanistan.

We must also focus on the word *succeed* instead of *win* in this campaign, because success is ultimately tied to the will of the Afghan government and people—the only ones who can truly “win.” The definitions of these two words have important distinctions. *Succeed* means “to make good, thrive, prosper, flourish, or progress in order to accomplish a favorable aim or outcome.” *Win* means “to acquire, be victorious, or triumph as a result of a fight.”

At the operational and tactical levels, the distinction implies that we must design our operations with the Afghan people as the focus of effort. They are the center of gravity in this campaign; thus, the prize on the Afghanistan battlefield is the mind of the population. Some have argued, based on Joe Strange’s model for analyzing potential centers of gravity in war,<sup>2</sup> that the will of the populace is not the center of gravity, but rather is merely a critical objective for both sides. We caution strongly against this thinking. The simple fact is that the will of the Afghan people is *the* key to our success. We can elimi-

nate 1,100, 1,000, and even 10,000 insurgents but will still fail if we do not succeed in the battle for the people’s will. On the other hand, if we succeed in winning the public over, it is also highly likely that, without firing a single bullet, the enemy’s numbers will rapidly drop from 10,000 to 1,000 to potentially fewer than 100 insurgents. This is the mindset that must be instilled in all ISAF personnel, from the most senior leaders to the most junior Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, and Airmen.

To succeed in the battle for the people’s will, we must commit to attacking the problems within Afghanistan across all lines of operation, using the political, economic, social, informational, and military elements of our nations. The military element of operational design

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*we can eliminate 1, 100, 1,000, and even 10,000 insurgents but will still fail if we do not succeed in the battle for the people’s will*

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requires a significant mindset shift in our military establishment. Although ISAF leadership should not (and could not) be responsible for executing the nonmilitary elements of the overall COIN strategy, it is responsible for playing a supporting role, and must be prepared to temporarily fill the void in the development of governance and reconstruction, particularly at the district and village levels.

The question now is whether ISAF can adjust its organization, training, and most importantly its corporate mindset to succeed in Afghanistan. We think the answer is *yes*, if the leaders of our militaries understand, support, and lead units to implement the operational design described herein. The importance of unity of purpose and closely coordinated methods of operation cannot be overstated. Tactical operations in COIN will often have a much greater impact on the operational and strategic outcomes of the campaign than will tactical operations in a conventional war. ISAF units employed incorrectly or in a disjointed manner, or focused on the wrong objectives, will create far more adversaries and problems than they will ever eliminate and thus will negatively impact our efforts to defeat the insurgency.

### Force Composition

Due to the nature of the Afghanistan operating environment, ISAF units must

work as a single, cohesive force, intimately partnered with Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The force required under this single unit is a combination of light infantry, artillery, and logistics units working in concert with specialized forces such as intelligence, civil affairs, psychological operations, human terrain teams, military police, explosive ordnance disposal, and engineers. Rotary- and fixed-winged aviation assets must also provide support as an integral part of the team. This force will normally operate under a single infantry battalion task force and will be assigned a single area of operation (AO). These types of forces are general purpose forces (GPF). Above the battalion task force level, all regiments, brigades, and regional and theater level command headquarters must operate under a single concept of operations and must establish objectives, coordinate actions, apportion and control terrain and boundaries, and allocate or aggregate resources as required between and among the GPF. Finally, special operations forces and other governmental agencies must also play a vital role in the operational design, and these units must synchronize their efforts with the GPF.

The importance of selecting a light infantry battalion as the base force deserves further clarification. Conventional mechanized and armored formations are often counterproductive in conducting COIN, particularly in Afghanistan.<sup>3</sup> These forces often have a mindset that connects them to their equipment and the firepower it delivers. They are frequently predisposed to vehicle-mounted (that is, road-bound) patrols to enhance their speed and survivability—both intuitive qualities of mechanized forces. Unfortunately, this approach only further separates them from the population, while also playing into one of the enemy’s strengths: ambushing road-bound vehicle units. One Russian journalist who embedded with Soviet forces in Afghanistan frequently from 1979 to 1989 described a major reason for the Soviet military’s failures: “During the 9 years of war we were constantly separated from the country by 8 millimeters of bulletproof glass through which we stared in fear from inside our armored carriers.”<sup>4</sup> We can ill afford to repeat past mistakes. If the majority of our mechanized units do not reorganize into light infantry forces, trading their vehicles for good pairs of boots, they will quickly become a detriment to one of the main requirements in COIN: connecting with the population. In

AOs that support vehicle movement, there is, however, a need for a motorized and potentially a mechanized task force held in reserve. All AOs must also have a heliborne reserve, and these forces must be available at the regimental/brigade level.

**Framework**

The operational design framework rests on five essential and sequential tasks: *understand, shape, secure, hold, and build*. While our GPF understand, shape, secure, hold, and build, they must concurrently assist the Command Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC–A) advisor in organizing, training, and operating with the ANSF. Finally, the GPF must develop the ANSF to a point where they are capable of largely independent operations.

To *understand* is to gain an intimate knowledge of the human and environmental dynamics impacting the campaign, particularly within a unit’s AO. To orient to the challenges in our AOs, we must first work to understand not only our enemy, but also the history, culture, traditions, and languages of the Afghan people. Simply studying enemy tactics, techniques, and procedures will leave us with a limited understanding of our AOs. We must also understand the family, clan, tribe, or community organization, and must know who now wields and who has historically wielded power in these groupings if we are to maximize the decisionmaking processes. Additionally, all ISAF units must map the human terrain so they can understand issues and actions from the many perspectives of the Afghan population. We must recognize that we will never fully understand what it means to be an Afghan, but through daily contact with Afghans, we can gain a critical

appreciation for their values. This routine contact will engender trust and mutual respect over time.

*Shaping* an AO is the ability to influence and inform the perceptions, allegiances, attitudes, actions, and behaviors of all players in the AO before we move in to secure it. Shaping operations that influence the population are human activities requiring personal contact. The base unit commander, who will

It implies a less confrontational approach, like a policeman handling an uncertain but potentially hostile situation. *Clearing* implies a destructive or escalatory mindset and may be suited in limited situations, but is more appropriate for warfare against another state army. When the GPF secures an area, it must be done discreetly and with precision. Killing insurgents is *not* the main objective. Large unit clearing sweeps and

*we must understand the family, clan, tribe, or community organization, and must know who now wields and who has historically wielded power in these groupings*

likely be at the battalion task force level, must have the ability to anticipate, recognize, and understand the strengths, vulnerabilities, and opportunities available in his AO to shape successfully. Without understanding or, more specifically, without mapping the human terrain so we know who wields power in our AOs, we will never maximize our ability to shape operations.

*Securing* an AO means to gain possession of an area’s key terrain in order to deny its use to the enemy and also to provide security for the population. We intentionally say *secure* instead of *clear*. To *secure* is “to gain possession of a position or area, *with or without force*, and to prevent its destruction or loss by enemy action.”<sup>5</sup> To *clear*, on the other hand, is “the removal of enemy forces and elimination of organized resistance in an assigned zone, area, or location by destroying, capturing, or forcing the withdrawal of enemy forces that could interfere with the unit’s ability to accomplish its mission.”<sup>6</sup> *Securing* is a more appropriate mindset for COIN in Afghanistan.

the heavy use of firepower are detrimental to effective COIN operations, as these tactics sometimes create fear and anger in the populace, prevent the establishment of normalcy, and sometimes demand revenge in the Afghan society. These results are often the goals of the insurgents.

The GPF and ANSF must have a plan when they secure an area to establish an accepted rule of law, provide basic public safety, and create links between the people and a government they accept as legitimate. Securing an area is best done with tactical units at the platoon and company level, partnered with ANSF, whose actions are coordinated with adjacent units and commanded at the battalion level acting as the base unit. The “base” unit is the largest unit whose leader is in direct and continuous contact with the population. This unit is the most important formation in COIN operations because it is generally the element that has the greatest impact on protecting the population and is where practical problems arise and are usually solved.<sup>7</sup>

**Marine surveys terrain from rooftop during patrol in Helmand Province**



U.S. Marine Corps (Pete Thibodeau)

*Holding an AO means that we and the ANSF are present and intend to remain until a legitimate local government is ready to provide security and governance. Both the people and the insurgents must truly appreciate the extent of this commitment; otherwise, the people will never feel safe, and the insurgents will have continuing ability to influence the population. Demonstrating this level of commitment requires the GPF, along with the ANSF, to live and operate among the Afghans. If the ISAF and ANSF team only interacts with the population during cordon and search, vehicle checkpoints, and raid operations, it fails to understand the center of gravity in Afghanistan. Large “secure” bases far from the population are arguably good for force protection and maintaining a “Western” quality of life for our troops, but these remote bases are counterproductive to accomplishing objectives. Living and operating out of such facilities creates an “us versus them” attitude between the GPF and population. It also inhibits the GPF and ANSF from gaining the human intelligence required to succeed. Simply put, the GPF and ANSF must “hug” the population to protect them. This means we must eat and sleep in the villages and towns without displacing a single family to build the relationships required to physically and psychologically separate the insurgents from the people.<sup>8</sup>*

*Building an AO means maintaining a safe environment for the people and the local government so both can pursue their political, social, and economic goals. At the tactical and operational levels, ISAF building efforts must be focused on facilitating popular support for the district and provincial governments through the clan, subtribal, tribal, and/or village leadership, and providing an atmosphere for political reconciliation. One of the first functions we must accomplish to establish this atmosphere is to identify who the past and current informal and formal leaders are in our AOs, which, once again, requires mapping the human terrain.<sup>9</sup> We must then work with the local leadership to develop a legitimate rule of law and help to enforce the laws. Afghanistan has a signed national constitution that is the primary source for the rule of law. However, there are also more traditional rules of law, such as tribal or village *jirgas*. While not officially sanctioned by the national government, *jirgas* have long served as an accepted rule of law in specific areas. One of ISAF and the international community’s main challenges in*

the future is to assist Afghans in integrating national laws with provincial, district, and in some cases village and tribal laws. That said, ISAF units should leverage the experience of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), along with the many nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have operated in Afghanistan pre- and post-2001, to help with all aspects of the building stage. We must appreciate that we might have to serve as a supporting effort to UNAMA, and even to NGOs, when it comes to tasks such as enabling elections and major infrastructure projects.

Working at the local level to stimulate the economy and to improve basic services for the people must also be a priority during the building stage. To this end, monies in the hands of the base unit commander and the ability to immediately use them to enhance peoples’ lives are critical assets in Afghanistan. Young- and middle-aged men who are unemployed for even a limited time represent discontent on which the insurgency can capitalize.<sup>10</sup>

### **Partnering with the ANSF**

Organizing, training, and operating with the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP), and Afghan Border Police (ABP) are essential tasks for ISAF’s general purpose forces in this COIN campaign. We must avoid performing any operation if we are not partnered with an ANSF unit. We must also resist the inclination to build the ANSF using a Western model. Additionally, we must assist the ANSF in taking the lead in the campaign even before we think they are ready. Much of this transition will have to be carried out while the ANSF are engaged with the enemy and living among the population. This said, ISAF must come to grips with the realization that we cannot succeed alone. The ANSF must play a decisive role to facilitate the Afghans’ trust in *their* nation’s security forces. This will be at least a 10-year mission that will require patience, significant resources, and ongoing international support.

To begin, we must focus on continuing to build an ANSF that can deal with the internal threats to the sovereignty of Afghanistan. The ANSF, specifically the ANA, must be organized, equipped, and trained to fight the insurgent threat. The ANA must be a light, highly mobile GPF that can operate dispersed in platoon- and company-sized formations. We need not develop an ANA that can fight

another state army. That is a mid- to long-term goal the Afghan government will move toward at an appropriate time. We must help the ANSF develop an air force that can provide fire support, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), and heliborne Quick Response Force (QRF) capabilities. Thus far, the ANA is the one bright spot in the ANSF, but with only one-third of the *Kandaks* (battalions) possessing a capability milestone 1 (CM 1) status,<sup>11</sup> the ANA still requires many years of partnering, mentoring, and support.

In conjunction with ANSF tactical training and employment in combat, ISAF must accelerate and heavily fund programs to bring ANA personnel to NATO military

**Provincial Reconstruction Team and Police Mentor Team members meet with village elders**



U.S. Air Force (Dustin Hart)

academies and war colleges. Furthermore, NATO-staffed professional military schools of shorter duration are needed in greater numbers in Afghanistan to gain momentum in the development of the ANSF professional officer corps. A strong officer corps capable of independent operations is vital to combating the enemy in Afghanistan. To repeat, this is a 10-year fight at a minimum, and a captain at a NATO school today will likely play an instrumental role in ultimately defeating the insurgency.

Simultaneously, ISAF must significantly increase efforts to develop the ANP and ABP, which are frequently viewed as

corrupt, incompetent, and loyal to warlords. An additional challenge is that there is virtually no viable criminal justice system in Afghanistan, which further undermines confidence in the central government and cripples legal and institutional mechanisms for the ANP and ABP to use in prosecuting insurgents and criminals. Establishing a legitimate judicial structure at the national, provincial, and district levels is not a task for ISAF, but it is nonetheless essential if a legitimate, nationwide rule of law is ever to be implemented in Afghanistan.

While waiting for this judicial structure to be created, ISAF must still make developing and operating with the ANP and ABP a top priority and work with the Afghan government to ensure that these units have fortified police stations and border outposts, local jails,

plants, schools, main roads, and highways. The police forces, with backing from the local leadership, must be heavily funded with handsome salaries and supported with top equipment to lure any militias and low-level insurgents into an alternative, lucrative, and legitimate profession. It is critical to remember that only a local police force can gain the trust of the local populace and penetrate a community thoroughly enough to gain the intelligence needed to destroy the insurgents' infrastructure permanently.<sup>12</sup>

**Professional Advisor Force**

Once the ANSF are equipped, trained, organized, and on the verge of being able to conduct independent operations, ISAF must pull back its GPF and transition to an advisor-only force that works closely with CSTC-A

tipping point to the final success of the campaign. In this gray zone, ISAF units become less visible, less intrusive, and less restrictive to the population while the ANA and, more importantly, the ANP and ABP begin to provide the primary elements of security.

In this gray zone and for the remainder of the conflict, ISAF will likely have to increase its advisor requirement, selection criteria, and support for CSTC-A. At this stage, ISAF's advisors will serve as its decisive element. Accordingly, it is of even greater importance that this force be comprised of career officers with combat experience. This force must be regionally and culturally aware and possess a desire to immerse itself within the ranks of the ANSF, providing advice and support at the brigade, battalion, company, and even the platoon and police station levels.



Marines and Afghan soldiers operate jointly in Helmand Province

armored vehicles, a nationwide command and control system, and embedded ISAF military and contractor trainers/mentors. Even before taking these steps, ISAF must work closely with the Afghan Ministry of the Interior to assist in recruiting, organizing, and training a professional ANP and ABP force. After all, at the local level, an area does not have true security until it has a legitimate local police force that is of and for the people.

These police forces must also have the ability to secure essential facilities and critical infrastructure such as government buildings, financial centers, electric power installations, water and sewage treatment

to provide logistics, fire support, MEDEVAC, and a QRF until Afghan forces can furnish these services. This marks a shift to an indirect approach by ISAF at which time the ANSF will take the lead and truly become the main effort in the campaign. The GPF base unit commander on the ground must make the assessment as to when the posture of the ISAF unit must change, and when having more overt ISAF units becomes a liability rather than an asset, as “over-partnering” can be detrimental to success. This judgment-based decision is made as the overall situation enters a “gray zone.” Yet in spite of its prolonged state in time, this period will serve as the operational

The transition to the indirect approach, using a professional advisor-only force, facilitates the major drawdown of ISAF units. This will in turn posture the force for the inevitable prolonged COIN mission, and this indirect approach will likely facilitate long-term NATO support.

The Afghan government and ANSF, supported by the ISAF advisor force, will win in the long run by proving their legitimacy in the eyes of the Afghan people. Through professional training, sound military and policing advice, and robust support, the advisor force will assist the ANSF in driving the insurgency to lower and lower levels of

violence while the insurgents' political will erodes. When the population looks exclusively to the legitimate government for protection and services, and the ANSF are operating independently, all ISAF military units can be withdrawn from the theater.

### Problems to Solve

Success in these areas will set the conditions for ISAF to address three problems that have plagued the COIN effort for years. First, ISAF must focus on creating legitimate and productive village- and district-level governments. Only by providing tangible services and meeting real needs at these levels will the national government gain legitimacy—and then credibility—in the eyes of most Afghans. Unfortunately, poor governance, in part due to the absence of security, has plagued the counterinsurgency effort to this point, especially in the eastern and southern provinces. Polls consistently show that the lack of roads, electricity, and potable water is the main concern of the population, particularly in rural areas. Also, the majority of Afghans believe that corruption is a serious problem, and nearly two-thirds think it is increasing. In particular, the majority of Afghans believe that government officials profit from the drug trade in the eastern and southern provinces.<sup>13</sup>

This leads to the second major problem, drugs. The Afghan National Development Strategy states that narcotics are the single greatest threat to the country's future and security.<sup>14</sup> Immediate eradication, however tempting it may be, is not the answer. ISAF must start by securing the population in the most important areas that produce these narcotics, and then over time ISAF, with the help of the government, can wean farmers off poppies and to a lesser extent cannabis. This should be done by bringing farmers back to agriculture as it existed prior to the Soviet invasion in 1979. While poppy fields provide a livelihood for farmers, they are also a substantial source of income for the insurgents in eastern and southern Afghanistan. ISAF and the government have made serious mistakes in the past by attempting to implement poppy crop eradication programs without providing an alternate source of income. Worse, past eradication efforts were attempted without securing the people first, which led to prime recruiting seasons for the Taliban. The intricate relationship among narcotics, security, economic development, political reform, and the social aspects of COIN operations

is readily apparent in eastern and southern Afghanistan. While poppy production is viewed as a national security problem by both the government and ISAF, it is now a critical part of the socioeconomic fabric of many eastern and southern provinces. Great care must be taken to address the issue, lest the coalition continue to alienate the population and drive more farmers and harvesters into the sphere of the Taliban. Alternate crops such as fruits, nuts, and spices may provide a solution; however, poppies are easy to grow and provide the highest return. For ISAF to fix this problem, it must first secure the population and then work with the government to move to an alternative economic solution. This solution must be agricultural-based and subsidized in the near term, and it must provide development in hydroelectric power, irrigation systems, and roads for the long-term growth of the licit agriculture sector.

The third and arguably most complex problem for ISAF and the government is that insurgent groups have established sanctuaries in Pakistan. These groups have often obtained external assistance from a global jihadist network, including players with a foothold in Pakistan, such as al Qaeda. These groups have also acquired support from tribes and criminal organizations there.<sup>15</sup> For the time being, ISAF must accept that it alone can do little about the sanctuaries on the Pakistan side. What ISAF and the ANSF can do is “poison the water” for the insurgents on the Afghan side of the border instead of worrying about “spearing the fish” on the Pakistan side.

Admittedly, this reality does not sound promising. It is important, though, for ISAF commanders to understand the realities, complexities, and opportunities available on the Pakistani side of the border. The new president, Asif Ali Zardari, is the widower of the late Benazir Bhutto, killed by the Pakistani Taliban in December 2007. President Zardari has expressed his commitment to defeating extremism, to include taming extremist madrassas and eliminating training camps that support the Afghan (and Pakistani) insurgency from within Pakistan.<sup>16</sup> He has also backed his words with deeds. Recent army operations in the Bajaur tribal region demonstrated President Zardari's seriousness, as his army destroyed an insurgent stronghold that had long served as a gateway into Afghanistan's Kunar Province. Multiple tribes within Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas have also shown a

desire to fight the Taliban movement.<sup>17</sup> Internationally, the Saudi Arabian government has begun to pressure the Taliban to begin political negotiations with the Afghan and Pakistani governments.<sup>18</sup> The main takeaway for ISAF commanders concerning Pakistan is that developments over the past year on both sides of the border have provided an opportunity to deliver a significant blow to the insurgency. The number one action ISAF can take to enable this blow is to secure the people in Afghanistan's eastern and southern border provinces. This will, in effect, trap thousands of insurgents inside Pakistan, where the new COIN efforts of the Pakistani government can defeat them.

Securing Afghanistan's eastern and southern provinces is no small task. These regions are where the Taliban first established itself in Afghanistan, where it is often strongest, and where it has longstanding relationships with tribes just across the border. One possible approach to securing these regions is to increase ISAF and ANSF presence in a way that embraces the Pashtunwali code. Approximately 45 percent of Afghan society follows a conservative Islamic ideology and adheres to a strict code known as *Pashtunwali*. This code exists within most of the Pashtun ethnic group, which predominantly lives in eastern and southern Afghanistan and also stretches into Pakistan. The fundamental tenet of *Pashtunwali* is an honor code that amounts to an unwritten law of the people that guides individual and collective community behavior. *Pashtunwali* represents a set of moral codes and rules of conduct that impact the daily lives of many Afghans to a greater degree than the tenets of Islam. It promotes self-respect, independence, justice, hospitality, revenge, and tolerance. The use of violence to defend the honor of oneself, the family, or tribe, to the death if necessary, is one of the most significant aspects of *Pashtunwali*.

The Afghan government, with support from ISAF, should use this code to recruit young Afghans, through traditional village ties, into ANSF units. ISAF should launch an intense recruiting campaign that promotes honor and service to oneself, family, and tribe by belonging to a legitimate local police force, ABP, or ANA. Closely tied to this initiative, ISAF and the ANSF should also work closely with and protect district, village, and tribal leaders and mullahs to gain support in using the *Pashtunwali* code of honor to bring young Pashtun men into the ANSF. The enemies

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of Afghanistan are using this same code to recruit young fighters into the insurgency. ISAF must support and promote the tenets of Islam together with the Pashtunwali code to beat the Taliban to the punch for this support. The code and the young fighters who fiercely adhere to it may just be the true center of gravity of the Afghan COIN campaign.

The question remains whether the International Security Assistance Force can develop and implement the appropriate operational design to succeed in Afghanistan. We think it can, but a significant corporate mindset shift is needed first. This shift requires recognition of the human and environmental imperatives of Afghanistan and of the fact that ultimately, the Afghan government and its security forces must win the conflict. This campaign is a prolonged struggle that can only be successful with greater investments in talent, time, and treasure by NATO and the rest of the international community. ISAF must first focus on securing and gaining the support of the people instead of hunting down and killing insurgents. At the same time, capacity-building for the government, starting at the local level, and developing the Afghan National Security Forces require significantly greater resources. Only when success grows in these two vital missions will the Afghan people believe they have a legitimate and credible government that, with ISAF support for a limited period, will offer them a brighter and more honorable future than the insurgency. The basic mechanism of conducting counterinsurgency can be summed up as *build or rebuild a political machine from the population upward*.<sup>19</sup> JFQ

disadvantages encountered by Soviet mechanized and armored units when fighting insurgents in Afghanistan. Coalition forces have relearned similar lessons since 2001, and many who have served in Afghanistan over the past 7 years believe that the insurgents' tactics, techniques, and procedures are primarily designed to kill coalition forces when mounted in vehicles.

<sup>4</sup> Artyom Borovik, *The Hidden War: A Russian Journalist's Account of the Soviet War in Afghanistan* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1990), 12.

<sup>5</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, September 27, 2001), C4-C5.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Praeger, 1964), 110-111.

<sup>8</sup> *Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats: An Updated Approach to Counterinsurgency* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, June 7, 2006), 25.

<sup>9</sup> For a cultural operator's guide to understanding and identifying informal and formal power structures in societies, see Paula Holmes-Eber and Barak A. Salmoni, *Operational Culture for the Warfighter* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2008), 155-166.

<sup>10</sup> *Tentative Manual*, 31.

<sup>11</sup> *CM 1 status* implies an ANA unit assessed as fully capable of conducting operations at the battalion level and below, while still requiring ISAF's combat enabling support.

<sup>12</sup> *Tentative Manual*, 68-70; and also see F.J. West, *The Village* (New York: Pocket Books, 1972), for a detailed description of how U.S. Marines, combined with local indigenous forces, destroyed the insurgent infrastructure in a village in Vietnam.

<sup>13</sup> The Asia Foundation, "Afghanistan in 2008: A Survey of the Afghan People," 2008, 15-23, available at <<http://asiafoundation.org/country/afghanistan/2008-poll.php>>.

<sup>14</sup> *Afghan National Development Strategy: An Interim Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction* (Kabul: Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, n.d.), 94-98.

<sup>15</sup> Seth G. Jones, *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, vol. 4 of *RAND Counterinsurgency Study* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2008), 37.

<sup>16</sup> Ron Moreau, "Good Intentions," *Newsweek*, September 9, 2008, available at <[www.newsweek.com/id/158092](http://www.newsweek.com/id/158092)>.

<sup>17</sup> "Pakistan Tribesmen Fight Taliban, Al Qaeda," CBS News, September 13, 2008.

<sup>18</sup> Faiza Saleh Ambah and Candace Rondeaux, "Saudis Held Talks between Taliban, Afghans," *The Washington Post*, October 22, 2008, A13.

<sup>19</sup> Galula, 136.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> David J. Kilcullen, "Twenty-Eight Articles: Fundamentals of Company-Level Counterinsurgency," *Marine Corps Gazette*, October 2007, 59-61.

<sup>2</sup> Joe Strange and Richard Iron, "Understanding Centers of Gravity and Critical Vulnerabilities," available at <[www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog2.pdf](http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/usmc/cog2.pdf)>.

<sup>3</sup> Lester M. Grau and Ali Ahmad Jalali, *The Other Side of the Mountain* (Quantico, VA: USMC Studies and Analysis Division, 1995); Lester M. Grau, ed., *The Bear Went over the Mountain* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 1996); and Lester M. Grau and Michael A. Gress, ed., *The Soviet-Afghan War: How a Superpower Fought and Lost* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), provide numerous examples of the